

LTUC response to the mayor's Draft Children and Young People Strategy "Towards a child-friendly London"

The Committee welcomes the development of the Children and Young People's strategy and believes its four key goals provide appropriate strategic direction. The Committee particularly looks forward to working with Transport for London in developing the Children and Young People's Action Plan.

While there are many overlaps, the travel needs of young people differ from those of adults. LTUC is pleased to see that the strategy recognises this fact. The Committee is also aware that young people do not have a strong voice in the decision-making processes relating to transport policy in London. This latter, as well as LTUC's desire to strengthen relations with its young constituents, spurred the Committee to host the youth event, *Young, Free and Mobile*, at the GLA's City Hall in April this year. The outcome of this event has contributed significantly to this response. The full *Young, Free and Mobile* report is available at LTUC's website: http://www.ltuc.org.uk/get_document.php?id=836

1. Fares and concessions

The Mayor's strategy rightly focuses on tackling child poverty and income inequality. To tackle this problem, the Committee believes concessions for young people will inevitably play a major role, but they can only be part of the solution.

At LTUC's *Young, Free and Mobile* event last April, young people put forward their views about London's transport system and there was no doubt that the issue of fares was regarded by most young participants as the most important issue. Young people attending the event raised the following points:

- Young people can not understand why they are not eligible for free transport if they are in full time education with no or minimal income. Indeed, the child poverty rate in Inner London is 48%, compared to 26% in Outer London and 30% nationally. Some young people also made the point that disabled people and people aged 60 years and over are eligible for the Freedom Pass and free travel, but many of these people are not on low incomes. Many young people thought that the long-term goal should be to move towards free travel for young people in full time education.
- Child bus fares are not valid between 2200h and 0430h. While young people can get around this by purchasing bus saver tickets in advance, young people unfamiliar with the system may be caught out. Young people felt that in principle, child fares should apply at all times. They also felt the moral issue of whether a young person under 16 years should be allowed to travel at night after 10pm was one for their parents and guardians, not the transport providers and regulators.

Rail fares

While setting fares for heavy rail does not come within TfL's remit, LTUC would like to draw the Mayor's attention to the following issues relating to rail fares, relevant to young people in London. LTUC hopes that TfL will be able to persuade and work with the SRA to address the following issues:

- For rail travel, 16-25 year olds and mature students can purchase an annual Young Persons Railcard for £18, which provides discounts of 33% on rail tickets (off-peak and advance purchase). Some young people at *Young, Free and Mobile* felt that the initial outlay of £18 for a railcard is prohibitively high.
- 16 and 17 year olds in full time education must pay full fare when travelling to and from their place of education, whereas holders of the New Deal Railcard are in work and receive a reduction.

- In Greater London 16 and 17 year olds have reduced-rate Underground and bus fares, but not National Rail fares. In some other areas, they receive local authority fares support. There ought to be a national scheme for discounted (perhaps half-rate) rail travel for education-related journeys until the end of the final school year.

The Committee acknowledges the significant concessions that are currently available to young people travelling on London's public transport and welcomes the Mayor's proposal, announced last September, to introduce 50% discounts for under-18s on the bus and tube. The Committee also welcomes the fact that this strategy will require TfL to examine further measures to reduce the cost barriers to young Londoner's access to transport in the capital, including: a continued freeze on child fares; free fares for all children of primary school age and under; and a gradual rising of the age limit at which children cease to qualify for child fares.

However, LTUC is aware of the large funding gap that TfL currently faces and is concerned that funds to maintain or expand child concessions will not be available. Other areas of transport policy will be competing for a portion of the same pot of money and LTUC appreciates that expenditure will depend on resources available, public policy priorities and value for money considerations.

Concessions can be an expensive and non-sustainable policy measure, so it is necessary to target funds on those in most need i.e. people with very low incomes. This should equally apply to all groups of society, including pensioners, the unemployed, the disabled and young people. However, the Committee does appreciate that it is sometimes more cost effective, due to high administration costs, to provide concessions to an entire sector of society (e.g. pensioners) rather than focussing on the low income portion of that sector.

Young people that are unable to afford fares are more likely to opt for walking, cycling or the bus, rather than the rail or tube. There should be more emphasis on promoting cycling and walking for young people (and adults) from the affordability angle, as well as to realise health and environmental benefits.

2. Accessibility

The Government and TfL have made considerable progress in introducing measures to improve the accessibility of transport for disabled transport users, although there is still along way to go. In relation to this particular strategy, the differences between adult disabled people and young children with disabilities need to be identified and catered for. Still it must be stressed that many policy measures which make travelling easier for the mobility impaired, actually improve access for all. In addition, closer attention should to be paid to the needs of young people with hidden disabilities.

3. Safety and security

The Committee welcomes the Mayor's proposals to improve safety and security for young people on public transport, but more emphasis should be placed on streets and roads because young people are more likely to travel by foot, bike or bus, than travel by rail or Tube. Safety and security are major concerns for both adults and young people but both groups are affected differently, and policy measures targeted at young people will need to reflect this.

Many young people do not cycle or walk as their parents are often (rightly) fearful that the streets are threatening or too dangerous due to high traffic speeds or volumes. Personal security is also a concern for parents; but we note that there is often a significant difference between actual and perceived levels of crime. As a result, parents prohibit their children from walking and cycling and young people become dependent on adults that drive. This contributes to congestion, can delay a young person's development of independence and can influence transport choices in later adult life.

There is no doubt that much more could be done to make streets and roads safer, to reduce levels of street-crime and to improve peoples' perceptions of the security of the street environment. This needs to be continually emphasised and should be prioritised. More

pedestrian-friendly crossings, better lighting and 20mph homezones are examples of simple, cost-effective measures that have been shown to significantly improve the safety and security of the street environment and these measures can considerably reduce the fear of crime and traffic. Such measures would not only help reduce accidents and crime but would give children and parents more confidence to use the streets for walking and cycling. For example, schools, bus stops, stations and public places frequented by young people, all need to be provided with surface road crossings located in the immediate vicinity, not some distance down the road.

The proposals to increase cycle training and to set up low-cost cycle helmet purchase schemes are certainly welcome. But while safety awareness is important, a safer environment is essential as prevention is better than cure. Efforts to promote cycling and walking need to be targeted not only on potential pedestrians and cyclists, but also transport professionals, local authorities and other stakeholders involved in relevant decision-making processes. The promotion of walking and cycling also needs to involve the allocation of sufficient funds to improve facilities and the street/road environment.

One of the issues arising from the *Young, Free and Mobile* event was that much more could be done to encourage young people to report crime and anti-social behaviour incidents. The young participants came up with plenty of ideas to make it easier for young people to report incidents and crime: http://www.ltuc.org.uk/get_document.php?id=834

While anti-social behaviour and incivilities are not as serious as crimes such as say, assault and robbery, their occurrence is extremely common on public transport in some areas. Anti-social behaviour is therefore a major concern for both adults and young people. The Government has recently stepped up efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour and various policy measures are being introduced. However, there is often a difference in opinion between adults and young people, and within these groups, as to what is and what is not socially acceptable behaviour. This issue was highlighted at LTUC's *Young Free and Mobile* event and several members of the Committee believe that this area needs to be looked at more closely (see http://www.ltuc.org.uk/get_document.php?id=830) and that education should play a stronger role in tackling this problem.

4. Education, citizenship and responsibility

Members have suggested that more emphasis needs to be placed on education relating to transport's contribution to society and how transport systems are organised, but also safety and personal security awareness and social responsibility. The latter, often referred to as citizenship or stewardship, should encourage greater goodwill, acceptance and consideration of others. The need for such education applies to all people including adults but such education should begin from a very early age. This may be one means of closing the 'generation gap' mentioned in the previous section.

The London Underground 'Love is...' is an example of a campaign aimed at encouraging behavioural change, that seems to have been well received.

5. Walking and cycling

The Mayor proposes to introduce a programme to provide facilities for cycle parking at school, and at home, as well as cycling information and training, so that all those children and young people who wish to cycle have the confidence to cycle whenever they wish to travel independently. This is certainly a welcome initiative. At LTUC's *Young, Free and Mobile* event, many young people stated that they would like to cycle to school but do not as the roads are not safe, there are no secure parking facilities, teachers do not allow them to use the showers, or cycling is not seen by peers as 'cool'. However, safety was seen to be the most important issue, particularly as parents or guardians played a key role in deciding whether or not to allow their child to cycle or walk to school.

The need for a safer road environment can not be over-stated and this needs to be better incorporated into policy and planning measures relating to walking and cycling. The

Committee notes that this strategy has been linked to the London Plan, but considerable effort will be needed to ensure road safety improvements are actually implemented on the ground. Much will depend on actions taken by the boroughs which are responsible for over 90% of London's roads and whose standards vary widely. LTUC would like to know what action TfL will be taking to encourage boroughs to promote cycling and walking?

The Mayor recently pledged £2m to provide schools with secure cycle parking facilities. This is a very necessary initiative. However, more needs to be done to improve the provision of cycling and walking facilities at locations frequented by young people locations other than schools e.g. parks, shopping malls, leisure/sports centres, cinema complexes.

The strategy could be more specific about the measures it is seeking to introduce. For example, young pedestrians would benefit from wider pavements, slower speeds, traffic calming, homezones, pedestrianised streets, pedestrian-friendly road crossings (on the surface, not under or over the road); safe and secure stations and bus-stops with pedestrian crossings next to the bus-stop or station if it is on a road, and much more emphasis during the planning stage on the walking/cycling aspects of residential developments.

6. Participation in decision-making

The Committee is very aware that young people are not adequately represented in the decision-making process, and commends the Mayor for proposing that young people be involved in decision-making processes that affect them, including those relating to transport and planning. Efforts must ensure that young people of all backgrounds are involved, including for example, those with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities.

As mentioned previously, the Committee has recognised that it needs to better engage with its young constituents which is why LTUC hosted the *Young Free and Mobile* event in April this year. One of the event's workshops focussed on the participation of young people in decision-making processes relating to transport issues (see LTUC's website for a report of the workshop http://www.ltuc.org.uk/view_document.php?id=828).

Ensuring better involvement of young people in decision-making processes must address two major difficulties. The first relates to engaging young people and encouraging their interest, and the second relates to setting up effective mechanisms through which young people can effectively participate or communicate.

The few mechanisms that do currently exist are not without their faults. During the *Young, Free and Mobile* event several young people stated they would like to campaign for transport improvements (e.g. cycling facilities, introduction of a travel plan), but they could not find the right information or did not have an effective mechanism through which to voice their opinions or propose their ideas. Young people complained that teacher-led school forums or school councils were often not effective mechanisms, as they were under-resourced, poorly organised or motivated, restrictive or not independent. Many of the young people attending LTUC's *Young, Free and Mobile* event were heavily reliant on their youth workers for support, but most youth workers were voluntary, unpaid, part-time and over-stretched. LTUC is very interested to see which mechanisms the Mayor will propose to ensure greater involvement of young people.

7. Monitoring and reporting

The Mayor states that he is considering introduction of some or all of the following:

- a) Regular and systematic data analyses on outcomes for children London-wide in order to monitor changes.
- b) Development of indicators for children's well-being
- c) Monitoring the impact on children of all GLA policy-making
- d) A biennial State of London Children Report
- e) Child Impact Assessment – an appraisal model to assess the impact of policy-making on young people

A strategy is far more likely to deliver successfully if challenging but achievable goals are set and if adequate monitoring and assessment provisions are in place. The Committee therefore supports the introduction of all of the above.