

**Transport Committee  
17 May 2011**

**Transcript of Agenda Item 9: State of London Underground**

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** The first part of our first investigation of the year is looking at the state of the London Underground. We are going to be gathering views and information to look at the recent performance of the Tube and Transport for London's (TfL) progress with the upgrade programme, including for each London Underground line. We are hoping to identify further actions the Mayor and TfL should be taking to improve the performance of the Tube and the delivery of the upgrade programme.

I should say this is the first session we are having. Next month we will have TfL and London Underground before us so they will be able to respond to the issues that are raised today.

First of all, can I welcome our guests. I will start with an opening question: where do you think we are with progress on the Tube upgrades since the end of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) last year and what future risks there are?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** Thank you, Chair. In one sense the simple answer to your question is that I know as much as any other member of the public because, since the role of the PPP Arbiter was changed with the contract modifications last autumn, I have got no access to information other than that which is published. That raises one issue that is what is published is not particularly helpful to assess what is going on. Others more closely involved will have to give a more detailed answer to your question but the baseline which I set out in my direction on costs more than 12 months ago is that, if this project had been approached efficiently, the Jubilee line and the other upgrades could have been delivered in line with the dates in the original PPP agreement. That needs to be the baseline for checking progress.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Number one is we do not get any information, as Chris said, any more than anyone else would in the public domain. It is basically whether you feel the upgrades are making a substantial difference. We do not agree with what Chris said. Chris had a golden opportunity, as PPP Arbiter, to do something about it when we raised the question of the inefficiencies of PPP. It fell on deaf ears and, unfortunately, it has cost Londoners and the taxpayer literally billions of pounds.

It is good news this week that Alstom has now given its contract back to Tube Lines. It makes another piece of the jigsaw far better for, in my opinion, both the Mayor of London and, more importantly, the Managing Director of London Underground. He can have full control over the running of the railway network. What we see, as passengers like yourselves and as members of staff, is constant overruns at weekends of engineering work, particularly on Mondays, and there have been massive problems with the Jubilee line and other lines due to failures of the new technology that was supposed to come in.

The litmus test at the end of the day is what the travelling public feels about these upgrades. I feel that they see no difference at all. I believe they do not see a massive deterioration but they certainly cannot see a massive improvement either.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Thank you very much.

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** On the Jubilee line, working on it myself, it has been quite frustrating. It has been delayed quite a lot. We do not get that much information either which was a big issue when the PPP was in place because of the system of penalty fines. It seemed like everything was kept secret because no one wanted to admit there was any liability on their part from either the PPP companies or the Underground. Because it was running behind it seemed it was being pushed through because of deadlines and that had an impact on the delivery of the project I believe. I am the same as the other two guests: I do not believe we get that much information ourselves.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** I begin, Chair, by declaring an interest in that London First is a membership organisation and we have a number of members who are active across the supply chain in providing services to London transport. The list is available on our website if you would like to see it.

I do not have a great deal to add to what the three previous witnesses have said. A one word answer to your question is yes there has been slippage. The upgrade on the Jubilee line was supposed to have been completed by the end of 2009 originally. There have been a variety of announcements near the point at which it was, subsequent to that, due to be completed to tell us it was going to be completed a bit later than it had been intended. Where we stand now, I believe, is that we are going to get, after a period of what we are told will be final weekend closures, the full capacity of the upgrade, or almost the full capacity of the upgrade, in early 2012. There are similar stories about other lines. The Northern line was supposed to be completed by the end of 2011 in time for the Olympics and it is now going to be completed at some point towards the end of 2014.

I absolutely share the point that others have made about information. Whatever the criticisms - and there are many - about the way in which the PPP programme worked, we had two key things from it. One is we had much greater volumes - arguably still not enough - of publicly available information that would help us make judgements about how well TfL and the governance of the Underground was working. Secondly, we had independent oversight of the programme and we were able to get insight from the Arbiter as to whether or not it was being delivered efficiently. Someone could go through the books, kick the tyres on the work being done, and tell us whether it was being done well or being done badly. We have lost that.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Thank you. That is very helpful. We will pick up some of the individual issues such as Tube Lines and so on later throughout our questioning.

One area I wanted to start off with is around the area of strikes. TfL particularly has said that its target performance slipped last year due to strike action. It states that it did not deliver its scheduled kilometres due to the five 24 hour strikes by the RMT and the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) unions. Could Bob and Steve start off with whether you think that is the main cause for a problem with performance on the Tube and if you have got any comments on that?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** It is hard to say. When the strikes were on TfL was saying it did not have any effect. Now, all of a sudden, there is an effect. The old saying is figures cannot lie but liars can figure! Hence the reason why, we do not know. We do not know if that is just part of the figures or not. Obviously, a simple way to improve the mileage of London Underground is to not have a dispute in the first place.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Steve, have you got anything to add on that?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** It just seems quite a low target if five strikes can affect its figures so.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** John, in terms of business, what was the impact of strikes?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** The impact of strikes is very substantial and I guess you may come to that. On the particular point about the impact of strikes on performance, again, it is difficult to tell. It is difficult to tell, from the published data, the extent to which poor performance and failure to meet targets is a function of strikes or industrial action; the extent to which it is a function of some of the things that the Underground management are trying to deliver through the upgrade programme just being hard and complex - and, inevitably, there are costs with that; and the extent to which it is a failure by management to deliver well. Disaggregating good luck, bad luck, good performance and bad performance from what is available to us is a very difficult task.

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** To add, in the sense of what John was saying there, yes, it is difficult from published information to work out exactly what is going on but the performance database which underpinned the PPP contract - which as far as I know is still being maintained - does identify different causes of delays in terms of the availability measure so that information should be there for London Underground to demonstrate how much is due in the first place to strikes, leaving aside the merits of the issue, compared with other problems coming from asset performance.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Do you think they are perhaps overstating the issues from the previous year or do you not know?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** I honestly do not know. What I am saying is the information is there and it would be helpful to have it split out in that sort of way.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Obviously, strikes have a huge impact on London. I am wondering whether, Bob and Steve, you might want to clarify to us where you are in negotiations at the moment for potential further strikes over this next year and the likely impact on London?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** We had a very positive meeting last week with TfL's Managing Director, Mike Brown. Very positive indeed. What we both agreed to do is jointly sponsor not an inquiry as such but a team to come in where we can give evidence - not looking at who was wrong and who was right but - to give recommendations on how to improve industrial relations.

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** With pay negotiations we have still got ongoing issues around Boxing Day and Bank Holidays which need to be addressed. There are ongoing meetings on those and pay itself. That is all I am aware of.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Negotiations on that front, in terms of pay, are progressing. This is a wider thing that you are talking about; more fundamental in terms of your working relationship.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** It is more fundamental. It is getting someone to come in - which has happened before on a number of occasions. It is not a commission as such but some kind of Panel where selected people - ie on behalf of London Underground and the trade unions - give evidence on how best industrial relations could improve and recommendations come out. That is what we are looking at. Not trying to say who was wrong on a particular

dispute and did this manager do this and did this local shop steward do this and did this full time official do that? It is about making recommendations to try to get all areas of industrial relations working better.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Do you feel that industrial relations have deteriorated over recent years?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Yes, they have deteriorated. If you look at the history of London Underground from around about 1926 to around about 1975 there was probably just two days of strike action in 50 years. That is a remarkable industrial relations record. They also had a machine of negotiation which had a Wages Board which meant that areas of dispute which could not be resolved would go to a Panel where there was an independent Chair, a side wing member for the company and a side wing member for the trade unions. That was done away with. Not just on London Underground but on the mainline railways as well. Then what you get is an old fragmentation of companies. You have not just got London Underground to deal with now. It was London Underground, then it was Metronet, then it was Tube Lines, then it was the contractors, then the sub-contractors and agencies. It gives an impression that there are loads and loads of disputes when, in fact, what it is is the fragmentation of the industry with particular problems with particular individual employers.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** One question I know that is on a lot of Londoners' minds is is there likely to be potential industrial action throughout the Olympic and Paralympic Games? We have seen a deal done with Network Rail workers where they will effectively not strike over that period. Will you be looking to negotiate the same deal?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** We signed up for the Olympics. We think it is a great opportunity for people throughout the world to play sport against each other, rather than fight against each other in wars. We think that is a fantastic opportunity to see the best in the world co-operate. We are part of that. We have signed up for that. There has been no formal position put by London Underground to us, as of yet, on an Olympic deal. We have got a deal with Network Rail which is the biggest railway operator in Britain. We will be looking for the same, if not better, with London Underground.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Peter Hendy [Commissioner, TfL] this morning - I have read in the press - is saying it is considering paying a Games bonus of up to £500 to staff --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** There you go.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** -- which is similar to Network Rail. Is that the first you have heard of that?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** That is the first I have heard of it. It must have been a good deal last week if Peter Hendy is recommending it.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Steve, have you got any further comments?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** Just to say that over the Olympic period there are no plans to have industrial action over a particular period. It is an ongoing thing. Any agreement reached is, effectively, a no strike agreement because if you reach an agreement then what are you going to be in dispute about? If an agreement is reached in advance of the Olympics, that, effectively to me, is a no strike deal.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Could I ask a question of you, John Dickie. At London First, how much do you estimate one day's strike costs Londoners? Estimates have been put forward by the London Chamber of Commerce and, I think, by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) too so you must, presumably, have a figure as an association of businesses in London.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** We have not made our own calculation. As you say, the Chamber has a figure which I think is £48 million per day. It is obviously a difficult calculation to make because it depends a bit on quite how the strike action takes place. A strike that goes on for several days in a row is going to be of much greater cost. A three day strike would be of much greater cost than three one day strikes.

It is also the case that the distribution varies greatly by businesses. There are some businesses that, when there is a strike, they can structure what they are doing to have many of their staff work at home or to not have to come into London. By contrast, if you are a business that has to get around London a great deal, if you cannot because the Tube is not working and, as a consequence, the rest of the transport infrastructure is going to be much more clogged, that makes it very difficult to go about your business. If you are in the service sector, if you provide meals to people, if you provide concerts or theatre performances in the evening and people do not come, they are not coming back and you have lost that seat in your restaurant or in your theatre forever, whereas there are some businesses that can recover much more easily and so the cash impact of a short strike will be less. So the distribution is very great.

It is absolutely the case that, first off, this is bad for business in London and for the reputation of London as a city in which to do business. Secondly, it is very bad for every business, whether their workers come in but are exhausted, whether they come in exhausted from having got in and spend half the day worrying about how they will get home, or whether they cannot make it in at all. The impact is substantial.

We are very clear that what we want to see is an end to strikes on the Underground in London. We do not have either a view on who you blame for what or what is the best solution to deliver this. That is why you are here and that is why we elect the Mayor. We do want to see change happen and we do want to see the frequency of strikes stopped.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** You say £48 million per day is a possible --

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** The Chamber's figure.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** -- estimate. Certainly I have heard the London Chamber of Commerce talk about £50 million so you are pretty much in the same ballpark --

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** That is its figure.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** As you say it is unacceptable, unacceptable to Londoners as a whole and unacceptable to businesses. The CBI has taken another step which is to suggest that in the case of the public service unions there should actually be a threshold limit on their ability to strike and cause this cost and cause the disruption that they do to London. What is London First's view on that?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** We have a similar view. We think there is a case for a higher threshold for industrial action on services like the Underground. When you have a public service provided by the public sector the people working in that organisation are likely to be on more secure terms and conditions and better terms and

conditions in terms of pay and pensions certainly than the generality of the people working in the private sector in London. When those people are providing an essential service that the rest of London relies upon to do their business – we should not forget that the people who most rely on the Underground or transport services to get around and to do their business are people who need to get to work to get paid. It is not rich professionals who can maybe work at home or can take a day off or can just make, somehow, arrangements to get around it, it is people who are reliant on getting into work to get paid that suffer the most. When you take those two things together there is an argument that there should be a higher threshold; at least half the people in the organisation saying they want to go on strike for a start. We think there is a strong argument for that.

Having said that, we should not see this as somehow a silver bullet that will solve the problem of industrial relations in London. It may well be the case that if you set a high threshold that will simply galvanise people in the unions to get out there and motivate their members to turn out to vote. It is a useful check but there are bigger and wider issues about the culture and about the way in which we manage transport that need to be fixed too.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Clearly there is a discussion going on in the House of Commons and in the Government about it, as there is here. You know that the Mayor has made statements and we have discussed this in the Assembly. New York is an example where this sort of strike is illegal. Do you think that is going too far?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** I think there is a balance that has to be struck. The right to strike is a civil liberty in a free society but, in return for immunity from a breach of contract, trade unions have certain rights. You need to strike the right balance. On the whole we think there is a case, as I say, in essential public services provided by the public sector, on which lots of other groups of people rely, on making it a bit harder to go on strike and putting a bit of grit into the mechanism and demonstrating there is real support for it. That certainly is where I think we go as a first step.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mr Crow and Mr Connelly, you have heard all that. That is the sort of statement from business in London. I have to say that a number of us in the political world share the views that he has given us. What is your view? May I say, perhaps, what is your defence of the actions that you take? Of course you are defending your members.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** There is no defence at all, Mr Tracey. If you are going to argue for thresholds, why don't you start with yourself and argue that you should get a threshold for the majority of people before you are elected as well?

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I do not go on strike.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Yes, you do.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** You have asked me to speak. Let me finish. I never interrupted you when you spoke. I am not asking you to agree with me; I am just asking you to see a point of view.

Secondly, you go on about America. No doubt your next quote will be that it still has the lethal injection to kill people out there. That will be the next one to stop people.

The reality is this: in industrial relations, at the end of the day, it is a very, very small amount of time that people go on strike. There are vastly more people losing time through work through injuries caused by negligence of the employer than they are by taking strike action.

Secondly, if you turn around and say that you are going to put a threshold on strikes, that will not stop people. The Prime Minister before Gordon Brown, Tony Blair, said that Britain, even with changes to the anti-trade union laws, would still have the most restrictive trade union laws in the western world.

The fact is, even if we go on strike at the moment, there are a number of hoops and hurdles to go through. For example, the employer can come along and just say that it is going to dismiss a group of workers. We cannot take strike action. There is no ballot of the workforce to say, "Should these workers leave the industry?" They are just done. "You are going". We have to give seven days' notice. We have to provide matrix systems which are not just about names and national insurance numbers and grades where people live but contains every single grade that London Underground recognises and every single location in a company where people are moving around on a day-to-day basis. Then we have to have a ballot - quite rightly so - of between 12 and 14 days in peoples' homes, which we totally support. Then, before we do anything, we have to give seven days' notice to take action. There is something in the region, before management makes the move to make people redundant or dismiss them, of six weeks before any action takes place. At the end of the day, what other defence have workers got, Mr Tracey, in defending ourselves?

You could say, "Go to an industrial tribunal". An industrial tribunal cannot force the employer to give them their job back. It can only make recommendations. Last year there were 57,000 applications to industrial tribunals. Out of that, 3,200 were successful and, out of the 3,200 that were successful, only nine people in Britain got their jobs back. What other defence have we got than other brothers and sisters standing by the side of us to say that if there is a ballot we take strike action.

If you look at the threshold, why is the Mayor not asking for a threshold for when he is elected? He would not have got elected --

**Richard Tracey (AM):** He does not go on strike either.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** No, but he makes the decisions regarding the determination of the budget which, in turn, pays our members' terms and conditions. You have not got a threshold as well. If we are going to have thresholds why wasn't a threshold put in place for the Alternative Vote referendum? It is a nonsense really at the end of the day --

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I agree with that.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** At the end of the day, Mr Tracey, you can put all the restrictions you want on workers. You can put them in a straitjacket. If there is a call to fight back they are going to fight back.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Sure. How many Members have you got in your union, Mr Crow?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Just under 80,000.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** In the case of London you have called strikes where you have had well below a minority situation, well below 50%, of your Members vote and then you claim that you

have got a mandate to have a strike. You have heard what it costs London. You have heard about the disruption it causes for all the other workers who have also got a perfect right to be going to work and you try to bring them to a halt. Fortunately Londoners do seem to fight back I notice. You are doing this with a tiny minority actually of the membership. How do you justify --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Easily justifiable, Mr Tracey. You are saying the majority of people need to vote yes but, for those who have not voted, we could argue the case that they are quite happy that they have not voted no in strike action. You quote that when we go out on strike it costs London £50 million a day --

**Richard Tracey (AM):** That is what industry says.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** OK. When we come to work then we must be worth £50 million then every day so obviously we are not being paid enough if that is the case. The reality is, at the end of the day, all you are looking at is the trade unions' reasons for going on strike. Why are you not questioning the other side? It takes two to tango for a dispute. Why aren't you questioning management's motives about strike action as well? Why aren't you questioning the industrial tribunal that said that a senior shop steward was dismissed for trade union victimisation, for being part of a health and safety committee? He was sacked. Why aren't you going and saying, "Where is the justice there"? Never heard a word from you. Not a single word. If you are going to deal with injustices deal with injustices where our Members are faced with a situation where an independent tribunal unanimously said that a senior health and safety representative was sacked for sitting on a health and safety committee.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** When I mentioned the minority that you used to call a strike I assumed, quite frankly, that the majority that do not even bother to vote are actually satisfied with the situation that exists. You are the militant operation going on. You have a minority then causing a --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** You are in a minority as well. Yes, you are --

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I do not call strikes, Mr Crow. It is no good using me as an example all the time --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** You set the budget, Mr Tracey.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** What budget?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** You oversee the budget of TfL. You oversee that.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** No, I do not. No, no, no. I scrutinise it. I do not have any executive powers. Don't let's try dragging my situation as a scrutinising Member of this Assembly --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** You are sitting there today, Mr Tracey --

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Let's focus back on the issue and not get personal.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** You are sitting here today, Mr Tracey, and you are --

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Scrutinising you.



**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Absolutely. And you have not got the majority of people in your particular area to give you the authority to scrutinise.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Richard, do you want to ask a further question or ...?

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I am just trying to establish how Mr Crow believes that, with a minority of his Members voting for a strike, they can try to bring London to a halt. They do not succeed and cause the amount of --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Why are you so annoyed?

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I am annoyed because of the inconvenience you cause to Londoners. If you were to face many Londoners and listen to them you would hear the same --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** I face up to Londoners every day, Mr Tracey. I use the Tube every day. I have worked for London Underground for 33 years. You haven't got to tell me about what it is like to work on London Underground. You want to come out one night and look at some of the track workers digging out stone at 3am.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I think you have proved the point that I have been trying to make.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** I think it is fair to say that the public is extremely fed up with a whole range of disruptions on the Tube - and businesses as John [Dickie] has said - of which poor industrial relations is one component that people are extremely fed up with now. My feeling is, from the public that contact me, that neither the unions nor the employer has done themselves any credit in the past few months and what the public expects is for a sensible deal to be done and, to some extent, debates about the legality of it are impractical and distractions. We want a deal to be done because, ultimately, that is what has to happen between employer and employees. I am relieved to hear that there is a new framework for broader conversation about improving industrial relations so let's look ahead to that.

We are going to be hearing from TfL and London Underground next time but it would be good to hear from you what you think could and should be done now to improve industrial relations on the Underground. It would be helpful to hear about what you feel the unions could contribute and what you would like to see coming from the employers' side. What do you want to see from the Mayor? What do you want to see from TfL? Let's talk constructively about the future for a moment.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** It would be nice to have a dialogue with the people concerned. Not going back through the ages. There is nothing more boring than old soldiers starting old battles. The fact is we used to have a meeting with the managing director twice a year - all the unions at national level - to let them know their plans about how they see London Underground going forward - openly and honestly. It wanted new technology to come in. It wanted massive changes. That is fine. We live in a world of change and we understand all that. We can have an open agenda with it. We want to see change as well. We want to see betterment of our Members' pay terms and conditions. That has not happened for a number of years. All the general secretaries were called over to London Underground, 55 The Broadway, twice a year for a meeting. I cannot remember the last time that happened. That would be one of the first steps.

The second step --

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Sorry, Bob, can I just understand what you are saying there? You mean outside of the negotiating context you want to have a higher level conversation about what the future is?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** No, it was formal but it was an informal meeting. It was called the London Underground Consultative Committee where, twice a year, the general secretaries of the rail unions would go over and meet the senior managers of London Underground. They would tell us their plans for the forthcoming year/how they see London Underground in five, ten years and we would tell them where we would like to be in five or ten years. That exchange has not taken place. Certainly I cannot remember in the last seven, eight or nine years. That would be one of the issues concerned.

One of the other issues as well is to re-establish the London Transport Wages Board which proved the test of time - for 40 or 50 years - that areas of disagreement could go to a conciliatory panel where there was a Chair on behalf of the unions and management, a wing member for London Underground and a wing member for the trade unions where tribunal decisions could make recommendations which could resolve disputes. That was gone.

That was another area that I believe that could really resolve industrial relations both at local level, at mid level and at national level; rather than just having meetings formally all the time - which is fine. Of course you should have the formal meetings. A couple of times if they put pens and pencils down and just have a chat and build the relationship up between the managers and the representatives on the opposite side of the table. If that could be done I believe there could be a hell of a lot of a better understanding from both parties to resolve some disputes.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Are you saying that there is not additional machinery at the moment to go to, a form of arbitration or whatever, when there is a dispute at the moment?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** The only formal place to go is to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). No disrespect to ACAS but you go there and you get the conciliation officer of the day. I am not knocking ACAS who do a very good job. Not faulting it at all. What you used to have before was a Chair that was agreed by both parties. On the British Rail side it was Lord McCarthy, for example, who dealt with the British Rail staff national tribunal. We had our own Chair as well for London Underground. You had a Chair that knew the industry and knew both parties. You had a wing member for the company and a wing member for the trade unions. They could get round the table and get a feel for the industry and not just deal with something that was on the menu today, but have an understanding of the industry and the people involved.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** In your view there is a real inadequacy in a long-term strategic overview of industrial relations --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Yes. Absolutely. Also I would like a dialogue with the Mayor of London. We do not want negotiations with the Mayor of London. We respect his position. He is the elected Mayor. Whether we agree with him or not we respect his position. All we ask him to do is respect our position and a couple of times a year do like commerce does and have the opportunity to have his ear.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** I am sure my colleagues will want to come in on that but there was a note I took on your opening entries, all of you, about information. I did not want to let that pass because it seemed quite important. I got the impression from all of you that when we were talking at the beginning about progress, or lack of it, on the upgrade programme you

were all saying that there is less transparency and information publicly available now on the Tube upgrade than there was during the admittedly flawed and failing PPP and, at the moment, you are all having difficulty.

Looking back through our notes we had the Chairman of the Independent Investment Programme Advisory Group (IIPAG) to this Committee last year, which is taking over the Arbiter's process of looking at efficiency in the process. He said he would let us have two of the reports that he has given to the Mayor on progress and efficiency and, in fact, we have not had any of those things. Have any of you made requests for specific information about progress on the upgrades?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** We sought copies of both of the reports which IIPAG produced which have, I think, gone to the TfL Board and we have been rejected. We have not made a formal Freedom of Information request. Doubtless there will be some publication schedule which means at some point it will be published --

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** I can assure you I have and it has said no.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** I think that is unsatisfactory. You made the parallel between what IIPAG is doing and what the Arbiter did. A very substantial difference, leaving aside the staff which the Arbiter had to do these things as opposed to IIPAG's reliance on its own resources and the resources of TfL, is the Arbiter operated in a transparent way. Of course there are lots of areas of activity where you do need redactions for commercial confidentiality but there are lots of areas where you do not.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** When we had David James [Chair, IIPAG] here I think we felt, as a Committee, we had a very good exchange with him and he was very helpful but we have seen a complete lack of published clear information. Would you all agree with that or am I being somewhat paranoid here?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** I would certainly agree with that. To distinguish the role of IIPAG with the role I had, clearly IIPAG is appointed by the Mayor with a short list agreed with the Secretary of State for Transport, and I was appointed under an Act of Parliament. Decisions then about releasing information were entirely mine. Take one example. The Committee has asked if I will release the technical report that was prepared for me in March 2010 on the notional infraco and I will be releasing some of that with redactions but that is my decision. The Secretary of State for Transport does not tell me whether to release information of that sort or not.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** It is within the Mayor's power to provide much more factual information about progress and efficiency on the Underground than is being done at the moment?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** Certainly in my experience as a regulator --

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** John is nodding.

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** -- commercial confidentiality is a card which is over played.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** OK. Personally I think it is nothing short of a national scandal to have such a major public works programme being done in conditions of secrecy,

especially when there are clearly things going wrong. Perhaps this is something we can come back to later today and for the future. Thank you.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** We will come back to some more of that later on. Jenny, you wanted to come in and you were going to pick up ongoing disruptions on the Tube.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I will. Just before I do that though if I could come back to this issue of strikes because John did say that it is a civil liberty to withdraw your labour which I absolutely support and I would like to point out that the Conservative Members of our Assembly went on strike on several occasions by walking out of Assembly Meetings and making them inquorate so the business falls. So please do not say you do not strike. You do.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Rubbish.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Bob, other countries sometimes go on strike by turning up for work but opening the gates and letting everybody go through and not pay. Have you considered that option? Obviously, you would keep at least the travelling public happy in London and they might support your strikes more positively?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** The issue with that is if someone comes in and does not do their job properly, works to rule, or refuses to do a part of their job, then the company is entitled to keep part of their wages or all of their wages, plus they can still discipline them for failing to carry out a management instruction. They would not be dismissed for taking strike action but they would be dismissed for failing to sell a ticket. We have looked at that. It operates well in France and other countries where they have got a far more efficient railway system and have a better industrial relation system as well.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** You are saying it is information flow, whether it is informal with meetings or it is this more important - it is definitely something we will pick up on.

Moving on to the ongoing disruptions, London TravelWatch did a report for us which has said that London Underground's operational performance has taken a significant downturn in recent quarters and it highlights the key measure of availability. The availability of Tube performance worsened last winter and excess journey times were also worse than target. Would you all mind commenting on that; the ongoing disruptions and the causes of those disruptions?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** I think it is unrealistic of anyone to expect major projects to be delivered and there to be no disruption. It is just not going to happen. The question is who is responsible for the disruption and has the project been delivered in the correct fashion. That is where you need to look. If you look back at the Central line where they brought in the signalling system then there was much more significant disruption than we are encountering on the Underground at the moment. Nowadays it does not seem to be as acceptable anymore and it is a much more political issue because everyone puts it on their front pages all the time and it has an impact on who gets elected for Mayor.

The performance overall - I do not want to down play it - I do not think is that bad in comparison to other projects, but there are many aspects of the project that could have been managed a lot better. If you are not getting information on that that is probably why.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Anybody else have a comment on the ongoing disruption?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** As I said earlier, I think it is very difficult to tell the causes of service problems on the Underground, certainly when you are looking at aggregate data over a quarter, and providing more intelligible data is a first step in being able to make better informed judgements about what the problems are. As Steve has said, some of the challenges surrounding upgrading the infrastructure we have while continuing to run high volumes of service across it are formidable and things will go wrong and there will be costs associated with doing that.

If you look at the example that is often given of the Circle line where there are parts of the Circle line that you need blacksmiths to repair because the kit there is just so old and it has been allowed to deteriorate further - quite rightly - because we are waiting for the upgrade programme to kick in on that line, there will be disruptions.

What is very difficult is to disaggregate the extent to which these are anticipated problems that were thought through and that there were mitigational strategies in place but sometimes things just go wrong, and things which go wrong because, actually, it has not been terribly well run or as well run as it could be. Getting better data and having people - it was not the role of the Arbiter but it is part of the areas that his office covered - whose job it is to analyse that data and make it intelligible to ordinary Londoners and businesses such as we represent would, I think, be a very good thing.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** You have still got an excellent Underground system. It is moving three million people about a day and that is going to increase, increase and increase. The fact is it is still the best way to get round London. If anyone tells me that they can get round London after 7am or before 8pm in a car quicker than they could a London Underground train that is not the case. Public transport, buses and trains, is the best way to move around London.

It is a system that is in dire need of investment and either you are going to have to go for the weekend disruptions or you have to look at shutting the entire line down to speed the process up and have more pain at a particular time. What I cannot understand is how the planned events around football matches and round the O2 and round Wembley sometimes leaves a lot to be desired. You can have a big event at the O2 and there are no trains. If you cannot move the weekend work that has got to be done then why can't the football match be moved to a Friday night? If Sky television can move all its matches to a Monday night when it suits them, why can't it be that it can move its football to a Thursday, Friday, Tuesday or Wednesday night? I am not saying that we have big difficulties getting our crowd down to Millwall but certainly people going to Wembley have particular problems and those are the things that need to be planned in the future.

We have still got a good system and people should be patted on the back for the way that the staff deliver the Underground network. The fact is it is the planning and the factoring and fragmentation of all the different companies in between delivering that new performance.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** TravelWatch did say that the causes of some of these difficulties were poor PPP contracts and an RMT overtime ban causing delays to inspections to safety critical components. Have you got a comment on that; that the RMT ban actually ...?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Once again I am surprised really because TfL told us that the overtime ban had no effect. All of a sudden it comes in front of the inquiry and it has an effect. I will go back to our Members and tell them that it did have an effect in the first place. They will be very happy when I leave here this afternoon.

The main point is I do not know if it did have an effect or not have an effect. Our Members tell us that it did have a significant effect and I am surprised why the management are not getting round a table to try to resolve the dispute.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** There have been more strikes under this current Mayor than there were under Ken Livingstone [Mayor of London 2000-2008]. Is there anything political? Are you trying to embarrass a Conservative Mayor?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Not at all. The fact is that we resolved part of the dispute last week under a Conservative Mayor. It makes no difference to us if it is an independent Mayor - which Ken was once I understand - a Labour Mayor, a Conservative Mayor, a Liberal Democrat Mayor or a Green Mayor. It is irrelevant. It is the industrial relations we have with the employer. We do not go about our lives looking to have disputes with London Underground or the Mayor of London. We go about resolving individual problems at the workplace. Sometimes there is a dispute. Sometimes it is settled without a dispute. In the main we resolve the majority of our items without a dispute but sometimes, in a democratic society, the Members have got the right to take industrial action.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Of course but an overtime ban on inspections to safety critical components seems a worrying aspect of any strike.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Yes, there is an overtime ban because it was cutting back on recruitment, it was moving people and not abiding by the agreement that was in place between us and the company. Some people said, "Do something different or we will go on strike". They took action short of a strike. Apart from doing that what else do they do. They cannot go to an industrial tribunal over the issue. They cannot bring in some independent arbiter to say, "Was the company right or were we right?" The option is democratic industrial action short of a strike.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Did you want to say anything on the causes and the impact, Chris, at all?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** No. Other than to repeat what I said before. I looked up yesterday the last publicly available performance report which is for the period ending 8 January 2011, so we are five and a half months out of date in terms of the published reports, and what is there does not enable you to answer the sort of question that you are looking at because the breakdown of the decline in availability which was certainly showing in the autumn is not provided.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I shall move on to health and safety. Just how safe is the Tube? We had the runaway train. Presumably there have been runaway trains before but I have not heard of one. How safe is the Tube do you think?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** I think the Tube is the safest form of public transport you can have. It is very safe actually. Sometimes complacency can come in but there is always an opportunity to review how safe they are. The runaway train is an issue. We do have people killed. Some 15 years ago at Chorleywood there was a runaway train. A contractor's train broke, ran down the track and killed four of our Members. These things do happen. We need to look at those situations and understand the reasons why and share that information with Network Rail, which has a problem with runaway trains as well. Four of its members of staff got killed as a result of a runaway train. You have got to look at the reasons why and learn from those

mistakes. It seems that the company still has not learned from some of the mistakes and we need to put them in place.

It is a safe operation the London Underground. A very safe operation.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** You, as a union, would go to managers and say, "You haven't put these safety measures in place yet"?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Yes, we would go to London Underground and also go to the rail regulator, the safety representatives and the health and safety executive and ask them to put their two pennies in. You are dealing with people's lives here. This is not just about whether a piece of paint falls off a wooden frame. We are talking about a train that ran away. There are other areas as well. Industrial disease as well, regarding asbestos, are big problems as well.

London Underground is not the worst management going. It is a management, in my view, that does take safety seriously, but we can improve upon it.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Steve, did you want to say anything?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** No. I agree that the system is safe. I would not say the system is unsafe for people to go on. In terms of the health and safety machinery sometimes we would like to see that adhered to and our safety committees taken a bit more notice of than they sometimes are. A lot of people have the suspicion that costs take priority over safety on some occasions, although I do not expect management to agree with that.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Do you think there have been any changes in safety practice since June 2010 that have made things less safe?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** The health and safety machinery is different from the industrial relations in that it is a consultation. From my own feedback from a lot of the circulars we get in relation to safety a lot of the stuff is implemented and consulted and that is it, rather than negotiated into place. I see that as a bit of a key difference between the two; health and safety is classed as consultation rather than reaching an agreement. On a lot of occasions I think it is felt that they have already decided and it is not meaningful consultation.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Do the unions have a common stance on measures that could be taken to improve the safety of the Tube? Are there certain measures that you have discussed and you have presented that have been rejected?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** On every level of machinery as Steve said. You have got local health and safety representatives. You have got people that operate in the middle of the company - national safety representatives. There is a health and safety machinery where these things are elevated through. Sometimes we do believe that management does drag its heels. That might be through impatience on our side but it is a concern for us and our Members.

One area of concern I would say Jenny - through the Chair if you do not mind me saying - with health and safety should be the Olympics. Not so much London Underground *per se*, but certainly in the Stratford area where the Olympics are, there are going to be grave problems.

We flagged this up. There is nobody for us to talk to where we have Network Rail, London Underground and the Docklands Light Railway. Here is just a small example for you. No one knows who the landlord at Stratford International is at this moment in time, except for National Express which is the train operator that operates out of Stratford. There you are going to have Eurostar, South East trains, high speed trains, Docklands Light Railway and whoever is going to get the new train operating company franchise for National Express. One thing is for sure, it will not be National Express because it has been told it is not part of it. We do not even know who is going to be running Stratford Station until April of next year, just three months before the Olympics start. I have got to say to you where is the safety plan. We have been asking.

The Fire Brigade has a debate at the moment whether there is going to be a temporary fire station in the Olympics itself, in the Olympic Stadium. That will be something for the Fire Authority to deal with with the company and the trade unions.

The Westfield Shopping Centre is going to open up with 10,000 employees on Stratford Station - the only access near enough to it is Stratford Station. We would like to see a mock evacuation of the Stratford Olympic Stadium to see what would happen and where would people go.

The more important thing is who is going to take control of Stratford International? It is not a London Underground station. It is not a Docklands Light Railway station. It is not Eurostar. Network Rail offered to be the landlord until after the Olympics and it was told no. It is absolutely amazing that we cannot sit down and talk to someone until at least next April because we do not know who the train operating company is going to be next April.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Who told Network Rail it could not be the landlord? That was TfL was it?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** No, no, no. We believe it was the Government who told it it could not hold it.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Right. We can certainly ask TfL these questions when we see them next month.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** This is an operation where we are going to have workers working alongside each other: Network Rail, Docklands Railway, South East Trains and Eurostar. Who is bringing everyone together. We wrote to Sebastian Coe [Chair, LOCOG] and asked for a meeting with all the people concerned and so far we have had no response.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Could we have a copy of that letter?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Yes.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** It would be --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** It was sent jointly by all the trade unions three weeks ago.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** This is quite recent. I have not got any more questions.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Thank you for that. We are going to move now onto looking at performance and upgrades on specific lines. Val, you are going to kick off with the Jubilee line?



**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Yes. Thank you very much. In recent months there has been, we think, a significant increase in delays on the Jubilee line. We have had signal failures, point related failures and shoe beams and other objects falling off trains. Not too sure I know what a shoe beam is but when they fall off they cause problems. We have had a power outage which was very, very serious. Steve, can you try to give us some insights, in layman's language, what is going wrong and why in your view? Why are we experiencing this decline of reliability and service on the Jubilee line?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** With the Jubilee, there is a major signalling project going on there. As I said before, there is bound to be disruption on the line in relation to it. A lot of the things you are reading about, the reasons for the delays, are the trains breaking down or becoming non-communicating which I believe are software issues with the trains which need to be sent back and rectified and then put back on the trains. It is lots of different little issues in relation to the signalling system itself.

The major one, the power failure - the report is pretty much finished now - was down to poor maintenance; a cover that was not secured correctly, a bolt missing and a couple not done up properly. That has been addressed now to make sure they are done up properly and there are taut settings done for the nuts. I do not know if that has got anything to do with it coming back in-house now. Obviously that is a good thing because we can run up now with the maintenance side of things. I do not believe it will be spending too much money before leaving its contract. Talking to engineering people who work on the engineering side, they say they are understaffed and they have got too much work to do. Whether that is just anecdotal I do not know.

The shoe beam incident is still under investigation. That seems like it was a collision and it was a one off incident.

The major delays are down to the implementation of the new signalling system. We get circulars explaining what caused it. Non-communicating train as they are called. That is just part of the project.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** You connect the two things together; the current problems and the implementation of the new signalling system. We have all been frustrated by what will be over 18 months worth of delays on the delivery of the Jubilee line. It is extremely serious for the Olympics harking back to the previous discussion. What do you think is the potential for further slippage on the Jubilee line upgrade? How secure are we that we are going to get the Jubilee line operating at the end of July as we are now promised?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** That is the present date but there have been major completion dates that we have been given. I would not put my money on it!

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** If you were a betting man, Steve, how much money would you put on?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** As time is going on it is improving. That is my take on the line; as it goes along it is getting better and better. Hopefully they are over the brow of the hill.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Do you think TfL has got proper systems and supervision in place to deal with any ongoing maintenance failures? You talked about Alstom losing interest. There was obviously --

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** That is a perception that it is running down its contract now it is on its way out.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Have they been double checked since it looks like it is getting sloppy possibly?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** I would not like to say that. Is it going to be spending money before it gives up its contract. I would not imagine so. That is just a transition period. Hopefully once it comes back in-house there are new regimes put in place to address maintenance issues because the drivers and the Members have concerns. There seem to be a lot of --

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Have you raised these concerns with TfL?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** Absolutely.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** What has its response been?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** In relation to the issue where the cover came off it promised doubling up maintenance and making sure none of these covers can be put back on without all the bolts being secured. You can imagine that is somebody rushing through the job.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Any other comments on the risks of slippage again?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** If I can make a couple of points. The first is it is difficult to exaggerate how the combination of unplanned service problems on the Jubilee line added to the closures we have seen over the past few years and how difficult that has made life, not just for businesses in Canary Wharf but for all those people who work there or need to get there. That is a similar problem that venues like the O2 or ExCeL have had, which have been massively compounded on those weekends where we have had a closure and the Docklands Light Railway down, which is extraordinary.

It is worth just noting that the firms who are delivering the work on all of the upgrade programme - and under any circumstance the contracting body running the Underground systems in London will always be relying on people with specialist skills to come in and do the work - are world class firms which have records of extraordinary success across the globe in delivering this sort of upgrade. Whilst, undoubtedly, you come to the end of contracts and people do these things and businesses get things wrong, most of the time these are businesses that have a great track record of getting things right. We do need to ask ourselves a bit about the framework under which they are delivering their work.

It is convenient for everyone to blame a lot of the problems we currently have on legacies from the PPP and some of them may well be entirely justified. The problem we all have, particularly those of you who are here to scrutinise the operations of TfL, is disaggregating what can you legitimately blame on contractual legacies and to what extent can you tell what it is that is driving some of the poor performance. To what extent are these tragic but inevitable from time to time random incidents around the operation of the line? To what extent are there structural

flaws grounded in the way in which the PPP contracts were set up? To what extent are we just not running it as well as we should be now? It gets us back to the constant theme we have all been saying about better information upon which we can make informed judgements.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** I would support what both my colleagues have just said. The only way forward really is, if there is going to be an upgrade, then upgrade the whole lot instead of piecemeal and keep on going back and doing bits and pieces. Crossrail is being built at the moment. That will be state of the art technology put in there. The whole lot from start to finish will be put in place. The PPP was an unmitigated disaster. That cost Londoners an absolute fortune and caused British taxpayers a fortune. We warned what would happen about trying to divide and break up the industry and put it to one contractor who would sub it to another contractor. That fell on deaf ears.

It is very hard to find out exactly if it is a signal failure or if it is as a result of new technology or planning work or so on. The fact is it has gone through a very, very poor position in the last six months and we all hope that that improves. We have got to learn our lessons from the reasons why these faults took place so they are not carried out again in the future.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** What do you think the lessons would be then for other upgrades?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** I would like to see the whole lot done in one to be honest with you, instead of piecemeal bits and pieces.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** You mean the testing?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** I would like to see the track, the signals, the trains and the investment all done as one. What you normally find happens is you get a new stock coming in but then they have to do the signalling to correspond with the new stock, or the new infrastructure and the new stock and it goes on and goes on and goes on, rather than repairing the entire structure of the line completely so people have got something fresh to go onto.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Any other comments on lessons for the other line upgrades?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** For the test train operators a lot of the drivers on the line were surprised at the amount of problems encountered after the test train operation side of things. To a lot of the people it seemed there was not enough testing done in advance of it being rolled out on to the lines.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Was it the right kind of testing?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** It was probably to do with time constraints I would say. You need to deal with a lot of the teething problems before you get on to the line. That is where it felt it fell down on the Jubilee line from the drivers' point of view.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** It has fallen down every time it has gone live at rush hour. Chris, I can see you nodding a bit there. That is something you agree with?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** Two points. One is that the history of signalling projects generally has been problematic and Network Rail has had its issues with signalling projects. One of the

things which other metros sometimes do better is the advanced planning, the understanding of the risks, and having a programme which is less susceptible to some of the problems - whether inevitable or not - which arise as you go through. That advanced planning is important.

A second point: given that we are where we are - this is going to sound like a cracked record - and the transparency around whether the plans now are robust seem to not be there. An analogy - not a perfect one - that is useful is when Network Rail was upgrading the West Coast mainline there were concerns on the part of Virgin Trains about whether the infrastructure was going to be ready to introduce the new timetable on time. A lot of work was done with the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) as the independent regulator and all the operators on the route, Network Rail, its contractors and the train operators to test the robustness of the plans to deliver the timetable on the date proposed. In the end a phased programme of ramping up to the new timetable was agreed by all the parties.

I do not see that transparency around TfL's latest plans and probably less than existed when London Underground was challenging Tube Lines as a separate company.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** You think the lack of transparency is also feeding into a poorer planning process because they are not being watched and questioned?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** It may be that all that detailed work exists but is not available for external scrutiny.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** It also undermines credibility. It is one thing to say, "This is a very difficult project. We will do three months' work. When we have done three months' work we will be able to tell you whether it is a further three months, six months or nine months because we do not know until we have done it". If you take the Jubilee line since 2009 when it was supposed to be completed it is a bit like Billy Bunter's postal order. It has always just been about to arrive. It has always been just going to happen. At any point you are another three months away from nirvana.

Getting the planning right so you know what the decision points are so you can communicate - people are grown ups - to Londoners and tell them this is difficult, what the options are and when you will be able to tell them more. I think that would be a much more satisfactory basis for doing the work, which relies on there being good planning in the first instance, than upgrades constantly being that little bit further ahead.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Clear information about the risks. Last question from me if I may, Steve, when I was looking at the ASLEF submission, there was some reference to potential future problems with the signalling system at Neasden after the upgrade because of potential overcapacity. Is there anything you want to say about that? We were quite concerned that we may be running risks of disruption into the future.

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** I have got to be honest; I am not 100% on what is occurring with the signalling centre.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Perhaps you could send something further in writing on the point Val has raised?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** Yes, that is no problem.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Chris, could I pick up one point you said, you said London Underground really is not learning from best practice in metros around the world. Which metro systems do you think we should be looking to in order to learn some lessons and make sure --

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** Sorry, I was not saying London Underground was not learning. Some of the issues around the way Madrid plans its line upgrades were something which London Underground was fully aware of and joined with us and Tube Lines to go over to Madrid and talk to the people there about how that was done.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** We spoke to Madrid, as you may recall, and London Underground told us we did not know what we were talking about. Two years later it is quoting Madrid and everything we suggested.

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** The essential point is having clear plans which anticipate some of these problems, knowing how you will deal with them and, as John says, communicating better around that, rather than waiting for problems to happen.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Richard indicated on this and then I want to move on to the Victoria line. If you want to be quick with a question on the Jubilee?

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I wanted to clarify. You have been talking about other metros and Madrid and so on. Do you feel, from your position, that there was not sufficient bench testing of the signalling methods? We have ended up with live testing and the commuters and the workers experiencing enormous inconvenience as a result.

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** One of the things I said very clearly in my direction on costs was that the notional infraco - the concept in the PPP agreement - would have approached the procurement of the signalling contract in a different way from the way Tube Lines actually did it. It was quite open in saying that at the point it signed the contract there were a number of risks which had not been properly worked through so it did not understand, and its contractors did not understand, what some of these issues would be.

My view was, learning from contracting generally and the way other metros have approached these projects, to spend more time understanding the risks and working out with your contractor how those would be addressed before you signed the contract is a better way of doing things and would have avoided some of the problems subsequently.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Do you believe that for the Northern line, which is the next one in line, these problems will have been ironed out?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** I hope so. I certainly took the view in my direction that there was plenty of time for Tube Lines - this was before it was taken over by TfL - to learn the lessons and to build those into the Northern line procurement.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** I want to raise the Victoria line if I may? There have been two issues with the Victoria line upgrade. One has been the new trains which the Mayor and the Commissioner of Transport have recognised were not properly tested before they went into service and also the new signalling system that is going to start coming on to line. Can I start, first of all, with you Bob, with regards to the Victoria line? With regard to the faulty doors and the aspects of the new trains, was that something that your Members picked up and do you believe that is being adequately resolved at the moment?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** No, it is not being adequately resolved at the moment. There are particular problems with industrial relations on that line as well. There is an action short of a strike taking place by our Members on the Victoria line. We have a whole number of industrial relation issues which we can send you details on.

The faults have not been corrected yet. They are significantly better trains; the air conditioning is far superior to the previous trains. We do not know what the performance will be at this moment in time. There is no reason to suggest they should be any worse but, hopefully, they are going to be better performers than the ones before. The Victoria line is a new line in relation to London Underground really, probably only 35 or 40 years into being as a line.

There are particular problems there, as you say, regarding the testing of the new trains and the new signal equipment. This is causing a performance problem for London Underground. What those actual figures are I do not actually know. London Underground would have to give you an update on what the situation is but, from the ground, there is still a bad performance taking place of the Victoria line trains.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Complaints have soared. Certainly my postbag has been filled with people who have been stuck in the Tubes and even had to be walked out the back and through the tunnels. I can see from the figures that we do have that they have been below target, certainly up until April 2011.

The one thing that does concern me now are the new trains. I believe at the end of this month the old stock should be off the tracks so it will be purely the new trains. Then you go into the second phase which is the signalling system. At the moment you have the new signal next to the old signal and I understand you are working from the northern end at Walthamstow and TfL is going to go down station by station testing the new signalling system and, when it is working, ripping out the old. Perhaps Chris can help with this as well. What plans are there in place to ensure that that happens smoothly?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** It is out of our control really. That is a management issue. It is management's responsibility how it wishes to roll out its programme. If it wants to do it section by section that is a management responsibility. If it wants to start in the middle and go south or go north we will do exactly what the management tells us. Unfortunately, for people travelling on the Victoria line it has been particularly problematic and frustrating using the Victoria line trains.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** OK. This comes back to Richard Tracey's point earlier that there seems to be live testing of the signalling whilst the Underground system is working. Chris, do you have anything further to add on this?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** No, nothing particularly to add.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I am particularly interested in the District line and the Metropolitan line. I wonder what views you can give us about the recent poor performance? The Metropolitan line particularly has been highlighted in press reports and information coming back. What is the reason for it do you believe?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** Just the introduction of the new stock again - the new S-stock - is causing the majority of the problems.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Incorrect timing of the introduction are you saying or a lack of testing again?

**Steve Connolly (ASLEF local representative, Wembley Park):** Problems with bringing it into service on the actual line – anticipated problems. It is where you draw the line on how much disruption it causes. I do not think any project can be delivered without some sort of disruption. It is the level of it and what the reasons for it are that you need to focus on. It is problems with the technology on the trains. It is a brand new train coming on to an old line so that is where the problems are generated.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** What you have not got, Mr Tracey, as I said before, is Crossrail being built or Eurostar being built or the Jubilee line extension being built. What you have got is old infrastructure and bringing new trains on. What you are trying to do is revamp everything possible which is very difficult when you have had something established there for over 100 years. That is what you will get. If you do get something new, like Crossrail, my view on Crossrail will be that when it opens up you will see far less faults on it because the whole lot of it is brand new. Here you are dealing with a drainage system that is 120 odd years old, you are dealing with old signalling cables which are a 100 odd years old, then you are bringing in a brand new state of the art train for a metro system that has got to conform with old infrastructure from the Victorian days.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** There is new signalling and so on being brought in along with the trains, is that right? Not on the Metropolitan line. Right. Mr Bolt, what is your view?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** The point that you will always have some problems is a valid one. This was certainly recognised by both London Underground, Tube Lines and Metronet when Metronet existed. To avoid that impacting by reducing performance on the whole line you had to make sure that, as far as possible, everything else was sorted out before you did something like introduce new trains so that performance was at a high level. If it dipped a bit it was still acceptable. What we are saying – reflecting some of the points previously – is that it appears that some of the problems with the new kit are adding to problems with existing assets so that that is, in some cases, causing the dip in performance.

Where you are introducing new trains, yes, you do have problems but the idea of having test trains and the Old Dalby test track is to try to identify those problems and resolve them before they run a passenger service. There is a question whether that is happening as rigorously as it could do.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** When we see TfL Tube managers we will ask them about that. We had understood – I think I am right in saying – that the testing of the trains was going on.

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** They certainly spent a significant sum upgrading the test track to enable that.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Joanne and I also went up and test drove some of the trains so we have been up there so we know there was testing going on.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** They were ones specifically intended for the Metropolitan line.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Exactly.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Right. Clearly you have given us your views and we can only resolve the Metropolitan line when we see TfL further.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** One thing which Bob has raised which I do want taken up is the sports travel aspect. Whilst we have all this focus on the Olympics, tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of fans move around London and I do not think the service is what it should be to get them round at peak time. We did do a scrutiny under Roger's [Evans] chairmanship on that. That is worth coming from those who manage the system. Let's just hope the Jubilee line, for example, is running properly on the big Champions League final at the end of the month. I have got a personal interest in that.

The sub surface issues I am going to suggest are fundamentally health and safety issues. Are there concerns from the Panel about the age of the stock that we have got in the signalling and track on the sub surface lines like the Circle, the District, the Metropolitan and City and Hammersmith? Certainly in my eye there are concerns and I wondered whether the unions have a view on that, given you are having to manage a lot of stock there?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** The stock is old. Technically the sub surface is less of a threat because if anything happens, emergency-wise, you can get to sub surface a lot quicker than you can through deep level tube. That is one issue that we can look at.

The stock is old. I dread getting the train, for example, from Earls Court round to Edgware Road. It takes you longer from there than it does sometimes from St Pancras down to Calais to be fair! What you have got is old infrastructure and old signalling. The stock is safe. It is not going to crash or anything of that nature. It is perfectly safe for the travelling public and our Members, however it is old and it is aging.

Once again, we have got Victorian infrastructure and, at some point in time, it is going to have to be replaced and there is going to have to be an entirely new look at how trains operate on the Circle and Hammersmith and City lines. We are talking about looking in 10 to 15 years' time with probably another 300,000/400,000 people per day using the Tube system.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** You are quite right, there is a signal box at Edgware Road Tube Station - I have gone on about it - which is 100 years old and it should really be in a museum. What I have not seen on the PPP contract though is things like that have been dealt with and it has been the newer bits. The Jubilee line, let's not forget, is the newest bit and is causing us the problems. Yet we have had the bits which are 100 years plus not being touched at all; the bits I go through and businesses do rely on in the West End and going out to Hammersmith.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** If you want a nice painted station. Fine. Nicely tiled, looks lovely. Or do you want a train that gets you from A to B as quickly and as safely as possible. They are the arguments. My view is that the resources should be put into not so much lovely stations but the actual movement of the trains. Go down to the Jubilee line extension, for example, you have got train stations there where every one of them is like Wembley Park. Every single station is like Wembley Stadium. At other places, for example, you have got a signal box with mice and rats running around in it.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** Chair, I think London Underground has just let the contract for the sub surface signalling and that is due to come in by the latest in 2018. I think it has to get some bits of it in beforehand. It has got a difficult challenge to balance which is, if you have got very old kit that does fall over and you are going to spend billions to upgrade that kit, how much do you spend in the meantime to keep it



running for the next six months or the next three weeks. That, from the value for money point of view, is a difficult judgement for them to strike but it is one that would be very interesting to hear what their views are as to how they go about making those difficult balancing decisions.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Yes, John, I am fully aware of the letter of the contract but it still seems that there are potentially delays there and if you do not keep emphasising it it may drop off in the priorities; given the whole focus on the newer bits.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** Letting the contract has slipped so this was contractual but, like so much of the programme, it was supposed to have been done earlier and has not been done earlier. It is not quite clear why it was not done to the original timescale.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** I wanted to form an impression whether we feel we are beginning to move away from the constraints of the PPP and the emphasis it had on different things like tarding up the stations rather than dealing with the signalling and the tracks and improving the service. I was thinking whether we have moved away from the confines of the contracts, thinking of the PPP contracts rather than thinking where we can best make the biggest impact. I get the impression we are still thinking of the Bakerloo, Central and Piccadilly line as one contract and all the other bits and pieces. I have not seen any evidence yet that London Underground has begun to think across all that in a way which is going to hopefully give us better results more quickly to improve things for Londoners.

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** It is probably not quite as you portray it because the upgrades were always on a line by line basis. Part of the original reason for packaging the lines in the way they were was to try to get some of the synergies for the different line upgrades. London Underground, since the collapse of Metronet, certainly has looked at what it regards as the best way of delivering the sub surface line upgrade both in terms of the fit with the trains and the nature of the signalling system particularly on the dual running parts of the Piccadilly line.

What it seems to me is the case is that, whereas with the PPP there was absolute clarity about what the contractual requirements were for delivering capacity increases by particular dates, there is now much less clarity about what London Underground is committing to deliver by particular dates which is the point we have all been making throughout this session.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** I understand that and we will make that point when they are in front of us. It is the synergies. I think that there is an opportunity to look across that.

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** When Tim O'Toole was Managing Director of the Tube he expressed a lot of concern about the potential with different signalling systems being adopted by Metronet and Tube Lines. One of the things that London Underground clearly has done, before it awarded the new signalling contract which John referred to, is to take a view about the best approach to signalling on a system wide basis and then fed that into decisions on individual lines.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I wanted to carry on to ask you what you think may be the risks of delay for the Northern line. Is the signalling that is going into the Northern line the same as the Jubilee line or has that aspect been changed now? Do you know anything on that?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** The original intention was it was the same as the Jubilee line. What everyone was asking was whether the move from the Jubilee line to the Northern line to the Piccadilly line which Tube Lines had originally planned built in enough opportunities to learn the

lessons before you moved on to the next one. Even if you are adopting the same basic technology the starting point is different. The kit you are adding the signalling to is different. The point Bob was making is, if you are working on different infrastructure the problems are going to be different, even if the intended solution is the same. Certainly what I had expected to happen, had Tube Lines continued, was a bit of a pause to learn lessons from the Jubilee line, move on to the Northern line but still, learning those lessons, being able to deliver in line with the contractual dates, but probably more of a pause to review between the Northern line and the Piccadilly line.

The original intention was that the resources on the Jubilee line would migrate over to the Northern line fairly seamlessly. With the problems we have seen on the Jubilee line and the changes in timing, some of those original intentions have changed a bit.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** So you think there is a risk that there will be delays with the Northern line work?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** There is clearly a risk. The question you will want to put to London Underground is whether it thinks that the programme as now exists for the Northern line has properly identified both the specific risks arising from the characteristics of the Northern line part of the network and the lessons of the Jubilee line to minimise the unexpected problems, which clearly are a cause for concern for both the people operating the line and for passengers.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** The other question is to what extent they will be able to deal with the Northern line and with the upgrading of the Metropolitan and the sub surface at the same time?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** The issue is - because the contractors are different - the project management capability and, to some extent, the supply chain, to manage two big signalling projects at the same time.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Do you other gentlemen have a comment to make on that?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** Just to note, Richard, that the completion date for the Northern line has slipped three years already.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** We are well aware.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** The target would have given a fair amount of time to learn, one would hope, the lessons from the Jubilee line compared with the original intended target and to note the point that Chris made, which is exactly right, about project management competence as a client. The work is being done by world class businesses that deliver these services across the globe. The challenge is to get clarity as to what it is you want and to make sure that you have got the people in place who can assess how that is progressing and can deal with the unexpected.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** You pointed out very early on that the Northern line should have been completed either in 2011 or certainly 2012 in time for the Olympics which it is well behind that now.

Once the signalling and all the rest of the improvements have been made we will then expect to see more trains running per hour in both directions and considerable improvements. Is that right?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** Yes.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I have to ask you at this point, with the new signalling, what is the possibility for the situation we now see on the Victoria line, the Central line and the Jubilee line of automatic train operation?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** We have had automatic train operation on the Victoria line for over 40 years.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Exactly. What do your drivers do on those trains, Mr Crow? Do they simply open and close the doors? I know you always say that they have the safety feature but otherwise they do not actually drive the trains?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** The trains are automatic. It is still demonstrated both by the health and safety executive that there needs to be an operator in the train because what happens to staff working on the track? If a member of staff doing engineering work in the day time - not the night time - fell over on the track or was inspecting the track, one thing that a train driver has got which an automatic train has not got is a pair of eyes. That is the reason why. Would you really consider having 500 or 600 people stuck down a Tube train with no driver on it. Who would evacuate?

**Richard Tracey (AM):** An attendant. Effectively your drivers are really attendants on those sorts of trains. Is that right?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** No, they are not attendants. They are train drivers.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** That is what you call them.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** They are train drivers. They are train operators. That is what their grade is. It is not what I call them. The London Underground calls them that as well. That is what they have been doing for the last 125 years very well.

Secondly, the Docklands Light Railway is a brand new piece of equipment. Even they have a train captain on there. They still have to have that train captain to be a train driver because, in the event of a signal failure or whatever, the train driver has to come to the attendance of everyone else. I think the travelling public would want someone on every train that drives their train. If we cannot rely on these signalling systems I very much doubt that the travelling public would rely on a computer to take us round the Victoria line.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** What about circumstances in the rest of the world? In all the cities where they do not have --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** They have been properly built, Mr Tracey. On the Hong Kong metro system they purposely built the situation there for that to take place. It is not a railway network that is 125 or 140 years old that has been built on it. It is a nonsense. The new trains that are being built cannot go without drivers on them. You know and I know that it is only a kite you are flying and every train that you are going to operate on London Underground will have a driver at the front of it.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Obviously it is a debate for another day.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Indeed. Thank you for that --

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** It will be a long time. Our grandchildren's day. Not our day.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Let's hope a bit before that.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Thank you for that on the Northern line. Murad, you were going to pick up the Piccadilly, Bakerloo and Circle.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Are there any implications to the delays on the upgrade of the Piccadilly line?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** The Piccadilly line was an upgrade - reflecting the points Bob was making - where there would be new trains and new signalling. The target date for awarding the train contracts to meet the original date for the upgrades was middle of last year at the latest so the fact that there is not a train contract says, as has been recognised, that the Piccadilly line upgrade will also be slipping.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Slipping. John, have you got any views on the delays on the Piccadilly line, given it serves Heathrow Airport?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** As you would expect, Chair, we are strongly in favour of the whole of the network being upgraded as quickly and to as high a capacity increase as possible. My understanding is that both the Bakerloo line and the Piccadilly line are unfunded as matters stand so the work would not begin within the current funding settlement so there are big issues there. It is very important we all are conscious that, while there are inevitably operational challenges in delivering upgrade works in some cases to infrastructure that is over 100 years old, and we have got issues about the transparency of the way TfL goes about this, it is absolutely critical to London that we continue to have the resources to implement the upgrade programme. We need the upgrade programme to happen. What we are discussing is whether it is being done at the margin as well as it needs to be and whether there are more lessons we could learn. We are not questioning the central importance of getting it done and making sure the funding continues to be provided to enable that to be delivered.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** With the Piccadilly line there will be an effect when Crossrail kicks in so the main issue about delaying that is to see that impact. The Bakerloo line though does come bottom of the list and the only thing that has been done, that I can see, on the PPP was a refurbishment of Regents Park Tube Station which mystified quite a lot of people because it is not terribly used. Does that mean people on the Bakerloo line will have to suffer a lot longer than others then.

Are there any other things that can be done to improve the performance of the Piccadilly, Bakerloo and Central lines in the meantime? We have seen, for example, on the District line, by dropping the operations to Olympia that should improve the District line service. We have seen the Circle line improvements to some extent by it going to Hammersmith. I am wondering whether there are means of improving those services in the meantime which are outside of the confines of what we understand to be PPP and what has been brought in-house already?

[Guests indicate they have nothing further to add.]

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** None at all? OK.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** One for TfL next time I think, Murad.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** I want to come in briefly on the Piccadilly line. Representing Enfield it is the only Tube line we have so I am very anxious to see that the upgrade goes ahead. I understand now that TfL is suggesting that it may replace the fleet first and leave the signalling to later. Do you think that is lessons not learned from the past upgrades if that takes place?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** It is not for a particular scientific reason that it is doing that. It is a matter for London Underground to decide, through its project teams, how best it wishes to deliver it. If it believes that will be beneficial. It is something really for TfL to answer the question. We have all got our views on it but it is the management who is delivering the project.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** We will ask them. The fact that we are having budget cuts across the board, have any of you seen any indication that, with the upgrades that will come in the future, there is likely to be further delays or de-scoping of those projects?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** There is going to be if there is going to be a squeeze on the budget. You cannot put a pint and a half in a pint pot. You have got to spread the jam a bit thinner. The reality is going to be that there will be some kind of delay. Whether you want, as I said earlier on, the stations modernised - eg nice new tiles with logos put on them - or do you want the infrastructure and the trains in place? The people I talk to want to see plenty of trains, nice and clean, with an opportunity from time to time to have a seat on them. That is what they really want.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** I think the settlement that TfL got from the spending review which runs up to 2014/15 was a good one and it is a settlement which is allowing Crossrail to be built and for the programme of works currently in train on the Underground to be completed, or at least there is the resourcing to complete it. That is a testimony to the Mayor, to those people in the Assembly who campaigned on this and other organisations such as ourselves who have done a lot of work to make the case for the upgrades to be implemented in London.

We need to both not lose sight of that success but be conscious, in the run up to the next spending review, we are going to have to make the case for the rest of the resourcing to complete the work and it is vital that we do that. It is vital, in making those arguments to Treasury and to the Government of the time, that we have got a record of effective delivery with the current resources. It is very clear, if you look at the agreement between the Secretary of State for Transport and the Mayor over the funding for this period, how much store is put in Transport for London meeting the milestones it said it will meet. A necessary condition for getting the resourcing to deliver the Bakerloo line upgrade and the Piccadilly line upgrade will be effective delivery of the current programme.

**Roger Evans (AM):** It will no doubt intrigue our guests to learn that the last time I was here, three years ago, we were talking about just about the same things! The same debates rage on don't they? I do recall during PPP there was a considerable reluctance to actually engage in block closures of lines and people preferred to do the work at the weekends and overnight. Now with London Underground looking at block closures again I thought it would be useful, Mr Bolt, if you could tell us about any advice that you had or opinions you formed on that issue?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** Two points I think. One is that, given the nature of the infrastructure and the amount of work you can do in an overnight possession, quite often block closures will be a much more efficient way of doing things but you need to take into account, in doing that, the impact on overall services to passengers and it will be easier to do that in some parts of the Underground than others. It is a danger to assume that that is the easy way out. There are examples in other metros of work being planned in a way which enables more work to be done overnight and significant amounts of upgrade work to be done without actually closing the line. It is wrong, clearly, to read lessons from metros with completely different characteristics and people talk about the New York Metro not being closed down but if you have got four tracks it is much easier to do that than on two tracks. Obviously.

With better planning I think there is a real possibility of doing more work in overnight possessions without block closures. If that is not possible then there is a legitimate question about whether a block closure with alternative transport laid on for passengers is a less disruptive way than the significant number of weekend closures we have seen with upgrades like the Jubilee line, particularly if those are running on for a much longer period than originally anticipated.

**Roger Evans (AM):** You have raised an interesting point there about possibly doing work without the level of closures that are planned at the moment. Have you got an example you can back that up with because I cannot think of something off the top of my head and obviously you are better informed?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** It is not a perfect analogy by any means but it was London Underground itself that raised the issue with Tube Lines about why it could not do the upgrades in the way Madrid did it, with very limited closures other than in normal overnight engineering hours. Certainly when I was looking at the closures allowance in the second review period the conclusion I came to was that the level of closures which London Underground had suggested as the baseline was achievable despite all the upgrade work that Tube Lines at that stage was expected to do in the second review period.

In terms of the numbers - and it is expressed in a different way - London Underground proposed just over 20 million lost customer hours for the seven and a half year period. Tube Lines said it wanted 36 million so getting on for twice as many. I agreed with London Underground that it could be done with 21 million.

**Roger Evans (AM):** That was always an argument that it had, a sort of negotiation, between the providers. Is London Underground going to be able to do it on the number of days it said it would now or is it going to --

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** London Underground said that that is what it expected Tube Lines as a private company contractor to do. I agreed with that. I cannot see why London Underground would need more than Tube Lines would have needed given the opportunities it has got to manage the network in a more effective overall way with the integration that Bob has been talking about.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I think, Chair, we have found something we might like to return to when London Underground are in front of us. Mr Crow?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** You have got four and a half hours engineering time Sunday through to Friday and you have got six hours on a Saturday night. That is the

engineering time. If people want to have more engineering time they will have to expect that the last two trains at night do not run and then people will have complaints about getting home. Or, in the morning time, you start the service later. If you start the service later how are nurses and doctors going to get to work to provide essential services for us? Then what you have to rely upon is the last train is on time, which undoubtedly is sometimes late, and then you have to wait for an engineering train to come because the engineering train cannot move until the last passenger train comes or gets nearer to its destination. You are stuck really with that kind of time.

If you want a block shut down that is fine but then people will have to expect that, on average, 300,000 people per line that you shut down have got to be distributed to other lines. Can they cope? Certainly, as I said before, and reiterate regarding sporting events, a lot of people were saying to me about sporting events at weekends. Move the sporting events to mid week. I just heard the Assembly Member talk about the Manchester United/Barcelona final. Why has it got to be played on a Saturday? Why can't it be played on a Friday night? Why can't it be played on a Wednesday night? It is being played on a Saturday night because television broadcasters want it played on a Saturday night but the travelling public in London are going to feel the pinch for it if there are engineering problems about getting to the match or away from the match and so on. The O2 has particular problems with people coming away from concerts.

That is the real ball game. If you are going to have a block closure, as happened with London Overground, in my view you have got to replace the lot. Replace the track, replace the signalling and have the new fleet to go on with it. The London Overground infrastructure change and the renewal programme took a particularly long period in time to do but you are now left with brand new infrastructure that is left in place. If you do it in bits and dribs and drabs in my view you are going to have constant problems. The weekends are a problem but less people use the trains on a weekend than they do Monday to Friday.

**Roger Evans (AM):** That is useful. Mr Dickie, what do you think about the argument about block closures versus trying to do it while the Tube is running? What do you think is the best approach from businesses' point of view?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** The fundamental answer is that there is no one size fits all solution to this. Let's say, for the sake of argument, you knew with certainty the amount of time you would need - so there were not going to be uncertain problems - to do at night or how many hours you would need if you did a block closure. There is then a trade off to be made about the difference in costs and the loss of revenue to TfL in doing this. You lose revenue through block closures. You do not with overnight closure but it costs more to do it.

There is a critical question about the actual specific local impact of each choice. Weekend closures are relatively manageable for Canary Wharf, provided it is open during the week, compared with a block closure, but it can be very bad for the O2 or for ExCeL if they have got weekend exhibitions. A block closure in central London where you have lots of alternative ways of getting from A to B and you can use the network as a whole is clearly easier to manage than if you take the Northern line and if you close one of the spurs in the north going into Camden Town or you close the line in south London where there are no alternative Tube stations. That is much more difficult for people than being unable to use, say, the central stretch of the Northern line in-between Euston and Waterloo.

The critical thing is for TfL to do proper consultation and to be transparent about these trade offs so we can get some kind of a solution which, even if we do not all like it, we can all see is

doing its best to strike a fair balance. To be fair to London Underground, Mike Brown has brought together representatives of businesses and of TravelWatch to try to discuss some of these issues.

I am afraid the two common themes, certainly to me, from this discussion across all the spectrum of opinion is greater communication and consultation and greater information and transparency.

**Roger Evans (AM):** How does that work, that consultation process, at the moment?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** Mike Brown, who is the Managing Director of London Underground, has started to bring together businesses and London TravelWatch to talk about some of the ways in which we can go about the programme for the Northern line so we are seeing the green shoots of a consultative and inclusive process. Too early to tell how well it will work.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Yes. Does that extend to dealing with major events? Mr Crow has mentioned some of them. Murad has talked about this. Some of my constituents complain and say, "Why on earth did they close the line when a particular match was happening or a particular event was on?" Do the people who are organising events have communication with London Underground and the other transport providers?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** There is communication. The question is whether it is, "I am telling you what I am going to do" and, "I am telling you what I am going to do with relatively short notice" or whether I am consulting and engaging with you as to alternative transport provision I might be able to make and indeed, ultimately, discussions over how we allocate the costs of doing this. It is that area, coupled with the Jubilee line being subjected to unanticipated closures. It is one thing to be told you cannot run any concerts for the following five weekends in 2014 but it is another thing to be told that we need to get in now and do work in October and you have got a full schedule in place.

To go back to the earlier discussion about decision points and planning, it is about getting the plan right and then consulting well in advance around how you implement it.

**Roger Evans (AM):** How does London Underground's communication with you over this and consultation compare to what you are getting from Network Rail and the rail operating companies?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** I find it difficult to make that comparison because we are much more concerned about the operation of TfL than we are about the rail network.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I think it is quite a valid comparison because if elements of the Tube are out of action you need an alternative to get into town and what we discover in East London is that, on occasions when the Tube is not working, the mainline is also out of action for engineering works. There seems to me to be an opportunity for people to work together a bit more and ensure that passengers can use the service and have some alternative.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** Of course the times when we have had both the Jubilee line out of action at the weekends and the DLR have been the times that it has been truly impossible for some businesses to get mass volumes of people to their venues or their destinations in the East End.



**Roger Evans (AM):** Yes, yet they are notionally a part of the same organisation aren't they, unlike the surface railway?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** They are actually part of the same organisation.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** Are there any other points of communication with passengers and businesses and staff that you think TfL should be doing in terms of the upgrade programme?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** Asking the staff and passengers for suggestions. A couple of times a year ask them to give any suggestions to make the Underground better. The best consultants in the world, in my view, are the ones that use it and work on there.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** On the block closures, some of us did go down and have a look at what night time working consists of and it was actually quite shocking. It was quite shocking about how little available time you have to do the work but also just how unpleasant it is down there. The Chair has just reminded me that we recommended that block closures should be in the area of two to three weeks. I am assuming that productivity must fall the longer you have a block closure. Common sense would suggest that when you only have four and a half hours working time the productivity is very high whereas, if you extend it over a period of time with dark, with dust and with danger, that people will get tired. Is there not some sort of logic to that?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** I would not say people only work for four and a half hours a night. If the line is closed for 12 hours or 24 hours our Members will work down there for the length of time they have got to work down there. I am glad that people have seen some of those conditions that people are working in down there. They are digging out concrete in temperatures sometimes in the middle of summer in 100 degrees --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** It was, frankly, nasty wasn't it? We did not like it at all.

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** I hope people remember that when people go round about talking about these gold plated railway workers that work on the Tube. You should go and put a pair of overalls on and a pair of boots and go and do a bit for the night. Then they would know exactly what our Members have to work through.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** What is your view on having a two to three week block closure rather than a week at a time or a month?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** From a personal point of view we are easy on it. If it has got to be shut down for three weeks and our members have got to work eight, nine or ten hours they will work eight, nine or ten hours. The conditions are one thing.

I am still not convinced that by just having a block closure you are going to make a massive difference at all unless you repair all of the infrastructure you have got to repair instead of keep on going back and back and back.

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** There is also a question about how you calculate productivity. One of the difficulties of doing overnight working is that there is a very tight window to actually do the work. If anything goes wrong and you kick off a bit later, if you have to have finish a little bit earlier, if there are any problems that take place that are unexpected and you need to get other people to come in to do specialist things, you

essentially lose the entire shift. Whereas if you have got a block closure that is much easier to manage. It depends how you are calculating productivity.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** OK. From a point that Chris made earlier you said you could get more work out of overnight possessions as other metros do, can you give us any examples now, or maybe in writing, because we do want to look at international comparisons? Where is it in the world - we keep saying Madrid but Madrid cannot be the most perfect metro system globally. We really would like to know where there are other examples of good practice that we can learn from.

[Chris Bolt nodded his agreement.]

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** A question to all of you. TfL's plans for finding more cuts and savings on the Tube through staffing and different maintenance practices: what do you think the impact of that is likely to be? Is it going to be improving our value for money or are there significant risks to the maintenance and the operation of the Tube?

**Bob Crow (General Secretary, RMT):** You cannot have one without the other. Do you want a system where there is high visible staff on the job which the passengers want to see. The passengers want to see plenty of people in uniforms that they can go to with a problem. A help point is no help after the event. You want the incident not to happen in the first place. Where you have got stations with highly visible staff then people feel far more safe travelling around, especially women travelling at night time.

Secondly, on top, if you cut back on the maintenance staff, you are going to get less work done. It is as simple as that. There was an incident yesterday at Leyton Station; the ticket office was shut and people could not get tickets at 10am. Leyton is the station that is supposed to be serving the Olympics. With barriers where someone puts a ticket in, they have got two children with them, or they have got a buggy or a dog, and the gates shut and there are no station staff there whatsoever to help out.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** What about risks to the upgrade programme? Chris, when we have spoken previously, you have been, I would say, fairly critical about the efficiency of the management and you have had quite a lot of comments about whether or not appropriate standards are being applied given the various ages of the bits of kit as Bob has talked about. Do you think the cuts programme, the savings programme, could deliver some efficiencies or do you feel like our trade union colleagues it is just going to deliver dangerous risks and a reduction in service?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** You have clearly got to identify what you mean by efficiency. If having staff at stations is part of the service then cutting staff is cutting costs, not efficiency. That is a decision you must take explicitly. With all the things we have been talking about - better advanced planning, more thought about risks and management of risks and issues of that sort - can you deliver the same outcome --

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** On the upgrade.

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** -- on the upgrade at lower cost? Yes. All the work that I did that is being done, for example, by Infrastructure UK looking at UK infrastructure costs, not just in railways but over all the utility sectors, all points to a gap between the cost at which we in the UK deliver things and international best practice. It is a matter of learning, at a fairly detailed level, what those lessons are and redesigning quite a lot of your processes, your project

management and your risk management, to ensure that you deliver those cost reductions without compromising safety and customer service.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** You have all commented about the relative starvation of information we are suffering at the moment in order for us and other commentators to judge whether or not what we are seeing is efficient. Can I ask all of you as guests to say to us what kind of information we should be publicly demanding from TfL? What do you think would be useful and reasonable for us to be asking be put in the public arena?

**Chris Bolt (PPP Arbiter):** Pulling together the strands of what we have all been saying this morning the first thing is to be absolutely clear what it is London Underground is planning to deliver and by when, because without that baseline of what you are trying to deliver interpretation of costs is impossible. Then there is more information on costs and comparisons with other comparable metros. There is more information about the causes of delays and disaggregating that. It is being able to analyse that information in a way which provides genuine information, not data. One of my concerns with what is published, the four weekly PPP report, is there is an awful lot of data in there. It is actually very difficult to make sense of it but, clearly, a lot of work goes into producing that.

Then you have the question what is the best mechanism for achieving all of that. Is it by building on the IIPAG mechanism and getting more transparency into that. Bodies like this Committee almost being able to commission reports from IIPAG to answer the sorts of questions which you are concerned about. Or, ultimately, do you have to say, as we have got on safety regulation for the Underground, this can only sensibly be done by an independent body?

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Any other comments about information transparency?

**John Dickie (Director of Strategy and Policy, London First):** Let me add a couple of thoughts. One is in terms of the question about can TfL deliver efficiencies? The answer is I am certain it can. Anyone who has run a business or a piece of local government knows the difference between cutting services through cuts and driving efficiencies to make things more productive and deliver better services for the same or for less resource.

One of the great challenges with Transport for London is this transparency point. It is difficult to tell. TfL has a savings target of £7.6 billion by 2017/18 in its business plan. This is a very big number but then they spend a very big number. Whether this is as big a number as it should be is simply impossible for anybody outside to tell. Whether this is an easy ride or an extraordinary achievement we just do not know.

To echo Chris' point, there is a set of issues around putting information as opposed to just data out there. There is also an issue about having somebody who does it as a job analysing this and being able to make some of these comparators and being able to act in the public interest to help voters, or people who are professional scrutineers of TfL, to make judgements. That is why we have long argued the case for a similar kind of independent regulatory role as was performed by the Arbiter, as is performed by the ORR for Network Rail - which is of course a public body for all practical purposes - and is the case with the public utilities services.

We think some kicking of the tyres with the TfL business plan, opening that up to the sunlight and some informed analysis and comparative work done to assess whether or not it is delivering as well as they could would be an extremely valuable contribution, not just to Londoners getting it at the best price but also helping us make the case in four or five years' time for the second

slice of investment we are going to need. We are going to have to persuade the Treasury that the money given to TfL is well spent and that we get value for money in delivery.

**Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair):** Thank you very much, John. I will say hear hear to that.

**Caroline Pidgeon (Chair):** That was picked up in the Department of Transport's letter to TfL and the Mayor when it gave the funding settlement; that it wants to see value for money.

Finally, to wrap up, are there any other actions that you think we need to see taken in the longer term to really drive performance up in the Tube and the delivery of the upgrades? Are there any other key points that any of you wish to make that we have not covered today? No?

[Guests indicate that there are no further points they wish to make.]

Thank you very much indeed Chris Bolt, Bob Crow, Steve Connolly and John Dickie. Thank you very much indeed. It has been a really useful session and it gives us lots of thought for the things we need to be asking.