

## **Proposed express bus service SL13 between Hendon and Ealing Broadway, with changes to route E7: London TravelWatch's response**

London TravelWatch is London's independent transport watchdog, using evidence to campaign to improve journeys, and advocate for all people travelling in London. It is in this role that we are responding to TfL's consultation about proposed route SL13 and changes to route E7.

We make the following comments:

### **The benefits of limited stop, orbital bus routes**

We support TfL's proposal to introduce the SL13. London TravelWatch has been calling for more orbital and limited stop bus routes for many years because we know that people value being able to travel across boroughs for work, healthcare appointments, schools and shopping trips. We support too that the SL13 will connect with other bus routes (including Superloop routes SL8 and SL10), Elizabeth line, London Overground, London Underground and National Rail services. By doing so, it will help connectivity and bring new, speedier connections to the boroughs of Barnet, Brent and Ealing.

### **Making Superloop (and all other bus services) better**

We are pleased that passengers view Superloop as a widely valued addition to London's bus network. However, Superloop services do not operate in a vacuum but within the wider bus network. Here, average bus speeds in London continue to fall year on year, with an average network speed of just 9.2 mph in 2024/25. And so, whilst London TravelWatch supports Superloop, we remain concerned that for passengers a limited stop bus stuck in traffic is still just a bus stuck in traffic.

To make the Superloop better – indeed, make all of London's bus routes better - we call for TfL to redouble their efforts to urgently give the bus the priority it needs on the road, whether this be their own roads or in working productively with London's boroughs on their roads.

### **The SL13's stops**

We welcome the choices of location for SL13 stops and would not suggest any additions or changes to them. To enable passengers to make the easiest connections between Superloop services and the other bus services which run alongside them, we support having same stop interchange, particularly where routes serve the same direction. The proposal for the SL13 is therefore particularly helpful at Brent Cross Shopping Centre and Haven Green, where there are multiple bus stops, and where it is proposed that the SL13 call at the same stop as other routes heading in the same direction.

## **The impacts for passengers of routes 112 and 232**

it is positive that the SL13 will provide extra capacity on the busiest part of the 112 between Brent Cross and Ealing. Passengers who choose to make journeys between the stops served by the SL13 will also helpfully free up capacity for passengers using the 112 at stops which will not be served by the SL13.

We note that one unfortunate impact of the SL13 will be a frequency reduction on the 112. This will be felt most keenly on the significant section of route between Brent Cross Shopping Centre and North Finchley which won't be covered by the SL13. We call on TfL to continue to carefully monitor passenger numbers on this section of the 112 and to restore the frequency to current levels if passenger demand requires this.

Although only a small section of route 232 will be covered by the SL13, it will offer those passengers the option of faster journeys using the SL13. We are also pleased to see the proposed increase in frequency on the 232 in the early mornings.

## **The impact on route E7**

The introduction of the SL13 will have knock-on impacts that may disadvantage passengers using route E7, particularly due to changes to stopping arrangements and reduced frequency. As there will be no overlap between the routes, no E7 passengers will benefit directly from the SL13 itself, though some may benefit from the extension of the E7 to Ealing Common. For those who use the E7 to travel to or from Ealing Broadway, changes to the stopping arrangements there to accommodate the SL13 will mean that a significant number of around 400 passengers on a typical weekday will either need to change bus on Uxbridge Road or walk up to an extra 70m to complete their journey.

To compound this, TfL propose to reduce the E7's frequency on Monday to Saturday daytimes from five to four buses per hour, thus moving it from a high frequency service to a low frequency one. TfL mention the 'continual review of the bus network' but don't explain the reasons for reducing the E7's frequency and inconveniencing **all** E7 passengers. Rather than just dismissively say that 'frequency changes are not within the scope of consultation,' TfL would have been better served explaining **why** they propose to reduce the E7's frequency. TfL should have also included an analysis of this frequency reduction in the Equalities Impact Assessment.

## **Advertising the consultation**

We have previously called for TfL to include all the proposed bus stops on Superloop consultation posters so that passengers can see how the proposal will directly affect them, rather than use this valuable space to show the entire Superloop network.

And so, we are pleased to see an improvement in the usefulness of information provided on the bus stop poster and consultation leaflet, with both clearly listing the SL13's proposed bus stops in both directions. We trust that this level of information will continue for the remaining Superloop consultations and that it will also be used for other bus consultations when it would be helpful for passengers to see proposed bus stops.