

---

**Secretariat memorandum**

Author: Vincent Stops

Agenda item: 7  
PC019  
Drafted: 02.12.13

---

London Assembly scrutiny of buses

**1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To note the findings of the London Assembly's scrutiny of buses and agree London TravelWatch's response to the recommendations.

**2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 To agree London TravelWatch response to the London Assembly's bus scrutiny.

**3 Information**

- 3.1 In October 2013, the London Assembly published a scrutiny report on buses in London. The full text of the report can be found here:  
[http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Bus%20Services%20in%20London%20Report%2C%20Transport%20Committee\\_0.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Bus%20Services%20in%20London%20Report%2C%20Transport%20Committee_0.pdf)
- 3.2 The executive summary and recommendations are set out in the appendix.

**4 Legal powers**

- 4.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight).

**5 Financial implications**

- 5.1 No specific financial implications for London TravelWatch arise from this report.

## **Appendix: London Assembly Scrutiny Report on London Buses**

### **London Assembly Report: Executive summary**

This report examines the challenge of rising demand for bus travel. A growing number of Londoners want to make journeys by bus but there are no plans for major expansion of the bus service. The Committee shows how improved bus service planning may help to meet the challenge of rising demand and also sets out other actions that the Mayor and TfL should take to maintain an effective bus network.

#### **1. The challenge of rising demand for bus travel**

Demand for bus travel in London has grown rapidly since 2000. Between 1999/2000 and 2012/13 the number of bus passenger journeys rose 64 per cent from 1.4 to 2.3 billion. The ten most used bus routes (25, 18, 29, 149, 38, 207, 5, 73, 86 and 243) illustrate this growth in demand.

Route 25 is the most used route in London with 64,000 passengers per day; 64 per cent more than in 2002/3. Bus passengers are noticing growing demand. They report waiting for long periods at bus stops for a bus that is not full or not being able to find an empty seat once on board. The Committee's survey of over 1,000 bus users shows nearly three-quarters think their bus is busy (47 per cent) or overcrowded (26 per cent). The survey respondents highlighted the following ten routes in particular for busyness or crowding: 185, 208, 96, 38, 176, 172, 484, 336, 162 and 358.

TfL predicts further growth in demand for bus travel of seven per cent between now and 2021/22 – annual growth of around one per cent per year or a total of 167 million more journeys. However, this forecast may be conservative. Between 2000/1 and 2011/12 annual growth in bus journeys was around four per cent. Demand for bus travel is influenced by many factors including population growth. If London's population grows by the forecast 1.2 million between 2011/12 and 2021/22, this is the equivalent of almost four double-deckers full of people each day.

The Mayor and TfL have acknowledged rising demand for bus travel but provided few details of how they will address this. By contrast there are published plans for meeting rising demand on the Tube and rail networks. There is also regular reporting of crowding levels on rail services but no routine reporting of the usage of buses especially in peak periods.

The Committee recommends that the Mayor and TfL demonstrate that they are meeting the challenge of rising demand for bus travel by publishing a long-term strategy for the development of the bus network. They should also devise a performance measure for the busyness of buses, set targets for this measure and report against these regularly.

#### **2. Meeting the challenge through bus service planning**

TfL has said it will need to improve its bus service planning to address rising demand. Many organisations including London Councils and London TravelWatch have told the Committee how this could be done.

- There is a widespread perception that TfL only reviews and makes changes to bus services on a route-by-route rather than area wide basis, which fails to take

account of all changes in local demand. The Committee recommends the Mayor and TfL should devise a programme for more cross-borough boundary reviews of bus routes and more orbital and express bus routes.

- TfL's rationale for making changes to bus services is not always clear. The Committee finds that TfL should make its 'black box' of decision making on bus services transparent and recommends it devise a new approach to consulting boroughs and Londoners on bus services.
- Many bus users are especially concerned about bus service planning and provision at hospitals. The Committee recommends that the Mayor and TfL should work closely with NHS providers including through the London Health Board to address these concerns.

### **3. Maintaining an effective bus network**

Improved bus service planning alone will not meet the challenge of rising demand. The Committee has identified other actions that the Mayor and TfL will need to take to maintain an effective bus network.

- There needs to be sufficient funding for bus services. The use of government grant – the bus subsidy – dominates the debate about bus funding levels but on a total expenditure basis the bus service is as cost effective as the Tube. More concessionary fare holders also use the bus than use the Tube affecting bus service income levels.
- Introducing different fares and ticketing products including 'early bird', part-time and 'one hour' bus tickets could help to spread demand.
- Road congestion needs to be tackled which may include providing more bus priority measures and tackling traffic pinch points.
- The Mayor and TfL should publish the schedule for rolling-out more environmentally friendly bus vehicles including electric bus vehicles to show how they are addressing the capital's poor air quality.

### **London Assembly Report: Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1**

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should demonstrate to Londoners how they are meeting the challenge of rising demand for bus travel by publishing a long-term strategy for the development of the bus network. This strategy should include a mechanism whereby TfL will monitor and respond to bus passengers' reports of overcrowding e.g. via Twitter and publish its findings and actions from this monitoring.

#### **Recommendation 2**

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should demonstrate to Londoners that they are monitoring and addressing the busyness of buses by devising a performance measure for all bus routes that captures how many people cannot board a bus because it is too

full and cannot get a seat once on board in peak times. They should set annual targets for performance against this measure and report on progress against these targets twice a year.

**Recommendation 3**

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should devise and publish a programme of cross-borough boundary bus service reviews and set out, for consultation, proposals for more orbital and express bus routes.

**Recommendation 4**

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should devise and publish details of a new approach to bus service consultation to provide for boroughs and Londoners to have a more informed say on bus services. This should include provision for targeted consultation with bus passengers who use Oyster cards via email and for the boroughs and bus users to comment on TfL's guidelines for planning bus services.

**Recommendation 5**

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should report on their work with NHS providers including through the London Health Board to plan for good public transport access at each London hospital and major health centre now and after NHS reconfigurations.

**Recommendation 6**

In its next published business plan, TfL should demonstrate to Londoners the cost effectiveness of the bus service by showing the gross cost effectiveness and financial impact of concessionary fares for all modes of transport.

**Recommendation 7**

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should report on how they will use the next generation of Oyster cards to develop a passenger focused ticketing system that provides for new ticketing and fares options including 'early bird' fares, part-time travel cards and 'one hour' bus tickets, and funding options for these new products.

**Recommendation 8**

By March 2014, the Mayor and TfL should publish details on how they are improving bus journey reliability. This may mean more bus priority measures and tackling the 30 traffic pinch points on the road network that affect 250 bus routes.

**Recommendation 9**

By March 2014, the Mayor and TfL should publish the schedule for the roll-out of more environmentally friendly bus vehicles including electric bus vehicles to help reduce air pollution.