

**Rupa Huq MP Parliamentary bus engagement event:
Monday 3rd December 2018
Houses of Parliament Committee Room**

Chair: Rupa Huq MP

Panel:

Geoff Hobbs, Director of Public Service Planning, TfL
Tom Cunnington, Head of Buses Business Development, TfL
Steve Harris, Operations Director, Metroline
Alastair Willis, Head of Commercial, Abellio Bus
Ray Clapson, General Manager, London United
Tim Bellenger, Director of Policy and Investigation, London TravelWatch

Geoff Hobbs began by presenting the context and proposals for the bus service changes.

He stated that there was a need to change the bus network as it can be complex and inefficient. Usage is also falling, especially in central London. Ealing has had a 3% reduction in usage in the last four years, whilst there has been a 7% reduction across London. During this time there had been a reduction of all categories of passengers, especially paying passengers. There have been various reasons for the changes including upgrades to the tube.

Geoff explained that TfL run as many buses as are needed on a corridor at the busiest time then they look at the off-peak services that are the best value for money. Some reduction in vehicle km in central London will be used elsewhere in London

TfL identified opportunities for change, including:

- The Elizabeth line
- Hopper fare
- Operational efficiencies
- Healthy Streets approach
- Private hire vehicles slowing speeds (the number of licenses for private hire vehicles has risen 40% in four years)
- More homeworking

Tom Cunnington explained that TfL were making improvements to bus services. There were improvements to air quality due to the Low Emissions Bus Zones on Chiswick High Road and the Uxbridge Road, along with the retro fitting of buses. There was also bus safety work, with a Bus Safety Programme and Vision Zero, and measures to improve the customer experience on buses.

In the London Borough of Ealing, there were planned changes to bus routes 27, 112, 266, 427 and 440.

The 27 would be withdrawn between Chiswick and Hammersmith and the 427 withdrawn between Southall and Acton. The 112 would be re-routed in North Ealing

and have a slight increase in frequency whilst the 440 would become more of an orbital route, with changes of routeing in Acton and Chiswick.

Geoff Hobbs explained that the 266 is a challenging route which experiences gridlock as it is routed through many congestion hotspots. This view was supported by Steve Harris from the route's operator, Metroline, who added that they try to regulate the service. An audience member explained that she now drives her daughter to school to avoid being late due to the 266's poor reliability. In order to improve reliability, the 266 will be withdrawn between Hammersmith and Acton and be replaced over this section by new route 218 (and also supplemented between Hammersmith and Acton Vale by new route 306).

Rupa Huq MP outlined the challenge of being able to change buses within the hour on routes that are split (e.g. the 83/483) in order to benefit from the Hopper fare, as well as having to wait twice for a bus. Geoff Hobbs advised that it is possible to benefit from the Hopper fare if you change buses at the correct place. He added that average journey length is 3km and average journey time is 30 minutes. Only 1% of passengers stay on buses for the full route.

Geoff Hobbs advised that the route changes are likely to take place between May and December 2019.

Concern was raised that Haven Green has become full of parked buses, which will increase with more buses coming to Ealing Broadway to serve the Elizabeth line. Geoff Hobbs advised that Haven Green will be restored when Elizabeth line works are completed and noted the difficulty of where buses could stand in central Ealing if not Haven Green. Wherever buses stood, there would also need to be facilities for drivers.

The audience expressed concern about the proposed changes to the 440. It currently serves Central Middlesex Hospital, three supermarkets and four schools but this will reduce once the changes are implemented. An audience member gave the example of currently accompanying an elderly lady to hospital appointments on the 440 but that won't be possible when the route changes. There is also no sheltered stop at North Acton where passengers will change buses.

Geoff Hobbs replied that TfL are moving the 440 away from the level crossing in Acton as it had made the route unreliable. The changes would make it a more useful, direct and faster service.

It was alleged that Oyster card holders but not Freedom Pass holders were emailed about the consultation. Rupa Huq expressed concern that non-paying users needs were not being taken into account. Geoff Hobbs says that this was not the case.

An audience member asked about the value of the consultation on the 440 as 72% of people were opposed to the proposed changes but TfL were still going ahead with them. Geoff Hobbs answered that there are a lot of factors which contribute to decisions, which are often more complicated than the binary answers in a consultation. A consultation also gave an opportunity to mitigate the worst factors and to try and make improvements such as at stops and interchanges.

An audience member stated that the 112 will now be routed down Madeley Road but the route did not have to go that way as a new school will be opening nearby. Geoff Hobbs advised that the 112 has experienced increasing passenger numbers and will now avoid severe traffic south of Hanger Lane.

A volunteer at Age UK stated that older people and those with mobility issues will usually travel by bus rather than tube or train, which were not as easy to use. She asked how TfL measure the impact of changes on elderly people. Geoff Hobbs explained that TfL take account of how changes will affect different groups, such as looking at where interchanges may occur and if there are good facilities. Computer modelling get it right more often than not and is used to show where passengers will go.

Steven Pound MP stated that he feels TfL are using Crossrail as an excuse to cut bus services but that bus services should not be diminished. He explained that TfL have listened to local pressure in the past, with the introduction of the E11. He asked what say users and potential users now had and how the local expertise in the room could get their voices heard. He also asked if TfL predict and provide or wait until people move into the borough (he gave the example of 4,500 new residents in his constituency along the 92 route).

Geoff Hobbs confirmed that TfL's computer models help them predict and provide. They also refer to the London Plan. He added that the biggest influences on journeys are levels of population and employment.

Audience members requested improvements at bus stops. Geoff Hobbs said that TfL are looking at making improvements to stops infrastructure although they need the co-operation from local boroughs. He suggested that ideas for improvements should be logged on TfL's website. TfL will also guide passengers on where best to interchange.

Audience members variously commented that the distance from bus stops is increasing but buses were not stopping where people want them to; that there were challenges for bus drivers on roads with yellow lines (e.g. Northfields Avenue and Uxbridge Road) where two buses were unable to pass each other at the same time; and that although there was a planned reduction of buses along Uxbridge Road, not everyone will be able to use the Elizabeth line as an alternative.

The audience called for more joined up thinking and more involvement for local people.

Disappointment was expressed that no representatives from Ealing council attended the meeting.

Rupa Huq closed the evening by proposing a follow-up event in Spring 2019 focussing specifically on the Elizabeth line.