

Proposed creation of route N118 and withdrawal of the weekend only night bus service on route 114 - 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.

Thank you for consulting with us and inviting our views about TfL's proposals to create a new night bus route N118 and make changes to the weekend only night bus service on route 114.

This follows TfL's consultation on the proposed introduction of new night bus route N518 in 2024, with these new plans developed in light of the feedback received. In general, we welcome TfL making changes to their proposals to account for information and feedback provided to them through routes such as consultations, a process which should strengthen final outcomes.

We make the following comments about the new proposals:

New and improved links

We welcome the creation of a new night bus route N118, which is proposed to run between Ruislip Station and Trafalgar Square on all nights. This will increase and improve connections in the area, with new direct links created at night between Ruislip and central London (and locations served in between). We also note there will also be new bus stops, serving locations that previously had no service.

Alongside the new direct links created, it is positive that under these proposals there would be a higher frequency of service on the section of the route served by both the N18 and N518. This will help support increased demand for services along this stretch and likely reduce instances of overcrowding.

Safety and the night bus

The creation of a new night bus route is particularly positive in light of the likely positive impact on safety. In London TravelWatch's [research about personal security when travelling on London's transport network](#)¹ 73% of people said that night-time (10pm to early morning) is the least safe time to travel. It is at night that perpetrators of crime have the benefit of dark streets and fewer bystanders.

The efficiency and reliability of the network therefore has a significant impact on how safe passengers feel. Frequent and direct services reduce the risk of passengers being left stranded or waiting for a long time in dark, unfamiliar or unsafe locations. Especially when travelling at night,

¹ Personal security on London's transport network – recommendations for safer travel, London TravelWatch, 2022

many passengers find it reassuring being able to board a bus and stay on it all the way to their destination, particularly if they are boarding at a well-lit, well populated location.

As such, given that the introduction of a route N118 would allow more people to travel between Trafalgar Square and Ruislip without needing to change bus, we believe this would not only make journeys quicker and easier, but also make people safer. The higher frequency of service between Trafalgar Square and Barham Park Roundabout would also have a similar impact, reducing the average amount of time people have to wait at bus stops.

N118 route

We note that compared to the original N518 proposal there have been some changes made to the planned route of the (newly numbered) N118. We recognise there are trade-offs required in these decisions, with some winners and losers.

The new proposal means the route will no longer parallel the rail line from Rayners Lane to Ruislip Station, nor serve Sudbury Town Station, providing fewer benefits to passengers on the original route. However, we recognise that the new N118 will provide better services for those on the new routeing and restore connections to passengers who used the night only route 114 before it was suspended. Additionally, the bus stops at Sudbury & Harrow Road Station will no longer see a reduction in frequency as in the original proposals, instead maintaining a service level of 4 buses per hour on weeknights and 8 on weekend nights.

We welcome the news that bus stops at Sudbury & Harrow Road Station will be served by the new N118 route, as the reduced frequency and need for some to interchange at these stops under the initial proposals was one of the concerns London TravelWatch raised in its response.

We know that time spent at an interchange is essentially involuntary time because having to change buses will always be second best to using a direct service. It adds additional time to a journey and an uncertainty of timing. Interchange can also be inconvenient, stressful or even impossible for some 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. Less interchange and more frequent buses will also help with safety, with people more likely to be concerned about personal security at night and not wanting long waits at bus stops.

Withdrawal of weekend only night bus service on route 114

While as a general position London TravelWatch would not advocate for the withdrawal of bus routes, given the need to manage resources we reluctantly understand the need for TfL to do so in some situations. Given the weekend-only night service operated on route 114 has been suspended for over five years, we understand that while this will have negatively impacted those using the service at the time, the impacts of withdrawing the service have already largely taken place with passengers finding alternative options. Additionally, we note the new N118 proposal means the western section of the 114 will still be served, and improve from a weekend only service to a daily one.

However, we would encourage TfL to continue monitoring the impacts of any route changes and make adjustments to services as needed. Additionally, where savings have been made due to

withdrawals such as these it is important to put these back into the network, where possible communicating with customers how they have done this.

Bus stop facilities

While we note it is important to have good quality facilities at interchange stops such as those outlined above, we would also like to see this infrastructure in place more generally. Bus stops and bus shelters should be well-lit and free of graffiti, with Countdown information placed at stops at all key locations and as many other stops as possible. This includes at any new bus stops, such as those being created on Alexandra Avenue.

Advertising and responding to the consultation

Turning to the consultation website, we were pleased to see TfL offer multiple channels to respond to this consultation, including via email, telephone and Freepost. It is also positive that these non-digital ways of responding were included on consultation posters and leaflets. We trust these posters have been placed in timetable cases at all bus stops where passengers may be impacted by the proposed changes.

Similarly, we positively note the variety of accessible formats provided, including Easy Read materials, a British Sign Language (BSL) video and consultation conversation service, audio versions, and the option to translate the webpage into a variety of languages. These will help make sure the consultation process is more accessible and inclusive. We strongly encourage TfL to keep offering these options to alert passengers to all consultations so that everyone who wants to respond to them is able to do so.