
Minutes

Agenda item: 5
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Minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 26 September 2017

Contents

- 1 **Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements**
- 2 **Apologies for absence**
- 3 **Declarations of interest**
- 4 **Minutes**
- 5 **Matters arising (PC117)**
- 6 **Key activities (PC118)**
- 7 **Changes to the National Rail Passenger Survey**
- 8 **National Rail performance report (PC119)**
- 9 **Transport for London performance report (PC120)**
- 10 **Casework performance report (PC121)**
- 11 **Any other business**
- 12 **Resolution to move into confidential session**

Present

Members

Jackie Ballard, Alan Benson, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke, Abdi Osman, John Stewart (Chair)
Arthur Leathley (Chair designate)

In attendance

Ian Wright Head of Insight, Transport Focus (Item 7)

Secretariat

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Keletha Barrett | Policy Officer |
| Tim Bellenger | Director, Policy & Investigation |
| John Cartledge | Safety Adviser |
| Janet Cooke | Chief Executive |
| Richard Freeston-Clough | Communications Officer |
| Sharon Malley | Executive Assistant |

Minutes

1 **Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements**

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

2 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in addition to the standing declarations available on London TravelWatch's website.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the Policy committee of 14 March 2017 were agreed and signed as a correct record. The minutes of the Policy committee of 20 June 2017 were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to amending "Camden" to "Camden Town underground station" on page 3.

5 Matters arising (PC117)

Members asked for copies of the customer satisfaction questionnaire. The Chief Executive said it was available online but would be reported in detail at the next Governance committee.

Action: Executive Assistant

Members noted that they continued to support the development of Crossrail 2. The Chief Executive said it would be challenging for London to provide funding for this project in advance, as the government was now seeking. This may need to be considered again at a future meeting.

Members discussed the need for rail performance measures to be aligned with the expectations of passengers, in particular in relation to the late cancellation or diversion of services. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the industry was reviewing performance measures overall and passenger expectations would form part of this. The Chief Executive said that the Office of Rail and Road would be invited to attend the next Policy committee meeting and this issue could be raised then.

Action: Executive Assistant

The Chair said that the future of the Croyley rail link seemed precarious as there was no agreement on funding. This was disappointing.

6 Key activities (PC118)

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the meeting he had attended with the South Eastern franchise review group had been carried out by the Department for Transport Projects Authority. It had looked at how the franchise process had been handled including the approach to passenger interests and its overall value for money.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, updated members on the bus occupant safety research project. He said that the project was being carried out in association with Loughborough University and bus operators. London TravelWatch had applied for a grant from the Road Safety Trust to fund the project, which would research the safety of bus occupants in transit. The Chief Executive said that London TravelWatch would not usually prioritise road safety work as this area was in the remit of many other organisations. However, the safety of bus users within buses had never been the subject of research so was an area to which London TravelWatch could usefully contribute.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, updated members on the feedback from the August engineering works and associated closures at Waterloo station. He said that there had been a derailment that was being investigated by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch and some works had overrun. The overrun had led to one day of diversions to Blackfriars station of services that had been intended to use Waterloo International for the duration of the Thameslink blockade of London Bridge, that had immediately followed on from the Waterloo works.

The passenger information systems about the Waterloo works had worked well and there had been a high awareness among passengers. Additional bus services had been operated, including a route requested by London TravelWatch.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said he had attended a workshop on tram ticketing as part of a proposal to withdraw ticket machines at tram stops and make trams cashless. This was likely to raise some of the same concerns that were identified when cash was removed from buses, which would be reflected in London TravelWatch's response to the consultation.

Members discussed progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the Gibb review of Southern performance. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said most of the recommendations were being actively pursued by the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Govia Thameslink Railway. Some appeared not be making progress, such as simplification of ticketing to Brighton and the electrification of the Uckfield line, which was disappointing. This issue would be considered again in the new year, when potential improvements to performance could be measured.

Action: Executive Assistant

It was agreed that the issue of ticket simplification overall should be considered at a future meeting, with contributions from Transport for London and Network Rail.

Action: Executive Assistant

7 Changes to the National Rail Passenger Survey

The Chair welcomed Ian Wright, Head of Insight at Transport Focus, to the meeting. Mr Wright gave a presentation on recent changes to Transport Focus's National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS).

Mr Wright said that the changes followed reviews and consultations over a two-year period and had been developed in conjunction with stakeholder groups. A key change was the reduction in length of the questionnaire from 12 to eight pages.

The new survey retained the section on attributes and then had two pages of rotated questions on areas such as station access and ticketing. The survey could now be completed online.

A significant change was that the survey now asked for responses in relation to the passenger's general experience of the journey rather than asking only about the most recent journey.

Mr Wright said that the results of the Spring 2017 survey were consistent with previous periods. There were some increases in satisfaction relating to punctuality and value for money and some changes between operators, but these were consistent with external factors such as recorded punctuality. The ability to respond online did not appear to have had a notable impact on outcomes.

Members said that London TravelWatch had a particular interest in smaller stations, which had less than one million passenger entrances and exits per year. There were many such stations in the London rail area but the NRPS was not well designed to deal with them. However, distributing questionnaires on trains in addition to handing out at stations should help capture the views of users of smaller stations.

Members asked what Transport Focus expected the split between online and paper responses to be. Mr Wright said the position would develop organically. It was useful to provide the online option but the paper option would be retained alongside as online-only responses would not currently be representative of all passengers.

Mr Wright said that the online option was accessed via a link that was sent to passengers who had been recruited by interviewers. As long as the interviewer had a phone signal, the passenger could receive the link to the survey while on the journey. Mr Wright said that ideally the survey would be reduced to a maximum of around two pages but it was difficult because the format of the survey was imbedded in the industry. He was also looking at developing a continuous survey option, which would operate between the current main twice-yearly survey periods. Mr Wright said that around 55,000 to 60,000 interviews per year were carried out for the NRPS and that train operators carried out a similar number of interviews privately. It would be helpful to be able to combine this data in some way in the future.

The Chief Executive noted that train operators had a strong focus on improving their satisfaction scores in the NRPS.

Members noted that many online providers now routinely sought feedback from users, which could lead to 'consultation fatigue' among respondents. Mr Wright agreed and said that face-to-face recruitment, while expensive, did cut through some of those problems.

Mr Wright said that the survey was good at unpicking views at the negative end of the spectrum as it was able to capture the nuance of views. However, most journeys were not viewed negatively.

Members asked whether Transport Focus had considered other formats, such as very quick face-to-face surveys. Mr Wright said this had been considered but

recruitment was a big cost in face-to-face interviewing so recruiting respondents but only asking a small number of questions would be very expensive. Other avenues such as apps or online questionnaires would probably be better for short interviews.

Members asked whether the NRPS online survey was optimised for mobiles. Mr Wright said it was, and that it was possible to analyse where people dropped out from completing the survey so it could be tweaked to encourage completion. Online take-up had been lower than expected, with paper returns remaining an important part of the survey.

Members thanked Mr Wright for his informative presentation.

8 National Rail performance report (PC119)

The Policy Officer (KB) presented a report on the performance of the National Rail network for the period April to June 2017. She said performance had improved on the same quarter in the previous year, possibly because there had been less severe weather in this period and also fewer engineering works. London Overground had the best public performance measure (PPM) score, with Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) having the worst PPM. However, GTR had improved on the same quarter last year, as it had experienced less industrial action. The operator with the biggest decline in performance was London Midland.

TfL Rail had the best Right Time Arrival performance, with GTR having the worst Right Time Arrival performance.

Heathrow Express had the best satisfaction scores in the NRPS while Southern Rail had the lowest.

Members asked whether GTR was reported as a single operator or by its component franchises. The Policy Officer (KB) said that it depended on the data available. Peak performance could only be reported under the single GTR operator but all-trains performance was reported under the individual franchises.

Members said that Right Time Arrival data was more useful in the context of suburban metro rail than PPM and so should be used where possible. The Policy Officer (KB) said that Right Time Arrival data was not currently as comprehensive as the PPM, for example it did not separate peak performance from overall performance. However, this may change and the presentation of the data would remain under review.

Members asked whether more profile should be given to the data showing how many passengers were being carried on trains in excess of capacity (PIXC). The Safety Adviser noted that trains could be operating within capacity but passengers were still standing. For the purposes of PIXC data, passengers were allowed to stand for journeys of 20 minutes or less. In the context of a suburban metro rail service, the PIXC data may not reflect the passenger experience. The Director, Policy and Investigation, noted that London passengers recorded lower NRPS satisfaction scores than passengers in most other areas.

Members made several suggestions for amendments to the report, including that the NRPS trust figures should be included alongside the satisfaction scores.

9 Transport for London performance report (PC120)

Members welcomed the response provided by Transport for London to performance concerns related to journey time reliability.

Members noted that some bus routes were performing poorly and discussed whether it would be valuable to publish tables showing bus performance by route over time. It would be important to ensure that reasons for performance reductions were stated but the information could be useful for bus users.

Members made suggestions about the presentation of the data in the report, including the graphs showing quarterly data, as it was not always easy to compare different periods and see trends.

Members noted that the narrative for Dial-a-Ride performance should refer to people who wanted to use the service but were unable to. It received high satisfaction scores from users but this did not show the whole picture as there were also high levels of complaints. The Chief Executive said changes to the wording about Dial-a-Ride performance had been on hold pending TfL's review of the service. In the meantime, the wording would be looked at to ensure it did not imply support for Dial-a-Ride's current performance.

Action: Policy Officer (KB)

10 Casework performance report (PC121)

Members welcomed the data in the Casework performance report, which showed that the casework team was meeting its targets in the majority of cases and that those which took longer to resolve led to good outcomes for passengers.

The Chief Executive said that she had discussed the TfL website with senior officers at TfL, who agreed that it was not always straightforward for passengers to make complaints via the website. There was some recognition at TfL of the need for improvement.

11 Any other business

There was no other business.

12 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 and considered London TravelWatch research on season tickets and changes to the consumer landscape.