Public Event

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LONDON TRAVELWATCH

Chief Executive's report

Author: Michael Roberts, Chief Executive

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Business Plan themes: update and status

Themes	Lead	Update	Status
1 More seamless journeys	MR	Continued engagement re interchange at Stratford and positive Budget announcement of TIF funding. LTW floating bus stop bypass statement and meeting with Will Norman. Engagement with TfL re Oxford Street pedestrianisation.	
2 Better transport services	AS	Met TfL to discuss Overground performance issues, with more engagement planned. Continue raising concerns about bus services, including changes to the network with TfL, and looking at joint work with Bus Alliance to build on this.	
3 More accessible, inclusive & secure transport	AS	Personal security reporting research now published. Positive response from stakeholders, continuing to engage esp. with taskforce. Received response from TfL on lift reliability, continue to monitor this and looking at supporting comms in next month.	
4 Greater TfL ambition in building trust	MR	LTW VfM research being prepped for publication in the autumn. Quarterly customer meeting with TfL held in September. Planning of comms campaign on one of the five drivers behind TfL's care score yet to start.	
5 Closer working with Transport Committee	AS	Regular meetings with AMs and GLA staff ongoing. Michael was a panellist at a Budget & Performance Committee session on TfL revenue forecasting. Our response also cited in Transport Committee's report on autonomous passenger vehicles.	
6 Improved casework operations	SJ	Caseworkers have new phones/app to record calls with appellants. Management checks have been updated and are in use. Changes introduced in managing LTW initial case handling, significantly improving compliance with managing people's data.	

Completed or going well	Under way or ongoing	Not going well	Not started	No longer applicable

1 Overview

The status of activity against the six business plan themes is set out in the table above. Further detail on themes one and four, where I have the lead, is provided in the section below.

Compared with my report to the September Board, the table shows a status improvement for themes 3,5 and 6 to green, and for theme 1 to amber. The changes reflect cautiously optimistic judgements, balancing where there may have been a recent positive development (such as publication of the personal security report under theme 3, or approval of our budget for next year as part of theme 5), with recognition that there is still more to be done in every case (for example, on accessibility as part of theme 3).

2 Business plan themes 1 and 4

Theme 1 (more seamless journeys) covers our work on streetspace and interchanges. Under streetspace, our statement on floating bus stop bypasses (BSBs) - relevant also to our work under theme 3 on accessibility - has opened up a useful dialogue with the Walking and Cycling Commissioner about cyclist behaviour at crossings at BSBs (see the item further below under section 3). The team also engaged with TfL about the quality of its communications about the changes arising from Oxford Street pedestrianisation ahead of the removal of traffic on 26th October. We plan to review how the changes have bedded in during the coming weeks.

Following our assessment of three key public transport interchanges, I have focused on the need for improvement at Stratford in particular during various recent meetings with TfL. In a welcome development – though not as a result of those meetings - the Government announced plans in its Budget for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) mechanism to address capacity constraints at Stratford station. We will need to consider how best to engage with this initiative as it takes shape.

Theme 4 (greater TfL ambition in building trust) covers our engagement with TfL on their customer care strategy, as well as our work on value for money (one of the factors which scores lowest among the individual elements covered in TfL's headline customer care survey score). As mentioned in the Campaigns and Advocacy report, the team are looking to publish our VfM research findings within the next month. Section 3 below also includes an update on our most recent quarterly customer care meeting with TfL.

3 Stakeholder engagement

Transport for London

In early November, I met Walking and Cycling Commissioner Will Norman at his request, following our recent statement on floating bus stops. Although he disagreed with our call for a pause on the further roll-out of bus stop bypasses

(BSBs), we agreed on the importance of improving cyclist behaviour at zebra crossings serving BSBs as well as more generally. A range of options to encourage behavioural change is being pursued and we hope to engage with his team on this over the coming months.

Following my meeting in August with TfL COO Claire Mann, I met her again in October together with Dave Hooper, MD Network Rail Southern Region. We discussed my suggestion that it would be good for TfL and national rail (GBR in due course) to have a common set of priorities for rail in and around London.

It was clear that, while there is much engagement taking place at different levels on individual issues between the two entities, there was currently no single document where the strands were brought together in a way which showed that their respective progammes were aligned in the best interests of the travelling public. The three of us agreed to commission an initial paper setting out conceptually what such document might cover, for us to discuss in the coming months before deciding any next steps.

I met David Rowe, TfL's Director of Investment Delivery Planning, to discuss the status of upgrades to Euston and Euston Square Underground stations as part of proposals for the HS2 terminus at Euston. In my discussions with Network Rail, TfL and the Euston Development Company, my concerns about the poor quality of interchange between the Tube and the existing national rail station had grown deeper in the absence of firm funding commitments for the HS2-related improvements to the Underground.

I was briefed on emerging plans to secure funding for the improvements via a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) mechanism: an announcement to this effect was subsequently made as part of the Budget on 28 November. The Budget also included welcome reference to a TIF-style mechanism to address capacity constraints at Stratford station, another location of concern which I have raised in recent meetings with TfL following our assessment of three major public transport interchanges (see my report to the July Board meeting).

Alex and I had our latest quarterly meeting on customer care issues with Mark Evers, who was joined by Emma Strain, TfL's Customer Director. We discussed progress against the nine in-year milestones on TfL's customer roadmap: the one related to service provision on the London Overground is proving particularly challenging (see also the Campaigns report and dashboard report provided for this Board meeting). We also agreed in principle that TfL would return to the Board in approximately six months to follow up the discussion about bus complaints at the September meeting.

National Rail

During September and October, I held a number of meetings with Network Rail executives related to ongoing improvements at Euston. The move toward “One West Coast” as part of wider rail reform, and the transfer of Avanti West

Coast to public ownership, are focusing industry minds on the need to demonstrate some wins for rail customers as a result of the changes.

A package of measures at Euston is already due to be rolled out in the short term, including making better use of the ticket hall (unlikely to be controversial, but we have stressed the requirement to consult on this) and further improvements to toilets at the station. In September, the Secretary of State announced a further tranche of £50 million available over three years for further improvements, ahead of more substantial changes expected in the longer-term associated with HS2.

I met SWR's MD Lawrence Bowman and his Chief Customer and Commercial Officer, together with Transport Focus colleagues, in late September. We discussed SWR's improvement plan based on the 4Ts (trains, tracks/signals, timetable, team) and their approach to timetable improvements, which in future will be made incrementally over 4 phases rather than as a single "big bang" change. We also discussed the importance of horizontal integration between what will become GBR and TfL.

Alex, Transport Focus colleagues and I also met Chris Fowler, the MD of GTS Rail Operations, and his Customer Experience Director: GTS operates the Elizabeth line for TfL. GTSR clarified that they look to TfL's Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) metrics and targets as the key driver for their priorities, rather than the Rail Customer Experience Survey used more broadly by the rail industry.

GTSR see customer information as an important area to invest in, as well as timetable improvements particularly at the western end of the Elizabeth line. They were interested to learn more about what our recent VfM research findings revealed about Elizabeth line serivces, which we will follow up once the research is published. We also touched on the management of some of the key stations on the line, including the need for improvements at Stratford.

In October, I met Paul Bowden, Commercial Director at Rail Delivery Group for an update following his response to our concerns about the display of contactless fare information on rail industry websites and apps. Overall, the initial reponse has been encouraging, with some players planning to make changes either in the immediate or short terms, and others still considering what they might be able to do. I will continue to engage with RDG with the aim of securing delivery of any necessary changes by all relevant operators by next spring.

London Assembly

Alex and I had our latest regular meeting with Caroline Russell AM in October: we shared updates on our work and the the work of the Transport Committee, most notably their report on autonomous passenger vehicles. We have our next Transport Committee member meetings in the diary with Thomas Turrell AM, Hina Bokhari AM, Elly Baker AM and Keith Prince AM over the next fortnight.

I took part in the Budget and Performance Committee's October session looking into Transport for London's record of forecasting its passenger income, as part of the Committee's annual budgetary scrutiny. Data shared at the session showed that over the last 15 years, TfL had tended to over-estimate, rather than under-estimate, projected revenue; in relative terms, the difference between projected and actual revenue was small, but in absolute terms and aggregated over the period, the gap was significant.

The session was an opportunity for me to restate our concerns about the pressure on renewals and maintenance investment, the need for more clarity around assumptions on fare evasion rates and the need to improve the attractiveness of bus services.

4 Organisational development

Our request for an increased budget for 2027/28 has been approved, following discussion at the London Assembly's Oversight Committee and a majority vote at the November meeting of the Transport Committee. The increase will enable us to create a new post in the Campaign and Advocacy team focused mainly on rail issues, buy in some external support to help manage our operations, and increase the salary on offer to the next CEO. We are due to present our next business plan to the Transport Committee at its meeting on 2nd December.

Following an invitation to three agencies for expressions of interest, Starfish have been appointed as our partner to help recruit our next CEO.

The local government pay settlement which determines the annual pay award for London Assembly members and London TravelWatch board members has been agreed for 2026/27 at 3.3%. Once we receive formal confirmation of this, we will reflect it in Board members' pay, backdated to April. We await the conclusion of GLA negotiations on the current year's pay award for its staff, which determines the award for the London TravelWatch team.

The transition to our new HR support arrangments have taken longer to implement than expected. I have raised the issue with our partner, HRI, and we have arranged weekly update calls to support an increased pace of implementation.

Our work with Transport Focus to agree a new Memorandum of Understanding, particularly to reflect the forthcoming changes associated with national rail reform, continues to progress. The focus now is on incorporating into the MoU the issues traditionally covered by the Collaboration Agreement between the two organisations. We are also working with Transport Focus to make clearer what we want to achieve and how we engage on the most important current rail reform issues for our organisations.

The annual accounts and letters of representation/audit engagement have now been signed and the accounts will shortly be posted as usual on our website.

The final details of our new office lease (due to start in the next few days) are being concluded between both sets of solicitors. As I previously advised Board members by email, the landlord is proceeding with a planning application to Southwark Council to convert parts of the building into a hotel. The expectation remains that, assuming planning permission is granted, work would not start on the building for several years to come.

5 Future Board meetings

The next regular meeting of the Board is as a members' event, scheduled for Thursday 21st January 2027 1000-1300 at London TravelWatch.