

Leon Daniels
Managing Director
Surface Transport
Transport for London
Windsor House
42-50 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0TL

13 January 2014

London Assembly Transport Committee Report into Bus Services in London

Dear Mr. Daniels

I am writing to you on behalf of the North London Transport Forum which is the sub-regional transport partnership for North London and has a core membership of the London boroughs of Barnet, Enfield, Haringey and Waltham Forest. Given the radial and orbital nature of London's transport network the Group also works across boundaries and has close links with the adjoining London Boroughs of Brent, Camden, Hackney, Islington and Redbridge.

The challenges of growth in the core North London sub-region are substantial. With 1.9 million people and 1.6 million jobs in 2008, forecasts are for an additional 305,000 people – equivalent to a city the size of Belfast or Malmö in Sweden - and 288,000 more jobs in our sub-region by 2026. The transport network is a vital dimension in meeting this growth agenda and promoting social and economic inclusion.

A key element of the transport network, particularly in outer London, is bus services which, according to the London Travel Demand Survey, in 2011/12 accounted for 15% of all trips. However we believe that, despite the improvements in services and increased ridership, there are still opportunities to make bus services even better particularly in respect of how they are planned. With this in mind the recent report on bus services by the London Assembly Transport Committee is most welcome and overall the recommendations in the report are supported by the North London Transport Forum:

- Publish a long term bus network strategy which sets out how rising demand will be met within existing funding constraints. It seems only logical that with other modes having a long term strategy so too should the bus network.
- Devise suitable bus crowding measures and related targets which capture how many people cannot board a bus or get a seat.
- Define a programme of cross-borough boundary bus service reviews. More work should also be undertaken to look at opportunities for orbital and express routes.
- Develop a new consultation model, including new channels for engaging, which allows boroughs and users to have a more informed say on bus services changes.
- There should also be a report on how good public transport access will be provided at each hospital and major health centre.
- Future business plans should demonstrate the relative cost-effectiveness of various modes of transport and the impact of concessionary fares.

- Set out plans for new ticketing and fares options which allow more flexibility and encourage changes to travel behaviour. Of particular importance is the introduction of a ticketing option which allows for multi-leg journeys at a single price.
- Publish details of how bus journey reliability, including via bus priority measures and tackling key pinch points, can be improved.
- Develop a schedule for the roll-out of more environmentally friendly bus vehicles.

North London partners would urge you to respond to the London Assembly Transport Committee with a timetable for delivering against these recommendations. However given the size and complexity of the network, many of these tasks will be difficult to deliver immediately and concurrently so we acknowledge that timescales need to be reasonable.

In terms of effectively planning bus services it has to be acknowledged that London wide reviews are difficult, however the London Borough of Enfield has been pioneering an approach to area based bus service planning and this could be used to define best practice going forward.

Given the remit of the London Assembly report there are some issues which have not been addressed in detail:

- The network needs to respond more rapidly to demographic changes which happen particularly quickly in London. There also needs to be a strong link to land use planning which drives local demand.
- A one size fits all approach does not work and to improve services different approaches are required, for example in some locations altering a route might work, while in another it might be travel awareness measures which are most appropriate.
- Focusing on existing users means opportunities to encourage non users to make bus journeys can be missed.
- Aside from the strategic planning of the network, there are also issues with the day to day operation of bus services and how stakeholders work with London Buses to resolve them.

Obviously the North London Transport Forum would welcome colleagues from London Buses to future meetings so that specific sub-regional issues can be discussed and suitable solutions agreed.

Regards

Dominic Millen

North London Transport Partnership Manager

CC North London Transport Forum
Chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee