
Minutes

Agenda item: 5
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Minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 11 June 2019 at The London Fire Brigade, 169 Union Street, London, SE1 0LL

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Present

Members

Jackie Ballard, Alan Benson (Chair), Safia Iman, Arthur Leathley, Karen McArthur, Laura Osborne, Abdi Osman

In attendance

Alex Phillips	Bus Policy Manager (Item 6)
Garry Sterritt	Head of Asset Investment (Item 6)
John Trayner	Managing Director, Go-Ahead London (Item 6)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy & Investigation
Gytha Chinweze	Governance Officer
Richard Freeston-Clough	Operations and Communications Manager
Susan James	Casework Manager
Luke Muskett	Committee and Public Liaison Officer
Joanna Simons	Chief Executive
Vincent Stops	Senior Policy Officer

Minutes

1 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

There were no apologies for absence. Arthur Leathley declared that he was also chair of Network Rail's Anglia Route Supervisory Board.

2 Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

3 Minutes

The Director, Policy and Investigation provided an update on the London Overground ticket office closures. He reminded the Committee that originally London TravelWatch had objected to the proposal to close 24 of 51 ticket offices. This was due to the fact that they exceeded the Secretary of State's guidance of having over 12 transactions per hour. He stated that since March there had been further developments on the closures.

In April the Mayor announced that TfL were going to retain the ticket offices at the stations that London TravelWatch had objected to. In addition, ticket offices would be retained at most of the remaining stations on the basis that they would be operational only at peak hours. There were a number of exceptions to this such as Theobalds Grove and Stamford Hill, where the ticket offices no longer existed. London TravelWatch had reluctantly agreed to the closure of the Brondesbury ticket office as there was no other way to provide step-free access to the station.

The Director, Policy and Investigation said that there were two other stations that the organisation was concerned with. The first was White Hart Lane which was subject to a rebuild linked to Tottenham Hotspur's new stadium. Currently, the plans for the new station would mean the closure of the ticket office which would not be replaced.

The Director commented that none of the rebuilding plans were disclosed to London TravelWatch at the time of the consultation, and they had not been informed that a ticket office could not be retained there. He said had the organisation been aware it would likely have been opposed to such a move. In response to the planned closure of the ticket office at White Hart Lane, the Director, Policy and Investigation explained that he had written to Gareth Powell, Managing Director for Surface Access at TfL, for an explanation.

The Director, Policy and Investigation remarked that similar to White Hart Lane, there was a proposal by Arriva Rail London to rebuild West Hampstead station and again not incorporate a ticket office in the new arrangement. Under the plans there would be a new point of sale mechanism which would not include the ability for passengers to purchase tickets with cash. He stated that he was not pleased with the situation and that it was not acceptable.

On a separate issue covered in the minutes, the Chair asked whether London TravelWatch was now receiving all the information it required from the Rail Ombudsman. The Casework Manager replied that the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) were being much more transparent and were providing as much information as they could. She added that she had a meeting with them and Transport Focus the following day to discuss this with them further.

The minutes of the Policy Committee of 19 March 2019 were agreed by the Board and signed by Chair.

4 Matters arising (PC161)

The Chair asked if London TravelWatch had had confirmation from Network Rail about whether they could be part of the steering group looking into Euston station. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that they had not received that though the item would be brought before the board for discussion in September and he would follow up the matter in the meantime.

The Chair said that he believed that the South Western platform management trials had been extended to more stations than had been listed by the train company. The Director said that he did not have any information to add to the item.

5 Key activities (PC162)

The Chief Executive commented that the document provided the Committee with all liaison and meetings that had been held since the Board last met in public. The Chair said that it was a very thorough and comprehensive list.

6 TfL's bus strategy and 'road maintenance condition' (PC163)

Alex Phillips, Bus Policy Manager at TfL presented a condensed version of a 25 page PowerPoint which he had given to TfL's Customer Service and Operational Performance Panel in February. He commented that the organisation wanted to build on the four key strengths that had developed over time: value, accessibility, flexibility and safety. This had been helped by policies such as the fares freeze and the hopper fare though there had been a number of challenges that were negatively affecting those core values.

Mr Phillips stated that bus speeds continued to decline, which was having a negative impact in terms of making it an attractive mode of public transport. He stated that although bus passengers were generally happy with the level of service, they did not have such data for people who had left the network, who were likely to be the least satisfied.

In order to improve on TfL's core strengths, Mr Phillips remarked that they were targeting six priorities: leading vision zero, improving air quality, focusing on customer service, improving bus driver welfare, reshaping the bus network and growing demand. He commented that all six linked up with the Mayor's Transport Strategy. In terms of air quality, TfL were looking at introducing potentially 12 low emission bus zones, retrofitting vehicles so that they were euro 6 emission

compliant and also looking to expand the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). In terms of ULEZ, the hope was the expansion would encourage people away from buying a new car and getting them onto the bus network. Mr Phillips commented that TfL was also taking bus driver welfare seriously through implementing a number of measures including ensuring that toilets were available on all routes and managing driver fatigue.

Mr Phillips said that the bus needed to be more appealing as a viable mode of public transport for people. TfL had set a target of growing demand at between 40 and 50 per cent. To do this TfL needed to provide a service that was fast, direct and reliable. Mr Phillips added that the organisation was looking at introducing express services such as the X140. The Director, Policy and Investigation commented that the X140 was not in operation at present. Mr Phillips replied that it would be coming into service later in the year. A member asked for more details on the express routes. Mr Phillips replied that the organisation was still in the embryonic stage of shaping the scheme.

Mr Phillips stated that following the bus changes taking effect at the weekend, passengers will be expected to interchange to a greater degree than they currently do. Therefore, it was imperative to ensure that the interchanges were in the right spots and the facilities at those stops were adequate for people.

Turning to funding, Mr Phillips remarked that there would be a reallocation of resources from inner London to services in outer London. At the same time TfL would be looking at how it could improve bus efficiency so they could get 'more bang for our buck'. He commented that the organisation was also looking at better embedding the bus in the healthy streets programme to give greater prioritisation on the road for buses. Tied into that, Mr Phillips explained that TfL was reviewing bus lane hours to potentially increase their operating window, which would also help to increase the reliability of service.

Mr Phillips stated that for outer London TfL was targeting year-on-year growth in capacity. They were also looking to make seven area reviews at potential places that could see population growth in future and consequently greater demand for public transport. He commented that the organisation was currently working with several London boroughs to understand where these areas were likely to be and how best the public transport network could be optimised to take advantage of that growth.

Mr Phillips remarked that road space in London was at an 'absolute premium', and ensuring that this was used as efficiently as possible would help deliver a reliable bus service. He said TfL was looking to create a network where passengers could ride a bus directly into the town centre as well as having greater orbital links.

Responding to a question from the Chair on road maintenance Mr Sterritt said that TfL had made the decision to reduce the amount of road maintenance that was done on London's roads. This would not include immediate defects and potholes, which would be maintained.

He stated percentage of the network was in need of repair would increase from 10% to 12.5%. He commented that the 12.5% did not mean roads were 'falling apart' they simply required investment, which TfL was unable to do due to the financial pressures it was under. He added that the priorities the organisation had

set itself focused on walking, cycling and public transport. The Chair asked Mr Phillips if money allocated for bus prioritisation would be affected by the plans for maintaining London's roads. Mr Phillips replied that the money allocated to bus prioritisation was protected and not affected by the policy.

The Chair said that Mr Phillips had mentioned about seven area reviews they were looking into that could see potential growth and demand for public transport. He asked how TfL was deciding on which areas to target. Mr Phillips replied that the organisation was reviewing up to seven areas. He said that a number of factors were being considered, though chief among them was where there was likely to be a growth in population and an increase in housing. Mr Phillips stated that TfL were in close liaison with the boroughs, and if one had a particularly good idea they would broaden the area review to cover that. He commented that due to the amount of data that they had available, they were able to get a clear picture of where peaks in demand were coming from and how best that could be optimised.

A member asked what TfL knew about the people that were leaving the bus network. Mr Phillips replied that it was a difficult question to answer as it was hard to find those passengers. He stated that TfL published their Travel in London report each year which provided details of what the transport situation was like. In the latest edition, the report found that trip rates were reducing across most modes, including travel by bus. There were a number of factors why that was likely to be, such as an improvement in the economy, as bus users tended to come from lower income groups.

Mr Phillips said that commuter journey levels have remained consistent for some time, though what was driving the fall in trips was the numbers of discretionary travel trips. He commented that it was an underlying factor that had been present since the 2000s. Mr Phillips stated that journey time was incredibly important to passengers, which was reflected in the falls in bus speeds and the number of people leaving the network. He added that the numbers of modal shift were not large enough to account for the numbers of people leaving the bus network, though there would be some people making that switch.

A member asked how the information they had received from the consultation into the central London bus changes was being used to inform their thinking. He also asked if there was anything London TravelWatch could do to inform TfL about the wants and needs of bus passengers. Mr Phillips replied that they would be very grateful to receive any information from London TravelWatch about passengers, especially if they could use that to try and encourage more people onto the network.

With regards to the first question, he stated that quite a few changes to routes had been made following passenger feedback during the consultation period. In terms of going forward, TfL would be looking at the journey time metric to see how that had changed and give another presentation on this at a later date. He said it will be interesting to hear how passengers find the changes once they begun to use them.

In response to a question from the Chair about the best practice from other countries, Mr Phillips said that a lot of cities were struggling with providing a fast and reliable bus service due to the increased drive to pursue sustainable modes of travel. Some cities had noticed this and were trying to focus more of their efforts

on improving bus services. New York had an objective to increase bus speeds by 10% due their decline in use and Dublin was looking at a similar policy. Lisbon had recently seen a rebound in the usage of their buses, though this followed a large reduction of 25% of their bus network.

The Director, Policy and Investigation asked what mechanism TfL had to reverse a change to a bus route if it was found to cause a negative effect on the service. One particular example he was concerned with was the 205 route. He remarked that no Equality Impact Assessment (EQI) had been done for the change and it would cause problems for people travelling between the north line stations of central London. The Director commented that it should be reviewed again as it would make journeys for passengers a lot worse.

Mr Phillips replied that he could not comment on the specific case of the 205. He said that there was a financial directive for the change which had to be met. However, he commented that TfL would be listening to all feedback from the changes including from users and passenger groups such as London TravelWatch. Due to the scale of the changes, TfL would allow time for people to become accustomed to them and review the situation in 12 to 18 months. On the specific case of the 205 he would go back to check how the process had been carried out.

A member stated that earlier in the year she had been in Perth, Australia where in the centre of town there were four bus routes which were entirely free to use. She asked if TfL had considered doing anything as radical to encourage people to use the bus. Mr Phillips said that he was not aware of the model and in the current financial climate it was be a hard thing to sell to the financial director. He commented that a free trial could be adopted prior to the expansion to ULEZ so people could try out the local bus routes before deciding on whether they needed to replace their car.

Another member asked whether there was a particular group of people that was leaving the bus network. Mr Phillips replied that TfL had hard statistical evidence on users of their buses. What this showed was that there were fewer fare payers on the network and that they were losing revenue naturally through the change in demographics.

The member asked for more detail on the Euro 6 emission standards and whether this was likely to remain in place once the UK left the European Union. Mr Phillips replied that they were retrofitting vehicles to comply with the standard and to help improve air quality. With regards to Brexit, he said that he was unsure though saw no reason why the UK would abandon the standard.

A member asked how technology could be used to improve road optimisation. Mr Phillips replied that TfL already had data in terms of knowing how busy a bus was as well as how long it would take to complete the route rather than what was said on the timetable. He suggested this information could be shared with passengers via their Journey Planner on TfL's website so that people had real time information which they could use to plan their journeys better. The Chair commented that as a wheelchair user knowing if there was enough space on the next bus would be incredibly useful.

The Chair asked what was the current situation with Hammersmith Bridge. As a local resident, he had noticed increased traffic around Richmond, poorer air quality and changes to bus services which had not been received well by locals. Mr Sterritt stated that the bridge was owned by Hammersmith and Fulham Council, not TfL. However, TfL had been doing regular safety assessments on the bridge and in April they found a hairline fracture in some of the cast iron. This was an immediate safety concern and the bridge was closed and will remain closed for the foreseeable future.

Mr Sterritt stated that since the closure TfL had been working closely with Hammersmith and Fulham Council and TfL had agreed to manage the delivery of the project. He added that by the summer they hoped to be in a position to agree a solution. This could range from making the bridge only useable for pedestrians and cyclists to having double decker buses back in operation over it. The cost for these sets of options would also vary depending on how much work needed to be done in order to take the maximum load.

The Chief Executive commented that she understood the importance of cost to the project but also suggested that the impact on air quality was extremely important. Mr Sterritt replied that there had been meetings with the Deputy Mayor for Transport about the situation and everyone was in agreement that the bridge had to be reopened. He added that as the structure was a Grade 2 listed building there was no quick fix in order to resolve the problem.

Mr Phillips said that from a bus network perspective the closure of Hammersmith Bridge had been a surprise which TfL had had to act on quickly. Due to the speed of implementing new routes these may not have been introduced in the most effective way as possible. However, there was now an opportunity to review the situation to ensure that the routes that were in place made sense. The Chair commented that an example of this was the 190 that travels between Hammersmith and Richmond. Although it did not go near the bridge, since its closure journeys were taking 50 minutes to 1 hour whereas before trips would take between 20 to 25 minutes.

A member asked if there were other bridges of a similar age and construction that could end up in a similar situation to Hammersmith Bridge. Mr Sterritt explained that at present London received no money from the Department for Transport (DfT) for maintaining roads, despite everywhere else in England being granted funding. Therefore, the backlog of maintenance for TfL was going up as they simply did not have the budget to complete works on the bridges when degradation was found. He added that London councils were also in a difficult situation as they did not have the revenue streams available to them that TfL had, and were extremely restricted on finance.

Mr Sterritt explained that the Hammersmith Bridge situation occurred because there was not enough money to invest in maintaining infrastructure. He stated that a number of other bridges were in need of works, some which were older and some newer than Hammersmith Bridge, and that all bridges generally were suffering from underinvestment. He suggested that the problems at Hammersmith could be a foreboding of things to come if the current policy of maintaining London's roads was not changed.

The member asked whether TfL had done an economic impact assessment for the closure of Hammersmith Bridge. Mr Sterritt replied that TfL and the DfT were doing some joint work on the economic benefits of highway maintenance which was slowing taking shape. However, he was unsure whether people would take notice of its findings.

The Chair asked John Trayner, Managing Director of Go-Ahead London for his comments on the bus changes from an operator's perspective. Mr Trayner replied that he generally agreed with what Mr Phillips had outlined in his presentation, though not every detail. He remarked that there had been an incident on Friday that had brought west London to a standstill. The A4 road had been closed for three hours following an accident which had a knock on effect of leaving his buses stranded on Putney Bridge which did not move for four hours. He stated that experiences such as these would only put people off of travelling by bus.

Mr Trayner said that his experience as an operator had taught him that when the network was changed it confused the public, leading them to take different travel options which were not good for his company or for TfL. People under 30 had grown accustomed to using apps such as Uber to get around despite them being a much worse use of road space which was not sustainable.

Mr Trayner stated that what he wanted from TfL was to be given a reliable time schedule. He commented that having such a schedule on a normal day would allow him to deliver 98% of services. However, the current situation made it very difficult to have a normal day running to schedule. He remarked that Go-Ahead also operated buses in Singapore where you could match traffic and road conditions to what the schedule could provide, which was the right approach.

Mr Trayner concluded by saying that at present more people used their cars on Sunday. This meant that despite there being less frequent bus services journeys were actually less reliable than elsewhere in the week. He suggested that if they could create a schedule that could be trusted by passengers to get them to their destination at the correct time this would help provide a service that people could rely on.

A member asked Mr Phillips whether they had considered communicating the environmental benefits of using the bus as a mode of transport. She remarked that young people were increasingly interested in sustainability and wanted to be informed to make better decisions. Therefore, such an age group may consider a lengthier bus ride over other modes if it was proved to be a more sustainable form of travel. Mr Phillips replied that he did not believe TfL made enough of marketing the environmental benefits of using the bus and that to do so would be a good way of encouraging people with those concerns onto the network.

The Senior Policy Officer thanked Mr Phillips for his presentation though stated that similar reassurances had been made in the past with regards to buses which had not materialised in improving the numbers of people using them. He stated that it was within TfL's power to extend bus lane hours to include Sunday and extend the operational hours of red routes and the congestion charge. Mr Phillips replied that TfL wanted to improve conditions for buses though this had to coincide with improving the network for walking and cycling. He added that they would be feeding back to the Mayor in a few months to consider the potential of making better use of bus prioritisation tools as the Senior Policy Officer had outlined.

The Chair thanked all speakers present for their time.

7 Casework Q4 performance report (PC164)

A member asked if the Board could be provided with more up-to-date information than the previous quarter. She also asked if London TravelWatch could reduce the number of complaints it received. The Chief Executive commented that it was generally considered a good thing if the organisation was receiving more complaints as it showed that people were able to find them.

The Casework Manager replied that complaints would reduce naturally now that the Rail Ombudsman had taken over the appeal process for most of the operators. She said that many of the complainants were asking London TravelWatch why the process was taking so long and were suggesting to them that the reason the new system had been put in place was to encourage them not to appeal. The Casework Manager added that the reason the information was reported in quarters was because that this roughly coincided with when the Policy Committee meetings were spaced out through the year. She added that she also had to have a cut off date to collate the data and write the report.

Another member remarked that a number of complainants had raised issues around noise levels of the tube network. She said that at Tottenham Hale station she regularly had issue with the sound made by the vehicles which seemed way above a safe decibel limit. The member suggested that it could be a potential joint piece of work that the organisation could do with hearing loss organisations. Another member agreed that the sound levels at some stations were unbearably loud.

8 National Rail Q3 performance report (PC165)

The National Rail Q4 performance report was noted by the Committee. The Senior Policy Officer asked members if they had any questions to let him know.

9 TfL Q4 performance report (PC166)

There was not enough time to provide the Committee with a verbal update on the TfL Q4 performance report. The Senior Policy Officer asked members if they had any questions to let him know.

10 Any other business

There was no other business.

11 Resolution to move into confidential session

The meeting resolved, under section 15(b) of schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, that by reason of the confidential nature of the next following item/s, that it was desirable in the public interest that the public should be excluded from the meeting.

In confidential session, members reviewed financial or reputational risks posed by the meeting.