

Transport Committee – 6 June 2013

Transcript of Item 4: Bus Services in London

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): The way we are going to structure this morning is that we, the Committee Members, have some introductory questions for the panel, a very broad set of questions about the bus services and the future of bus services in London, then we will come to our guests in the public seating. All of you are welcome. We have some roving microphones and we will have about 20 minutes from you on the topics you want to raise.

Then we will come back to our guests. We want to specifically focus in the second half on the planning of bus routes. How do things get changed? How do they not get changed? Are they changed in the right way? What are our frustrations and happinesses about Transport for London's (TfL) planning processes around buses? We will come back to our audience there and I know many of you have had experiences of trying to deal with TfL about bus routes, so we would like to get into that set of issues. Then of course we will be having a second session in July, so we will have homed in a bit more on the issues.

As well as our guests, we also have two senior representatives from TfL. Leon Daniels, the Managing Director of Surface Transport, is here and John Barry, the man who helps him run the buses. Although they are not on the main desk today, they are actually here to listen to what is being said and will be sitting at the table at the second meeting, so TfL are here to listen which I think is very good of them. Thank you very much for that.

As well as what you have to say today and our guests, we are trying to run a bit more of an open-ended consultative process for this scrutiny. There are 6½ million bus users every day. We hope we do not hear from all of them but we would like to get a sample of opinion from around London. To that end, you will find there are some comment postcards that have been run off. We have a box of them here. If you want to take any away for your user group or your pensioner group or whatever, so we are looking for comments there. Of course, you can email us as well. We already have some substantial written comments from organisations and members of the public. Because this is quite a long scrutiny, you will have quite a long time to get those comments in and we will do our best to analyse them. We would like it to be spread across London. We do not want it just to be one or two hotspots.

Can I welcome our guests. We have Councillor Derek Levy from the London Borough of Enfield, which is doing a very interesting experiment on trying to replan bus services with TfL. We have Stephen Locke who is our new chair of London TravelWatch. Welcome, Stephen, and for the excellent contribution that TravelWatch has already put in writing to this scrutiny. Welcome to Vincent Stops who is a well-known expert within TravelWatch on all things to do with the bus. Faryal Velmi, the Director of Transport for All, has appeared at this Committee many times and has done some excellent work on disability access in its broadest sense on transport in London. We have Wayne King who is a Regional Bus Officer from Unite, the union, because we know our colleagues who drive the buses and help run the buses everyday will have broader comments

about that bus service and we want to hear from you. Then Professor Peter White from the University of Westminster, again, an expert on public transport, has put in a very helpful submission which we appreciate. Thank you all of you for giving up your time today.

I am going to kick off by giving each of our guests a chance to make your opening comments. We are looking for what you think are the key issues facing the bus services in London at the moment and for the future. So what are the things on your mind about the bus services in London? I think particularly things like the efficiency of the bus service, how it is dealing with demand, with population growth, issues with employment and access to services.

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): I am just going to raise one issue with the Committee. We are very interested in this inquiry at London TravelWatch. We think it is timely and we think there are some major questions that need to be addressed.

The one issue I would like to raise is that of bus priority. London TravelWatch, as you know, is a multimodal organisation, unusually and uniquely so, I think, where we deal with the full range of modes of transport. But we make no apology whatsoever for liking buses a lot. We like them because they are efficient users of road space and because they do a great job in moving people around the capital. They are hugely important to many millions of passengers and the interests of bus users are often not heard as loudly or as clearly as they need to be. So we take our job of representing the interests of bus users particularly seriously.

We also believe very strongly that bus priority is a major and ongoing issue in the interests of the efficient operation of London's transport network as a whole. To that extent, we rather regret the disbandment of the TfL bus priority unit back in 2008 because we think there is a wide job to be done in encouraging, persuading and providing incentives for better bus priorities in a number of different places.

I would stress also that goes well beyond the issue just of bus lanes. It is about bus turning. It is about parking controls. It is about the detailed design of the urban realm and the way that it accommodates buses because all of those things add up to a more efficient and therefore more user-friendly network.

One thing that is quite striking and which may also explain why there are relatively few complaints in this area is that the incremental changes from just one or two minutes here or there may not seem very much in an individual journey but they are very important for the network as a whole. Quite often, we think it is important to pursue bus priorities even where they may only seem to make relatively small individual savings of time simply because of the impact they have on the overall journey and on the network as a whole.

So that is my opening bid. It is bus priorities and the way in which they are reflected in policymaking.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): There is no doubt if we were sitting here 10-15 years ago that the buses outside on the streets of London looked very different. In that time, down to the campaigning and lobbying of many disabled campaigners and also very good

decisions that have been made in terms of improving access, we have seen a real sea change when it comes to accessible facilities available on buses and more and more disabled and older people exercising their right to ride and getting out there.

Some of the main issues we have in terms of this investigation which we also very much welcome are to do with rush-hour travel in particular. Travelling as a disabled or older person at rush-hour can often be quite a nightmare situation. Getting actually onto the bus as a wheelchair user or as a visually impaired person with a cane or with a guide dog is very difficult. We have a Government drive to get more disabled people to work. If you cannot get on the bus to actually get to work, whether you are going or coming back, then I think we have a big issue. So this is definitely something that we would like to see.

We are also obviously seeing a move over to Personal Independence Payments (PIP). Thousands of people are actually going to be pushed into the bus networks, some for the first time, as they lose access to their Motability vehicles and Blue Badges and various other travel concessions, so again we very well may see an increase of disabled people, some for the first time, using buses.

There are other concerns as well and other issues that we would like raised around access to National Health Service (NHS) facilities which perhaps will come up later on.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): We are going to do a little section later on about the NHS in particular because we feel it is a particular issue.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Great. Absolutely. Yes, it is very important.

Peter White (Professor of Public Transport Systems, University of Westminster): I have monitored what has been happening in the bus industry over many years, both in London and elsewhere, and as you know London has experienced a very strong growth in bus use, in marked contrast to the average pattern in the rest of Britain.

One of the particular factors that comes with that is the very large increase in bus kilometres run and the level of service provided, which not only means you have good daytime frequencies but in London you have an exceptionally high level of service in the evenings, on Sundays and overnight, which means the network is providing a much more comprehensive facility than it would be doing even in some other quite large cities in Britain.

The stability in car ownership rates for the last 15 years is also noteworthy. It is worth asking the question whether that is influenced itself by the high level of public transport provision, as well as factors such as congestion and parking.

It is also the case that the very extensive use of information technology in London does create opportunity for exploiting that for planning purposes in addition to the existing techniques, with a high proportion of passengers using an Oyster card. That generates a lot of data on, for example, patterns of usage by time of day. The iBus system generates a lot of data, likewise, on monitoring bus performance which could feed into more reliable scheduling in future.

It seems to me there are two crucial issues. One is how far could you incorporate local initiatives in the current comprehensive network planning framework? One question there is obviously you may have one local group pressing for a certain service change and you need to consider whether that might be offset by disbenefits to other user groups in making some comprehensive evaluation, for example, on the rerouting of a service.

The other is the effective use of peak capacity. The average load factors in London are reasonably high and obviously if you have further growth in population and employment, that does raise the question in particular of effective use of capacity in the peak times.

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): Obviously, there is a population growth expected of a million plus people in the next ten years. Fifty million journeys were taken in one week in the capital recently. The concern is that there does not appear to be any plan for investment in the future but there is a continual cut in the bus subsidy which creates a downward pressure onto the operators and downward pressure onto our workers and Londoners. The concern is that with the continual cuts this is only going to get worse.

We do not want to end up in the situation we were in the 1980s and 1990s when there was horrendous turnover in employment in bus workers where the money was not good enough. People just left and the service deteriorated because of the continual cuts to the TfL budget. Something needs to stop. The Mayor recently said that the buses are the backbone of the London transport system. The concern is you cannot keep cutting away at the backbone without there being a failure sooner or later.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Yes, the turnover of bus drivers is an issue for the quality of the service as well?

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): It is a serious concern. The concerns obviously are that for every single London bus operator now they have introduced a new starter rate of pay. The reason we are given is the continual cuts to the bus service subsidies, therefore the contract price that they have to tender out is lower, therefore they cannot make the profits to give to the shareholders, therefore the downward pressure only ends up on Londoners because the majority of our members live in and around London, so Londoners are suffering because of the continual cuts to the subsidy.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): Just to say, most people here have said a lot of the things I would want to say. There are two issues I want to bring up really at the moment. First of all, I am here as a representative of Enfield and in many respects a representative of myself. I cannot speak for the rest of the London boroughs and a number of comments I am going to make probably do convey some of the views that other boroughs have had from meetings I have had.

The first thing I want to touch on which I think we need to talk about later on is the fares system of transport in London. It seems to me that for all sorts of reasons it is a very inflexible system. It seems absurd to me that for a person to get onto a bus, if they choose not to use an

Oyster card, at the moment they have to pay as much as £2.40 simply to take one or two stops. The flexibility of the fare system has to be looked at significantly. I think of experiences in cities like Prague and other European cities where you pay a certain sum, usually a round-figure sum, not with pence or cents, and you can get on for an hour or so. You may be able to have unlimited travel. It is almost like a one-hour travel card. That is something I particularly would like to advocate in terms of bus usage, not least because bus services very often operate not as efficiently as I would like in the areas of greatest deprivation where the people who need to use the bus services at unsocial hours find there is no bus service or the buses do not go to where they want them at the times they want them, so flexibility in fares and flexibility in service.

However, the principal point I am here to speak to today and will probably tease out later on is the route planning or, as some people would say, the lack of route planning, with the greatest of respect to Mr [Leon] Daniels. The starting point that I and a number of other councillors and council officers feel is that it is rather like after the Lord Mayor's Show where massive amounts of money was put into a fantastic stakeholder consultation, inviting people to comment and suggest what they would like to hear, and then we got a letter six months later that says, "The 536 is going to stop two bus stops further down", and the rest of the system does not change. So there is a bit of inertia and a lack of flexibility in the way buses are planned.

I would rather say, instead of planning routes on a route-by-route basis, which is the current broad model, in boroughs, even sub-regions but certainly in boroughs, one actually has to take a much more strategic view because changing anything on one route has an impact on route two and route three. The reverse domino effect is probably what I would call it. So, for me, I would like to take a strategic view and when we talk a little bit more about Enfield, I can take questions on it.

What we have sought to do is actually look at the bus map of Enfield, take all the routes off and leave a blank canvas of map and redraw the map completely. What would an Enfield bus map look like to respond to the present and, more importantly, to five years' time, taking into accounting new schools, new regeneration projects and the changes in the health service that was referred to earlier on and simply actually redraw it.

I will say at this point, with one eye on Mr [Leon] Daniels, we have started this exercise on the basis that any changes we are proposing in the review we are doing are cost-neutral and kilometre-neutral. We know how much money we have. We know how many miles we have.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): I think the one thing we are all agreed on is that the London bus is really important and it is the unsung hero, really, of the transport system in London and it is high time we talked more about it and its future.

Richard Tracey (AM): One of the remarks made by Faryal has prompted a question from me. You mentioned an increasing number of wheelchair users on buses, which we all very much welcome. But how do we cope with the battle of the wheelchairs against the buggies? There are more and more young mothers and fathers with buggies and the buggies seem to be becoming larger and larger, as far as I can see, almost like small vehicles. There is a serious battle in fitting all these onto our buses.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, it is a good question. I think there are a number of answers to that. There has definitely been (and absolutely a welcome thing) a real sign that more and more disabled people are using buses and wheelchair users in particular are getting on and travelling on our bus network. This battle, as it were, is played out every single day. We get numerous calls to our helpline on a weekly basis that wheelchair users are absolutely frustrated that after having waited for the bus 10, 20, 30, 40 minutes, up to an hour sometimes, because bus after bus has a pushchair in the space.

I think there are a number of solutions or things to attempt to try and deal with the situation. One thing is looking at bus design. If we are dealing with a growth in bus users, we need to see a faster evolution of the way that our buses are designed. This is a real concern. We would like to see a bus base that can accommodate a wheelchair user and a pushchair user. However, the wheelchair user having priority is a big thing. Increasingly, we welcome TfL's efforts to promote the priority space for wheelchair users, but if we are looking at the future we would like to see buses on London streets that can accommodate both. Disabled people have children, too, so a lot of wheelchair users would like to see a situation where both could be easily accommodated.

The other frustrating thing in London as well sometimes is the difference of bus layout. There are so many different bus designs out there and unfortunately we do not seem to have a situation where we have a best practice and then that is replicated and we are disappointed with the New Bus for London, for example, which has a smaller wheelchair space than some of the other buses on the streets of our city. The evolution of bus design emphasising a priority of wheelchair users is a big key.

I would also like to say that recently TfL brought out a scheme for which we have been lobbying for quite a long time where scooter users are allowed on buses and there is actually a particular design of scooter. There is a list which we give out all the time, "Is my scooter on this list? Yes". What about the same thing for buggies? If buggy users want to be using buses regularly, then perhaps there should be more co-operation. Maybe we could have a kitemark to say this buggy is for bus use. Certainly, as a mother myself, I often travel with a friend in a wheelchair and a buggy. It is hard work and we need to look at ways we can get around this.

Richard Tracey (AM): The question of demand, if I can move on to that. Where is there the greatest demand for bus services in London?

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): It varies. Looking at the condition brief yesterday, the 207, the 38, the 29, the 253, the 12 and the 23 seem to be the highest populated routes or the busiest routes, however that is quantified. It seems to be more because of the areas that they travel through than anything else. They are the ones that take the most passengers because they go through the centre of London.

Richard Tracey (AM): It is through the centre of London specifically?

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): Quite a few of them will start on the outskirts of London, Stoke Newington, Westbourne Park, but it is the routes they take through the centre of London that seem to create the highest passenger volume.

Peter White (Professor of Public Transport Systems, University of Westminster): It is worth pointing out you have some very high flows within the suburban areas. The 207, for example, does not actually enter central London, so one of the major roles of the buses is very often in providing intensive local networks into places like Croydon, Kingston, Romford, etc and inter-suburban links, as well as the obvious confluence in central London.

Richard Tracey (AM): Is that dictated to an extent, then, by particularly successful shopping centres or universities or what?

Peter White (Professor of Public Transport Systems, University of Westminster): Yes, shopping, universities, also bus/Underground interchange, so somewhere like Ealing Broadway has both a local shopping centre and a major bus/Underground interchange point.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): To some extent, Enfield is an outer London borough, so of course we have a variety of different needs. The bus network, as I see it, is primarily radial in London. It always has been. It has been the way that it goes, so of course routes from outer London into the centre are congested. What is missing for an outer London borough are what I call orbital for the sake of argument, but certainly transfers routes and sometimes what you may want to call the awkward kinds of forms of travel where everyone wants to go, in the case of north London, to one of three hospitals. You can actually spend two and a half hours getting to do something. The connectivity between key points, be it shopping, increasingly health and actually with the growth of schools in London through the primary places expansion and suchlike, getting people from unconventional A to B is not factored in perhaps as well it might be. So there are local pockets of demand in outer London and also there are a lot of radial routes that start at outer boroughs and go right the way into London but because of the interchanges and the enhancements of services like London Overground, one gets the impression that some of the routes that start outer do not actually have to go as far inner and could release capacity of certain routes and certain miles to actually reinforce in other parts of town. More flexibility in radial routes, not necessarily running from the outer right into the inner, because it is not necessary.

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): In the generality, it would be a function of population density and where the generators are. Clearly, employment generators in the centre of London mean the inner city. Elephant and Castle is one; there are any number of buses. Ealing, the tram route that was suggested [West London Tram, proposed in 2007], is heaving with buses and that is those sorts of places. There will be local football matches and schools. The crowding issue that I do not think we mention there but do we get hints of in terms of our case work is school peak time-related crowding issue. In the generality it is where the population is.

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): This has both a macro and a micro dimension to it. At the macro level the demand is quite clearly increasing across London as a whole with

static, or even declining, car ownership and with a substantially increasing population in most boroughs and indeed very intensely in the inner boroughs. How that maps into bus services will depend on the provision of other transport means, what the particular demand is for transport from that particular increasing population cohort and where they want to go. It is quite difficult to generalise at that level.

But then there is also a micro dimension which, as Vincent [Stops] and other colleagues have said, will depend on the particular provision of services that people need to access, the nature of interchanges and the nature of local populations, so it is a very complicated mosaic. Actually, the most important thing is to grasp not just what the demand is now but how it is changing so that the network as a whole can be flexible and responsive.

Richard Tracey (AM): I have already mentioned universities and talking to the Professor [Peter White] particularly. I am struck by the fact that in my constituency, Wandsworth and Merton, I have one particular university, Roehampton University, which is growing very rapidly and is in an area where there is frankly a dearth of passenger transport. There are buses and there is a mainline railway station at Barnes, a mile away. But this university has grown to 12,000 students if not more and I am not honestly convinced that there has been any real planning for all those students needing transport.

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): That illustrates my point really well, I think. First of all, there is a significant change going on in terms of the increasing numbers of students. Second, this is a group that is unlikely to travel by car. Third, the availability of alternatives seems to be rather limited, so a lot of that will be thrown back onto the bus network. It may well be that it takes a while for the powers that be and for the planning system to actually catch up with that change in demand. One of the things I think inquiries like this and indeed pressure from users and consumer groups like ourselves should do is to hasten that process so that responsiveness is there.

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): But they should have recognised that rising demand. The local authority and TfL should have seen it coming and should have planned for it.

Richard Tracey (AM): That is my view and the view of the local Member of Parliament for Putney [Justine Greening]. But this university has been growing now for ten years. It was very predictable. So, clearly, that is one thing.

How might demand for bus services change in the future? Do you have any predictions of that, any particular things that you see coming?

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): They will follow population changes, so east London where half of London's homes will find themselves and much of the employment will clearly be a focus for new bus services. We have seen a review of the Olympic area and there has been some rejigging and some additional resource put in there and that will continue over time. The Barking Riverside area is growing and does not have a good fixed infrastructure facility, so that will rely on buses to a greater extent than one would hope.

Peter White (Professor of Public Transport Systems, University of Westminster): The underlying factor would obviously be population growth and where it occurs. The other factor to look at is the timing of trips, and whether that might change. So, for example, Sundays are now far busier than they used to be, partly through increasing bus provision but also changes in shopping and leisure patterns. Some of those might actually assist in spreading the current peak demand into other periods.

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): If I might make one more point, it is also important to distinguish between visible and hidden demands. There will be visible demand where, for example, a new hospital or a new school or higher education facility is built and people need to access it. There is also hidden demand which will tend to be released only when services improve. In other words, to some extent supply will create demand. Where the service is of sufficient quality, people might either take journeys they would not otherwise have taken or they may substitute for going by car or by other means, all of which almost certainly are to be welcomed because, as I said, there is a welfare gain from that. But getting at that hidden demand is surprisingly difficult, as has been experienced with the Overground journeys which increased massively more than anyone ever expected because of the hidden demand in that part of London.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): There is an aging population, so I think more scooters on buses. More and more people are using mobility scooters and increasingly, as we see an increase in that particular demographic, there is going to be a role in increasing scooter use. Again, bus design is really important to incorporate that.

Onkar Sahota (AM): I just want to pick up on this thing about schools. In my constituency, which is Hayes, which is on the 207 bus route, there is a school which is about a quarter of a mile walk from the main road. It has been in existence there for five years. There is a new primary school going in there in September and they have been lobbying for a trial bus service to this area. Why is the system taking so long to respond to this demand? This demand has existed for five years. There is a new primary school going in there. It is only now that I am hearing from the school saying, "Can you lobby on our behalf?" What is TfL doing? What is your experience and why does it take so long to respond to these changing needs and demands?

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): I think you make a very good point. I do not want to make this sound like TfL-bashing because it is not. Actually, the bus services in London are significantly better now than they were 10 or 15 years ago and have shown remarkable improvement but that is no reason for complacency. The reality here is that the methodology by which the bus services are reviewed, the time period between buses is reviewed and the structure, possibly necessarily so, does not allow for short-term or medium-term change or responsive change. That possibly comes from the fact that a lot of the people who make the decisions sit in Victoria Street or Palestra and do not actually sit in Hayes End or Church Street, Edmonton, or the Whitgift Centre in Croydon because the local people, the transport user groups, councillors and officers, often know more about the local system. Transport for London

actually perhaps ought to mean Transport for Londoners and listen more to local demand and actually take note of these things.

The answer is they should follow up in a shorter time spell. There is a possibility and a capacity for TfL to react sooner. In Enfield we have a business park called Innova Park. It started in 1998 and it was intended to attract lots of people onto an industrial park to create employment and jobs and it is not served by buses. It took us a long time to try to get TfL and Arriva who were the operating company to maybe take buses onto the site and when they did, in my view, they took the wrong one on. My answer is listen to the local people. Listen to the knowledge, not just opinion but considered opinion, analysed opinion, and try and find a way to accommodate it. In other words, I sense rigidity in the methodology in TfL planning which is changing, is softening, but actually has moved far as much as it can. Therefore, a more radical approach is what is going to be needed in the future.

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): The contractual period is driving much of the framework for the review and that is in five and seven years, so there will be a lag, I guess. That is a good question for them, whether that lag is too long. I guess that is worth asking.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, it is a really good question and I really do echo what was said earlier. We often are approached by people who feel that there should be a new bus route or a bus route needs to incorporate particular neighbourhoods and areas. The time it takes just feels like trying to scale Everest. It just seems such an arduous task. How do you actually begin to lobby and really put the word out in your local community? A lot of times people are unsuccessful and get very frustrated. So it would be great to have a bit more clarity on what that process is and absolutely to expedite how long it takes to basically make it quicker to get an answer sometimes as well.

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): There is a clear disjoint between planning, affected parties and local communities because the vast majority of our members have worked in the London bus industry for a very long period of time, some of them 20 or 30 years, but there is no involvement of those people when this planning process takes place. They get the result of it when their employers turn around and say to them, "This is what we are now going to do because this is what we have agreed with TfL. This is what TfL is saying we are going to do". The majority of our members live in and around where they work unless they have been forced to TUPE¹ transfer because of the tendering process. But the vast majority of them are local experts in their areas. They are not involved in this process. There is a disjoint between the communication that goes on about the requirements locally and the requirements that TfL and the operators believe there is.

The tendering process does play a part in that. The tendering process has been in place for quite a long time. It is quite flawed. You have people that basically are up for movement from employment every five years if their employer loses a route. It is not working in the way it was originally designed to work. The tendering process is a part of this because, as my colleague said, you have to look at that when the planning permission goes in. The planning process for

¹ Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations

any new school is a long one. I have lived in Hayes most of my life. It is a long process, so there is no surprise. It is disappointing that we have to wait until the school is about to open before we start to lobby because we need more bus services. But a lot of that is because there is a disjoin in the communication process about the best service for the community and it does not involve the right people.

Tom Copley (AM): My question is about the impact of rising demand on bus passengers and one assumes there are some obviously things like more overcrowded buses and a longer wait for a bus where there might be a space and perhaps some less obvious things.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): That is an obvious question, but in parallel with that one actually has to look at current capacity and at the fact that in some cases there are a lot of routes that are working at under-capacity at the wrong times. In some senses, if you look at the map of London ,or even a map of little local areas, you have some times of the day where buses are travelling relatively empty and there are other parts of London where there are buses that need the extra demand for other reasons. So I just really wanted to make the point that in broad terms one has to always look at the bigger picture and not the narrow. There will always be increased demand. The changing dynamic of London, the changing population and all of the new infrastructure that is going on clearly is going to create demand. That is pretty obvious, actually. But it is actually looking at what is not working at the moment as well as it might and it is a balance of under-capacity and over-capacity, especially if there are financial constraints and kilometre constrains, which is what I said earlier on.

For me, one actually has to monitor the total package of demand or under-demand and reposition. That requires more flexibility, probably at local level. The relationship obviously between TfL strategically and the operating companies is an issue that has to be brought into play, but it certainly seems to me in my experience, both as a passenger and as a councillor, that the guys who actually talk on the radios to the drivers do not actually know what is going on and buses are sitting in traffic jams, not terminating short, and therefore it is curtailing the demand where it is there and having an empty bus not getting very far. I would just like to take into account the bigger picture.

Tom Copley (AM): What is the relationship like in that regard between TfL and the borough in your experience?

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): It is actually OK in some regards. Certainly in the work that I am doing at the moment, we are working with TfL to include them in what we are trying to do, even though it is a challenging analysis that we are putting up. But it actually worked very well and we actually have a very good borough liaison officer who probably gets a big headache when he comes to Enfield and listens to some of the things we want to do and change things. But I think the relationship is good.

But what is not as clear is the link between the strategic and the operational and whether or not the operating companies ought to be more involved in some of the process because actually they have some local knowledge.

Tom Copley (AM): So there is a lack of flexibility there?

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): At the risk of repeating myself, it is lack of flexibility. If more flexibility were imbued within the total management, not just bus planning, but the hierarchy within TfL, it would permeate down to the operating companies and it will enhance the relationship. But at the moment, people like me who are elected to speak on behalf of the people and the operating companies to some extent have to do the lobbying, have to be the flag-wavers and have to be the martyrs on occasion.

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): We have made a bid in our submission for transparency so that folks know actually what is going on. TfL has an amount of money and they are trying to maximise the return for the public purse on that money. There are not many local authorities that submit to the TfL review that say, "We would like to have less buses on our particular route", or, "We would like you to run half as many services and take a couple off". There are some angry residents that would like the bus not to go down certain streets.

TfL has started this so they will tell you that "to put on a bus that you want to run up a certain street will cost £400,000 and it will only generate 500 extra passengers a day" and we have seen that. But if there was more explanation and a more thorough statement as to how they come to that position and there was some collaboration in terms of making the bus network more efficient in terms of bus priorities so that TfL could say, "Actually, if we could take some time out of running that service by turning left at a traffic lights that we cannot now turn left at or turn right, then we could win a bit more money for your borough and for the services". Finding a way to express the complexities of how they have to do their review would be helpful to everybody.

Tom Copley (AM): To what extent do you think there is scope to do what Derek [Levy] is suggesting which is to look at shifting capacity between routes where there is perhaps a route with less demand at a certain time of day?

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): It is done. There was a proposal in terms of the 312 and the 412 that was resisted by the local community, so that sort of stuff does get proposed and there is a juggling around, but there are winners and losers on a lot of these things. The losers will assert themselves sometimes more than they should.

Tom Copley (AM): One assumes that an increase in demand is going to have a disproportional impact on certain groups, perhaps older people and disabled people.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, absolutely. As I said in my opening remarks, already rush-hour travel sometimes can be a nightmare for many groups of disabled people. Definitely, if we continue in a situation where we see an increase in bus users but yet in terms of bus frequency and design of buses these issues are not looked at and unless we come up with some proper solutions, we may come to a point where it is a nightmare or indeed physically impossible for wheelchair users or visually impaired people with guide dogs and older people perhaps who travel with mobility aids to actually get on a bus in the first place.

Obviously conflicts in terms of the wheelchair and pushchair space are very likely to increase as well. So absolutely, for reasons of access, our buses do need to evolve and come up with strategies for dealing with demand. That is absolutely crucial. If we are looking at building on the legacy of the Olympics and Paralympics and seeing more disabled people in particular out and about using our transport services, then we have to look at dealing with demand. It is absolutely crucial.

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): Obviously what Derek [Levy] said about taking the local view about moving capacity possibly from east London to west London and vice versa, because of the way the system operates at the moment, that could lead to the redundancy or unemployment of bus drivers and bus workers. If you change the route, you could potentially change the employer. If you move it across London with the current process, you might move to another company within the same geography as where you are now but, by moving it across London, you are going to lead potentially to quite high numbers of unemployed bus workers.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): A very quick point. Implicit in your question here, and a lot of the questions we are talking about, is looking at it on a route-by-route basis. I actually think that planning on a basis of a route, we become route-obsessed. If you just change one bus route it affects two, three or four. The bus system could potentially build in the flexibility that the Underground system cannot do because of the nature of the Tube system.

I like the idea of forgetting about routes and just considering bus services that go from A to B to C to D or A to E via B. I favour the notion of almost a colour-coded zonal system of buses so that in fact buses do not actually have to necessarily have a number. I will try and explain a little bit more. In Leeds, for example, they have the blue zone, the brown zone and the green zone and I like this notion that the zones denote --

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Villages and areas and communities?

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): And means of travel and reasons for travel and modal travel. Therefore, for example, instead of having the 1, the 2, the 3, the 4 and the 5, you can have zones of buses and then you can manoeuvre around because the routes are a constriction. That is the point I would want to make.

Peter White (Professor of Public Transport Systems, University of Westminster): One has to say in terms of operating practice obviously you have to run scheduled bus routes with numbers, and that is how they run in Leeds and everywhere else. The issue is whether you can carry out a comprehensive network review looking at a whole area together rather than simply making incremental changes to existing routes. In principle, the TfL approach of periodically reviewing about every six years should enable you to do that if it is sufficiently comprehensive.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): I was just thinking that our guests from the public have not had their say yet, if anybody in the audience would like to make a comment or a suggestion or even ask a question of an expert. We are very interested in what your experiences are of using the buses in London and any other comments on the issues that have been raised already.

Terry Murphy (Chair, Bexley Pensioners Forum): My name is Terry Murphy and I am the Chair of the Bexley Pensioners Forum. I come to these meetings quite a lot anyway.

My main concern is the 96 bus which goes from Woolwich and goes past Dartford to Bluewater. It passes Darent Valley Hospital, which we are now using that much more because of the loss of the accident and emergency (A+E) at Queen Mary's. It passes but does not go into the hospital. This is one of the pitfalls of the 96 because on the other hand we have a bus that goes in there which is the 428 and it is a single-decker. Up to 9.30am in the morning it is very rare that you can get on that bus because schoolchildren are going to school, which is their right, and really you cannot make an appointment until after 9.30am. That bus goes along the outskirts of Bexley and not through Bexley, so therefore people that live actually in Bexley itself, in the town of Bexley, have to catch three buses to get to Darent Valley. I live on the 96 bus route and have to catch two buses to get to Darent Valley. You have to bear in mind that we are only going to the hospital for two things. Either we are in pain and suffering or we are going to visit and it takes a hell of a long time to do this on the outskirts.

What I would like to see is that this bus, if it is possible, to go into Darent Valley and pick up and drop off people. It is on the way. It is not too far inside the hospital grounds. It is only a few minutes maximum into the hospital grounds and back out again, so that is the point we have.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): It sounds like a very interesting case example. Have you tried to feed that back to TfL at all?

Terry Murphy (Chair, Bexley Pensioners Forum): I have been to TfL and I have been to our MP and the council now have taken this up, our local council. The problem is the fast route [Route 96]. We nearly got there last year by the fact that it was agreed that the buses would go into Darent Valley if they used the fast route. But the operators of the fast route from Dartford to Bluewater [Stagecoach London] put a stop to it, so that is the bugbear we have at the present time.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): OK. Thank you very much.

Tony Greville (Secretary, Greenwich Pensioners Forum): I am Tony Greville. I am Secretary of the Greenwich Pensioners Forum and we are both members of the National Pensioners Convention, Terry Murphy and I.

I have several problems. One is the fact that southeast London as a whole is going through a hospital reorganisation. In relation to that, a lot of the patients who live in Greenwich will probably have to go to Lewisham for treatment. From where I live in Thamesmead, that is two buses and takes an hour to an hour and a half. When they said that we had to go the Princess Royal at Farnborough, I tried it out as an experiment and it took me two and a half hours from Thamesmead.

I spoke to TfL about the question of changes to bus services in relation to hospitals but, despite writing a number of letters and talking to MPs, I am still not satisfied that there is a sufficient bus service covering hospitals between Woolwich, Sidcup and Lewisham if you go from one to the other. Yes, you can get to Lewisham, yes, you can get to Woolwich and, yes, you can get to Sidcup. But trying to get between them is a mighty exercise, so I would like some thoughts on that from the panel. Thank you.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): We are going to have a session specifically in the next bit on that, so that is an incredibly helpful case example of where things are going wrong.

Ernie Whitaker: Good morning. Ernie Whitaker, Woolwich. In many respects we have the best transport system in the world and I have lived in places like Birmingham and Sydney. Just one blot, unfortunately, a major blot and that is nothing on Christmas Day. Most of the major world cities have at least a restricted bus service or a Sunday service on Christmas Day. Even the little Isle of Wight runs its buses on Christmas Day but not London. I just think that needs to be corrected.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Trapped at home on Christmas Day.

Sue Elliott (Wandsworth Older People's Forum): Hi. I am Sue Elliott. I work for Wandsworth Older People's Forum. What worries me, and I do not know whether you can answer this question, is what is going to happen to Countdown [live bus arrivals information]. It is not just useful to older people but, if you are standing at a bus stop, you can see the bus that you need is going to take 20 minutes but you can get another one and change somewhere else. That is what people need to know. I did hear that mobiles were going to be used instead. This is not always convenient, not only for older people but for other people. You are searching around in your handbag, you have to put your specs on to read your mobile and it is not good. Countdown worked very well. Is it too expensive?

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): We will come to TfL on that one in a minute because we have them sitting here and they can answer that one. Let us come to the gentleman in the wheelchair.

Speaker 1: I travel all over the place and on lots of routes the drivers, although they will stop, they sometimes stop out in the road. They then have to come in specially to get to the kerb, whereas they should go near to the kerb straightaway.

The other thing is some of them do it right. They get the wheelchair on first and then the other passengers or they do them together, which is OK, but sometimes they do not hear my -- honestly, some of the buses do not have a board at the back of the bus so that when people get off they do not know whether the bus driver has actually heard that they have got to get the ramp down. Some of them have the buzzer so low in volume that you cannot hear it. Others have a thing that goes for a long time and it is a different buzzer and it is very loud. On some buses do not hear it or they do not react to it; others do.

Another thing: sometimes the ramps do not come out at the stop when you are getting on or sometimes they do not come out when you are getting off. I think that is about all.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): OK. That is very helpful. Faryal [Velmi] talked about that.

Chris Pennington (Vice Chairman, Sutton Seniors' Forum): My name is Chris Pennington. I am Vice Chairman of Sutton Seniors' Forum. Should the Better Services, Better Value (BSBV) review be agreed, and closure of the A+E and maternity services at St Helier Hospital go ahead, our members are extremely worried about how they will be able to access these services at the given alternative hospitals of St George's in Tooting and Croydon University Hospital in Croydon.

BSBV quotes the extra time taken for travel by public transport to these hospitals would be 14 minutes. However, the journey to St George's Hospital from Carshalton Pound Street using routes 407 to Sutton and the 280 from Sutton to Tooting took me 56 minutes in light traffic conditions. The return journey to Carshalton Pound Street took me 70 minutes using route 280 and S3. Although public transport links to Croydon University Hospital are good in Croydon, there are no direct public transport links with Sutton to this hospital. The journey from Carshalton High Street took me 41 minutes using routes 157 and 109. The return journey took me 32 minutes using the routes 64 and 407. For both visits to and from these hospitals I used the first bus which came along.

Would you agree that the travel times being quoted by BSBV are absurd? At both these hospitals car parking charges are unaffordable by older people, even if they were able to drive themselves. The cost at Croydon University Hospital is up to £15 a day or £2.50 an hour. What discussions have the BSNV review board had with TfL about the possible transport improvements in the London Borough of Sutton and Croydon areas before going out to consultation on the proposals which will entail higher numbers of people using public transport to enable them to access the two alternative hospitals? Did they consult with TfL to understand the impact this would have on local bus routes and will TfL respond to the BSBV consultation? Thank you.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Thank you very much. That is a third major hospital issue.

Christiana Link (Transport for All): My name is Christiana Link. I am from Transport for All. I live in Greenwich but I travel all over London virtually daily by bus. As you can see, I am a wheelchair user and I still have an ongoing problem with buggy users in buses, especially during rush-hour when school has ended and so on. The TfL campaign was very helpful, no question about that. At least I have a sticker or a poster on the wall now in the bus that I can point to and ask the people to read what it says.

But in the future there needs to be a complete change of layout in the buses and pressure on the manufacturer of London buses to think ahead about what they do with the space they have, especially when they get more and more people using buses and when we have scooter users and people who have luggage and so on. The space within the buses can be used better. There are longer buses on the market now as well. I know that they cannot be used on every route in

London but my feeling is that the research is not done yet about what can actually be done with buses, what that could look like and so on.

I want to agree with Faryal [Velmi]. I cannot understand why very large buggies, these running, jogging buggies, are even allowed on the bus. They are 150 centimetres long. My wheelchair is half the size of that and absolutely not as big as a toddler or whatever. They do not need that space, so I cannot understand why this is really needed.

Tom Kearney: Hi. My name is Tom Kearney. I represent the 3,591 people in London over the last five years who have been hit by a London bus and the 1,219 cyclists who have also been hit.

I do not think any investigation of London's bus services can ignore the issue that buses, given their mass, are ten times the killing power of a vehicle and, secondly, that TfL buses have been involved in 145,533 collisions in the last five years. The speed of TfL buses and the mass of TfL buses means that they need to drive differently and 33.3% of the deaths involving TfL buses have been of the elderly. One reason you become elderly is because you actually are risk-averse, so it would suggest that TfL buses are driving aggressively and they are driving too fast, just like all the other London drivers. The only difference is they report to you and they are paid for by us.

Tony Wallace (London Borough of Enfield): OK. Tony Wallace working with Enfield. We have heard various mentions of the work that Enfield is doing to look at its whole route network. There were probably two 'drivers' for that: one, the sheer frustration, as has been mentioned, of the six months consultation and then you get two extra stops on a particular route and nothing more, but also in our particular case there is a proposal to close a particular railway level crossing which will cut the 121 trunk bus route in two, admittedly towards one end of it.

What we did was to actually look at how we could deal with that and continue to provide a service that was effective and useful and, as Derek [Levy] has already said, that led to another bus route change and another and another. In all, Enfield has about 40 routes and our proposals, which go to a second public consultation this evening so they are not finalised yet, affect 30 of those 40 routes. It is quite a comprehensive exercise and, although I am sure when it gets finally looked at by the council and submitted to TfL there will be more negotiation, we appear to have kept almost bus number neutral. In other words, I think we are using about five extra buses at the moment.

Stephen: Hello, I am Stephen from Croydon, south London. Going back regarding hospitals, the major missing link is to Norwood Junction and we have been promised for about five or ten years a bus route to Norwood Junction. All we have now is 130 being promised and the railway bridge being rebuilt.

The main thing is that there is an intercom to tell drivers was when there were delays and curtailments. But it gets out to the radio stations and it gets to all the motorists. But with text messages and all that sort of thing, could there not be a system where text messages about

local incidents could be sent to local people in the six areas of London who are waiting for a bus.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): All right, so you could register as an interested person in a particular route and get a text if there was a problem with it, yes.

Richard West: My name's Richard West. I am a deaf person with a learning disability and I represent deaf people with learning disabilities. I have also helped TfL for the past 15 years anyway. I am part of what they call the 'unusual suspects'.

I live in Paddington in Westminster. The problem is that I live in the Westbourne Park end of Paddington and Wayne King over there says Westbourne Park but it is an error. It is now called Paddington. It is still Paddington. But in that area, we have an accessible lift at Westbourne Park Station. In Westbourne Park itself or Paddington as part of Westbourne Park, about 80% are elderly or disabled people. It is quite a lot. There are only two routes between Westbourne Park and Ladbroke Grove. One route between Westbourne Park and Ladbroke Grove is up to 20 minutes. Can they have more routes with more buses on that side of the area?

I also want to talk a bit later if it comes to Police on buses that ticket inspectors usually come on the buses asking for travel passes. Yes, it is their duty but they ask very aggressively. For people with a learning disability, most people with learning disability are deaf people and we call it a threat, and there is no point in being abusive like how they talk to us. What are they going to do to make sure that they can understand what we are talking about? Really, it is threatening behaviour and aggression. That is very important.

Hugh Small: Thank you. I am Hugh Small. I live in central London. I would like the Committee to ask TfL to publish an analysis of the effect of flexible ticketing of the type described by Councillor [Derek] Levy which would allow travellers to transfer between bus routes and perhaps too without paying a new fare. Free transfers would encourage users to choose the fastest route instead of the cheapest. The fastest route is by its nature more efficient in terms of the use of TfL capacity, which is important in times of falling funding and increasing demand. So can you ask TfL to analyse and publish the analysis of their traffic to see if this would economically free up capacity?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): It is great to hear support for a one-hour bus ticket which I have been going on about for five plus years.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): There is a lot of support around the Chamber.

Alexandra Gautier: Alexandra Gautier from Roehampton. I live in Roehampton where TfL buses are our only form of public transportation. Increasing residential development and the University of Roehampton's expanding campus is putting more and more pressure on transportation. We have been lobbying for years to get the 22 bus extended to Roehampton. This would provide more reliable and direct transportation for Roehampton to Queen Mary's Hospital and possibly access for London to green space, as in Richmond Park. What do we have to provide you with in order to get your attention and, more importantly, TfL's action?

I have another question. Is it true that the Government continues to cut TfL's grant? It would be very difficult to provide increasing services for London's growing population if that is true. Thank you.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Thank you very much. I am going to come to our colleagues from TfL. Not to go on too long, Leon, but there were a couple of specific things. There was a question about the future of Countdown, if you could deal with some of that.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): I am very happy to deal with that one, Chair, of course. Just on Countdown, there were 1,800 Countdown signs. There are now 2,500 and all 2,500 of them have been renewed in the last year or 18 months using the very latest wireless technology. Previously Countdown signs at bus stops had to have two copper wires and a telephone line. Now of course we can do it all wirelessly. So I am more than happy to confirm and guarantee that the 2,500 Countdown signs that are currently in operation will stay in operation for the foreseeable future, that is to say for the lifetime of the equipment which is many years.

I promise you that apart from signs that have been removed because there are building works going on nearby for some technical reason, no stop that has had a Countdown sign in the past should lose a Countdown sign at all. We maintained the original 1,800 and we added some more to make it 2,500. As always, there will be a few signs that get taken down because there are some other works, if the shelter is being maintained or something else going on that affects the comms, but every place that had a Countdown sign should continue to have one. Over and above the 2,500 Countdown signs, across the 19,000 stops that we have on our network, you can access real-time information by text, on the internet, on your mobile smartphone and so on as well. The guarantee that the 2,500 Countdown signs stay in use.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Sue [Elliott], what you could do is fill in one of these feedback forms with the locations you refer to and we will take it up for you as casework. Those are really fantastic and useful contributions. It is really good that we have had a good geographical spread, actually. I think that was one of the most helpful things.

We will come back for a second bite after we have heard from the panel again. We are trying to pick up some of those issues but of course we have another meeting, so between now and the next meeting we will try and absorb some of the things that you have said and look for solutions and suggestions to TfL.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): It is a fantastic geographic spread and we will come on to the NHS issue later which is clearly really bubbling across London. I want to move on to ask our panel really about this planning, reviewing and how we change the bus service. What do you think could be the benefits of changing how TfL strategically plans the bus services in the medium- to longer-term rather than how they do it at the moment which is on a route-by-route basis?

Peter White (Professor of Public Transport Systems, University of Westminster): I think the principal one could be building on the existing systems and bringing in more flexibility. First of all, you can look at a whole area together by collecting data, carrying out passenger surveys and so on, on that five or six-year cycle. But maybe obviously you need some interim changes as well to take account of things like universities, school demand and hospital demand and so on. Again, with that proviso, you have to consider the net benefit that might arise from a service change, taking into account any losses to the existing passengers that could arise.

I think the other thing that comes out of the questions just now is the need for health service planning to be far more realistic in making estimates of journey times, accessibility and so on, rather than them putting that problem on to the public transport provider, having made the health service changes.

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): I think I would agree with a lot of that. I mean we do get, and the boroughs do get, the ability to think the unthinkable quite a long time out before TfL make changes, so there is a stage one process, which says, "We are thinking about this area, what do you guys think?" and that is the opportunity for Enfield, or indeed anybody else, to say that a school is opening up there, the University of Roehampton is expanding, so the system should work.

I think in the generality we think the system does work, but the problem that we have is a whole set of routes where we have seen changes, following asking for changes, we see the borough asking for changes and we see some changes. We have had the frustrations, we have asked about certain route changes that have not occurred. We have some sense of why they have not happened, but we do not have an overall sense of how the decision is being made and balances are being struck between two services or not changing a service. There is some benefit of maintaining a consistent network, so it will be, if Enfield changes the whole orientation of the system, then there will be some disbenefits in terms of not knowing where you are, so you need to be a little careful of too-frequent changes. I think the six-year cycle does mean it is really frustrating if you have just learned that TfL, you get interested in a service and you learn that, "We looked at that and we have had our contract and you will have to wait another six years before you get another go at it". So some flexibility within their processes would be good. But transparency as to how they net off the benefits and the costs would be the best improvement I think we could ask for.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): But you think the stage-one process at the moment, you think, does allow for that more general look at a geographic area, it is just transparency with some of the decisions that come out?

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): Yes. So we could and we do say there is this demand of a new school or whatever and the local boroughs say that. It is whether that school will generate that much demand to reorientate the service at the end of the day.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): From your experience, Vincent, the technical modelling that TfL are using, are you satisfied with that? Do you think it needs modernising?

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): That is the black box that we do not understand and we hold our hands up there.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): Because, just like the comment from yourself earlier, I have to say my experience often is, you ask for something and it comes back minimum, it is always £400,000 whatever you want to do.

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): It will take a new bus, yes. If we could have some sort of sense of where that is coming from and be persuaded that is the case it would be better for everybody.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I definitely agree with this idea of more clarity and a clearer idea of how the decisions are made when it comes to bus routes, and certainly the six-year cycle, I again echo that there does need to be some flexibility and leeway within that.

I would also say, just kind of really more of a responsive way in terms of strategic planning as well, acknowledging that there does need to be I think definitely better consultation with local communities during that six-year cycle, so a constant kind of process, "Is the route in a bus network, is it meeting demand and where are the areas where people are unsatisfied and how can that be met?" I would like to see that more integrated and more clear that it is happening as well. Every time the six-year process, when does it come along, we do not hear about it, so again when it does come upon us that decisions are being made that needs to be announced so people can be involved in that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): Yes, the bus users, effectively stakeholders are consulted with whatever we have, but the users of the bus services, what can be done to really engage them to make sure TfL consult more thoroughly?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Again, through organisations, through disabled people's organisations, older people organisations, if we were to know that the review is happening or there is a process period where things are going to change then we need to know about it better. I think at the moment we do not.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): Could there be information on the buses of routes saying, "We are looking at this"?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, absolutely.

Victoria Borwick (AM): That is skewing it to the current users.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Just the idea that, as I say, I think the consultation with the community is really important, so it is looking at particular hubs where there are schools or hospitals and are services and the frequency of services, are they working? But, yes, potentially doing that, or using social media or using other ways and use that to kind of get out. So more of a trickle-down when those big decisions are made to bus users and organisations of people with an interest in the way bus services are run.

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): Every London bus operator signs up to, I believe, two agreements, a general framework agreement and a route agreement. The route agreement is identified by specific routes. That is in place for the life of the tender, which is five years, with a potential two-year extension. Within that there are key areas; one of them is a scheduling agreement. Scheduling agreements can be changed, either at the request of the operator or at the request of TfL, and then there is an onward process from that. What we are not quite sure of is what makes TfL view the scheduling agreements and that is something that we tend to get caught in the middle of: TfL say, "We have an agreement with the operator", the operator says, "We have an agreement with you", but what we do know is that does not go outside of that line. Our members receive the end result of it and there is a process in place where we respond eventually to what they want to make the change in agreement to, but there is no links in with the communities, there is no discussion of when rescheduling takes place with local groups, with affected parties, and our members are at the very end of it and we have a very limited ability to be able to change any scheduling agreements that the operators sign up to.

I believe that both the framework agreement and the route agreement process is up for review next year. Now that could be a very good opportunity to get a much wider consensus of opinion about what these scheduling reviews and what the impact of these scheduling reviews could be to local communities and obviously the people that have to work them.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): So, as drivers, you will know some of the issues.

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): Drivers, controllers, engineers, everything has an effect because, if you are an engineer, you have to turn the bus around quickly and you have to make sure it is roadworthy and it is safe and everything works, and then obviously the controller has to make sure that the schedule runs in line with what the driver and the requirements are agreed between TfL and the operators. It is a never-ending chain.

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): A cynic once said that consultation is what you do after you have made up your mind. I hope we are not dealing with that now and that consultation is genuine. The problem though is that real consultation, and this is something that applies to many sectors, not just transport, is very difficult. There is a particular problem with the transport sector because you may get more views and more vociferous views from those who are in danger of losing something they have now or who are in danger of having some other adverse effect on their particular interests, like an unwelcome bus route past their house or a bus stop in front of their business premises, which gets in the way of parking or whatever. You will get very, very strong and powerful views from those.

You may not get so much from those who may be getting a relatively marginal benefit that nonetheless is a significant gain to the public as a whole because, for example, they may be on a bus travelling through an area, they may be regular travellers on a bus that is going to be five minutes' faster than it would otherwise be, or whatever the case may be. It does seem to me very important that consultation is not just done as a ritual but as something that really tries to get to the heart of the issue and tries to get as close as possible to as many of those who are

affected, whether directly or indirectly, whether immediately or over a longer period. That is quite difficult and I think that is something that needs to continue to evolve and the role of social media in that particularly is quite clearly something that needs to be opened up and looked at.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): Very helpful, thank you, Stephen. Now I want to come to Derek, obviously you have talked a little bit about what Enfield are doing, which sounds really radical and exactly the sort of thing that I have been trying to look at with some Councillors up in Highgate across boroughs; that is something they have been very passionate about. Do you want to explain just what you hope to achieve by this review and have TfL bought into this or has it just been Enfield saying, "This is what we want to do", and going to present it and hope for the best?

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): It started with the latter but it has incorporated the former because one cannot not incorporate TfL into the work in progress because ultimately any changes that come through the process as it filters down have to be done in conjunction with TfL because TfL has to deliver them.

The point is, it is a coincidence of factors, I just happen to be a bus anorak, at the age of five I knew every bus route in London from 1 to 301 and the night buses of 12 that there were at the time. There is only one person in this room who knows more about buses and that is Tony [Wallis] opposite. But the reality here is that I think all too often we are imprisoned by the route planning of the past in order to try and plan for the future and I think the current methodology of, however well-intended the process is, however well-intended and wide-ranging or not the consultation is, the reality is, if you plan the future on the basis of current routes, which are sometimes enslaved by the past, you are never going to get anywhere. There sometimes comes a point in time when you have to say the status quo is not an option and in order to jump from planning from the past to properly planning for the future, you have to take a totally different approach, and that is what happened.

So about two years ago, long before this discussion was foreseen, or even the London Councils' report was done, when I became a Councillor in 2010, and being a transport interestee, I took the view that there are so many things happening in our particular area, eg regeneration projects, the schools programme in particular, this level-crossing closure, which is going to happen, and every action therefore has a reaction.

On the basis that the 'black box' that we talked about tends to come out with an answer that says, "The computer says no", in general terms, I thought we had to take a different approach. So what we did was not simply tear up the map as such and say, "Routes should not happen", I mean that would be absurd, but the view we simply took is, "We know what is happening now in the short, medium and long term, and we want to factor into it". In the case of the Lea Valley Line, which is going to see level crossing closures, maybe next year, maybe in three years' time, I do not want to wait until Network Rail make that decision, and the way Network Rail operate they may do it tomorrow without telling anybody and then go to Leon [Daniels] and say, "My 121 bus cannot get across the crossing, what am I going to do?" and he will say, "I will come back to you in nine months' time" In the meantime I have a route that is malfunctioning.

So that thought process expanded to the fact that said, "These are the factors in Enfield, we have an employment zone on the eastern side of the borough, east of the railway line, north/south, which has no service provision at all, or marginal at best. So we looked at that, we looked where the schools are, we know that certain hospitals are closing, so people who had an A+E in Chase Farm Hospital will now maybe need to go to North Middlesex. There are services that are going to Barnet General just on the other side and if the changes to the health service in north-central London do happen the Royal Free comes into play here. So what we are saying is, here is a package of issues that we need to address, a route-based system is not going to do it, so where do people need to go now, where might they need to go in the future, and what are the implications of some of the things over which we have no control?"

So we took a view, we did invite, through the Councillors and various stakeholders' groups, "What is we were to do some changes; what would you like?" and of course you get various interested groups coming back and in effect a lot of people wanted a bus to be a surrogate for a minicab, but nonetheless they were making a point that it is sometimes difficult to get from a certain part of the borough to another part of the borough for their own specific reason. But I see the bigger picture, Ranjith Chandrasena (Section Manager for Transportation, London Borough of Enfield) over there is our econometrist and methodologist, so we listened to what peoples said and we did a little bit of bus usage analysis, we took TfL staff on some of the buses to show some of the pinch points and some of the concerns, and as a result of that what we have chosen to do as part of the process is saying, "What if?", and we started to answer the questions.

The way to do that was, as I inferred before, forgetting what the route numbers are currently called, where do we need the services to go and how do we want them to run? Then we did a full analysis, we have not brought them here, but we have eight massive full-sized maps that says, "What if this is what we can do?" Some routes could be changed completely, some routes may not change at all, other routes might need a little tweaking.

The point is we need to look at the big picture to understand what would be the ideal world. That then goes out to further consultation, it refines it down, and TfL are part of the process. We know, if we are honest, that through this process, if we are looking at 30 routes, if we get 3, 4 or 5 major changes at some point of the process, that is still a win result, because the analysis, the intellectual analysis and the study and the methodology behind it is simply to reflect what is happening in the future. So it talks to the timetabling, we cannot wait for things to happen before we have one.

We talked earlier, Stephen [Locke] mentioned earlier on about hidden demand. I rather call it neglected supply, because there are occasions, and the analysis has showed this, where in areas of low car ownership is often in the areas where you have the most inaccessibility to public transport routes, and we are looking to maybe see a bit more experimentation and trials of certain routes to try and prove the point.

Just one final point I would want to make, and it touches on the hospital thing to which you are moving, but it is kind of relevant, is that a lot of the changes and the people who need to use

the buses are going to be conditioned by the changes in the health service and the independent reconfiguration panels have put recommendations up and frankly people are taking no notice of it.

So what I would like to see as part of the whole picture and the funding picture is, if the Mayor, not present today, is able to get a major airline to have a wire gondola going from not quite Greenwich to not quite Docklands, and not provide a transport service, when we come to look at the health service and getting people in any areas, whether it is Sutton or Lewisham or Woolwich or whatever, I would quite like to see sponsored bus routes that may be funded by healthcare providers and pharmaceutical companies who have a vested interest in the privatisation of health service to get the people to the places they did not want to go in the first place from a top-down reform of the health service that the local public do not want, and that is part of the politics underneath the planning.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): OK, we are very interested in what you have done and we want to see how this progresses because this potentially could be a model that other boroughs could adopt if TfL genuinely listen to it and I think, if it works, I think we are very interested in that. Just very quickly, have you been able to use Oyster card data to be able to show the routes passengers want to use as well? Have TfL been able to help you with that or not at this stage?

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): If I may, can I ask my colleague Ranjit over there to answer that? The answer is we are looking at all information, all statistical information, we are dealing with Fergus, who has been coming to all of our meetings, Fergus McGhee [London Buses Network Development]. Ranjit might be able to give you a quick answer.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): Have you been using Oyster data?

Ranjith Chandrasena (Section Manager for Transportation, London Borough of Enfield): Yes, indirectly we have. Just to say that I am from the London Borough of Enfield and I work for Derek really and I am just going to say that so much was mentioned about supply and demand, suppressed demand, levels of accessibility and so forth. We have done a massive amount of work on the analytical methods of using the census, directed operations, or using the indices of deprivation, car ownership levels, household income statistics and so forth, we have gone down so many aborted ways, and eventually worked out what I call a very sustainable methodology. If anybody wants to share this work, we are very willing to share our intellectual effort that has gone into this.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Deputy Chair): Yes, we would like some of that detail in writing.

Ranjith Chandrasena (Section Manager for Transportation, London Borough of Enfield): Yes, we can do that, we are very willing to share that, because we have done a lot. The second issue is that so much of what we discussed today can be encapsulated by saying that, like myself and Councillor Levy, so many have given evidence to JNP Consultants when they were commissioned by London Councils, so much of what London would like to see in

terms of engagement with TfL, perceived criticisms and so forth, are all in that report. I think it is very vital and imperative that the next part be a TfL board response to the JNP report, just in the same way that the TfL board responded to the KPMG report of course, otherwise commissioned, so that is vital. So if anybody wants to talk about the mathematics or the statistics we are very willing.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): I am sure we will read it when it comes. Thank you very much.

Richard Tracey (AM): I am very interested in what Councillor Levy was saying because he says he has been a bus anorak from birth; I mean it seems to me that there are a number of the routes across London that are probably exactly the same as they were 80 years ago when horses were pulling the buses.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): That is not a bad thing. If you look at the routes in Central London, you look at the old footage of the horse-drawn things, you will see the number 11 going roughly from Walham Green to roughly Liverpool Street and you will see the 22 that does not go quite as far as Roehampton, but stops on Putney Common in the middle of nowhere sometimes, or it used to anyway until they changed it.

Richard Tracey (AM): It still does.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): The reality is, I am saying we are enslaved by the past, but that does not mean there is not a lot of good things, you do not throw the baby out with the bathwater. The point you have to change the bathwater sometimes without throwing the baby out.

Richard Tracey (AM): The other thing, which concerns me, and obviously we will get some definitive answers from TfL at our next session, but I do get the impression that route changes primarily happen only when they are renegotiating the contract with the bus operators rather than reacting, perhaps mid-term, to the local demands and the changes of population. I mean I talked about the university change, but there are of course many other things that can change. Suddenly an enormous new shopping centre or a change in a hospital, all sorts of things like this, and I mean really that is the bit that bothers me, when the change of routing happens, when there is some sort of response to the demand.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): I think very quickly on that, I mean you are right and we have touched on that before; that is why, within the kind of review we are taking, we are trying to, instead of being one or two steps behind, we are trying to get three steps in front and use certain presumptions, and also my concluding points, I am not going to say anymore on this, is that in terms of redrawing the map, as I described, it was not just a random, "Oh let us just do this", every route that is on the map that we have currently developed has a rationale behind it, it is not simply a simple wish list, it is a wish list in the sense that it will not all happen, but it is considered, because we do know certain things are going to happen. I think generally, yes, route planning changes do happen at the contract exchange or whatever, but not exclusively, there are some short-term measures, I am sure Leon [Daniels]

would be able to say that on 2 July, it is not always wait and see, it feels like it is wait and see, and that is the issue, perception and reality get clouded.

Richard Tracey (AM): Yes. It makes one wonder whether stakeholder engagement is simply a cosmetic exercise frankly, but what do TravelWatch think of the planning mechanism?

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): Broadly we think it can deal with, and it will deal with, Enfield, when they propose these things and when the tranche of routes that are affected come around. It should be able to deal with Westfield open, because the time horizons are longer than five years for opening major -- so the system should work. Sometimes it is frustrating that it seems not to work. There are some changes that happen mid-contract, but not very often, because the bus operators are then in a very strong position in terms of making changes, they will not do it easily. So I guess I keep coming back to the fact that we think the system can work and does work generally, we do see some changes that we have asked for, we do get frustrated, but we are not able to see inside that black box as to how they are changed.

Victoria Borwick (AM): I would just like to take us back to some of the points that we were talking about how we are going to take it all forward and what is your approach to planning, reviewing and changing. We have talked about the historical routes, those that have been there for 80 years for good and for bad, but one of the other ideas, which again has been touched on, and I know is very much the passion of Caroline [Pidgeon] is that actually we could be much more flexible with our bus routes if we were to look into the whole ticketing and the changing of ticketing from one bus route to another. You can change from one Underground line to another, why can you not change from one bus line to another? It is all very well to talk about subsidies and things like that, but actually that meant you could really look at the bus during the day and have shorter, more efficient routes, and therefore you would have better use of TfL's stock, then actually we could have new routes on these other areas you have identified in local networks.

There has been a lot of planning done over the years about dividing London into cells, which is a little bit like what you have been talking about, about local areas, and I just think that would it not be wonderful to use this consultation to really have a radical look at how we do London as a whole, to offer those opportunities. I think the problem is, someone talked about consultation, there is no point just asking the people who are currently on the bus, because that does not bring in the people who are not getting the bus to where they are going to, and so it is very important not to skew it. But, if we were able to say, if you were starting from now, would you do the bus network like this? No, you would not. You would probably look at different ways of doing it and I do think that we are very open to ideas here. The Chairman is very keen on this and obviously Caroline has led on this, and then we can look at the whole thing, we can look at the speed of the buses, the safety of the buses, the routes they go, should they be going at different routes in residential areas, are there other areas where we have other reviews. But I do think this is a wonderful opportunity and I do hope that, listening to what you have all said today, which has been really fascinating, and I know we are now going to talk about the hospital access, which is again vital, but I do think that there are opportunities if we are seriously able to be brave and really say, "Let us relook at, rather than having bus routes that travel large distances, if we were able to have more flexible ticketing we could actually have shorter, more-

efficient routes, therefore we would have a timelier manner, we would know when the bus was coming because it is a shorter route, you would not have to worry so much on Countdown because actually the route would not be so long, and therefore you could make more-efficient use of the buses.

Murad Qureshi (AM): We have heard many comments about the consultation on bus routes, or rather a lack of them. Are those comments also applicable to bus stops? I know very often they can be a source of a lot of grievance when people suggest there are better places for them and what have you, certainly in central London in relation to pedestrian crossings and things like this. I am never quite sure whether there is a consultation process there or not. We have heard issues about Countdown on the bus stops, but actually where they are on the routes is also an issue from my experience of some of the constituency work I have done. So I just wondered if there were any thoughts on that as well?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I have some thoughts on that, yes, absolutely. The positioning of bus stops, but also the type of bus stop as well. We get a lot of people ringing us up, particularly older people and people who have mobility impairments who actually have stopped using buses because they cannot rest, they cannot sit down, there is no shelter, and often the stops are replaced without any kind of prior notice and you kind of go there and you are used to being able to sit down, for example, and you just cannot anymore. So I think, again, there needs to be more clarity on that process because we certainly are not clear on it and I think absolutely when a bus stop is due to be either relocated or the type of bus stop is supposed to be updated, we definitely believe in advancements and things to improve, but there does need to be some consultation with the people that are using that bus stop, you know, “Do we need a shelter? Do we need somewhere to sit down?” and the answer is always yes.

Murad Qureshi (AM): As many bus shelters as possible presumably is one of the conclusions.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, absolutely.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): I know that Stephen [Locke] gave us a definition of consultation, and we have had that sort of consultation in the NHS recently. I hear all from London the concerns about the NHS reconfiguration and the impact it will have on travel plans, and I think I am also aware of another black box that exists in London transport is that when the consultation process in London NHS quotes the figures of travel times they seem to be discorded from the route experience of patients. I mean I am fighting for Ealing Hospital and the hospital nearest to us would be Norfolk Park and travel times of 1 hour, 40 minutes are what will happen there. But those are not reflected in the data that comes out of TfL and I know that TfL will comment on this at some stage in our hearings. But I want to hear from you of what can TfL be doing at this stage to prepare for those changes that are being planned? These are planned changes right across London, it is not just northeast London or southeast London, this is the whole system, right, and Councillor [Derek] Levy invoked a level of emotion, obviously Isaac Newton said to each action there is a reaction, equal but opposite, and I know that when you have impact of this reconfigurations, more services concentrated on less sites, travel distances and travel paths will change, and people will be competing who have disabilities, people who have sicknesses,

people who have been taking their children with buggies, but also patients who have their legs wrapped up in plaster of Paris, where will they park their legs, which they cannot bend, and where will they park their crutches? With these issues what can we be doing and what have TfL been doing now to prepare for that, right, and why do you think the travel times quoted in the consultation by the NHS does not bear reality with the experiences of people right across London?

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): I did some research when our former chief executive left after 25 years, I looked at the 1983 minutes of the predecessor organisation [London Regional Passengers Committee] and there was the formulation of an Access to Travel Sub Committee because the issues of travel to health services was an issue in 1983 just as it is today. We did quite a lot of work, it was a few years ago now, but I think it still pertains, and the things that we found were that I think the spatial planning issues are really acute within the health service. They classically will take a Bromley Health Facility and relocate it to the Princess Royal University Hospital, so taking it from an area that can be well served by public transport to one that cannot be well served by public transport.

There is an expectation within the health service that TfL will somehow find a way and somehow they do find some way of servicing the thing, but the planning is not good from the health service perspective. The area of West Wickham is to this day not able to be served well to the Princess Royal University Hospital. Compounding that issue, there was how do you get a bus into the hospital and will the authorities allow you a bus stand, and that was a long negotiation and eventually they did.

We also found that the health service, so the spatial planning issue, they pass on their costs to the transport industry or the transport providers, we found that they have lots of priorities in hospitals, one of them is not worrying about how their patients and visitors get to them, so TfL would say to us, and we believed them because we saw the evidence, that, "They are not giving us the data". The origins and destinations are really important to TfL if they are going to plan bus services, so I think that was a problem.

We were getting some way, the joint commissioning Primary Care Trusts (PCT), we were on their case through sort of a reconfiguration we got involved in, and they were going to, as part of their commissioning role, were going to insist that the hospitals had some genuine travel planning capability. Unfortunately the changes that happened around PCTs has meant that line of work stopped, and so we are where we are. I think the health service needs to be part of this discussion that you are having and individual hospitals need to take some responsibility of how their patients get to them and not just hand-wringing from them.

The reconfiguration figures that you see, they have a map of a general area of where their catchment is, they assume people come from their closest hospital, which often is not the case, and they have a model that spits out the times, often it will be on average everybody will lose five minutes, and so they say that is OK, but they do not really consider the outliers, the people in West Wickham that are not going to be served, etc. So it is not a very satisfactory position we are in and it is not all down to TfL; it is the health authority and the health service and strategic health providers as well.

That is what we found. We did not find a solution to it. One of the solutions that we came up with finally is there could be a possibility that you prioritise health trips to a greater degree than you do trips to the football match and TfL at the moment, they say all journeys are equal. You could say that the journey to the health service facility is worth one and a half times the general trip value and that would skew journeys to the health facility, would give them more priority, but it would deprioritise some of the other trips, so there would be less ability, so you might get a 318 into North Middlesex but you lose something somewhere else.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Vincent, your experience is that there is obviously poor communication between the health services and TfL, is this what you are saying?

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): There is not enough working together at the early stage and through the process and in real time. There needs to be constant work.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): There are also concerns about the modelling that TfL uses.

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): You could change the model to favour health services but that would disadvantage others, because TfL only have a certain amount of money to spend, you could favour health visits and perhaps you should because they are a unique sort of traveller, but out of that they would say, "Right, we have put more money into serving hospitals, we will take less money to serve something else.

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): Yes, I suppose this is more for your information, but very basically there are two kinds of bus routes in London, there are high-frequency and there are low-frequency routes and that is pretty much how they are governed. The high-frequency routes is any route that has on average more than five buses an hour go down it over a week, a low-frequency is four or less. Now I am not quite sure what makes a high-frequency route or a low-frequency route and you could have a reasonably semi-educated guess on what it would be depending on population, where people live, and the service it needs to provide. What is going to be clear from the concerns raised by the public and the views of the people on the panel is that is going to need to be very seriously reviewed if these NHS changes come through, which some of them are very likely to, because a lot of the routes that serve hospitals are unlikely to currently be high-frequency routes, they are more likely to be low-frequency routes, that is likely to change and that needs to make sure that whatever review goes in place or whatever mechanisms or science TfL and the NHS or anybody else uses, that needs to be very clearly identified about what requires a change from a low-frequency to a high-frequency, because there also might need to be certain aspects of rerouting to make sure that you can get into a high-frequency route.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): I would add that, if TfL had prioritised health services, they would never have taken out the South London line train service, because King's College Hospital were utterly opposed to that and did a lot of research to demonstrate what damage it would do and they went ahead anyway.

From our guests in the public here, we are just trying to focus on how TfL plans and changes or does not change its services at the moment, so if I can see people who have not been in before that would be particularly helpful. I recognise Andrew Boag here who is “gamekeeper turned poacher”, as he used to work on TfL buses.

Andrew Boag (Bus Users UK): I want to declare an interest; I am a former bus service consultation manager for TfL. I retired a couple of years ago and I now run a bus-users group outside London and I keep a keen interest in what goes on here and I have been particularly interested by what has been said today, particularly by Councillor [Derek] Levy. I wish you were around when I was dealing with my London boroughs a few years ago.

One of the problems we had actually in doing our bus service consultations was that when you wrote to the councils at what we called our stage one consultation at the beginning of the year, some councils gave quite good feedback but some hardly said anything, and then at the end of the consultation process they come along and say, “Why did you not do this? Why did you not do that?” So I would urge very much that, if all the boroughs could get up to the standard of Enfield perhaps and some of the other boroughs, and get more interested in the issues that affect their boroughs.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): That is very helpful, Andrew. I think part of the problem is that the boroughs are under enormous financial pressure and we are finding there are fewer and fewer highway staff around London in the boroughs, so it is not just TfL under pressure.

Neil Malcolm (Lavender Residents and Tenants Association): Hello, my name is Neil Malcolm from Lavender Residents’ Association in Merton. We have been requesting a bus service in Merton for more than ten years through local councillors. Out of frustration in 2011 I produced a report, which was widely distributed. We are now, fingers crossed, on the verge of actually having a bus service delivered. The facts appear to speak for themselves, it was served by TfL’s own figures, 740 households will be brought into the Mayor of London’s 400 metres proximity of public transport statistic. Unfortunately, it does not make links with Overground or Underground services, so, although we are pleased to have any kind of bus service, it could be better, and through-ticketing would be a bonus in this instance.

James Skinner (Sustraco): James Skinner, Sustainable Transport Company, Sustraco. I wanted to respond to what Caroline Pidgeon [AM] mentioned looking at a longer-term more-strategic view about transport in London and the role of buses in transport. The overriding problems obviously are congestion and pollution and how to keep up with capacity in the future. I do not think that those are necessarily going to be addressed by sticking entirely to buses. The whole discussion at the moment seems to be focused very understandably and quite rightly on the need to improve in an incremental way the services that are already available from buses. I would suggest that we have to look at London, as one of the great cities of the world, at the London Assembly’s responsibility for planning the future of one of the great cities of the world and I do not think that at the moment the bus service is adequate for the expectations that people have of one of the great cities of the world and I think that the incremental improvement is going to prove inadequate in the future. There has to be a radical change and a

radical look at how one is going to tackle the problem that London is the most polluted capital in Europe. Nothing really seriously has been done to mend that.

The whole question of the West End centre where visitors are attracted, and nobody here is representing visitors to London, which are extremely important to the economy, and in the future economy, how is the West End going to be a place that people continue to want to come to unless something is done about Oxford Street, as Victoria Borwick [AM] has quite rightly pointed out. There is also the question of safety, which Mr Kearney has been very eloquent about, and there is a big demand that the West End Commission showed for pedestrianisation in London. We all know that buses and pedestrianisation are incompatible; they are extremely dangerous and there is plenty of examples in other parts of the world, in Zurich and particularly there you have the Bahnhofstrasse where pedestrians and trams can mingle together without danger or with very much reduced danger as compared to buses. There is always a danger wherever vehicles and pedestrians meet.

So what I would be saying is that there has to be a radical look and I would suggest that the London Assembly Transport Committee should have a special committee looking at the future of particularly the West End, I know it has been over and over again, and the role of TfL, which has been to block any kind of improvement in Oxford Street for all these years, and they still are doing it. There are solutions.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Yes, in fact you only have to go to Croydon to see where trams and people mingle very well and trams can be a very good solution to bus congestion, and of course there was a proposal to take a tram down Oxford Street some years ago, which came from TfL, which was not progressed by the current Mayor.

Mark Worely (Chair, North West Surrey Bus Users Group): Mark Worely, North West Surrey Bus Users Group. I would just like to mention cross-boundary services. The area I represent, the services are mainly under the deregulatory regime, they are quite poor for the type of area it is. It is a postcode lottery really, you have to live in North West Surrey, generally you have a very poor bus service compared to people a few miles away in very similar urban areas just inside the boundary. TfL does operate certain services into North West Surrey and people who live on those routes enjoy a far better service than others do in that area. I am not sure what the criteria are for deciding which routes TfL operates, obviously I think Surrey put some funding into some of them, but in their generosity TfL runs routes like 216 and the 465, which do serve quite large parts of Surrey. I believe there is a lot of latent demand in other parts of North West Surrey, which would be brought out if TfL could find its way to running more routes into that area and it could be argued that would be to the prosperity of London in terms of it bringing shoppers into Kingston and workers into the London boroughs.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Thank you, and probably another complex meeting to be held on cross-boundary issues I think.

Julian Heather (ex-Councillor, Streatham Wells, London Borough of Lambeth): Julian Heather, Streatham Wells, Lambeth. I just wanted to agree with you, Chair; I think it is pretty pathetic as an ex-councillor in Lambeth, how badly local councils in London interface with the

transport operators generally, whether it is rail or TfL buses. I was struck when I was a Councillor just how bad it was that even in Thames it was a big issue, which I know Dick Tracey [AM] has been very involved with, and we succeeded there. But getting people interested in terms of the local Councillors is something that I do not know how you do it, but I think we all need to give them a good kick up the backside quite frankly.

Secondly, when I was a Councillor, one of the things I was very aware of with this review process was the fact that TfL would write to the local authority and say, "We are not actually planning to make any changes on the 159 route", and then another authority would come in and say, "We would like the 159 to divert before it reaches its destination", and of course, as a Councillor, you think, "Uh-oh", and you are actually quite relieved sometimes that TfL buses did not change the route, and you were not aware that other authorities were competing for your bus that would serve your constituents.

The very last thing, I was just wondering at some stage, and it sort of relates obviously to the bus investigation, in terms of customer services, I have a very poor view of TfL customer inquiries, the call centre. I am afraid half the staff really do need retraining or putting out to pasture. But what I would say is I have now insisted on a particular bus route that whenever I ring up to complain about half an hour late when it is supposed to be a 12-minute service, I actually ask now for a written response from TfL buses, or TfL rather, and I have done this about four times and it is a bit patchy how you get a response, if you get a response, but the response is appalling. The last one I got said, "Inquire", which is presumably your system for complaints or suggestions, it just said, "Inquire 5171", presumably your reference number, it did not even refer to the date on which I had made the complaint and rung up, it did not refer to the the day on which the bus delay to which I was complaining about took place, ie a different date, it did not tell me which of the complaints that I had in the system were being dealt with, it just had an incredibly bland response just saying, "Well of course we do have problems, London buses, because of course road works all the time, and we do our best to sort it out". I thought, "Just do not bother to respond if you are going to give that kind of nonsense response". It could have been to any bus service in Enfield or Watford or anywhere, so that needs to be looked at.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Was that recently, Julian, because this Committee has started to take an interest in customer services?

Julian Heather (Councillor, Streatham Wells, London Borough of Lambeth): Very recent, and you are very welcome to look into my account with TfL, all my calls and all my responses, just to get an example, please go into my data.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Thank you very much, and nice to see you. OK, thank you, those were very helpful I think, really very interesting

Darren Johnson (AM): The first opening question, does no growth in funding for buses necessarily mean no growth in the distance covered by the bus network? It would be useful to get your views on that. [Sir] Peter Hendy [CBE, Commissioner of TfL] had talked about TfL needing to be smarter about how it used its vehicles in those circumstances.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): First of all, I think you could have ended your sentence, "TfL needs to be smarter" with a full stop. The second point is that I think the answer to your question is "not necessarily". I mean obviously one can predict the growth, there are some aspects of the growth you cannot predict so well, but if you are smart in the way you review and analyse and look for route realignment or route reconfiguration, there does not have to be a direct proportion between the increase in funding or the decrease in funding and the number of miles if you are smart. The reason for that, and in part we have taken this onboard, is to plan laterally and not linearly. When we were talking just now about the health service, if you simply talk about bus routes that meet the needs of getting from hospital to hospital, the 318 that comes into North Middlesex from the north, that is great, but then you overlay on top of that, "Well what if the 318 or the XYZ goes around this road and that road, it actually takes into account a housing estate it might not have done and it takes into account a school that may not have been built". So instead of actually looking at all of the drivers, if you pardon the pun, of route planning, there is the issue of health service access and there is the issue of schools access, there is the issue of industrial estate access, and looking at them separately, if you can join them, and in the maps that Tony [Wallace] has produced in our work to date, and then kind of overlay them, you actually arguably, and I am not going to advocate this, can increase your mileage for less cost.

Darren Johnson (AM): So an area-based approach as well as providing better services can actually be more efficient in terms of operation in your argument.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): I would say, if you take an area-based approach, you will get better services.

Darren Johnson (AM): Good, so it could potentially be a win/win situation, both for TfL's budget and for the bus user.

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): Just very briefly, I mean I think you could add to that the issue of bus priority, which I raised earlier on. I mean quite clearly, if you can shave time off the duration of an individual route then you can run your services at lower cost and more smartly. Now that may not be very large in terms of the individual route but across the system as a whole that might well make a difference. Ultimately the money has to come from somewhere, so you either cut your costs or you increase your income, there is no other way of doing it, but that is one way of making some progress.

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): Going back to what I said at the beginning, I don't think there has been any increase in TfL's London bus budget since 2008, it has been habitually cut and there is another wave of cuts coming into it now, so I think we cannot sit and say, "We need to look at this, we need to look at that", when the bus service and the bus subsidy is continually being reduced. TfL need to cut their cloth to fit and there is a downward pressure on every single Londoner that has a negative effect because it is either the workers or it is the service, which affects the public, which affects the communities. I think, looking at creating the zonal-wide London bus network is something that can be looked at but you have to stop the cut first because you are going to be looking to do anything on a reduced funding, on a reduced budget, you cannot keep cutting and keep supplying a world-class service, it is

impossible. The key has to leave the budget alone, stop reducing the subsidy, otherwise sooner or later it is going to break.

Darren Johnson (AM): What about Councillor [Derek] Levy's point that, if we had an area-based approach, it could actually be a more efficient use of money, particularly if there was less money around?

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): I would need to know the detail of it, but when it is being cut by hundreds of millions of pounds a year, year on year, you have to question how anything can survive with that level of reduction in what it is meant to do and how it is meant to operate.

Peter White (Professor of Public Transport Systems, University of Westminster): You have to bear in mind the London level of funding is still relatively generous compared with bus services in many other parts of the country. Perhaps one of the other things you need to consider is the realism of offering free travel to school children, even for very short distances, in the peak. If peak capacity becomes a constraint, is that necessarily a sustainable part of the policy? This is a relatively unusual feature in London and these are mostly non-statutory trips, for which there is no obligation to provide free travel, and the common policy elsewhere would be to charge some sort of fare, not necessarily a very high one, but one that might for example encourage shorter trips to shift to walk or cycling. The peak cost of handling that school travel can be very high in some cases.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I think that absolutely a downward pressure in terms of cutting, always when that happens access is one of the first victims of that, and I think that if we continue to not invest in our bus services then absolutely being able to actually get on the bus for many disabled and older people becomes very difficult, if not impossible.

Is there opportunity to comment on the NHS question very quickly? I think that absolutely some of the anxiety and absolute fear that people have in terms of this reconfiguration in the NHS and the effect it will have on transport in London is a big concern and one of the other issues obviously is patient transport services in London are a lot of the time inadequate and that does push people on to buses and I think there does need to be a lot more joined-up thinking about how people are going to get to hospital appointments and we feel that is not happening. So, yes, it is a big concern and something that we hope really is going to have the London Assembly and obviously all London politicians definitely a big priority and look forward to kind of feeding back on that more.

Darren Johnson (AM): Thanks for that, and while we are still on the issue of funding, can I raise the question of fares. We have had a lot of concerns expressed to us as Assembly Members about fares increases each year, it obviously is a way that the Mayor can increase the revenue, but obviously it also has an impact on how many people are going to want to use the buses. So views on fares.

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): It is a political decision and so often we try and keep out of that, but we would like to see consultation about fares and that started

last year and that was good. We are doing some work on value for money and we have done some qualitative research recently about fares and value for money and we will put that into your process.

The third thing is, to just remind ourselves that fares is a tool of urban transport policy, it is not just about whether people can afford them or not, if fares go up in outer London, bus services there compete, unlike inner London, with car, and so fares do need to be kept down to keep people on the buses so that buses can operate sensibly in uncongested streets, so it is not just about the affordability.

Darren Johnson (AM): And the issue of having smarter fares policies and one-hour bus tickets and so on could also help.

Vincent Stops (Policy Officer, London TravelWatch): Members have always been persuaded that Oyster deals with that because it provides you with three and a half bus journeys; that was TfL's case, "You have an Oyster capped day bus ticket effectively.

Darren Johnson (AM): OK, and then the next question I had was about the New Bus for London and views from the panel about what they role they think that plays.

Councillor Derek Levy (London Borough of Enfield): Well I mean this speaks to some extent to the point that James [Skinner], over there, was mentioning about sustainability and congestion and pollution. You know more than I the mathematics of working out the cost of eight number 38 buses compared to x-number hundred of hybrid buses that could have been on the road for the same amount of money. So if we are talking about resources, the same amount of money could have put more buses on the road to meet the demand that we are talking about, apart from having something that looks a little bit like a Routemaster with more plastic interiors, fabric that does not look exactly the same and a conductor who is redundant at the back and not providing a conductor service. So there is a resource issue about that. I realise as they are rolled out the unit cost of the buses are going to change, but my answer to that is quite simple: if TfL and London Buses is cash-strapped, either (a) save the money and not spend all that money on the bus that is not a Routemaster, and almost looks like one, and/or (b) put more into more environmentally-friendly buses for the same or similar cost to meet the demand that we are talking about and make life simple.

Let us remember that there is politics in this but we also have to remember that buses, bus routes, people (I use the old-fashioned word "passengers"), they existed long before an organisation called Transport for London existed, and there will be buses, routes, people and passengers long after there is an organisation called Transport of London, and therefore it is all about the fact that, strip the politics out, strip the vanity out, listen to what the people want. TfL, all of us as elected politicians, only exist because of the public out there who elect us and therefore it is our duty to reflect what they want and not meet the vanity of any individual Mayor over a four and eight-year tenureship; that is my answer to you.

Darren Johnson (AM): I think I have made numerous remarks in various press releases at stages with the Mayor on a similar line as that.

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): Well I think it is now here and I think the challenge is to make the best of it. The jury is out as to how it will work in detail but quite clearly you need to get the best value for money out of the new buses and to get people to use them.

Darren Johnson (AM): Do you see it playing a major part beyond the numbers that have been ordered already, the 600?

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): Not necessarily. I mean one of the challenges is quite clearly to deal with the extra costs involved in having a conductor onboard as opposed to one person operating, which is the norm for other buses. I do not see the economics working, at least outside central London, for having a separate conductor onboard.

Darren Johnson (AM): So you see it as a little niche for a small number of routes.

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): It is there, it will probably be an isolated, significant, but nonetheless contained, issue and will not necessarily be the answer across the rest of London. I think the issues are much broader and need to be analysed more rigorously.

Darren Johnson (AM): Thank you. Any further views on the New Bus?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Certainly we did feel again the great kind of quote about consultation and how the decision seemed to have been made before there was a consultation, we really feel this is the case when it comes to looking at the access requirements, particularly the wheelchair space on the bus, and it was very disappointing that we had the opportunity to build from scratch a new bus that could have really looked at best practice, even on other parts of London or of the UK and the world, but we did not. As I have mentioned before, we have a smaller wheelchair space on the New Bus for London than other buses in operation in London and that is very disappointing and frustrating.

However, yes, it is here, and I would agree with what Councillor Levy said in terms of the costs of the project, I think certainly with TfL claiming they are cash-strapped then kind of funds should absolutely be diverted to other areas and improvements in the bus service.

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): It was not a great idea, I think the money could have been invested a lot better, it could have been a lot better used to update the existing fleet and make them more environmentally friendly, make better access for disabled and elderly people, it would have been a lot better use of money.

The use of a conductor that is officially called a customer service assistant is obviously being widely debated because they are basically a tour guide from my understanding.

Darren Johnson (AM): They stop people falling off the back and suing TfL I think, do they not?

Wayne King (Regional Bus Officer, Unite): Pretty much, I believe, and they tell you where to get off and where the next bus you get from, but again it is TfL set the rules for how they

work and how they are used. They spoke to the operators, they did not speak to anybody else, it was a two-way consultation process. TfL and the Mayor's Office said, "This will be a conductor, this will be their job spec", they spoke to the operators, the operators had a minimal input, and that was the end of it. There was no further information or communication until it comes out the other end. It is pointless. It is a dictat. It is an empty process.

Peter White (Professor of Public Transport Systems, University of Westminster): Yes, one of my students did a survey on the New Bus for London last year interviewing a number of the passengers. The response was generally favourable, although the extent to which that would translate into any greater ridership remains extremely unclear.

We have also done some work in the past on bus safety, which highlighted the safety issues of the open rear platform Routemaster, hence the need for the conductor, or whatever the job title is, for safety reasons. So it does look very questionable on cost grounds, especially the direct operating cost.

It is also worth bearing in mind that reports do indicate some further improvement in terms of energy use and environmental emissions for this vehicle, but one might be able to incorporate those of course without necessarily having the open rear platform.

Darren Johnson (AM): About bus stops, is the signage visible enough to make them properly user friendly for people? When you get out at a tram stop or a tube station or a Docklands Light Railway (DLR) stop, you have a sign that is a metre high that you know exactly where you are, there is a clear name. Is the signage visible enough on bus stops for them to be properly user-friendly?

Stephen Locke (Chair, London TravelWatch): Now you have raised it, we will have to look into it, I am sorry, we have not thought of that up to now, but we will make that point.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (Chair): Thank you very much. I am sorry, I did promise everybody that you would be away for your next meetings. Can I bring this session to a close then and thank everybody for their contributions. That was a really terrific session I think, a very well-balanced set of contributions. We are open to more written contributions from you; that will be very helpful.

Thank you also to our audience, who were very patient and made some fantastic contributions. You did not get an answer now, but it has all gone into our thinking machinery. We have our next meeting on buses on 2 July, but can I encourage you please to go back to your community and user groups and get people to write in. I think we have had some very powerful themes today and it was great to hear some real-world experience, so thank you everybody.