
Public Event 19.03.25 Minutes

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Author: Michael Roberts, Chief Executive

Attendance

Members

Tricia Hayes (Chair), Richard Hebditch, Eddie Lynch, Priya Khullar, Susan Stockwell, Lara Sonola

Apologies

Tiffany Lam

Secretariat

Sonya Dallat, Paul Michaels, Susan James, Alex Smith, Michael Roberts, Catherine Williams

1. Chair's introduction

TH opened the meeting and advised that Andy Lord would be joining at 9.30am to give an update on TfL priorities which were drive demand and revenue, sound financials, funding and investment in services, decarbonisation and building a great workplace (staff morale, preventing any future strikes).

2. Commissioner Andy Lord update on TfL priorities

TH welcomed Andy Lord (AL) to his first session with the London TravelWatch Board since he took part in its July 2023 meeting. Board members raised a series of questions to which AL responded.

Susan Stockwell (SS): Are the four priorities you set out at our last meeting (driving demand, sound financials, decarbonisation and building a great workplace) still the same?

AL confirmed that these remained his priorities, adding safe operation of TfL services as a priority underpinning all the others.

Passenger demand was at c 93 per cent of pre-Covid levels – up on last year but lower than forecast. Improving bus journey times was among TfL’s operational priorities to help increase ridership. Other forthcoming customer initiatives mentioned were the introduction of new DLR trains (later than planned) and new Piccadilly line trains coming into operation in 2026 and 2027.

TfL’s budget for 2025/26 was going to its Board for discussion the following week. TfL was due to achieve an operating surplus for the second year in a row, thanks to cost savings and the opportunity to reduce contributions to TfL’s pension scheme.

Following last year’s financial settlement with central Government (the bulk of which is for capital renewals/replacements), TfL has made the case for multi-year settlements in its Comprehensive Spending Review bid: the current dialogue with Government on this point is positive.

TfL’s net zero target remained but was the hardest priority to achieve. Electrification of the bus fleet was ahead of programme, but there were still c 7,000 vehicles to replace over the next five years. A bigger challenge was ensuring the infrastructure needed to support this was in place.

On making TfL a great place in which to work, the latest staff survey had seen a big jump in the engagement score. In terms of diversity and inclusion, TfL was ahead of its target to represent economically-active London by 2030.

SS: fares was the issue which our newsletter subscribers most wanted us to raise with you. Do you think they offer value for money to Londoners?

AL said that TfL receives no operating grant from the Government, yet London has the lowest bus fares in the country. TfL was able to cover c 80 per cent of its capital costs for rail and Tube and was looking to invest in a number of major improvements to its network.

Priya Khullar (PK): it has been a difficult year for users of different parts of the network, including the Piccadilly line and even the Elizabeth line, while a great addition to the network, has underperformed. How can things be improved?

The problems on the Piccadilly line resulted from the combination of very old rolling stock and the particular nature of last autumn’s leaf fall. TfL had worked round the clock to return damaged trains into service as quickly as possible. This autumn may also prove to be a challenge, and contingency plans were in place which could

potentially include a proactive suspension of services to prevent wheel damage. The introduction of new trains from later this year should improve things in future.

AL did not think the Elizabeth line was underperforming, having achieved its best performance and the best performance of any part of the railway in January. He noted its unique features, linking two separate parts of the national rail network with a metro-style service and measured as a single operation.

Problems had included the lack of investment in Network Rail infrastructure west of Paddington ahead of the start of Elizabeth line operations; an increasing number of trespass events; no investment in the Greater Anglia network (now being addressed through renewals, which will lead to many weekend closures); specific incidents such as the November signal outage in the central section which has now been resolved and cannot happen again; and poor train reliability, which has also been addressed.

Lara Sonola (LS): what progress is TfL making to improve bus journey times and which boroughs are doing well to support this? We hear of customer complaints about buses terminating early: what are you doing to minimise this happening?

AL noted the importance of working with boroughs, with 92 per cent of TfL bus routes run on non-TfL roads. Some boroughs were more effective than others: where there was less engagement, sometimes it was due to resources and sometimes it was the result of boroughs placing less priority on public transport.

AL noted positively the proposals to invest in bus lanes included in boroughs' bids for Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding and the trial to extend TfL's lane rental scheme involving four boroughs. He had personally met the senior leadership teams of over 20 boroughs and TfL was re-engaging with them following a number of changes after last year's elections.

AL highlighted Putney as a hotspot where bus services were badly impacted by works on the high street and diversion of traffic currently unable to use Hammersmith Bridge. His view on early termination of bus services was that that was done where there was a need to regulate disrupted services: the important thing was to ensure that passengers were given good information and to avoid terminating consecutive services.

Eddie Lynch (EL): TfL's Equity in Motion strategy is very ambitious, but Disabled people still face big challenges. What work is taking place to address

their concerns? And is there a risk of over-reliance on digital channels in service TfL's customers?

AL felt there was more to do to ensure that “good service” as reported on TfL’s information systems needed to be truly holistic, including an accurate reflection of the status of issues such as availability of lifts and staff at stations.

AL noted the challenge of meeting the recently-increased Mayoral target to ensure 50% of Tube stations are step-free by 2030. This meant converting 46 more stations over the next 5 years and potentially involved making improvements at very complex stations with high passenger flows.

Knightsbridge station was due to become step-free shortly: AL also singled out the Paddington Bakerloo line ticket hall for the attention given to neurodiversity in its recent re-design. Making more London Overground stations step-free came under the Access for All programme and so depended on making the case for investment with Network Rail.

Commenting on a couple of recent events, AL promised to find out more about a driver’s reported refusal to let Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson onto a bus; and he said TfL were checking the accuracy of their own statistics, quoted in the media, saying that there had been 6,000 hours when lifts had been out of order on the network.

On digital exclusion, AL recognised this was a live issue, including with TfL’s own Independent Disability Advisory Group (IDAG). This was something on which TfL’s Customer Director Emma Strain led and he encouraged us to keep on engaging with her.

Rick Hebditch (RH): what are your hopes and fears regarding rail reform and the creation of Great British Railways (GBR)?

AL highlighted ticketing reform as an opportunity, but also as a source of nervousness. TfL was heavily involved with national rail on Project Oval: but there was currently no commonality of ticket types or technology, nor was there a common approach to revenue protection.

AL felt there was a lot of focus on train companies (TOCs) in the reform agenda, but for TfL the transition of Network Rail into GBR and its subsequent relationship with TfL was vitally important:

- TfL was interested in the potential to transfer assets to it from national rail (complex as this might be), where the assets are entirely used by TfL services eg District line to Richmond or Bakerloo line to Watford
- TfL is looking for a greater role for it and the Mayor in some service areas (either complete devolution of responsibility or a greater say in service planning)
- AL did not think that nationalisation of TOCs would have an impact on its concession model and he felt that there is no shortage of companies interested in running services.

Tricia Hayes (TH): Is there any update on Broadmead Road Bridge, both in terms of the specific asset and the wider implications arising from this example?

AL recognised the challenge around the funding needed to maintain this local authority asset represented a test more broadly about where leadership lies in resolving funding gaps for London's transport infrastructure. AL noted that there were 62 assets across Transport for London's Road Network (TLRN) currently operating at reduced capability. He had asked his team to investigate the specific issues related to Broadmead Road Bridge and he agreed to come back to us.

TH: As TfL celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, what are the next big innovations we can expect?

AL highlighted three areas of interest:

- the next generation of ticketing and the potential of technology to remove the need for ticket barriers, and how that could be managed even at large stations
- the potential for artificial intelligence to provide solutions which reduce unauthorised access to the network (e.g. trespass) and so improve safety as well as performance
- the future place of cars in urban areas.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising from Members meeting 21.01.25

The minutes were approved. The Chair ran through the updated action log and thanked the team for closing many of the actions. There were no new declarations of

interest. Eddie Lynch commented on the staff training list saying it seemed IT focussed and asked if there was a trained first aider in the office and if Health & Safety training should be added to the list.

Action: Check if Margaret Croucher is the First Aider and investigate Health & Safety training options.

4. Chief Executive's Report and business plan (LTW777)

MR introduced his report, which included an update on delivery against the agreed business plan. This update was noted by the Board.

MR specifically highlighted the slower than expected progress on the "seamless journeys" theme, where a more focused approach was being developed in the context of the 2025/26 Business Plan. The team was now planning to commission research into the public's views about street scape as part of the passenger priorities work. The Board supported this proposal and noted that streetscape design was a key driver of transport system accessibility.

Board Members welcomed the refreshed proposal for taking forward work on transport user priorities. The Chair noted that this was a good example of constructive challenging on the part of Board Members (especially EL) resulting in a more tightly defined project.

2025/26 Business Plan

MR shared the latest version of the Business Plan for 2025/26. The priorities had been agreed by the London Assembly Transport Committee in December 2024, and the proposals for individual themes reflected earlier feedback from the Board. Each project (with the exception of "seamless journeys") now had a detailed project plan identifying key activities to be undertaken and milestones to be achieved.

In addition to finalising these topic-by-topic plans, MR said that the team would be creating an overall timeline for the year, which would show the sequencing of the key products and activities and provide the basis for more detailed campaigning and communications activity.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- The Board was overall content with the shape of the plan for 2025/26, noting that in earlier discussions they had agreed that there should be stability in the high-level issues to be considered over a three-year period, but with different activity under each heading in different years.
- The Board was very mindful of the risk of over-programming given the limited capacity of the team and the need to retain some space to respond to events in the London Transport system in real time. MR said that he was very aware of this risk and the need to identify the relatively lower priority work which could be delayed if necessary (probably the seamless journeys topic which was currently being redefined in the light of previous board feedback).
- Board Members continued to attach a high priority to work on accessibility and wanted to be clear about how LTW's proposals for proactive work on accessibility fitted with TfL's "Equity in Motion" strategy. The project plan for this theme includes a specific deliverable to use existing quarterly meetings with TfL to challenge progress on EiM.
- EL suggested that, in our work to influence TfL's approach to building customer trust, we should co-create our ideas with disability groups.
- PK asked about the work on incorporating quality standards included in the project plan for improving casework operations, as previously discussed. SJ said that while she remained keen to pursue this, further consideration was needed to understand how much work this might involve. This could be part of the work to reform case working as part of wider rail reform, which might also impact the timing of this activity

MR thanked Board Members for their feedback on the draft plans and asked for any further points of detail to be provided within the next two weeks – Action – all Board Members to send any further comments by Wednesday 2nd April.

Action: Considering external quality standards is an objective for SJ in 2025/2026.

Action: MR to incorporate co-creation within the project plan for greater TfL ambition in building trust.

2025/26 Budget – LTW782

MR introduced the 2025/26 Budget for approval by Board Members. He reminded Board Members of the previous agreement that LTW should seek to increase its reserves to around £250k. This level of reserves – which would equate to about 3

months of spend for LTW – would remain lower than the reserves held by some other organisations but given the relatively low risk of funding being withdrawn, and fact that any change in status would need to be taken forward via legislation, the Board supported this as an acceptably prudent number.

Should LTW face unexpected financial pressures in 2025/26 the Board would in principle be prepared to draw on reserves to accommodate them, and to accept a slower build up to the £250k benchmark.

MR noted that the draft budget for 2025/26 proposed a lower allocation for project spend compared with the previous year, reflecting the experience of 2024/25. The current draft project plans contained suggestions for project funding which totalled more than the amount in the draft budget: the two sets of figures would be reconciled as the project plans were finalised in the next few weeks.

Against this background, the Board approved the 2025/26 LTW Budget.

Oxford Street Pedestrianisation

AS briefed the Board on the latest set of proposals for pedestrianising Oxford Street. This had been a longstanding debate and LTW was now being invited to comment on a set of proposals for removing almost all vehicles from the street.

Board members welcomed the update and made the following comments:

- while the purpose of the proposal was clearly to remove vehicular traffic from Oxford Street as far as possible, it would be important for LTW to understand very clearly what exceptions were planned to be made e.g. to allow disabled people to access the area as blue badge holders or by taxi. Further clarification should be sought on this.
- it was very important for a wide variety of users to be fully engaged in the development of the detailed proposals. LTW should actively champion a co-design process bringing in diverse user voices and ensure that the consultation itself was accessible.

Action: AS agreed to pick up both these points in responding to the Mayor's proposals.

5. Rail Reform discussion (LTW778)

The Chair introduced the paper which had been circulated just before the meeting. This was an update to the previous outline response on which Members had already helpfully offered comments.

The Chair said that she and MR had recently discussed the consultation with the Chair and Chief Executive of Transport Focus and would be meeting DfT officials to discuss later that week. LTW's understanding was that in setting up the new Passenger Standards Authority and providing additional powers to hold the rail industry to account for its service to consumers, the government was intending to ensure that these additional powers were also available to LTW. This was welcome news.

The Board was content with the latest version of the outline in particular:

- The positive stance on devolution, which should be strengthened, given the evidence from London that bringing services closer to the user can drive higher quality standards.
- The proposal to make it easier to amend LTW's geographical scope without primary legislation, which could provide an opportunity to deal with anomalies and adapt to future service or network changes.

The Chair noted that a final version of the LTW submission would be circulated for clearance in advance of the April deadline.

6. Any other business

There was no other business. TH said the next Meeting would take place on May 22 2025 at the London TravelWatch office.