

Bus route 42 - 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 reduction in the length of route 42.

The proposals and the rationale for the changes

TfL say that the 42 is one of the most unreliable on the bus network, due to heavy traffic delays and the lifting of Tower Bridge. TfL explain that they have investigated ways to try and improve its reliability but that all options are too costly to have any impact on operating a reliable route. They therefore propose to withdraw the 42 between Tooley Street and Liverpool Street, with any passengers in future needing to change to route 78 to travel on that section.

We have the following comments:

Breaking routes because of unreliability and changed demand

We are troubled because, not for the first time, TfL have concluded that problems with heavy traffic delays and reliability are solved by reducing the length of bus routes, with many passengers inconvenienced as a result. We urge TfL to focus more on improving conditions on the roads, whether they be TfL or council owned, to address the underlying issues causing unreliability. In turn, buses would become more reliable without the need to change their route.

This would improve the experience for everyone and encourage a reversal of the decline in the number of people using the 42 in recent years. This decline has surely not been helped since TfL moved the 42 from a high to low frequency bus route five years ago.

Having to change buses

The impact of broken journeys

TfL say that 1,531 daily trips made on the 42 would require interchange between bus routes in future, with 18% of those trips made by passengers using Freedom Passes and young persons' tickets.

TfL admit in their Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) 'that people do not like changing buses,' something that London TravelWatch has long known. 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 an uncertainty of timing of the journey.

Changing buses can also potentially mean an additional cost for passengers if they go outside of the 60-minute Hopper fare window while waiting for their second bus,

particularly at night when buses are less frequent. In this context, we are concerned that TfL say some passengers may have to wait longer at bus stops as the proposals result in a lower frequency of service for some journeys, not least because the 78 will not see any frequency increase except for two early morning journeys.

TfL concede that 'passengers who are elderly, female or have various different needs could be negatively impacted by the proposal as they may need to change buses to complete journeys.' Interchange can be inconvenient and stressful for those individuals - and many others - who may choose to the bus because it is easier for them to use. In this context, it is worrying that one in eight passengers using the 42 are Older Person's Freedom Pass holders.

Safety concerns

Passengers can be concerned for their 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.

TfL refer to an assessment of the impact on safety of women during hours of darkness (18:00-06:00) but do not state how many women would be affected by this proposal so we are unable to fully assess this aspect of the proposal.

Interchange locations

Given the above, it is critical that changing between buses is as seamless as possible.

TfL have identified a pair of stops on Tower Bridge Road where same stop interchange will be possible for passengers changing to/from routes 42 and 78. These stops each have shelter and sufficient seating. Piecing together the information about the interchange stops elsewhere in the EqlA, it appears that real time information and lighting will also be provided at each stop.

Unlike in many other TfL EqlAs, it is not stated here if the suggested interchange stops are in areas predominantly overlooked by housing and natural surveillance from traffic, which may increase safety for those making late-night trips. We hope TfL have considered this factor when identifying appropriate stops for interchange.

Appold Street

TfL explain that stop AP on Appold Street would no longer be served by buses. Passengers who currently board or alight there would need to make their way 230 metres to the alternative stop J on Bishopsgate served by route 78. This is a not inconsiderable distance. It is not stated if the walking and wheeling route between stops AP and J include pelican crossings, tactile paving and dropped kerbs. We therefore urge TfL and the local council to ensure that all this is the case in the affected locations, if it is not so already.

It is also unclear from the EqlA how many passengers will be affected – on page three it says 177 passengers but in three other places it says 68 passengers. We ask TfL which is the correct number and why there is a discrepancy in the same

document. As we have raised both previously with TfL and with this and the current 106/253/254 consultation, it is vital that the information provided for every consultation is thorough, accurate and consistent, so that people can provide a fully considered response when considering TfL's proposals.

Taking all matters into consideration, we retain serious concerns about this proposal.

If TfL decide to proceed with this proposal

Monitoring and evaluation

We note that TfL have said that passenger loading surveys would be undertaken to confirm that the right level of service is being provided and that there are no crowded services. We would ask TfL to offer transparency in the monitoring and publicly provide a summary of the results where possible.

TfL state that capacity requirements and reliability would be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that there is enough resource and level of service. Should further resource be required, we call on TfL to do this as a matter of urgency.

Publicising the route changes

As these are significant changes, TfL will need to ensure that there is clear information about the alternative bus routes including at all current bus stops for route 42.