

LONDON TRAVELWATCH

Proposed Business Plan 2026/27

DRAFT



Working in Partnership with

**LONDON
ASSEMBLY**



Introduction

Our vision is of a city where transport is reliable, safe, affordable and accessible for everyone. We seek to promote that through our mission to be the voice of the travelling public in championing measures to improve transport in London.

This paper proposes a business plan for London TravelWatch for 2026/27, 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.

This year we marked our 25th anniversary since we were established in our current guise under the 1999 Greater London Authority Act. Our achievements in the year to date show good progress under the key themes we set out in last year's business plan and highlight the ongoing importance of our work.

Looking ahead to 2026/27, we have shaped our programme around the same six themes as those identified for 2025/26. 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 to date in 2025/26

Transport for London (TfL) secured a four-year capital funding settlement in June as part of the Government's 2025/26 Spending Review. This followed calls from London TravelWatch, TfL and other organisations for a move away from annual settlements, enabling TfL to plan and deliver major capital projects more effectively.

London TravelWatch was invited to join the Mayoral Transport Hate Crime and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Taskforce, which held its first meeting in October. The Task Force acknowledged our work over recent years on personal security and will develop recommendations for transport operators and policing bodies to tackle hate crime and VAWG.

In May, following major disruption to Tube and Overground services after a power failure, we publicly called on TfL to do better in providing information to passengers during service disruption. TfL subsequently reviewed its use of social media and the resilience of its website, as part of ongoing work to strengthen its approach.

We engaged with TfL in September over our concerns about the operational resilience of the Bakerloo line, which is served by the oldest train fleet in the UK. We learnt that recent problems caused by sickness-related driver absence were being overcome; and we were told that the fleet could be satisfactorily maintained until new trains were commissioned. We plan to hold TfL to these assurances.

Following our call last year for action to improve the customer experience at Euston station and the response from the rail industry, there has been further progress during 2025/26. This includes continued focus on longer boarding times, use of the

main concourse screen solely to provide customer information, clearer signage around the station, and refurbished toilets, with more improvements to come.

We have encouraged TfL to show more ambition in its efforts to drive Londoners' perception that it is an organisation that cares for its customers. TfL has reflected this in a target to achieve a customer care survey score of 66 per cent by 2030 – higher than the 2025/26 target of 60 per cent. TfL has also taken up our idea of considering whether the work of the Institute of Customer Service could help strengthen its approach towards its customers.

TfL responded in part to our report last year challenging it to demonstrate by this summer that it had a compelling programme to make bus services better. Meetings in May and June included an informative briefing from senior executives on TfL's Bus Performance Plan of 25 workstreams to improve journey times. We continue to press for clarity as to how far TfL thinks the Plan will deliver against the 2030 target for average bus speeds in the Mayor's Transport Strategy.

In October, we published our *Making Space* research carried out by Yonder into what Londoners say they need from their streets and how improvements should be prioritised. People said improving pavement quality, providing better facilities and making streets safer and more accessible should be the top three priorities for street investment: we will use these findings to shape our future work on this topic.

We have continued to support the work of the London Assembly. The Transport Committee's letters to TfL on bus safety in July and fare evasion in September included points made by us to the Committee, as did the Committee's response to TfL's consultation on Capital Call. We submitted evidence to the Committee's enquiry into the walkability of London's pavements, drawing on the findings of our *Making Space* research. We also contributed to the Budget and Performance Committee's session on TfL as part of its review of the Mayor's budget for 2026/27.

In the year to date, we have responded to nearly 60 consultations from TfL, the rail industry, the Mayor and London Assembly, covering topics such as bus routes, pedicabs regulation, train performance targets and Oxford Street pedestrianisation. Our views were reflected in the outcomes of consultation on bus route 310 and Superloop SL12; and in the outcomes this year from previous consultations on bus route 350 and Bakerloop BL1.

In the first six months of this year (April to September), our casework team received 426 initial contacts from the public and resolved 633 appeals. We cannot compel a transport operator to provide us with a favourable outcome, however:

- 50 per cent of the appeals provided the passenger with an improved outcome and a further 18 per cent of appeals provided a partially improved outcome;
- 40 per cent of penalty fare/revenue protection cases resulted in a lower cost or a cancellation of the penalty fare. We were able partially to help a further six per cent of appellants;
- 71 per cent of non-passenger appeal cases (ULEZ, Congestion Charge, PCNs and TfL Santander Cycles and TfL Tunnels) were successful.

We have liaised with the Department of Transport as it prepared provisions relating to London TravelWatch in the Railways Bill laid before Parliament in November. The Bill confirms our ongoing role as a passenger watchdog and includes some welcome expansion of our investigatory and information-sharing powers.

Work programme for 2026/27

Our work programme for 2026/27 is geared toward achieving impact which, building on our previous work, aims over time to help shape the provision of transport services which are reliable, safe, affordable and accessible for everyone.

We will operate proactively and reactively on different levels, challenging providers and policy makers on their strategies, responding to consultations of a more tactical nature, and following up concerns raised by individual members of the public.

Through an active programme of engagement, we will hold service providers (mainly TfL, but also national rail bodies in our remit) to account for programme delivery against their goals, and for how they respond to specific issues as they arise.

To support our engagement and advocacy, we will build evidence and develop solutions through a combination of our in-house expertise, commissioned third-party research, and insight generated by our appeals-handling casework.

We will use our communications activity as an important part of our advocacy, by selectively highlighting examples of service failure, monitoring emerging issues and raising broader awareness about our role as the voice of the travelling public.

Through our work handling appeals from members of the public with unresolved complaints about service providers, we will seek redress for individual shortcomings as well as raising common issues arising from our casework.

We will also collaborate to maximise our impact, working with the Transport Committee to reinforce our respective roles in holding service providers to account; sharing resources and insight with our sister watchdog Transport Focus; and working with other organisations individually and collectively to amplify our advocacy.

In our last two annual business plans, we have shaped the range of activities outlined above around a set of priority themes. In 2026/27, we intend to adopt the same six themes as in 2025/26, which we believe remain material and topical in promoting a better experience for the travelling public in London.

For each theme, we set out further below an in-year headline objective and planned projects or areas of focus; and the medium-term outcomes, identified in our 2024/25 business plan, to which we think our work can add value.

In addition, as an important part of our work programme for 2026/27, we plan to carry out a deeper effectiveness review, looking at what we do and how we do it, before preparing our business plan for the following year.

Theme 1: More seamless journeys

Medium-term outcomes (from 2024/25 Business Plan)

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

Our proposed objective in 2026/27 is to develop recommendations for improving two aspects of seamless travel and advocate for them to be adopted by transport service providers, building on our activities from this business year.

We plan to work up recommendations to address the top three priorities for streets identified in our 2025 *Making Space* research (pavement quality, better facilities and safer/more accessible streets). The aim is to help shape programmes such as TfL's Walking Action Plan and its work with boroughs on Local Implementation Plans, through our regular engagement and by working with other organisations.

We also plan to assess the quality of interchange between modes at key public transport hubs in London and to identify the priority locations for improvement. We would expect to deploy our findings primarily with national rail bodies, but also with TfL. This project would build on and complement our ongoing engagement with Network Rail and others in calling for improvements at Euston station.

Theme 2: Better transport services

Medium-term outcomes (from 2024/25 Business Plan)

- 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 proposed objective in 2026/27 is to hold public transport providers to account in how they address three areas of challenge to service performance, alongside our regular work responding to consultations and engaging with TfL and national rail.

We plan to press for TfL transparency on consequences for service performance of planned level of spending on maintenance and renewals, and its strategy for mitigating risks. To support, this we will consider continuing with our recent pain points work to highlight selected parts of the network at risk.

On buses, we plan to hold TfL to account against the key measures in its Bus Performance Programme (the "BP7") and encourage action to manage down complaints related to bus driver behaviour and curtailments.

On rail, we plan to engage with key rail organisations to ensure they remain focused on delivering for customers during the ongoing implementation of rail reform, liaising with Transport Focus. This will include a focus on the forthcoming recast of South Western Railway's timetable, and we will consider continuing with our recent pain points work to highlight selected parts of the rail network in our remit at risk.

Theme 3: More accessible, inclusive and secure transport

Medium-term outcomes (from 2024/25 Business Plan)

- 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.

Our proposed objective in 2026/27 is to press service providers for effective action on public transport hate crime and three accessibility challenges, alongside our regular engagement holding TfL to account in delivering its *Equity in Motion* strategy.

On personal security, we plan to use our membership of the Mayoral Task Force on hate crime/VAWG on public transport (due to sit until October 2026) to promote our goals. These include a co-ordinated approach among service providers, policing bodies and policymakers to tackling the problem; and ensuring the industry approach is well-informed by the needs of those groups with lived experience, for example, of race-and faith-based hate crime.

On accessibility on TfL's network, we intend to build on initial work from 2026/27 and press TfL for better availability of, and information about, key facilities such as lifts, escalators and toilets. We will also collaborate with organisations such as Transport for All in calling for more effective staff training on meeting customers' accessibility needs.

On accessibility on the national rail network, we plan to campaign to prevent a loss of momentum in the programme of national rail station step-free projects NR in our jurisdiction while the Government's rail reform agenda is implemented.

Theme 4: Greater TfL ambition in building trust

Medium-term outcomes (from 2024/25 Business Plan)

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

Our proposed objective for 2026/27 is to develop recommendations for improving the perceived value for money (VfM) of TfL services, alongside our continuing engagement to hold TfL to account for delivery of its customer strategy.

We plan to use the insights from the next stage of our VfM work (expected later in 2025/26) to develop proposals aimed at improving the perceived VfM of TfL services: this aspect is one of the lowest scoring elements covered in TfL's customer care survey. This will also support our engagement with TfL with regard to the commitment, made as part of its *Equity in Motion* strategy, to carry out by 2026 a review of the effectiveness of concessions and fare structures supporting lower-income households.

Theme 5: Closer working with the Transport Committee

Medium-term outcomes (from 2024/25 Business Plan)

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

Our proposed objective for 2026/27 is to ensure that London TravelWatch and the Transport Committee continue to support each other in holding transport providers to account, as a new Chair takes their position in Year Three of the Committee's term.

We plan to do this through our continued regular engagement with group leads on the Transport Committee, and with the secretariat to help inform the Committee's work programme and views. As before, we plan to make provision in our budget potentially to commission research in support of the Transport Committee's workplan.

We will also continue to participate in Transport Committee inquiries on topics where we can add value, and to contribute to the work of other London Assembly Committees where that supports the Transport Committee's agenda.

Theme 6: Improved casework operations

Medium-term outcomes (from 2024/25 Business Plan)

- 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 % of closed cases, and average value of compensation secured per appeal.

Our proposed objective for 2026/27 is to sustain the quality of our work in handling growing numbers of appeals and make more use of the insights from casework to promote improvements by transport service providers.

On service provider engagement, we plan to continue engagement with key industry players on issues such as possible changes in managing Revenue Protection; with the Rail Ombudsman regarding issues from emerging from RO-generated casework data; and with the rail industry on the potential for condensing the RDG Industry Pledges into an easy reference document to help improve the outcome from appeals handling.

On process improvements, we plan to consider potential options such as changes in the handling of initial contacts, linking survey responses (currently anonymised) to specific cases and recording phone calls with appellants, to make it easier to learn lessons in casework handling.

We plan seek to ensure that our appeal handling remit covers not just Eurostar, but also new operators offering international services through the Channel Tunnel. We will also liaise with Transport Focus on emerging details about how its transformation into the proposed Passenger Standards Authority (for example, through its role in setting rail consumer standards) might affect our future work in handling appeals.

London TravelWatch's proposed budget for 2026/27

The Assembly Budget Requirements 2026-27 paper discussed at the Oversight Committee on 23rd October 2025 notes (paragraph 7.6) that our current funding sits some £500k below that in place in 2008, and at the same level as set in 2012. The cost to the London Assembly of funding London TravelWatch has increased in each of the last five years only in line with the GLA staff pay award.

This business plan is based on funding which combines the same level of grant as in 2025/26 (£1.209 million) with a provision to fund the next, yet to be determined, annual GLA pay award for London TravelWatch staff and annual award for Board members. This approach mirrors the one adopted for our annual budgets in recent years and is in line with the Assembly Budget Requirements 2026-27 paper (paragraph 10.1). It will enable the organisation to:

- cover the normal increase in staff costs, where employees progress annually through their salary bands. Total staff costs accounted for c. 71 per cent of London TravelWatch's original budgeted expenditure for 2025/26;
- pay for our fixed and variable overhead costs. These accounted for c. 21 per cent of total original budgeted expenditure for 2025/26, of which property-related costs are the largest element. The lease on our office ends in November 2026: for budgeting purposes, we are currently assuming no change in the amount of rent we pay;
- 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. 8% of total original budgeted expenditure).

In recent years, and in line with previous business plan proposals to the Transport Committee, we have set our annual budgets consistent with the aim of increasing our reserve over time to approximately £250,000. At the end of 2022/23, our reserve stood at c. £150,000: we currently forecast to end the 2025/26 business year with a reserve of £194,000. We expect to have less scope than before to increase this amount in next year's budget as we absorb pressures on our cost base, but will aim if possible to maintain the same level of reserve for the end of 2026/27.

Grant in aid funding	2025/26	Bid for 2026/27	Comments
Core	£1.209 million	£1.209 million + provision for GLA pay award	See Assembly Budget Requirements paper to Oversight Committee 23.10.2025.

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