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| Policy Committee  16.06.15 |  | |
| **Minutes** | Agenda item: 5  Drafted: 13.04.15 |  |

**Minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 24 February 2015 at 15 Westferry Circus, Canary Wharf, London E14 4HD**

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**Present**

Members

Chris Brown, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke, Abdikafi Rage, John Stewart (Chair), Ruth Thompson

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger Director, Policy & Investigation

Janet Cooke Chief Executive

Richard Freeston-Clough Communications Officer

Rob Gifford Safety Adviser

Sharon Malley Executive Assistant

Robert Nichols Policy Officer

Vincent Stops Policy Officer

**Minutes**

1. Chair’s introduction and pre-meeting announcements

The acting Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and made standard safety announcements. He thanked Transport for London for allowing London TravelWatch to make use of its meeting room.

1. Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

1. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Policy committee on 18 November 2014 were agreed subject to amending the word “reduced” to “relaxed” in the fourth line on the final paragraph of page 3.

1. Matters arising (PC042)

Members noted that the National Rail website still did not give prominence to wording that highlighted that Oyster fares might be cheaper than National Rail ones. The Chief Executive said that the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) would need support from all its members before making changes to the website and this was a complicated process and made agreement to changes difficult and time consuming. The Director, Policy and Investigation, had raised this with ATOC on several occasions but the National Rail Enquiries Service website existed to promote the rail network and the sale of tickets via the site.

Members noted that the Department for Transport (DfT) had decided not to conduct a full cost-benefit analysis that looked at data from both before and after devolution of the West Anglia route to assess the impact of the changes, which was regrettable. Transport for London (TfL) intended to conduct detailed analysis of the impact of the devolution but this would only look at data following the change and would not be fully independent. It was noted that this may be worth raising with a future Transport Minister following the general election as devolution was so important to London.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that obtaining more detailed data on right time arrivals to include in the National Rail performance report was proving difficult but officers were continuing to investigate whether it would be possible.

On the issue of the January 2015 TfL fare changes, the Director, Policy and Investigation, said that TfL would reinstate an off-peak cap for people who had made off-peak journeys within zones 1-4 or 1-6[[1]](#footnote-1). While this was obviously welcome for the individuals who benefitted, it did not aid the simplification of the fares structure.

1. Key activities (PC050)

Members noted how impressed they had been by the management and operation of Victoria Coach Station, which they had visited previously. The Chief Executive said this would be fed back to TfL and also that the coach station was included in the forthcoming London TravelWatch interchange report as an example of good practice.

The Policy Officer said that he and colleagues were due to meet TfL the day after the meeting to discuss accessibility of the Central line platforms following the proposed redevelopment works. He said that London TravelWatch would withdraw its objection to the proposals if the platform were made accessible. The cost of including accessibility had reduced considerably and officers were hopeful that TfL would review its position.

Members noted that the Policy Officer had made good progress with clearing advertising boards from footways and welcomed his work on this with TfL board member Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson.

In response to a question, the Director, Policy and Investigation, said he had met Peter Bradley, TfL’s head of consultation, and discussed changes to TfL bus tendering processes and had also discussed possible changes to some local bus routes. It was noted that this informal discussion with London TravelWatch prior to public consultation on bus route changes should now be the norm.

1. London Underground ticket office closures (PC051)

The Policy Officer presented a report on activities relating to the closure of London Underground ticket offices since the previous meeting. He had now carried out analysis of the responses to the London TravelWatch survey and was trying to pick out station-specific information and to capture any trends from the closed-field responses.

Following analysis, he was recommending a change to a recommendation concerning Gateway stations. He no longer thought that Oxford Circus should be classified as a Gateway as the majority of visitors to this station would have already accessed the transport network and obtained tickets. Stratford International, on the other hand, say high levels of passenger numbers accessing the network for the first time and may be more worthy of Gateway status. Brixton station should be classified as a Destination station as it had much higher passenger numbers than other Metro stations and there was a high level of interchange from the tube to bus and Network Rail services.

The Policy Officer said that work on implementing the proposals was now underway and three ticket offices had now been closed. London TravelWatch’s focus now should be on the need for flexibility, especially in relation to physical changes to concourses and booking halls. Unfortunately there was no statutory obligation on TfL to consult London TravelWatch prior to removing ticket office space from passenger use, unlike the position for National Rail operators.

The Policy Officer said London TravelWatch had offered to be involved in the design of new ticket machines, to give the passenger perspective, but had not been involved in the design of the new machines at Cannon Street station.

The Policy Officer said he had not yet been told how the statutory duty to consult London TravelWatch about the closure of the ticket offices in the former Silverlink stations would be discharged. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the DfT was aware of TfL’s obligation to consult.

Members agreed with the Policy Officer’s comments about the classification of Brixton station. They noted that Brixton station’s escalator was currently being refurbished and this was leading to long queues outside the station and wondered whether the works to the ticket office should be delayed until after the escalator was back in service.

Members noted that the timetable for the station closures was tight with many scheduled to take place very soon. It was agreed that London TravelWatch should write to TfL setting out the points raised in section 4 of the report, with copies sent to relevant individuals at the DfT and on the Transport Committee.

**Action: Policy Officer**

1. Performance of the Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern franchises (PC052)

The Director, Policy and Investigation, presented a report on the recent poor performance of the Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern franchises in the London area. He said that the comparison period in the report, for October to December 2013, had seen very severe weather have a considerable detrimental impact on train performance. This year there had been no adverse weather to affect the running of the railway yet performance measures were just as bad as last year.

Much of the problem seemed to be caused by the Thameslink upgrade works as parts of the network that were not affected by the upgrade had significantly better performance results that were in line with “normal” for the period. The causes for the poor performance on the three affected franchises were entirely within the operators’ control so it was very disappointing that passengers were experiencing such poor service.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said London TravelWatch had been right to call for improved compensation for passengers and to highlight poor performance by operators. It was important to be aware that the industry tended to view success through the engineering outcomes and did not always appear to take the passenger experience into consideration. A recent Thameslink stakeholder board had been self-congratulatory about the success of the engineering aspect of the works and London TravelWatch had needed to highlight the poor experience for passengers. The Director, Policy and Investigation, hoped that the frequency of the Thameslink stakeholder board meetings would increase and would focus more in future on performance.

He said that there were likely to be weekly timetable revisions on Southern routes into London Bridge station and there was likely to be significant reduction in capacity on metro services in some peak periods. The Forest Hill corridor had seen a 50% reduction in service frequency and there had been no indication that those services would be reinstated in the short term.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that TfL had introduced a number of additional bus services in affected areas but had withdrawn one almost immediately through lack of use, which might have been caused by a lack of information about it for passengers.

Passengers were still trying to work out their best routes into central London and were making travel decisions that did not necessarily align with the modelled expectations. Southeastern’s management of passengers at Lewisham station had been unenthusiastic and it was not difficult to see why passengers were dissatisfied.

Members noted that the Right Time Arrival figures were for arrivals across the whole day, which suggested that figures for the bulk of passengers would be even worse because of increased problems during peak periods. They noted that the figures did not make reference to the trains that had been removed from the timetable. Compensation for passengers remained a priority.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that he had held some discussion with the Office of Rail Regulation on performance and the need for them to provide the train operators with the infrastructure to operate on.

The Chief Executive remained concerned that the industry was not fully aware of the poor passenger experience on the ground. There was a level of denial about the impacts of the disruption and it needed to be better understood by senior individuals in the industry.

The Policy Officer said that London TravelWatch was focused on increasing industry understanding of the level of the problems faced by passengers. Meetings with the ORR had been productive and the DfT was seeking London TravelWatch’s feedback from casework and experience. There was some frustration from the ORR and the DfT that they were not able to hold the train operators to account and a sense that the train operators were still in denial about the extent of the problem.

Members recognised the knock-on effects of the Thameslink works on other routes, such as the Wimbledon loop, where there may be some transfer of passengers from London Bridge services to Blackfriars services and re-routeing of other services via Tulse Hill and Streatham. Areas such as New Cross were also being affected.

The underlying issues causing the disruption were deep-rooted and would take a long time to resolve. There were problems of management capacity at some train operators and there were inadequate incentives in place for operators to regard performance as the top priority; the incentives prioritised the completion of London Bridge station works.

It was agreed that London TravelWatch would seek to encourage local newspapers to campaign on this issue in order to highlight the need for better compensation for passengers and better communications from train operators.

**Action: Communications Officer**

The recommendations in the report were agreed, subject to stressing the need for robustness in relation to the improvement of resilience and reliability of train services. In addition, it was agreed that London TravelWatch should call for the reinstatement of lost services as soon as possible.

**Action: Director, Policy and Investigation**

1. “Mind the Gap” RSSB guide to platform safety

The Safety Adviser reported to members on the Rail Safety and Standards Board’s newly published guide to passenger safety at the platform edge. He said that around 30% of gaps between trains and platforms conformed to national guidance on height, around 22% conformed laterally and around 7% conformed to both height and lateral gap guidelines. It was not possible to know whether the 7% figure was improving or whether it was getting worse.

Following the work done to prevent trains passing through red signals, the largest number of passenger fatalities on the railway was now caused by accidents between the platform and train. The industry was beginning to recognise this challenge.

The Safety Adviser said that the RSSB strategy identified different problems associated with boarding and alighting and trends that varied according to the gender of the passenger, the weather, the time of year, the peak or off-peak time of day and so on.

The RSSB guide had established a task group, with which London TravelWatch would have a small involvement, with the aim of securing implementation of the findings of the guide.

The Safety Adviser said that there would be several workstreams looking at specific aspects of the problem, including intelligence gathering, analysis of the best place for trains to stop at platforms, analysis of the best gap distances at platforms and the impacts on performance and capacity. In the short term there would be new posters at stations advising passengers on safe behaviour.

Members noted that the audience for the guide should be the rail industry rather than individual passengers as the industry needed to recognise the problem. It would not be acceptable for the industry to place all the responsibility for passenger safety onto passengers themselves.

Members noted that the existence of gaps was enough in some cases to deter people from using the railway at all, which meant that solving the problem would increase accessibility generally as well as improving safety.

Members noted that the rail industry might benefit from advice from behavioural change specialist in relation to encouraging safer behaviour from passengers. It would also be useful if Network Rail could signpost more clearly the most problematic gaps at particular stations.

The Safety Adviser said he would raise these issues within the implementation group and would be happy to report back to a future meeting if necessary.

1. Transport for London performance report (PC053)

The Policy Officer presented a report on the performance of Transport for London for the period July to September 2014.

He said that Dial a Ride had a new performance measure relating to the percentage of trip requests that were delivered, which may be a useful measure to report on in future.

The Policy Officer said he wanted to focus on the performance of streets, as journey time reliability was beginning to suffer following a rise in levels of traffic congestion. He was keen to see what TfL proposed to do about increasing congestion and slower journey times beyond simply relaxing the performance targets.

Members noted that increased congestion had a negative impact on bus priority and bus reliability generally. It was important that bus priority be retained. It was agreed that officers would invite representatives from TfL to attend a future meeting to discuss congestion and journey time reliability.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

The Policy Officer said that performance against target for other modes of transport was satisfactory to good, with buses being very good.

Members noted that there was still no way of measuring overcrowding on buses or the short-turning of routes. The Policy Officer said that TfL was making progress on a bus crowding measure but this required the development of sophisticated computer modelling that could accurately gauge where passengers alighted each route. This could be done through looking at onward journeys on Oyster or looking at return bus journeys but was complicated.

On short-turning, there was a performance measure on the number of miles covered but this would not specifically cover whether buses had completed their routes. This could be found from iBus data.

Members noted that Dial a Ride had implemented a new system for membership. The Policy Officer confirmed that London TravelWatch had been consulted about the change, which meant that users how needed to meet some particular mobility criteria in order to make use of the service.

Members agreed to note the report.

1. Casework report (PC054)

The Casework Manager sent apologies as the new casework database system was being installed on the day of the meeting and she was needed in the office to supervise it. The Chief Executive presented the report on transport operators’ performance in relation to casework.

Members welcomed the approaches by train operators to London TravelWatch about implications of changes to their passengers charters in order to gain London TravelWatch’s passenger perspective.

The report was noted.

1. Any other business

There was no other business.

1. 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 discussed the increase in levels of casework and also reviewed financial or reputational risks posed by the meeting.

1. TfL’s policy on the off-peak cap can be found here: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/contactless/what-is-capping> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)