

LONDON
TRAVELWATCH



Business plan

2025 / 2026

Submitted to and approved by the London Assembly Transport Committee, 10 December 2024

Introduction

This paper proposes a business plan for London TravelWatch for 2025/26, for consideration and endorsement by the London Assembly Transport Committee.

It summarises the main things we have done so far during the current business year, sets out the themes which will shape our work programme next year and proposes a headline budget to resource our work.

The year to date, as ever, has involved a mix of both proactive and reactive work, and of external-facing activities alongside internal operational developments. Delivery against our current plan began slower than originally expected, but our pace of activity has noticeably picked up again in the second half of the business year.

Looking ahead to 2025/26, we have shaped our programme around similar themes to those identified for 2024/25, at a more prudent level of activity in the light of experience in the year to date. As before, we intend to refine and develop the objectives and activities under each of the priority areas proposed in this paper, in time for the start of the new business year in April 2025.



Key achievements in 2024/25

In November, we published our report *The next step: making London's buses better*, highlighting five areas of recommendation to improve the attractiveness of bus services and calling on Transport for London (TfL) to set out in detail by next summer how it plans to take these recommendations forward.

In October, following our statement about the problems of over-crowding at London Euston, Network Rail and the Secretary of State committed to a five-point action plan to improve the customer experience at the station.

In November, jointly with TfL we held the first summit of its kind on personal security and transport in London, highlighting the need for operators to continue addressing the issues highlighted in our recent reports on this topic.

We have completed the fieldwork for our digital exclusion mystery shopping on the public transport network, prior to analysis by our research agency and publication planned for January.

We have continued to support the London Assembly Transport Committee's work, through our submission to its inquiry into accessibility and inclusion and our participation in its review of the Mayor's Transport Strategy. Our input to the Budget and Performance Committee's review TfL's budget has been reflected in its subsequent letter to the Mayor about his proposed budget.

We have had ongoing engagement with transport service providers on a range of issues which have arisen during the period, such as TfL's handling of the impact on customers of the September cyber attack.

In the year from 1 April to 31 October, the London TravelWatch casework team received 228 initial contacts from the public and resolved 560 appeals. While we cannot compel a transport operator to provide us with a favourable outcome, we did see the following:

- 60 percent of the appeals provided the passenger with an improved outcome
- 42 percent of penalty fare/revenue protection cases resulted in an improved outcome for the passenger
- 63 percent improved outcomes were achieved for non-passenger appeal cases (ULEZ, Congestion Charge, PCNs and TfL Santander Cycles).

Our casework team has managed the induction of a new service provider for our contact centre, starting in April. The team has also introduced a package of planned system and process changes to our appeals handling work, with early signs of positive impact.

We successfully filled three vacancies to our Board, with the new members taking up their seats in September.

You can read the full overview of the year's work in our [Annual Review](#).

Work programme for 2025/26

In the 2024/25 London TravelWatch business plan, we identified eight priority themes for our work. For 2025/26, we intend to retain five of these themes, merge two (on accessibility and inclusion) into one, and treat the eighth (better London TravelWatch insight) as an integral element of the others, rather than as something separate.

Our programme aims to hold service providers to account in making London's public transport services more attractive to use and so contribute to wider goals, such as improved quality of life and tackling climate change. We believe the business plan themes set our broad agenda for the remaining three years of the Assembly's term, subject to review during the annual business planning process.

Later, we outline the expected London TravelWatch activities and draft objectives for each theme in 2025/26. We intend to refine these in time for the start of the business year. We have also included for each theme the measurable outcomes (identified as part of last year's business planning) which we hope to influence over the next three years, should our work prove successful.

Three assumptions underpin the content of our proposed 2025/26 work programme.

First, our capacity for proactive projects will be determined by a busy ongoing baseload of work. We expect to manage broadly the same level of appeals as in 2024/25 (the volume handled per caseworker is estimated to be 25% greater than pre-Covid) and the same number of consultation requests (annually, these can run into hundreds: we responded to over 30 substantive consultations in 2024/25). As ever, we also need to be ready to react to significant external transport events.

Second, delivering our commitments in many cases will involve partnership (and sometimes co-production) with other organisations. Our relationship with the Transport Committee remains key, as does that with our sister watchdog Transport Focus, particularly in a year when we expect the Government's national rail reform plans to be a live area of joint interest. Partnership with other stakeholders will also continue to be important for our next stages of work, for example, on buses and on inclusion.

Third, our contact with Transport Committee members in the year to date gives us confidence that the themes of our work programme are the right ones. However, we hope to survey the public on our priorities before the end of 2024/25 and that may influence the final shape of our planned activity.



Our themes for the year ahead

1

More seamless journeys

We intend to use our membership of TfL's Healthy Streets Advisory Group more actively to promote better connectivity to and from the public transport system by modes such as walking, wheeling and cycling. We are scoping the specific aspect of connectivity on which London TravelWatch might focus; as part of that, we are organising a workshop with stakeholders to take place this business year. The potential focus for us might be public transport connectivity in outer London or improving the quality of interchange at specific public transport hubs.

Draft objective(s) for 2025/26

- Ensure London TravelWatch views on the connectivity of public transport are reflected in TfL's Healthy Streets programme.

Medium-term outcome(s)

- Better first/last mile travel experience, for example, as currently measured through TfL's Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) methodology.

2

Better transport services

We expect work under this theme to cover TfL and National Rail. In the case of TfL, we will use our channels of engagement to push the recommendations in our 2024 report *The next stop: making London's buses better*. We will continue calling for action to tackle pain points on the capital's wider public transport network, focusing on those parts where service quality is at risk pending major investment, such as the Bakerloo line. We also plan to develop our thinking on what a more strategic approach to fares in London might look like, building on comments to the Transport Committee's 2024 inquiry into the Mayor's Transport Strategy. In the case of National Rail, we expect to engage with the Government's reform agenda where relevant to London, for example, by monitoring plans to move private rail operators into public ownership for any impact on service level commitments.

Draft objective(s) for 2025/26

- Ensure TfL publishes detailed plans for strengthening how its Bus Action Plan will address our five recommendations for improving services, by summer 2025
- Ensure our priorities for tackling pain points affecting other modes on TfL's network are reflected in its plans
- Publish and promote London TravelWatch recommendations for a more strategic approach to fares in London
- Ensure London TravelWatch views are reflected in Government rail reform measures where they are relevant to the capital.

Medium-term outcome(s)

- Higher levels of passenger satisfaction with services, for example, as currently reported to TfL's quarterly Customer Service and Operational Performance (CSOP) panel meetings and through Transport Focus Rail User Survey scores; and through published TfL and National Rail performance statistics.

Our themes for the year ahead

3

More accessible, inclusive and secure transport

We plan to use our current channels of engagement to ensure that delivery of TfL's Equity in Motion strategy reflects recommendations from the London Assembly Transport Committee's 2024 inquiry into accessibility and inclusion. We will take the insights from our transport and personal security summit (November 2024) and from our digital exclusion mystery shopping exercise (early 2025) to shape the next stages of our work on these issues. We also intend to continue calling for better accessibility at National Rail stations in our remit, following the audit highlighted in the Government's 2021 national strategy for Disabled passengers.

Draft objective(s) for 2025/26

- Ensure TfL delivery of Equity in Motion reflects London Assembly Transport Committee priorities
- Secure commitment by transport providers in London to deliver a more joined-up approach in one key aspect (tbd) of improving personal security
- Secure commitment by National Rail to publish plans to improve accessibility at stations in London TravelWatch's area.

Medium-term outcome(s)

- Higher levels of Disabled passenger satisfaction, for example, as measured through TfL customer care survey of Disabled passengers, TfL's tracker on the extra trip time experienced by Disabled passengers, and ORR's Passenger Assist survey scores
- Improved public sentiment, for example, through relevant metrics supporting TfL's Equity in Motion programme.

4

Better TfL ambition in building trust

Our intention is to use our current channels of engagement to promote effective delivery of TfL's Business Plan strategy for its customers. We will keep pressing TfL to aim higher in terms of how many people say that TfL cares for its customers. We aim to focus our engagement with TfL on one of the eight areas of its customer strategy, informed by a workshop which we hope to hold before the end of the current business year.

Draft objective(s) for 2025/26

- Secure public commitment by TfL to a medium-term goal for measured public perceptions of care/trust at levels higher than today
- Ensure London TravelWatch views are reflected in delivery of TfL's Business Plan strategy for customers.

Medium-term outcome(s)

- Higher levels of public trust in TfL, for example as currently measured through TfL's customer care survey.

Our themes for the year ahead

5

5 Closer working with the Transport Committee

We will continue our regular engagement with political leads and officers in support of the Committee's work, as well as submitting evidence to (and taking part in) Committee inquiries where we can add value. We will plan on the basis of resourcing one piece of research during the business year to support the Transport Committee's work, if asked to do so. We also intend to support, where asked and where relevant, the wider scrutiny work of the London Assembly, for example, in contributing to the Budget and Performance Committee's annual review of the GLA Group budget as it relates to TfL.

Draft objective(s) for 2025/26

- Ensure London TravelWatch views are reflected in the findings and recommendations made in London Assembly positions regarding transport.

Medium-term outcome(s)

- Higher Assembly Member satisfaction with London TravelWatch, for example, through future London TravelWatch stakeholder surveys.

6

6 Improved casework operations

Our intention is to implement further options (currently being scoped) to improve our processes for handling appeals from the travelling public, building on the positive changes made this year. We will continue to draw from our casework and, where possible, from transport industry complaints data, to identify areas of service provision where operators need to raise their game and to make recommendations on policy. We will also engage where necessary with the Government's plans for a rail-focused Passenger Standards Authority where they have particular significance for the future handling of appeals.

Draft objective(s) for 2025/26

- Implement further options (tbd) for improving London TravelWatch appeals-handling processes.

Medium-term outcome(s)

- Higher public satisfaction with appeal outcomes, for example, as reflected in London TravelWatch customer survey scores for appeals handling, favourable and neutral appeal outcomes as percent of closed cases, and average value of compensation secured per appeal.

London TravelWatch's proposed budget for 2025/26

This business plan is based on funding which combines the same level of grant as in 2024/25 (£1.182 million) with a provision to fund the next annual GLA pay award for London TravelWatch staff. This approach mirrors the one for our 2024/25 budget and is in line with the Assembly Budget Requirements 2025-26 paper discussed at the Oversight Committee on 23 October 2024. It will enable the organisation to:

- cover the normal increase in staff costs, where employees progress annually through their salary bands, and an increase in employer National Insurance Contributions arising from the Government's October 2024 Budget. Total staff costs accounted for c. 69 percent of London TravelWatch's budgeted expenditure for 2024/25
- accommodate the cost of replacing IT equipment which is coming to end of its life (if not brought forward to 2024/25) and expected increases in the business rates and service charges for our office. Fixed and variable overhead costs accounted for c. 21 percent of total budgeted expenditure for 2024/25 (of which property-related costs are the largest element)
- provide funding for projects (such as research) which support our work programme. The precise allocation of funds will be determined before the start of the business year, but the total amount will be broadly the same as the amount budgeted this year (c. 10 percent of total budgeted expenditure).

We currently expect to have an underspend by the end of 2024/25 of approximately £40,000. We plan to use this in our budget for 2025/26 to absorb the expected net increases in our overhead and staff costs (excluding the annual pay award) and, in line with the Oversight Committee's Assembly Budget Requirements 2025-26 paper, to build up our financial reserve. The aim is to increase our reserve over time to approximately £250,000; at the start of 2024/25, the reserve stood at £171,000, an increase of approximately £25,000 on the previous year.

Grant in aid funding	2024/25	Bid for 2025/26	Comments
Core	£1.182 million	£1.182 million + provision for GLA pay award	See Assembly Budget Requirements paper to Oversight Committee 23.10.2024.

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