Public Event
11.11.26

LONDON TRAVELWATCH

Campaigns & Advocacy Report

Author: Alex Smith, Head of Campaigns & Advocacy

Board paper: LTW850
Agenda item: 06
Drafted: 03.11.2026

Better transport services

Buses

Following the letter we sent to TfL raising our concerns about changes to the bus network and how they were being conducted, we met with TfL's bus planning and operations team to discuss our concerns. They shared the reasoning behind recent consultations, including changing passenger demand and financial pressures, and we spoke about how they could improve communications to passengers. While it was a useful discussion, we remain concerned about continued service cuts, particularly at a time when passenger numbers are already falling, and whether TfL is properly considering passengers' needs.

We raised these concerns with the London Bus Alliance (LBA), which reconvened after a hiatus. Several members shared our concerns about the ongoing changes to the bus network, including route changes and withdrawals, and we have agreed to explore what collective action we might take on the matter. We are now developing next steps to share with LBA members, alongside our continued individual engagement with TfL.

The LBA meeting also provided a useful opportunity to discuss concerns about bus driver training, particularly on hate crime and accessibility, slow journey times and roadworks. These are all issues London TravelWatch has previously raised, and we will continue to monitor them over the coming months.

Network performance

Following significant performance issues on the Mildmay line, we met the team responsible for its operation to discuss the causes of disruption and their plans to improve it. Driver shortages have been a key problem (also impacting the Windrush Line), and while recruitment has increased this will take some time. We will continue to monitor this. Problems with Network Rail infrastructure is another issue driving poor performance, and we are planning to raise this with Network Rail shortly. We have also scheduled a meeting with First Rail, who operate the service, to understand their perspective and how they are addressing the challenges.

We also have concerns about Greater Thameslink Railway's (GTR) performance. GTR has been consistently near the bottom of TOC performance tables and the Rail

Customer Experience Survey customer satisfaction rankings. We'll be attending performance seminars with the operator shortly to understand the underlying issues and what they are doing to improve services.

Our internal dashboards (monitoring performance on National Rail and TfL services) have also highlighted a wider pattern of performance issues across the network over the summer. Based on initial conversations with stakeholders the lengthy periods of hot weather seem to be one of the key drivers, resulting in various infrastructure and technical difficulties. We'll be engaging with industry as they consider lessons learned and encourage measures to mitigate the impact of hot weather in future.

Personal security

We published our new research examining the reporting process for people who have experienced or witnessed hate crime, violence against women and girls (VAWG) or sexual harassment while travelling in London. The findings highlight serious issues with the current reporting system, and we're calling for transport providers and policing authorities to take immediate action to address them. This should include better staff training, further awareness campaigns and changes to the current reporting system – with the ultimate aim of a simple, supportive, accessible and trusted pathway with a single front door.

The research has received some good media coverage and a positive response from stakeholders. We'll continue engaging with decision makers, including through the Mayor's Transport Hate Crime and VAWG taskforce, to make the case for change. In particular, we are aiming to secure a commitment from the taskforce to implement some of our recommendations in the end of year report. We also submitted evidence to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee's inquiry into safer journeys for women and girls.

Accessibility of transport

We continue our work pressing TfL to improve the reliability of lifts, escalators and toilets on their network. They have now replied to the letter we sent outlining our concerns and the improvements in lift reliability we expect to see. In the response TfL acknowledged the issues and noted the actions they are taking to address it. We will continue monitoring the situation. We are also planning public communications to highlight our focus on the issue, showing the impact it can have on people and why it's important to urgently improve lift reliability.

We continue to engage with the DfT as they develop Accessible Travel Charters, which aim to bring together best practice across the transport industry and complement modal accessibility plans. We have reviewed initial plans and provided our feedback, and while we believe there is further work to be done overall we think they are a positive addition, particularly regarding buses.

We met TfL to discuss their refresh of the Equity in Motion programme, with the strategy currently under review with the aim of agreeing new actions beginning from autumn 2027. We were invited to give feedback about possible actions across key

themes, and we spoke about issues including safety, accessibility, digital exclusion, concessionary fares and the use of AI and technology.

It has also been confirmed there will be level boarding for Elizabeth Line services at Old Oak Common station. This is something we had been campaigning for, and we very much welcome the news.

Value for money

We are finalising outputs from our value for money research, and plan to publish a summary report along with the full findings within the next month. This will be accompanied by stakeholder engagement to share the findings and encourage decision makers to take targeted action to improve value for money on their services.

Working with the GLA Transport Committee

We continue our regular engagement with key stakeholders at the London Assembly, including with the transport leads for each party and the Transport Committee secretariat. We continue to support the work of the committee, and were pleased to note London TravelWatch was referenced multiple times in the Committee's report on autonomous passenger vehicles.

We also continue to work with the London Assembly more widely, including submitting a response to the transport aspects of the Draft London Plan. Michael also spoke on a panel giving evidence to the London Assembly's Budget and Performance Committee. The discussion focused on TfL's approach to forecasting passenger income, and Michael set out our concerns about the level of renewals and maintenance funding, bus services and assumptions around fare evasion.

Other updates

- We continue our regular fortnightly meetings with TfL to discuss emerging issues. Recent topics include their work to manage demand on "hot routes" (the most crowded parts of the network), Oxford Street pedestrianisation, the impact of escalator problems at Angel station and improving road safety data.
- I went to an EHRC Equality Exchange event. The session brought together watchdogs and regulators from across the transport industry to discuss how to embed equality considerations into delivery of work, particularly regarding accessible transport, and share good practice.
- I attended an event on the future of shared micromobility, with speakers from the DfT, TfL, Lime and the London Boroughs of Hackney and Hammersmith and Fulham. The discussion looked at the opportunities of shared micromobility, including improving first-mile-last-mile connectivity and supporting the Mayor's target for 80% of all journeys to made by sustainable transport. It also recognised the challenges such as bikes obstructing pavements, insufficient parking and inconsistency of approach across boroughs. We will continue advocating for improvements including through future dockless e-bike regulation.
- I met Waymo to discuss London TravelWatch's response to the Transport Committee's investigation into autonomous passenger vehicles, including our

concerns about the potential impact of AVs on congestion and buses, and the safety of passengers and other road users. We also spoke about accessibility and the need for data sharing for transparency and to help inform transport planning. We'll continue to monitor this issue as plans to introduce regulation to allow driverless taxis to operate progress.

- We continue to attend the Travel Demand Management Forum for London. In the most recent session, the group received a presentation by TfL's Resilience and Partnership team, details of planned closures over the festive period and an overview of Operation London Bridge (the plans that would be put into effect following the King's death). The group also went on tours of TfL's Surface and Rail Control Centres including hearing how TfL work to provide updates to passengers during disruptions.
- We joined the latest meeting of the Better Bus Southwark Advisory Group (part of Southwark Council's Better Bus Partnership with TfL). The meeting discussed the proposals and local engagement being undertaken on the different sections of the strategic corridor between London Bridge and the South Circular Road
- We joined a Department for Transport Safer Streets event hosted by Connected Places Catapult to explore the feasibility of a single national reporting mechanism across all modes of public transport. There were a range of interesting discussions and exercises, with a focus on whether a local or national mechanism would be most effective and viable. We hope to receive feedback from the event in the coming weeks.