

Secretariat memorandum

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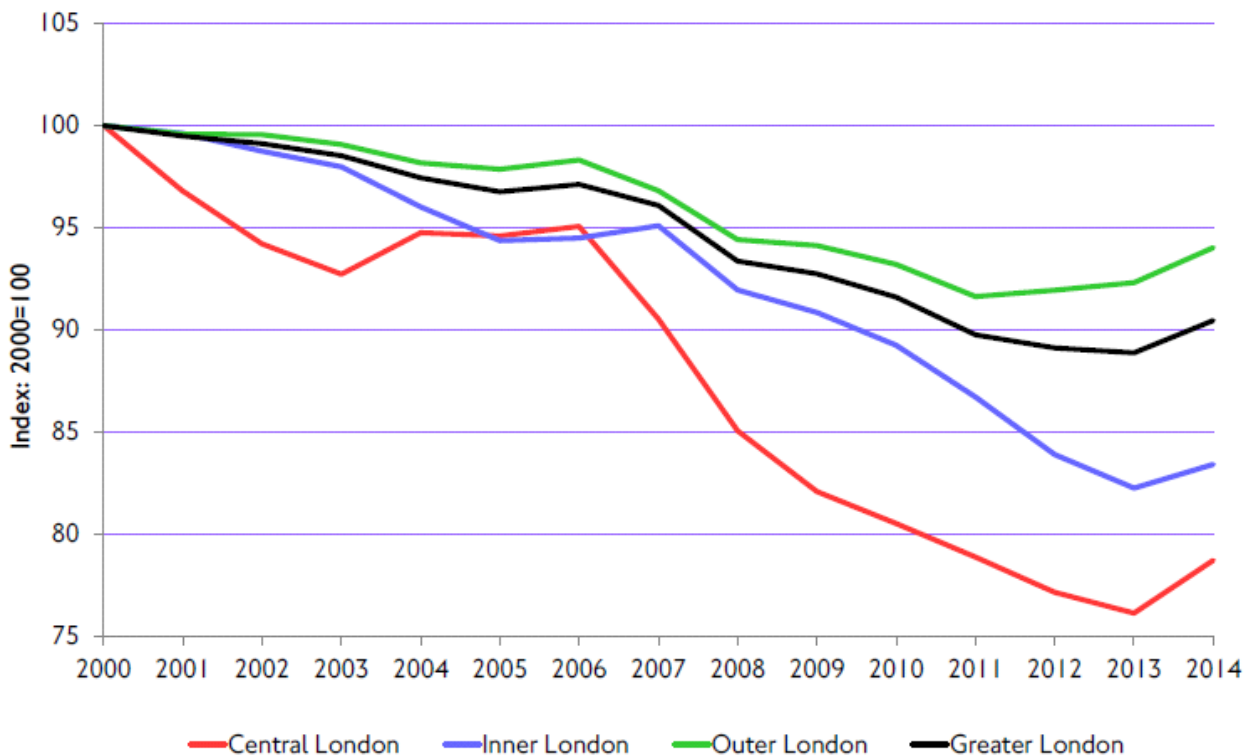
Streets and bus performance

1 Purpose of report

1.1. This report briefly outlines some of the topical streets and bus performance issues to inform members discussion with Ben Plowden,

2 Streets and bus performance

2.1. Following many years of declining traffic volumes there has been a noticeable reversal in this long-term trend.



Source: Department for Transport.

In interpreting the trend for central London shown by figure 3.7, it is important to recognise that this reflects a different area and set of conditions to that previously reported by TfL through the Congestion Charging Impacts Monitoring reports.

- 2.2. This is attributed to:
- the economic upturn (particularly in outer London where congestion restrains traffic growth less), and associated construction activity;
 - population growth
 - a rise in the number of Private Hire Vehicles (the Uber phenomenon)
 - a rise in the number of small delivery vans;
 - a drop in the price of fuel.
- 2.3. There has also been a reduction in traffic capacity caused by:
- the cumulative impact of streets schemes undertaken by local authorities and TfL to improve their streets and town centres;
 - the street works associated with TfL's Roads Modernisation Plan (RMP)
- 2.4. The recent change in legislation to remove the powers of local councils to enforce against parking infringements using cameras will be a further unquantifiable factor.
- 2.5. These trends seem unlikely to reduce significantly in the future. While the works associated with the RMP will reduce as the projects are completed, the Board will recall being told by TfL that there would be a substantial (25 to 30%) permanent reduction in traffic capacity in the Central area.
- 2.6. Leon Daniels, Managing Director of Surface Transport, wrote to the Chair on 8 January 2016 stating that the most intense elements of TfL's works would peak in mid January. There would then be some reduction in congestion.
- 2.7. The result of this is a reduction in Journey Time Reliability for motor traffic in general and a deterioration in bus performance. In the short term this deterioration in bus performance is being managed by TfL by means of incentivising bus companies; running additional buses; curtailing bus services early in their route and, in the case of the No 25 (London's busiest bus), by-passing the congestion (and bus stops) using the Bow flyover.
- 2.8. TfL have previously told us:

TfL's Roads Modernisation Plan (RMP) has led to a series of curtailments to bus services, or where they had previously been curtailed not reverted to the full route because of the RMP.

Route 3 is curtailed at Conduit Street

Route 8 – Tottenham Court Road

Route 15 – Trafalgar Square

Route 25 – Bank

Route 148 – the day service is curtailed at Shepherds Bush Green. The night service continues to operate to White City.

Route 254 – at Whitechapel, Route 115 has been curtailed at Stepney to mitigate for the delays being experienced as a result of the cycle superhighway works and urban realm works at Aldgate.

Route 115 – curtailed at Stepney for the same works as above.

Route 53 – curtailed at County Hall primarily for works at Elephant and Castle although it suffers disruption on many parts of the route.

2.9. It is planned that these routes should generally revert to their advertised route, although TfL are considering permanently using Bow flyover for the 25 to avoid the congestion at ground level.

2.10. Reflecting this deterioration in bus performance, there has been a reduction in passenger numbers. London TravelWatch has publicly called for more action by TfL and the London boroughs:

Stephen Locke, Chair of London TravelWatch commented: ‘The recent deterioration in bus performance is now affecting many people's lives - with longer waiting times and longer journey times making it harder than ever to get round on the capital's bus network. Not surprisingly, some passengers are abandoning bus services altogether. If some of them end up travelling by car, this will increase congestion still further.’

Stephen Locke continued: ‘We know that TfL and the central London boroughs have started to take action to address the problems but further work is still needed. As much as possible should be done to improve bus performance.’

In the short term London TravelWatch wants to see the extension of operating hours for bus lanes and single red and yellow lines. We also want to see better enforcement of the existing waiting restrictions.

In the medium term, the passenger watchdog wants to see a redoubling of efforts by TfL and the boroughs to progress bus priority schemes on the roads where buses operate.

2.11. To mitigate the medium and longer term impacts on the bus services TfL are investing in bus priority and there is now a bus priority team. However, we know that there were some significant additional journey times forecast by the modelling associated with the RMP. Making up that lost journey time will be very difficult, and in many cases impossible. Of the 21 bus ‘progression’ schemes that TfL had originally proposed as part of the mitigation for the RMP, only a small handful have actually progressed to being planned or built.

3 Longer term trends and policy

3.1. In the longer term (2031), TfL have forecast rising levels of congestion due to the continuation of population growth and rising aspiration for ‘improved streets’. The forecast suggests congestion will rise in central London by 60%; inner London 25% and outer London 15%.

- 3.2. The Mayor's roads taskforce encouraged the improvement of 'place', but also suggested additional road infrastructure and possible roads pricing.
- 3.3. The RMP is, in part, a response to the desire to see improved 'place' and encourage cycling and walking.
- 3.4. The Mayor has also promoted additional road infrastructure, firstly in May 2014 when an orbital tunnel was proposed. Recently the Mayor proposed two new east-west cross-city tunnels and smaller tunnels to ease congestion.
- 3.5. These tunnels would probably be tolled themselves. But if any congestion relief were not simply to be utilised by 'latent' demand, then further area wide pricing would be necessary.

4 Cross border services

- 4.1. TfL has a duty to provide transport services within, to and from London. London TravelWatch has worked hard over a number of years to maintain this as a reality on the ground. For example TfL operate route 258 between South Harrow station and Watford station. TfL negotiates with the surrounding counties for contributions to run these services.
- 4.2. However, local authorities are having to find more cuts to the services they provide and supporting bus services is not a statutory requirement. (Oxfordshire and Derbyshire are reportedly stopping all support for non-commercial bus services).

5 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 5.1. Any reduction in cross-border services would impact on those without access to private transport.

6 Legal powers

- 6.1. Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 requires London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) to consider, and where it appears to it to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to any service or facility provided by or for (or in the case of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, licensed by) Transport for London, other than a matter relating to the transportation of freight, if it has been the subject of representations made by or on behalf of users of that service or facility.

7 Financial implications

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