

**Proposed changes to bus routes 287 and 687 –
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 the proposed changes to routes 287 and 687.

We make the following comments:

Using Maplestead Road and Goresbrook Road instead of Ripple Road (A13)

TfL estimate that a significant number of passenger trips per weekday (2,400) will benefit from rerouting the 287 and 687 onto Maplestead Road and Goresbrook Road. London TravelWatch supports providing bus services where they are most needed. In addition to TfL's estimated figure, we hope that the proposed new routing will further encourage people who live or work nearby to use the bus network to access local amenities and other bus routes and public transport options.

It is reassuring that TfL expect the 287's passengers to benefit from improved reliability as the 287 will have more consistent journey times by avoid the queueing traffic on the A13. Diverting the 287 and 687 away from the upcoming, long-term works on the A13 will be an added benefit to those passengers.

It is positive too that there will be a better waiting environment in future for passengers in the Becontree estate area who currently need to board the 287 and 687 on the A13, but who will instead be able to board on Maplestead Road and Goresbrook Road. We also support the highway changes on those two roads because they will benefit pedestrians and cyclists as well as bus passengers.

However, there will also be passengers negatively impacted by this proposal. TfL acknowledge that 2,600 (38%) of weekday trips board and alight at the stops which will no longer be served by the 287 and 687. Those potentially negatively impacted include 11% using young people tickets and 7% using the Freedom Pass. But TfL adds 'it is likely that the majority of those trips start or end north of the A13,' so those trips won't be broken and those passengers will benefit from the changes. Although it's unclear where the data is to support this claim, it's welcome that it appears far fewer passengers will be negatively affected than it may initially seem.

We welcome too that the high frequency 173 will continue to operate on Ripple Road. We are reassured that TfL say that the 173 will have sufficient capacity for passengers displaced from the 287 without causing crowding. However, we urge TfL to carefully monitor this and to increase the frequency of the 173, if required.

Having to change buses

London TravelWatch knows that passengers don't like changing buses. Time spent doing it is involuntary because having to change is always second best to using a direct service. Changing buses adds extra time to a journey and uncertainty to the timing of the journey. It can also be difficult and stressful especially for passengers such as older and Disabled passengers or those with children or luggage, who choose the bus because it is easier for them to use. Changing buses can potentially mean an extra cost if passengers go outside of the 60-minute Hopper fare window while waiting for their second bus, particularly at night when buses are less frequent.

There is also concern about safety whilst waiting at bus stops, especially at night, when perpetrators of crime have the benefit of dark streets and fewer bystanders. People don't want to be alone for an extended period as it can feel it invites opportunities for people to take advantage when no one else is around. We note from this consultation that 57 trips made on the 287 on a typical day between 18:00 and 06:00 would require a change of bus in future.

Given this, it is critical that changing between buses is as seamless as possible. However, same stop interchange between the 287/687 and 173 will not be possible under these proposals. Instead, passengers will need to walk approximately 150 metres to/from the bus stop they require. It is positive that the walking routes include pelican crossings with tactile paving, and that the bus stops are in a well-lit environment, with shelters, seating and information. But as interchange can be difficult and stressful for some passengers, it may cause some to make their current journey less often in future, or not at all.

The consultation information also does not state which of the interchange bus stops have Countdown screens, only that 'many' do. We ask TfL to install Countdown at those stops currently without it, where possible (prioritising, if needed, the busier stops and/or those more isolated from other facilities).

Conclusion

Taking all matters into consideration, especially TfL's claim that they expect that more people will benefit from the scheme than disbenefit, London TravelWatch supports the proposed changes to the 287 and 687.

Publicising the changes

Should these proposals proceed, TfL need to ensure that clear information, including wayfinding signage, is provided at the affected bus stops about the alternative bus stops which passengers will need to use in future. This must be done well ahead of the changes taking place.