

67 and 149 bus routes proposed changes – 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 67 and 149.

If these proposals proceed as planned, the 67 would be withdrawn and the northern terminus of the 149 would change from Edmonton Green to Wood Green.

We have the following comments:

Simplifying and rationalising the bus network

TfL note that where services are underused, changes can help provide the right level of service while maintaining important links.

London TravelWatch understands the principle of reviewing the bus network and adapting as needed to make the most effective use of its resources, redirecting them where most needed.

Simplifying the network may make it easier for people to understand and navigate, and re-routing the 149 will maintain the links currently provided by the 67 between Wood Green and Stamford Hill.

Matching demand to capacity

Part of the rationale for these proposals is to better match capacity to demand to address apparent surplus capacity issues. While we understand this requirement, as these proposals focus on route structure rather than frequency it is hard to comment on whether the proposals are reasonable, or risk reducing capacity to a level that is detrimental to passengers.

More concrete information is needed about surplus capacity. At present it is difficult to judge the claims as detailed numbers are not available. We would ask TfL to provide further details in future consultations, so respondents are able to submit more informed responses.

We note that TfL will review service levels as part of the implementation process to ensure that capacity meets demand. We ask that this is monitored on an ongoing basis, with increases to capacity made swiftly if needed. If supply is not well matched to demand, higher occupancy on buses can have create a poorer travelling environment for passengers if there are fewer available seats and more crowding. This is particularly detrimental for some disabled people and those who require a seat.

The context of changes to routes 259, 279 and 349

TfL note that the recent consultation for the above routes ‘aimed to reduce surplus bus capacity.’ In this current consultation, TfL say that their proposals ‘would further reduce surplus capacity and simplify the bus network.’

Given the interconnected locations covered across both consultations, we believe that TfL should have consulted about the proposed changes to all five routes at the same time. We ask both why this did not happen and why it was not addressed in the consultation information. As it is, had people known during the 259/279/349 consultation that TfL were planning to follow up by removing a second bus route between Stamford Hill and Edmonton Green, responses may have been different.

We would therefore ask TfL to at least wait to see the real-world impact of the changes to the 259/279/349 before making further changes.

Taking together the withdrawal of the 149 and 349 north of Stamford Hill, we also ask how many buses per hour will be cut on that busy corridor between Stamford Hill, Tottenham and Edmonton Green.

Route 149

Impact of the proposal

For several years the 149 has consistently been the second most used bus in London. It is therefore not surprising to read that under this proposal approximately 5,225 daily trips currently made on route 149 would require interchange between bus routes in future. This considerable number equates to a significant one in six trips.

The impact of broken journeys

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 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.

Interchange can also be inconvenient and stressful, especially for passengers such as older and Disabled passengers or those with children or luggage, who choose the bus because it is more accessible and easier for them to use. This is particularly of concern as the proposals could also reduce access to medical and disability centres, as noted in the EqIA.

Interchange locations

Given the above, it is critical that changing between buses is as seamless as possible. TfL say that it is working to reduce the impact of having to change buses by planning the network so passengers can easily transfer between services.

We note that same-stop interchange will be available for current route 149 passengers who will need to change to/from route 279 if these proposals go ahead, and that these stops have shelter, seating and a Countdown sign to provide real-time bus arrival information. These are positive features, which we would ask TfL to make sure are available at all stops where possible.

We also note that passengers who currently board route 67 in Dalston Junction Bus Station would instead need to board route 149 at Stop C on Kingsland Road. Though this is 100m away, we note there is a signalised pedestrian crossing and shelter, seating and street lighting at the stop. It is important that the journey between stops is easy and accessible, so these are positive attributes. We also ask that TfL ensure the pavement is good quality and there is sufficient wayfinding signage.

Safety concerns

Passengers can be concerned for their safety whilst waiting at bus stops, especially before dawn and after dusk, 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 know this is particularly a concern for some passengers, for example women and girls.

It is positive TfL have reviewed interchange locations and potential new pedestrian routes to determine whether existing facilities "help to provide a safe waiting environment" and if any additional mitigations are needed. It is important safety features such as good street lighting and CCTV are in place, along with making sure the stops aren't isolated (in this instance they are near a restaurant and residences).

New links

TfL state that re-routeing the 149 would create new direct links between Wood Green and Green Lanes, and King William Street and London Bridge, though our understanding is that those links already exist on the more direct route 141. TfL also talk of new direct links between Wood Green, Green Lanes, West Green Road, La Rose Lane, St Ann's Road, and Kingsland Road and Shoreditch High Street. This restores the direct connections which existed before TfL severed them in 2019 when it withdrew route 67 south of Dalston. We welcome these returned connections, with passengers travelling between these locations having quicker journey times and no longer needing to change bus.

The benefits of bus priority

The current routeing of the 149 benefits from significant stretches of bus priority on the A10, to help provide more consistent journey times and improve reliability. It is unclear if there are, or will be, bus priority measures in place to prevent the 'new' 149 from becoming slower and more unreliable on the section between St. Ann's Road and Wood Green. We would appreciate TfL confirming their plans and would strongly

encourage bus priority measures be put into place to accompany the changes where needed.

Wood Green High Road

In its 2023 consultation on proposed changes to bus routes in Wood Green, TfL stated that the level of bus service on the High Road was higher than required to provide enough capacity and it was proposed (and now been implemented) to withdraw routes 123 and 232 from that road. However, TfL now propose to send the even more frequent route 149 there at the expense of its current northern end of the route. This appears to be contradictory and we would welcome further data from TfL to explain this change of approach.

Route N149

TfL propose to renumber the 149's night service as N149 and for it to continue the 149's current route between Edmonton Green and London Bridge. However, we believe that it is potentially confusing to have this associated number as the routes of the 149 and N149 would be significantly different.

The Weaver line alternative

We note that parallel to this consultation is TfL's plan to run an additional train per hour on the Weaver line's Enfield Town and Cheshunt branches during the weekday off peak, though this is subject to confirmation and would not begin until at least May 2027.

Whilst such a frequency increase is welcome in its own right, it will also provide additional service options for some people who currently use the bus. We therefore ask that if the proposed changes to route 149 do take place, TfL wait until the increase in frequency on the Weaver line has been introduced.

We also note that the Weaver line is not an option for everyone. For instance, the cost of single journeys by Overground are higher than the equivalent point to point cost by bus, some key locations on the 149's route, such as Shoreditch and Dalston, are not served by the Weaver line, and there are only three Weaver line stations with step free access on the 149's route. And of course, the bus will usually take passengers much closer to where they want to go than a train, which is particularly important for people who have may accessibility needs.

Consultation information

We note there is no FAQs section on the website, unlike for the other two live bus consultations, and ask why. We would expect TfL to pre-prepare some questions and answers for the most important aspects of this consultation.

We also note that the A4 poster for the 67 and 149 does not explain what the changes are but the equivalent poster for the 106/253/254 consultation does (see

screengrab below). We ask that in future TfL provide such a summary of the changes on posters for passengers to see.

We are proposing to make changes to bus routes 67 and 149:

- **Route 67 currently runs between Wood Green and Dalston Junction.**
- **Route 149 currently runs between Edmonton Green and London Bridge.**

For more information, to view maps and have your say, please scan the QR code or:

We are proposing to restructure bus routes 106, 253 and 254:

- **Route 254 would be withdrawn.**
- **Route 106 would be extended to serve Aldgate bus station and also increased in frequency.**
- **Route 253 would be increased in frequency.**

For more information, to view maps and have your say, please scan the QR code or:

Conclusion

Taking all matters into consideration, London TravelWatch has significant concerns about these proposals to re-route the 149 to Wood Green and withdraw route 67.

As one of the most used bus routes in London the changes to route 149 would result in a large number of passengers needing to change buses on their journey where previously it was direct. This results in longer and less predictable journey times, reducing the quality of passengers' journeys and making bus travel less attractive, and is more likely to negatively impact disabled people and older passengers.

We also have concerns about these proposals in light of changes to routes 259, 279 and 349, which are already reducing capacity in busy key corridors, for example the key stretch between Manor House and Seven Sisters where the frequency of buses would be more than halved. We would like to see the impact of these cuts monitored and evaluated before further capacity reductions are made as outlined in these proposals.

However, if TfL do decide to proceed with this proposal, we call on them to focus on the following:

Monitoring and evaluation

We note TfL's statement that 'passenger loading surveys would be undertaken on all affected routes to confirm that the right level of service is being provided and that there are no crowded services', and that capacity and reliability would be reviewed on an ongoing basis. We welcome this continued monitoring and ask TfL to be ready to take swift action if needed to address any issues as they arise. We would also ask

for transparency in this process to reassure passengers the changes are indeed being sufficiently monitored and amended if needed.

Reinvesting savings

TfL say that they “continuously review and adapt the bus network to reflect changing customer needs”, including changes to make sure services operate in areas where people need them most. While we understand the logic behind this, it is important to put these resources back into the network and be transparent about where they have been redirected to.

Publicising the route changes

TfL will need to ensure that there is clear information about the changes online and in-person, including at all current bus stops for routes 67 and 149. We also support the plans to provide detailed maps, journey planning tools and travel mentoring to help passengers understand the changes and adapt journeys, as needed.