

## **Proposed express bus service SL15 between Clapham Junction and Eltham**

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 SL15.

We make the following comments:

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

We support TfL's proposal to introduce the SL15. London TravelWatch has called 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 welcome the connectivity of the proposed route for the SL15, which will create interchanges between 77 other bus routes and eight train stations, including the Northern line, Windrush and Mildmay Overground services and National Rail services on Southeastern, GTR and South Western Railway. By doing so, it will help connectivity and bring new, speedier connections to the area.

As there are not existing routes that significantly shadow the length of the proposed SL15, it will also create new direct links for people travelling between areas between Clapham Junction and Eltham, reducing journey times and the need to change buses. This is a positive improvement which we welcome.

It is also positive that there do not seem to be planned reductions to routes that do in part parallel the proposed SL15, maintaining capacity and frequency for those bus users.

### **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 operate within the wider bus network rather than in a vacuum. Average bus speeds in London continue to fall year on year, with an average network speed of just 9.2 mph so far in 2025/26. While 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.

This is particularly the case for the SL15 as most of the route would follow the South Circular Road, which suffers from frequent congestion. Additionally it is a relatively long route - the consultation notes that, taking the traffic conditions into consideration, it may take up to 75 minutes to complete a full end to end journey on the SL15. Given this, we hope that the SL15 will not become unreliable or lead to any short running, which would particularly affect the Eltham and Clapham Junction ends of the route.

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 more efficiently and productively with London’s boroughs on their roads. With much of the planned SL15 route comprised of single carriageway roads, innovative approaches may be needed to make sure buses are not stuck in this traffic.

### **Capacity of the SL15**

While we welcome the proposed introduction of the SL15, we question if the use of single decker buses will provide sufficient capacity on the route. We note a TfL memorandum regarding the SL15 stated that “TfL Engineering are investigating what would be required to allow for double-deck height clearance”<sup>1</sup>, and we support exploring such options. If this is not possible we would ask TfL to consider alternative routes that would avoid the low bridge on Thurlow Park Road, for example the nearby Lancaster Avenue.

If this is not possible and single decker buses are used, we would ask TfL to monitor demand for the service and if capacity is not sufficient to increase the frequency.

### **Changes to bus stops at Clapham Junction**

We understand there will also be changes to stops at Clapham Junction to create space for route SL15 to terminate there, giving drivers access to toilets. We support making sure drivers have easy access to such facilities, particularly where route times are longer. As this requires moving eight routes to different stops we recognise that this will have a mixed impact on passengers, increasing or decreasing walking distances depending on the individual.

Given the large number of passengers it is expected to impact (over 7,000 on weekdays) we would like to see clear communications from TfL to the public ahead of the SL15 being introduced and during implementation, to make sure people are aware of the changes and can plan their travel accordingly.

We would also ask TfL to ensure there are good quality pavements and signage between stops to help people adjust to the changes and allow easier interchange. This is particularly important as the EqlA notes that there may be a “small negative disproportionate impact” on those with the protected characteristics of age, disability and pregnancy/maternity. While we recognise these will be outweighed by the large positive impact of introducing the SL15, we nevertheless ask that steps are taken to mitigate the negatives.

### **Consultation communications**

We welcome steps taken by TfL to make the consultation more accessible to the public. This includes providing alternative formats including easy read, audio and British Sign Language (BSL) versions of the proposals and survey, and a BSL conversation service. It is also positive there are posters at relevant bus stops with digital and non-digital ways to find out more information and respond to the consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> [FOI request detail - Transport for London](#)