

# LONDON TRAVELWATCH

## **London TravelWatch Business Plan January 2021-November 2021**

### **Introduction**

2021 will be a year of change and significant uncertainty so our Business Plan needs to have sufficient flexibility in it to reflect the changing needs of transport users and to take advantage of any new opportunities that emerge.

At the time of writing the prospect of a Covid vaccine is looking promising, but will take some time to roll out, meaning that there is likely to be continuing disruption to the way that people travel around London, at least into the first half of 2021.

TfL have a temporary finance deal in place, which runs up until the end of March 2021 and at this stage, we are unsure how the replacement deal will be negotiated; how long it will be for and whether any new Government funding will cover all of TfL's needs.

The Government's intention to 'level up' English regions could impact on available funding for London and it will be more important than ever that the voice of the capital's transport users is heard.

There are however, real opportunities to develop a transport system that meets the new needs that Londoners have as we come out of the pandemic, at the same time as reducing air pollution and decarbonising transport. London TravelWatch, in collaboration with the London Assembly, stands ready to be the voice for transport users.

This plan sets out the work that we plan to do in 2021 but we will of course have to keep it under review as the situation unfolds. Most of the proposed projects can be scaled up or down to match the resources that we have and our assessment of the opportunities available.

### **What we've achieved in 2020**

Before we look at what our plans are for 2021, it's worth a look at what we've achieved in 2020.

#### **External successes**

- We persuaded TfL to improve the information on their website and journey planner about travel during Covid. This included a new 'refunds' page and a

website re-design which included features which predicted how busy a service would be at any given time

- We got TfL to raise their target for average bus speeds to 9.3 mph and our lobbying of TfL resulted in them bringing in a trial of 24/7 bus lanes, to improve bus speeds
- Our suggestions to bring in better seating and toilets at train stations led to improved passenger satisfaction scores in the National Rail Passenger Survey at London Bridge and Victoria
- We formed a coalition which helped to save the Oyster Zip Card, using evidence from young people to help inform the debate
- In conjunction with the London Assembly, we persuaded TfL to add Thameslink stations to the Tube map
- We brought TfL and the rail industry together to agree to collaborate on better real time information to transport users about when lifts and escalators are out of order
- We got GTR to improve their accessibility plan in the re-build of Haringey station
- We persuaded Network Rail to bring the platform height at South Croydon station up to the national standard to improve the step gap
- Our calls for improved signalling in South London are being acted upon which will reduce selective door opening and step gaps on trains.
- We conducted research which persuaded TfL in January to drop their plans to make all ticket machines cashless

## **Public engagement**

- We set up a digital community of transport users which now has over 4,500 members
- Our first ever webinar was viewed by over 1,000 people
- 1,257 people filled in our survey on future transport
- Our focus groups of young people in London provided invaluable evidence to London Assembly Members and MPs which helped to save the Zip Card
- Our 'Have Your Say' guide on street changes has been downloaded 560 times so far

## **Casework**

- Our casework team have been phenomenal this year, taking over Transport Focus's complaints at the same time as integrating a new IT system
- Quarter on quarter we are improving the number of successful outcomes that we get for passengers, with only around 12% of passengers currently receiving an unsuccessful outcome.
- We have helped Eurostar passengers get better access to refunds for trains that were cancelled during Covid

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

- We now have a very successful partnership with Transport for All, which helps us to better understand the lived experience of disabled people
- We've been accredited with the Mayor of London's 'Good Work standard' and are planning to follow this with accreditation to the Healthy Workplace Standard
- We've brought in a health and well-being policy, a flexible working policy and a menopause policy
- All staff now have access to a 24/7 counselling helpline
- Each of us has at least one Diversity and Inclusion objective in our annual appraisal

## **Internal improvements**

- We successfully migrated our IT system to share a platform with Transport Focus
- Everyone has a laptop so that they can work at home effectively
- Our first ever staff survey showed that 90% of staff are satisfied or fairly satisfied with working at LTW
- We've massively raised our media profile this year, in part due to being able to use Transport Focus's Omnibus survey

## **Stakeholder relationships**

- Our relationships with London Assembly Members are much improved and in our survey in the summer, nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  thought that we are more useful than last year
- Our collaboration with Transport Focus has been a huge success with both parties extremely satisfied with the partnership
- Our relationships with TfL have deepened and the fact that the London Omnibus results are discussed at the highest levels is evidence that we are seen as more credible.

We want to build on these successes in 2021, making London TravelWatch even more relevant, evidence-based and useful to both transport users and the London Assembly, so that the voice of Londoners is heard in the places where decisions are made.

## Proposed projects for 2021

### Future Transport in London

2) Varying needs across London's Geographies  
Example: South London

Outer London  
- Higher car use  
- More concern about transport links into central London and around outer London

Inner and Central London  
- Issues around congestion, air quality and streets changes

The commuter belt and beyond

to boost representation amongst under representative groups

BusAnd TrainUser Good to see the need for bus maps highlighted. It's ridiculous there's no bus map and spider maps are being reduced.

Tim B We have a link on our website to Mike Harris's Bus Map

Chris Barker A pity Mike Harris's map is not more widely available.

Phil Carey That 40% more users switching to car in future in London will be from a lower base than the rest of the country, of course.

Nicholas Biskinis Also concerned that TfL has used LTNs to return to retrograde attitudes of lack of engagement with local communities which the Local Communities and Partnerships division was meant to address

Tim B

J M Gold Compared with LUL, Network Rail seem to have many more weekend closures for routine maintenance. Can LTW look into this, noting that Andrew Haines is open to reform of NR working methods?

In January we'll be building on the survey and webinar that we did by writing up the main themes of our prediction for how transport in London needs to change, to better suit the needs of Londoners.

We'll be building

these themes into our 'asks' of the London Mayoral candidates and exploring them further in the meetings that we have with the candidates prior to May.

We aim to include ideas about how the needs of women, BAME communities and lower income Londoners can be better represented in any changes to our transport system, including keeping public transport affordable.

Whatever themes come out of the research will also form the basis of our ongoing lobbying of the Mayor and transport operators during the course of the year.

### Confidence to travel again

It looks likely that there will be some kind of return to more regular travel patterns sometime in 2021. But there will inevitably be things that transport operators need to do to improve confidence and attract passengers back onto public transport. London TravelWatch was very successful in persuading TfL to improve the information that they gave customers at the start of the pandemic and it's likely that we'll need to encourage transport operators to bring in additional reassurance measures as people start to return to their offices. For example our research with Transport Focus has shown that the ability to socially distance on public transport is still a key priority for passengers.

### Giving the Bus Priority

We plan to launch our long-awaited bus campaign in 2021. We've already made some progress in 2020 with TfL's average bus speed target going up to 9.3 mph; the congestion charge being extended to weekends and the TfL 24/7 bus lane trial being brought in (all outcomes that were in our original plan). But we plan to revamp our old strategy and launch it in 2021, taking into account changes that have happened

this year such as the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. This project will require us not just to work with TfL but also with the London boroughs, as 80% of London's roads are borough roads.



We expect that the role of the bus will be even more important when the needs of our public transport system are evaluated after the pandemic. Ultimately, we think that London needs a new bus strategy, which both prioritises the bus on our roads and looks at how buses can best serve the changing needs of Londoners. For example, by bringing in new orbital and express bus routes in outer London or extending some routes to serve hospitals.

Working on improving bus transport in London will also help to mitigate against a car-led recovery from the pandemic which is causing both road congestion and poor air quality for Londoners.

### **Accessibility of Transport**

Our survey of transport users for our Future Transport project showed that improving the accessibility of our transport system is a key theme.



Our partnership with Transport for All has been a great success this year, helping to inform LTW about the lived experience of disabled people and we will continue to develop this partnership in 2021.

LTW has brought TfL and the rail industry together to come up with a plan for how to improve real time information to passengers about when lifts and escalators are out of order. Our aim is for passengers to have access to a seamless flow of information across the different modes in their journey. LTW will be overseeing this new collaboration, attending regular joint meetings between TfL and the rail industry.

We will continue to look out for reactive opportunities to improve accessibility for transport users, including improving step gaps between trains and platforms and making sure that the needs of disabled people are properly considered in the changes to our streets.

### **Streetspace and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods**



As some of the temporary changes to London's streets are assessed to see if they will become permanent changes, London TravelWatch will have an important part to play in pushing TfL and the London boroughs to make sure that they are evaluating the existing schemes robustly and listening to residents' views about what is and isn't working.

London TravelWatch currently sits on TfL's Streetspace Advisory Group where we've been making the case for better general consultation of residents; the monitoring of how buses are impacted in trial areas; and the need for boroughs to co-produce Equality Impact Assessments for each scheme, with experts in accessibility.

We'll continue to make evidence-based interventions on this issue, including advocating for best practice. And we'll be continuing our joint work with Transport for All, lobbying councils to take a more collaborative approach when evaluating the accessibility of the proposed schemes.

It is hugely important for pedestrians and cyclists to be able to walk and cycle with confidence so we'll also advocate for the vision zero target to be front of mind when schemes are consulted on and evaluated.

This will however be a relatively small project and we need to make sure that London TravelWatch is not duplicating the work of other groups.

### **New Opportunities and Threats**

We'll keep an eye on unfolding events to see if new opportunities or threats emerge. These could include: the re-igniting of the debate on road pricing or cashless ticket machines; possible ticket office closures and opportunities for rail fares reform. E-scooters and micro-mobility will increasingly be on the agenda and London TravelWatch may need to make interventions on behalf of all people who use our streets.

In terms of our statutory duties, we also need to prepare for the possibility that London TravelWatch will be asked to take part in more consultations during this time of change. And there may be additional consultations that it could be important for us to take part in, such as expressing a view on how crucial public transport links are to new developments or redevelopments in outer London.

We will also look for opportunities to further the vision zero commitment in our advocacy work.

### **Increasing our Consumer purpose**



Our most visited web pages and most successful Facebook posts tend to be those which feature consumer issues for transport users. We'd like to increase our usefulness to transport users in 2021 by creating more 'bite sized' content related to consumer rights. With organisations like Which? not focusing on consumer transport issues at the moment we feel that there is a gap in the market for a consumer transport champion.

We also think that we can bring more people into our digital community by engaging people with a consumer issue first.

We'll be developing new media relationships with a consumer focus, to spread the reach of our work in this area. We've already worked with the Guardian Money Editor and we'll be reaching out to more journalists this year.

### **Digital Community of Transport Users**

We now have over 4,500 people in our community of transport users and many of them have engaged with us about their views on how they think transport should change in London in the future. We'll be maximising every opportunity to grow the community and continue to gain valuable insights from them, as well as engaging them in some of our campaigns. We'll also be trying out different ways to make the community more diverse so that it better reflects the demographic make-up of London, particularly focusing on recruiting women, people aged 18-25 and people from BAME backgrounds. To reach these people we plan to collaborate with other organisations who already work closely with these audiences.

We believe that the transport user insights that we get from our community could be really helpful to the Transport Committee in their work, and we'd be happy to explore collaboration in this area.

Our focus in 2021 will be on maintaining and improving our existing communications channels: the website, Twitter, email and Facebook. But we'll also be creating more shareable content to extend our reach, by using better graphics and more video content.

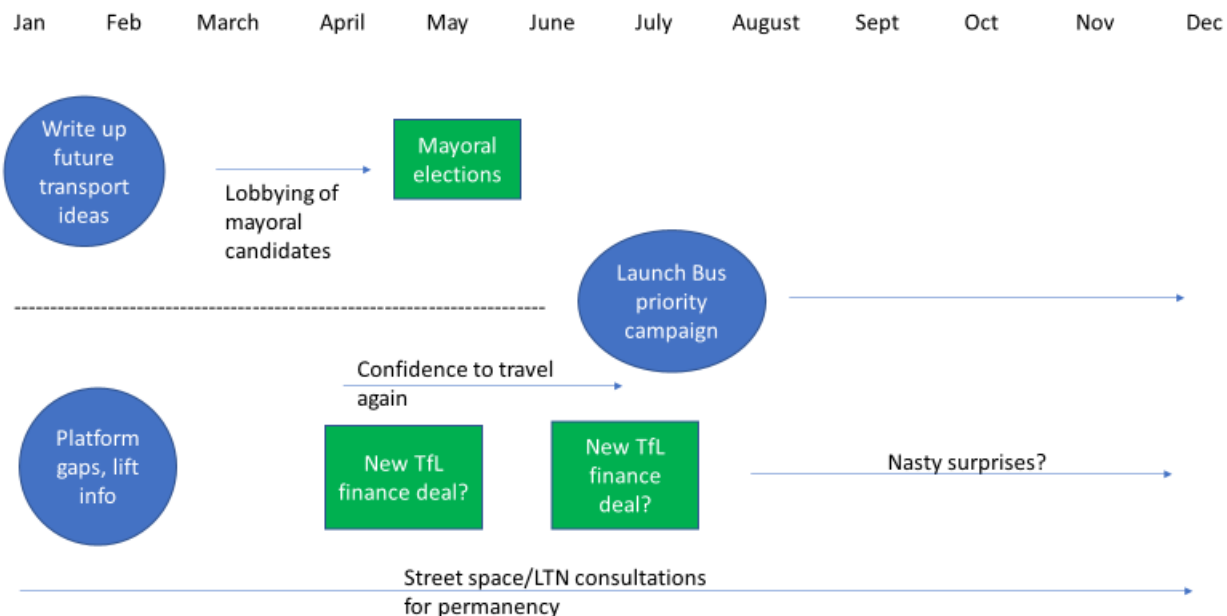
### **Casework**

Throughout the year, our reduced casework team will continue to respond to appeals from London's passengers and road users. Our Head of Casework will ensure that the London passenger voice is heard, among other organisations working in the interests of national rail passengers and will also continue to advocate for and represent the interests of Eurostar passengers.

Our Casework team will be overhauling and modernising the way that we deal with complaints, including introducing a new triage system, which will enable them to focus more time on the cases where they can really make a difference, such as passenger refunds, unfair penalties and accessibility problems.



## Timeline



## Additional Internal objectives for 2021

### Organisational development

- Create a renewed sense of organisational cohesion following the re-structuring process
- Create a Diversity and Inclusion strategy, based on the results of staff surveys
- Achieve the 'London Healthy Workplace award' accreditation
- Improve our staff survey ratings on 5 key questions which rated lower in 2020, including the setting of clear work objectives and getting the information to perform one's job properly

### Campaigns and advocacy

- Grow and diversify our online community, while retaining existing members
- Create new partnerships with a wider range of organisations, to grow our influence and reach our key audiences

### Complaints handling

- Overhaul and modernise our customer complaints system so that it delivers the best outcomes for the transport users who need it most

## Relationships

- Continue to develop our partnership with Transport for All
- Grow our influence with TfL
- Improve our satisfaction ratings with the London Assembly, based on last year's survey
- Find at least two new ways of collaborating with Transport Focus

## **Budget for 2021-22**

We now know that our budget will be reduced by 15% in this next financial year, with the budget available to us being £963,900. We're currently consulting staff on a restructuring plan to meet this budget reduction. We are confident that London TravelWatch will continue to be a viable organisation and we're looking for opportunities to make our operations more efficient during the restructuring process.

We have an agreed reserve level of £45,000 and our forecast predicts that we will be able to maintain this level of reserve at the end of 2020-21.

The majority of our costs are for the staff that we employ, with around 15% of our outgoings going on renting our office. We have a modest operating budget.

We will continue to try and bring our costs down by subletting our office but at the time of writing we've not been successful in finding a tenant.

## BUDGET SUBMISSION 2021-22

£'s	Budget		Notes
	2021-22	2020-21	
<b>Grant in Aid Funding</b>			
Core	963,900	1,134,000	
<b>Total funding</b>	<b>963,900</b>	<b>1,134,000</b>	Assumed 15% budget reduction in 2021-22
<b>Expenditure</b>			Anticipated savings of £170,000 following implementation of organisational restructuring plan (subject to consultation) Budget assumes we will remain in our current offices.
Fixed Pay	636,000	806,000	
Fixed Overheads	190,800	190,800	
Variable Overheads	137,100	137,200	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>963,900</b>	<b>1,134,000</b>	
<b>Net surplus / (deficit)</b>	-	-	