

Transport Committee - 12 November 2014**Agenda Item 6 - Door-to-door Transport Services**

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Let us move to our main item, which is looking at door-to-door transport services in London. This is a topic we have done a number of pieces of work on over the last few years and we felt it was timely to revisit it.

First of all, can I welcome our guests who are here today? We have Leon Daniels, who is the Managing Director of Surface Transport at Transport for London (TfL) in charge of this, amongst many other services. Welcome, Leon. Thank you for joining us today. We have with you Peter Blake, who is the Director of Service Operations at TfL. You are in charge of door-to-door services as well. Welcome along. Spencer Palmer is from London Councils, which obviously administers a number of these services. Welcome along. Ewan Jones is on his way. He has had a bit of a delay in transport. Ewan is the Deputy Chief Executive of the Community Transport Association. Hopefully, he can give us a national perspective on all of this. We then have Faryal Velmi, who is Director of Transport for All. Welcome back before the Committee. With you today we have Joan Hunt, who is a door-to-door service user. She uses all of these services and we are going to get some insight into what it is like as a user of these services. Joan, thank you so much for coming along today. You are very welcome.

I am going to kick off by looking at Dial-a-Ride to start off with. What I would like to start off with is to ask Joan and Faryal from the point of view of a user of these services and obviously, Faryal, the people that you represent. What has the performance been like in recent times with Dial-a-Ride and what is your experience of the service?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes. I will just say firstly that it is really important to say as a preamble that door-to-door services - and by that I mean Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard and community transport services - are just vitally important for disabled and older Londoners. In many cases, they provide a lifeline which enables people to go out and live independently. In that, they play a really important role in maintaining people's health and wellbeing. Therefore, they are vitally important services and I am very pleased to see the Committee discussing and putting a spotlight on these services today.

Dial-a-Ride is absolutely a well-used and loved service by older and disabled people in our city. Definitely, it continues to do a large volume of trips and gets many people out and about. Certainly from what we hear through our advice line and also anecdotally from travelling around London and speaking and listening to disabled and older groups, on the whole, people are happy with the service.

However, there are some stubborn issues which keep on cropping up and problems that people do experience. If I can just maybe say a few, sometimes getting through to the call centre can be an issue at peak times. Refusal of trips can be a problem with people not getting the trips they want or only getting one-way trips. Also, a big bugbear for people - and it has been for many years and it is not necessarily a new thing - is the distance that you can travel. There is a five-mile radius. If you live in outer London - if you live on the outskirts of Bromley, for example - five miles will not take you that far. If you live in Camden, it will. It will encompass your local high street, etc. That has been an issue that people have.

I would say that generally, when we have made complaints to Dial-a-Ride about services, we do feel there is a genuine will to resolve them and we are happy to say that we can easily access the management of Dial-a-Ride to try to iron out complaints. That is important to say as well.

Overall I would say, looking to the future for Dial-a-Ride, whilst we believe that contracting out services is good and it increases the reach of Dial-a-Ride, we do not feel that it should be at the expense of the service itself. You contract out to enhance the offer of Dial-a-Ride, but actually we do not want to see a dwindling-down of Dial-a-Ride and its resources itself. That is a really important point that we would like to make.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are going to come on to some of the future things. Faryal, before I move on to Joan [Hunt], at the moment, say in the last six months, some of these issues are stubborn issues that will not go away, but do you feel the service has stayed about the same or do you feel it has perhaps deteriorated slightly and you have had more concerns and complaints or has it improved?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): There is a steady experience. However, we did notice that there was a spike in complaints - a 40% spike - which was picked up by the Board of TfL and noted in its papers, which we did actually raise directly with Dial-a-Ride management. We went to speak to them about it and they offered us various explanations for that. Yes, again, we go out and we hear positive stories and then we do hear about the same issues. However, I will say that the stubborn issues are a problem because they should be resolved and the fact that people keep on having this repeat experience is not always great.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you, Faryal. Joan, I wonder if you would like to tell us how you find the Dial-a-Ride services and any issues that you and perhaps some of your friends have with the service.

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): Just Dial-a-Ride first?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Just Dial-a-Ride to start off with, yes, please.

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): I have been with them for many years now and I certainly think that the service has somewhat gone downhill, but in the main it is an absolute lifeline to us. It enables us to get out of the house and do a lot of the things we want to do.

However, as you said, it is not totally accessible inasmuch as you cannot always get a trip or you cannot always get the time you want. I mainly use the service just to go to see friends or family, shopping or maybe the cinema, but they probably would get me there an hour too soon, which is the only way they could get me there. If you have Capital Call, they will get you there more or less exactly at the time you want and collect you at the time you want. However, I am afraid Dial-a-Ride cannot do that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): It cannot be more flexible with your times?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): It has a big turnover. I appreciate that that is the reason. However, we could not - any of us - do without it. For any of us who really need it, it is a total lifeline.

The booking service is a problem. You are held on the phone for maybe 10 or 15 minutes and occasionally, when I get through to the booking clerk, the phone goes dead after she has obviously picked it up and then I have to start off with another 10 or 15 minutes again before I can get through, which is very annoying.

I also agree totally about this five-mile limit. I do live in central London, but I cannot even get to the West End or anywhere that is slightly beyond the five-mile limit with Dial-a-Ride, which I would love to do.

Another thing is with the co-opting of other services if they cannot take you out in a Dial-a-Ride bus. Quite recently, I went to the Old Vic. I managed to get there with them, but they sent a taxi to bring me home. It should have been there at 5.05pm. It was not there at 5.35pm. You have to wait 15 minutes before you can call them to ask why your transport has not arrived. When I called, apparently it was two minutes too soon and I had to call back again. Then I was told that the taxicab company could not find a taxi to send, but they would keep looking. By this time, it was dark and it was cold.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): What did you do? You were stranded?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): I just was not prepared to wait in the hopes that something would turn up and I took an ordinary cab and got a receipt. Hopefully, I will get that refunded by Dial-a-Ride at some point.

However, there are things, especially when you are in a wheelchair and you are totally dependent on these people who are coming to get you. It makes a big difference. Thank you very much.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you, Joan. That is very powerful indeed. I wonder if I could move to Leon to start off with and how he would respond to that. It is very powerful, rather than just reading it and looking at statistics, to actually hear from a user about what it is like to be stranded, perhaps after they have been out to the theatre or something. We know there has been an increase in complaints going up. It is 159 complaints per 100,000 Dial-a-Ride journeys, a 66% increase from the same period last year. Do you want to talk us through that and respond to some of the points Joan has made?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): Thank you. Yes, I will.

Just in advance before I do, during the course of this morning I am sure we will talk and use the words 'review' and 'investigation' and so on. I would just like to state that there is absolutely no intention from our side to make any changes to Dial-a-Ride that would reduce the volume of service we are currently providing. In fact, if anything - and we will hopefully come on to this later - our main mission is to be able to carry more people for the same money, not carry the current people for less money. As I hope we will be able to explore later, we are particularly interested not just in the people who are using the service but the people who might be able to use the service if we made certain changes. Just in case we use the word 'review' as shorthand in future, for the record, this is about increasing our reach, not decreasing it.

In response to the questions, the spike in complaints is pretty well all down to the service delivered by taxi and private hire. The current run-rate for complaints is about 1 per 1,000 journeys provided by Dial-a-Ride and its contractors and it is about 8 complaints per 1,000 services provided by taxi. Just as Joan has described, it is exactly what happened. The bus took you there and the taxi failed to bring you back, for which we apologise. Of course we will deal with your refund.

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): Thank you.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): There is no doubt that the weaknesses in the system of course, very clearly, are the arrangements for booking and - just as Joan has described - waiting too long for the phone to be answered, sometimes being kicked out of the system and having to start all over again and indeed - just as you have described - being hung on the end of a piece of bureaucracy that says you have phoned two minutes too early to complain that you have not yet been collected, which is easily the most unsympathetic call I have heard all morning.

I would say that this is a system which is, clearly, provided free at the point of use. There is, therefore, inevitably sometimes, when the system is overwhelmed by more callers than we have resource to answer the calls and indeed more demand for services than we have buses and drivers to deliver them. That is why we will from time to time ask the indulgence of the users and say, "We cannot get you there for 2.00pm, but if you do not mind getting there for 1.30pm, yes, we can", because that is our way of trying to get you there in time with what is effectively a finite resource.

We think that the levels of satisfaction are broadly very good. People appreciate the service enormously. People are glad that it exists. It is very much our intention that the service will continue and, as I said, we will work very hard in order to try to carry more people for the same money. We will try to carry more people as efficiently and as courteously and as sensitively as we can.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I do not think you, surely, can blame all of the complaints on the issue of when you have had to get taxis to fill in a gap. We know that the percentage of Dial-a-Ride trip requests for this quarter is below target and you are not fulfilling the trip requests as well. Clearly, something is going wrong with the service, isn't it?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): There are two parts to that. What I was saying was in response to the query about the increase in complaints. The rate of complaints for journeys completed by taxi is very much higher than the level of complaints for those services provided by the in-house fleet or the contracted-out fleet. That level of complaint is very much lower, as it happens, than on mainstream public transport. Nevertheless, it does not really count because, if you are a vulnerable user, one complaint is one too many and we accept that. My point simply was that the spike in complaints was driven off the service provided by the taxi and private hire side.

That being said, there is a finite resource of drivers, buses and our ability to deliver trips. There is not an infinite supply of either and, therefore, at times of peak usage there will be those occasions when we cannot offer to complete the trips that people have requested from us. However, our number one rule is that if we get you out, we surely must bring you back. It is completely unacceptable to say that we did 50% of the job because, frankly, taking you out and having you marooned at the far side is entirely unacceptable. One of our priorities - absolutely - is that if we get you out, we must bring you back.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): What about the issue of a shortage of drivers? I understand there are about 20 driver vacancies at the moment. Are you planning to fill these? I understand there is a recruitment freeze at the moment.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I am afraid that we do compete in the labour market, as you might imagine, for other sorts of driving jobs. The vast majority of the services are provided by our own in-house fleet and those are, to some extent, the very last remaining London Transport publicly employed paying conditions staff, many of whom have been with us for a very long time. The situation across London is different, as you might imagine. We are competing in a pool for labour.

The sort of people who like to come to work for us on Dial-a-Ride are those drivers who are perhaps a little bit older and who no longer want to be in the cut-and-thrust of driving a big bus or a big lorry in London and for whom providing this service is not only nice for them but is a nice experience and they are working with people who are often extremely chatty and happy to be on the bus and are indeed grateful for the service. There is a particular sort of person who likes to be a Dial-a-Ride driver. I am afraid that just going out and recruiting in

the mainstream is not terribly effective because what happens is that no sooner are they with us than they move on to something else.

However, we have a huge opportunity to provide these services by using other local providers. We extensively use other providers - community transport operators and so on - who are already in the community with their own vehicles and their own staff and who already have their own work that they do. It is often cost-effective for us to ask them to provide the services for our customers. Frankly, any slack there might be in the shortage of drivers ought to be easily accommodated by some of our subcontractors, all of whom we are in discussions with about what their capacity might be. Their capacity is not infinite and it is patchy across London, but since they are already providing other services in their communities and since they are social enterprises registered as charities, the double advantage is that not only are they able to provide these services and any surplus they might make is reinvested in those communities. Indeed, the vehicles and the drivers they employ are able to do other good things in the community as well. Therefore, we are quite happy with having to do that. As I say, we are able to cope with any driver shortage by flexing the amount of work that is contracted out.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I understand that there is industrial action going on at the moment by Dial-a-Ride staff. It is short of a strike, but this is through the trade union Unite. What is the position regarding that and what impact is that actually having on the performance of the service?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I might just defer to Peter on the actual position at the moment. My understanding is that it is not having a material effect on our ability to --

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): No, it is not impacting at the moment. What you were seeing in terms of the scheduled figures earlier in the year with the industrial action was that there was an impact, which is the reason we are slightly below our target.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That is another reason?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): That is primarily the reason why we are below, but we fully expect to hit the target by the end of the year by putting in the additional capacity and working with the co-ordination of community transport schemes. However, at the moment there is no impact on service delivery.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you for that. Perhaps I can move on and welcome Ewan Jones - sorry, I introduced you before you had arrived - who is the Deputy Chief Executive of the Community Transport Association and giving us a national perspective today. You are very welcome.

Perhaps I could ask you and Spencer as well what you think the knock-on effect of all these problems we have heard about Dial-a-Ride are having on the availability of other door-to-door services.

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): In terms of the availability of the service, we have not noticed any major transfer. In fact, Taxicard trips are reducing and not increasing. Therefore, we are not seeing a transfer. However, of course there is a minimum charge for Taxicard journeys and users who normally use Dial-a-Ride would prefer to use it because it is free at the point of service, as you mentioned before. We have not noticed the particular impact of these performance issues with Dial-a-Ride impacting on the Taxicard service.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Ewan, do you have any general view on the Dial-a-Ride and how it compares to others across the country?

Ewan Jones (Deputy Chief Executive, Community Transport Association): Certainly. A number of our members who are based in London provide community transport services, but around the UK a lot are involved in Dial-a-Ride as well. There are some interesting differences in London. In particular, it is free. For most of the other services there would be some form of a charge. Talking to members in London, I suspect that when Dial-a-Ride became free, it meant that quite a few people who might have travelled on different types of community transport service had a lower-cost option and therefore started to use Dial-a-Ride. That had a knock-on effect on other community transport services.

In general, community transport operators are really quite active in providing Dial-a-Ride in a number of other areas. For instance, in the West Midlands, the Ring and Ride service is effectively a subdivision of West Midlands Special Needs Transport, which itself is a single community transport operator. A slightly different version in some ways more akin to London is what is going on in Glasgow and Strathclyde at the moment, where the MyBus service is effectively the Dial-a-Ride. It is run primarily by an in-house fleet at Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, but they do contract quite a lot out to community transport. They are currently negotiating a public social partnership with the third sector in a very positive relationship and are trying to look at how they use more of the community sector to deliver a lot of the dial-a-ride services. It gives a higher degree of flexibility. It brings in quite a high level of training and accessibility in terms of the services and understanding users' needs.

In other areas, for instance, like in Greater Manchester, the service is run by Greater Manchester Accessible Transport Ltd, which is a standalone charitable organisation. The funding from the integrated transport authority (ITA) goes in there. That does not meet all the demand, though, or all the need, if you like, particularly in terms of the actual direction of journeys in some cases. The Local Link services have been set up. They are separate. They are accessible and available to any member of the public. The idea there is that there are certain routes that public transport does not meet, particularly perhaps circumferential rather than radial routes in Manchester. Even though they are in a quite heavily urbanised area, people can become quite isolated. They have been trying to bring together a mix-and-match of different services to meet different needs to make sure that this is completely covered.

The Community Transport Association and particularly members in London feel that community transport operators are well placed to run dial-a-ride services. It is an area that a lot of them have been involved in for many years. It is where I started off in Edinburgh, for instance. They are keen to work with TfL, with the Assembly and with others to be involved in that.

Not only are there differences between different boroughs in London, but you will find that people have different needs in different areas within one borough. If you live in the west of Ealing or the east of Ealing, your options and requirements might be different. The community-based organisations, which are rooted in the local communities they serve and are governed by them, are well placed to participate in that network.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That is very helpful. Thank you. We are going to come on to what the service could look like in the future later on. Let us move on to look at the issue of the Taxicard now.

Navin Shah AM: If I may start with Joan about Taxicard usage, you already mentioned some of the experiences you had in terms of the Taxicard service. Do you want to add to that? Particularly, can you tell the Committee how often you use the Taxicard service, what problems you generally face, what kind of journeys you make, how long and so on?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): I find the Taxicard service is the most unreliable. For one thing, apparently, even if you book in advance, the message does not go out to the computers in the drivers' cabs until 15 minutes before they are needed and then it is totally up to them whether they accept it or not. Quite often, you are waiting and waiting and a cab never comes or it comes half an hour late. Therefore, I very rarely use the Taxicard unless I can absolutely help it.

Also, there is a bit of a problem with the ramps and getting into the taxi. Some of them are simply quite rickety and old and it is quite a job to get the wheelchair on. If there is a pavement, I can actually step on a box if they have a box, but they do not always have one. I am afraid that for me it is the bottom of the services at the moment.

Navin Shah AM: You try to avoid it as best as you can unless you have to use the Taxicard service?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): I do try to avoid it, yes. I do.

Navin Shah AM: It is a very limited use at all?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): Very rarely, yes. I will say they are extremely good if you have to go to hospital. If I need to go to hospital or an accident-and-emergency (A&E), I have always had a taxi come fairly quickly and another one to take me back again. However, for an ordinary, everyday trip anywhere to a show or anything that is ticketed or timed, I would not think of using them unless I could get there an hour before and I know that I would be there on time.

Navin Shah AM: Do you recall any instances where they have refused bookings for any particular reason?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): No, I do not think I have ever been refused a booking. Yes, once. I was at Victoria station. This was when I was still able to walk with difficulty. There was not any queue at Victoria Station and I stood there with my friend, waiting for a ComCab - because we are only allowed to use ComCabs - to come along. When one did eventually come, he refused to take me because he said it was a Saturday night and they did not have to take me on a Saturday and they did not have to take Taxicard. If that is true or not I do not know, but I did make a complaint about it to the Taxicard people, but actually I should have complained to wherever the driver gets his authorisation from.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Does Spencer want to comment on that? Are there limits to when Taxicard is available or should it be able to be used at any time including a Saturday night?

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): That is right. No, they should not have been refusing journeys. When we are made aware of it - and I am certain that if your complaint was made to us rather than to the contractor - it is right that we are aware of these issues and we would fully investigate it. I know that records are kept of this and we are able to track the incident and speak to and deal with the driver concerned. Thankfully, these incidents are very rare. If they are a ComCab displaying the 'target' motif, they should accept Taxicard users at all times.

Navin Shah AM: That is interesting. Unfortunately, I do not have any of the details, but last night after People's Question Time I met a couple of people who were complaining about the drivers refusing to take bookings. I do not know for what reasons, et cetera, but I will be taking that up whenever I hear and get more details about it, certainly, whether this is anecdotal or not.

Faryal, do you want to pick this issue up as well as generally comment upon the performance of the Taxicard from your perspective, please?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Sure. In 2010, Transport for London's contribution to Taxicard was capped by the Mayor. Prior to that, ever since Taxicard has been operating, since the 1980s, TfL's contribution to the scheme would go up according to usage. This cap has basically played out and has resulted in more restrictions in the scheme. Boroughs and London Councils had their own priorities and a number of cuts were imposed on the Taxicard scheme after 2010. These included the fare rising from £1.50 to £2.50 in a lot of places and also the subsidy going down, which meant that people travelled not as far and paid more. This has resulted in a drop in usage and we have seen and everyone has seen because it is in the public domain that the usage of Taxicard has gone down by 20% last year.

We are really worried about this. It is a big concern. For many, many years - decades - Taxicard has been a much-loved service for disabled and older Londoners. It is unique to London in many ways and we believe that it should be maintained. A lot of these cuts to subsidies and increasing fares are meaning that people just do not use it anymore, which is a real concern.

In terms of the contracting out, we believe the current Taxicard contract says that 30% of its services can be contracted out to minicabs. That has its own issues. On the one hand it increases the reach of the service, but on the other hand there are sometimes problems with minicab drivers not necessarily always having the expertise in terms of knowledge about where to go and also reliability and training. That is a problem.

In the future, if you would allow me to say what we would like to see in London, it is a real levelling-up of Taxicard provision. At the moment, it is a bit of a postcode lottery. If you live in Harrow, the way you are assessed in terms of eligibility and how many trips you get, et cetera, is one thing. If you live in Croydon, it is done in a completely different way. There needs to be a levelling-up of standards, absolutely.

At the end of the day, the answer for Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride is more resources. They cannot be seen as the poor family relation in the transport network. We need investment into these services to make them able to provide a good, decent, equitable service across the city.

Navin Shah AM: If I can move on to the issue about declining usage, which has been the trend recently in terms of the Taxicard service, would Leon, Peter and Spencer want to pick up on this issue? I believe London Council's Transport and Environment Committee did some work on it fairly recently as to the reasons for declining trips. Similarly, Leon and Peter might want to tell us what the reasons are and what is being done about it.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): If this question is about - such as Joan described - a taxi driver declining a Taxicard journey on the grounds that it is Saturday night, over and above the sanctions that Spencer on behalf of London Councils can take in respect of the operator. As the licensing authority for black cab drivers and private hire drivers in this city, we will take action against the individual driver as well. Taxi drivers are not allowed to decline a fare that has been legitimately hailed, as it were, or booked except for certain very narrow and specific reasons. There is no reason why a Taxicard user who has made that booking should be treated any differently or any worse than somebody who is paying cash on a normal basis. If it is the case that on a Saturday night the taxis are busy with cash customers, it is the give-and-take and rise-and-fall of being a taxi driver or private hire driver in London. We will undertake that if there are any substantiated complaints in respect of drivers refusing a fare, we will look at disciplinary action as far as the driver's licence is concerned as well.

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): If I can just state to start with, although Taxicard is a service that does not suit all, I think Faryal would confirm that it does suit some people and we have over 76,000 members currently using the Taxicard service and around a million trips per year. In terms of performance, 96% of our performance targets for arrival are being met currently in London across all the boroughs. Generally speaking, for that level of journeys we are achieving our performance standards in terms of service.

However, for a number of reasons, we cannot guarantee a taxi in every circumstance because of the way the journeys are issued to taxis that are often doing other business and hail-and-ride as well. However, what we are doing is we are meeting our contractual targets in terms of arriving on time. That is within 15 minutes for advance bookings and within 30 minutes for as-soon-as-possible bookings. We are achieving, as I say, over 95% of our target across the board.

As I said, we also have a low level of complaints. We have a low level of queries compared to the number of journeys we are providing. We do investigate every complaint.

On the subject of private hire, one of the things we have done over the years to improve the service and to improve availability - because we know that black taxis are not as available in some areas as much as others - we have now reached our target this year of providing private hire availability of minicabs in every London borough. That is giving more choice, more availability and more service and hopefully will improve and lead to us achieving better against our targets in the future.

However, on the subject of training and private hire vehicles, obviously private hire vehicles do not suit all users in terms of accessibility. Those who prefer to have a certain vehicle can actually request that and have that noted on their record. However, all of the private hire contractors who work for us receive driver training. As Leon [Daniels] mentioned, if we are aware of any issues or concerns about a particular driver, we will take that very seriously.

Navin Shah AM: What I want to hear about is the reason or reasons behind this decline, which has been pretty continuous over the last year or so.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): The usage, yes.

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): Yes, apologies. As Faryal [Velmi] mentioned, the main reason was when boroughs about four or five years ago now significantly changed the level of subsidy that users achieved and this was mainly around capping unsustainable growth in the service. That had the biggest impact on users.

We have not done any detailed research into the reasons that users have shifted or changed perhaps their travel habits. However, the report you mentioned that went to our committee in the summer stated some likely reasons. The likely reasons are that perhaps they consider it to be unaffordable now and perhaps they are shifting across to Dial-a-Ride, which is a free service. Perhaps it is because of improvements in bus accessibility and public transport accessibility. More people are choosing to use public transport instead of door-to-door. There are a number of possible reasons, but we have not carried out any detailed work into finding out why exactly journeys are declining.

Navin Shah AM: Whilst the review into the whole of this provision is part of the current understanding and strategy, should there not be a proper systematic survey or some research done jointly, possibly, between TfL and London Councils to see what the factors are behind this decline in trips by taxi service?

That also brings me to this issue about the falling usage. There was in the past two years a pretty significant underspend; in the region of £2 million, I believe. Can you tell us what the likely budget proposal is for 2016 for this particular service?

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): On the budget provision and the future budget provision for Taxicard, TfL provides a large element of the funding for the scheme and we are currently in the second year of a three-year agreement with Transport for London. We are not aware of any reduction in the level of funding being made available to Taxicard from Transport for London. Therefore, we have no plans to reduce the level of service available.

However, what we are seeking to do is to achieve further efficiencies and further improvements with our contractors, developing an online portal to allow online bookings and bookings through smartphones. We are also looking at internal administration efficiencies as well where we can. One of the things that has been highlighted as London Councils, although this scheme being discretionary does have differences from borough to borough, we are aiming to achieve more consistency of approach for members and really just to improve the service. However, in terms of funding, we are not expecting the level of funding to be reduced in the coming years.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I should say that the TfL board will shortly see a new ten-year business plan from TfL and Members will see that shortly. It would be inappropriate to comment about what is in the business plan, but it is fair to say that I am not aware of any material change to the funding for Taxicard in the business plan.

Navin Shah AM: Just one last question now about the knock-on effects of the declining usage of the Taxicard service on community transport.

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): Again, we are not aware. We have not looked into this area in any great detail to date. However, it might be something we can look at and I would be willing to work with TfL to see if we can find out what impact the decline in usage of Taxicard is having on other services. However, as I say, the agencies that run those services have not highlighted any particular shift to their services as a result of this.

Navin Shah AM: Thank you. Faryal, you wanted to comment?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes. We definitely hear that more people are using Dial-a-Ride as a result, basically, again, primarily because of cost. They are giving it a go if they have not used Dial-a-Ride in a long time.

Navin Shah AM: Thank you.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you, Navin. We are going to move on to look at Capital Call now.

Darren Johnson AM: Capital Call is the subsidised service in ten boroughs where there is a shortage of taxis. Faryal, could we start off with you? You have given comments on the other services. What is Transport for All's view of the current Capital Call service?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Capital Call has been around for quite a long time now in London. It is an established, accessible option for many disabled and older Londoners in the boroughs it operates in. We were alarmed to hear of TfL's plans to close the scheme, especially as there was not any alternative proposed either as a service or to do with the £700,000 budget that Capital Call currently has. We know there was a consultation that was held. We have not seen the results of that consultation. However, we would be very much against the closure of Capital Call unless there would be a viable alternative proposed.

Darren Johnson AM: You do not see it being an obsolete service on the basis that another alternative has not been put forward, basically?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): There have been over a few years problems with Capital Call. The service quality in terms of bookings, for example, has declined. We have had issues for people who have contacted us. Yes, there have been problems.

However, there is a bit of an issue here about what we do when a service is perhaps not performing that well. We have communicated these issues to TfL, but that should not be an excuse to do away with it. One should look at how the service can be improved for users. Certainly when we contacted our members and supporters across London who use Capital Call - and we facilitated a consultation event, actually, with TfL where users spoke about what it meant to them - there was a real passion about the service. We need to see improvements in it that will raise user levels. What happens is perhaps the service user levels are not great and then the stats say, "People are not using it", and it becomes a vicious circle.

Darren Johnson AM: Self-fulfilling, yes.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): We do not buy that as an excuse to do away with the service.

Darren Johnson AM: The view from your users is very much that they want the service retained but improved?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes. There are lots of views. I have been at Transport for All (TfA) for ten years and in that time I have seen so many different reviews and plans about what to do with door-to-door transport. No one has ever come up with viable solutions and alternatives that would be palatable to disabled and older users. Stop saying that you are going to cut and replace services when you do not actually offer viable alternatives. I will say that again with Capital Call. Let us see what the alternative is and we will judge that and look at it.

Darren Johnson AM: Thank you. Joan, I take it, given that you are based in central London, you have not made use of Capital Call?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): Yes, south London. I am passionate about Capital Call. To me, it is by far the supreme service. There is always availability. You are never turned down. The cab arrives on time, both taking you and bringing you back. It just has everything. I am most surprised that you had so many reports that things are not going well.

Darren Johnson AM: Your experience has been very positive, then, with Capital Call?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): Absolutely. With the booking service, you may hang on for a short while but if you are not getting through they say, "Please would you dial 0, leave your number and

address and a short message about where you want to go and we will get back to you within half an hour”, which they do.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Brilliant.

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): Only once has that ever failed me and I have been with them for at least four years.

Darren Johnson AM: All right. That is really useful to hear. We will put some of these things to Leon [Daniels]. What was the outcome of the recent consultation on the proposal to close Capital Call? Peter, do you want to comment?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): Leon has passed this one to me. We are still working through the outcome of that consultation, but it is probably worth going through the rationale for undertaking the consultation.

Capital Call was established back in 2003 in ten boroughs where there were relatively low rates of taxis. That was the rationale. What has happened in the ten years or so since is that actually the numbers of taxis in those boroughs have increased markedly to levels that reflect the rest of London. The situation has changed. We have also seen a reduction in general membership use and we have also seen a reduction in usage generally.

What we undertook during the early part of the summer was a consultation to ask actually whether this is still relevant. We received a lot of responses. Clearly, a lot of users responded saying, “We use this. We value this service”. Also, we had a lot of responses from other stakeholders saying, “We are not really sure where this sits now in the mix given that the original basis for establishing this back in 2003 has significantly moved on”. We are still going through that in terms of making a decision and we will be coming forward as soon as we can.

Darren Johnson AM: What do you say to Joan’s [Hunt] point? She likes the flexibility of this service and there are not the same types of restrictions as there are with the other two services.

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): We have skirted around this thus far. There is a mix of services out there, some that people value higher than others. It relates to their individual circumstances. What we need to do collectively is to ask how this mix hangs together. What really is the relationship between Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard and Capital Call and community transport schemes? Do we clearly understand that? It is fair to say there is more work to do in terms of getting to that point. Getting back to the issue about moving forward, how do we best use that mix to best meet the growing expectations of people who rely on door-to-door services? That is really the issue that we need to try to address. Different services will work very well for different people and we need to understand that, but we also need to understand how those services interrelate to each other.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are going to be coming on to that in moment.

Darren Johnson AM: Faryal, do you want to come back on this?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes. I just want to say that, again, we saw in the last couple of years some boroughs capping membership of Capital Call. It does not feel fair then to say that there has been a reduction in users and usage when some boroughs cap membership.

Also, yes, absolutely, Capital Call was set up to plug the gap in black cab provision, but things evolve. We have wheelchair spaces now on buses which are a lot of times used by parents and buggies, for example. Things evolve and change. In the mix, yes, we absolutely need to look at the offer in terms of door-to-door transport, but we also need to look at public transport. We still have only 67 stations on the Tube network which are step-free. I was at the Royal Courts of Justice yesterday with some of our members and a bus company spent a lot of money hiring top barristers to argue that wheelchair users should not have priority on buses. This is the mix in terms of public transport.

Victoria Borwick AM: That is a really interesting point.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): We have to value and invest in those door-to-door transport services that exist and are being used already.

Darren Johnson AM: Spencer, from a borough perspective, do you want to comment on Capital Call and particularly the issue of capping?

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): We accept that some members value the Capital Call service. However, this is something that was discussed by our relevant committee and our view after consulting with boroughs is that we can see the sense now. The world has changed and a lot of the reasons why the scheme was introduced in the first place are no longer relevant. What we suggested is that if there are any savings if Capital Call was to be disbanded for any reason, perhaps some of the money could be diverted into Taxicard to improve services in the areas that would be affected within those ten boroughs that you mentioned.

Darren Johnson AM: What about the issue of the loss of flexibility, though, if people were being told to stop using Capital Call and to start using Taxicard in terms of the number of journeys, the distances and so on? It seems that Capital Call gives users much more flexibility and much more freedom than Taxicard.

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): Yes. This is something that needs to be looked at in detail by TfL when completing the review. You are right. There is a different level of flexibility, as there is borough-to-borough with Taxicard as well.

Darren Johnson AM: Peter, might one of the options then be to look at bringing Taxicard up to some of the flexibility standards of Capital Call if Capital Call were to disappear?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): We are still doing that work and we are still working through the various options and permutations that would apply to any changes - or not - that may come forward on that.

Darren Johnson AM: Thank you.

Victoria Borwick AM: It would appear that the things that you like are about the service. It is not who it is. It is the fact of the service and flexibility you provide and the point about swiping for different journeys and things. The point is surely to understand why they like it and why the bits they like could not be put into what else you do, if you see what I mean. If I understood correctly, it was reliability, the fact that they will come and the fact that you can go for longer journeys. It is understanding the customer's end that needs to come into whatever decisions are made, rather than, "It is called that and it will go", or, "It is called something else and it will stay". That is what we need to listen to this morning. Thank you.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): You are given as a Capital Call user a £200 budget every financial year and you can use that however you want. Six or seven years ago, it was introduced by TfL with banding which kind of mirrored the Taxicard subsidy levels. Still, absolutely, I would agree that it is the freedom to use that budget how you want.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That helps with the longer journeys. Joan, one of the frustrations you mentioned earlier was that you could not get to the West End on Dial-a-Ride because of the five-mile limit, but presumably you could use Capital Call because you have a budget to spend as you want. It is a much more personalised budget.

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): Yes, absolutely. No problem whatsoever.

Victoria Borwick AM: It is that flexibility that needs to go into whatever we take forward. That is the point, isn't it?

Richard Tracey AM: Could we have a look at the various demands and projections up to 15 years ahead? We have had various studies done, obviously, of the population growth and transport requirements up to 2030 and beyond, but I particularly wanted to look at and analyse some of the potential increase in demand as you see it.

We are informed that over-65s will increase by about a third, it is believed, by 2031 and indeed over-90s will be doubling, apparently, with all the medical advances and so on. How would you visualise being able to cope with that kind of growth?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I do not know if that is our opportunity to give you a progress report on the Social Needs Transport Review that we are currently carrying out.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): The review is the next bit actually that we are coming on to, if you do not mind. We wanted to really focus on demand and efficiency in this section.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): The two are interrelated because of course our work, which is designed to project what the future demand is and how we might cope with that, is the driving force behind the review. It would be difficult to disaggregate the two.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Let us try.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): The review that we commissioned was for the very reason that Richard [Tracey] says, which is that we really needed to get under the skin of what the demographics were likely to be in terms of the age of the population, the health and mobility of the population and whatever disparities there might be both geographically and culturally across London as to what the demand for this sort of service would be and, as Peter [Blake] and others have already described, against the backcloth of a fully accessible bus fleet and an increasingly accessible rail network.

However, what was really driving me along was this notion. What I believe is that there are a very large number of people who currently do not use the accessible door-to-door transport system. Whilst we have high levels of satisfaction of those who do, there is a large number of people who for one reason or another - we do not yet know but the review is designed to tease that out - who do not use the service. The reason I am driving this forward in the organisation is that I truly believe that there are some huge advantages socially for people

to be able to go about their business, go to lunch clubs, go shopping, go to medical or go to friends by using whatever service might be appropriate. It could be mainstream public transport. It could be door-to-door. Therefore, for me, the unanswered question is the non-users and looking forward how big the pot of non-users might be.

This is fiendishly tricky because, as you might imagine, you can never prove the counterfactual and therefore trying to do some work about finding out what it is people are not doing because they do not do it is quite tricky. However, it is driven also by a feeling that I have that we have several fleets of little buses running around this city - special education needs, non-emergency patient transport, the work done by the community transport sector, the work done by Dial-a-Ride and so on - and it seems to me that there ought to be some efficiency driven out of this. In effect, across London we have fleets of little buses doing one job when in fact, really, to get more efficiency out of the system we should try to pool that resource.

The drawback is that non-emergency patient transport is a matter for health, special education needs is a matter for education and Dial-a-Ride is a matter for transport. Therefore, we are trying to start from the premise that transport is part of the solution, not part of the problem. We are trying to find a way of quantifying the social benefits that should accrue to society by doctors and nurses not having to make house calls, by food not having to be delivered to people's homes and for other things. There is a cost to society of looking after people who for one reason or another are homebound and if we can encourage them to be more mobile and to use the transport services that could be provided in order to go to the places they need to go to, it has to be of huge benefit.

There have been a couple of attempts at this. It is very tricky. One or two of the major firms have failed so far to come forward with a way of quantifying those benefits. Of course, if we were able to quantify those benefits, we would be making a good case for the funding for transport services that would have other benefits in society. That is why the Social Needs Transport Review is making only average progress. Frankly, the thing is quite difficult.

In respect of the efficiency of Dial-a-Ride going forward, the position is that the cost of providing a single journey on a Dial-a-Ride bus in London is frighteningly expensive at some £25 a journey. When as part of this review we looked outside London - and I have been some places outside London to see this in action - the costs are much lower and to some extent the numbers of passengers carried on the buses are higher. If the position is as we expect it to be and the demand for door-to-door services including Dial-a-Ride is going to grow over time, as Richard [Tracey] says, with an aging population - and I very much look forward to living to over 90 and I am counting on it - and if we are to assume there is going to be more demand - and the review will perhaps give us some more granularity on that - then we need to gear up. The way to gear up for this is to be more efficient. Being more efficient is by carrying more people on the services we provide and by using the right size transport for the right size job. It is ridiculous to send a little bus to carry one person in the same way that it is ridiculous to try to carry more than two or three people in a taxi. When we are using little buses, it is important - as they do outside London very efficiently - to carry more than one person. That £25 a trip naturally halves and halves again as we put more people on.

In my experience outside London, the passengers who are travelling in the company of other people like themselves on Dial-a-Ride and accessible services are having a lovely time. They are having a longer journey because they are not being picked up from home and taken straight to their destinations. They are picking up some other people on the way. However, it is a moving social club. They enjoy meeting. They enjoy talking to each other. Of course, when they arrive at the lunch club or whatever the destination is, they are already happy and in a group of four or five. It has had a commensurately fabulous improvement in the cost.

We also believe that the key to this efficiency is the right blend of technology and personal attention. What we know is that if you phone a big call centre, that night the computer will throw it all up in the air and join it all together and there are some consequences for that. Outside London, what works is that users call somebody and they always speak to the same person because that person is lodged locally. They know the customers. They know their habits. I have been on calls when the local person says, "Hello, Mrs Smith. It must be your time to go to the hairdresser again". She says, "Yes, it is. I have an appointment for 2.00pm", and the operator says, "I cannot get you there for 2.00pm. Would you mind getting there for 1.30pm?" The user says, "Of course. I would be delighted". As a result of personal attention and as a result of a little bit of good-humoured conversation between the users and the operators who know each other personally, it is loads better than - as Joan has described - ringing a call centre and somehow being booted out.

We do need the technology as well because we need the technology in order to deliver and monitor the efficient operation of the services. However, without in any way pre-empting what our review might say, I would not be surprised if more local booking, a blend of local booking with technology and a sincere attempt to carry more people on buses would get us to a position where we get the costs down. That will mean we can carry more people for the same money.

Richard Tracey AM: Spencer, can I ask you about your analysis in London Councils? Do you broadly agree with what Leon [Daniels] has been saying?

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): Yes, much of what Leon has said I would agree with. We are in a different situation because, as I have mentioned several times already, we are bucking the trend at the moment because the number of journeys is reducing rather than increasing with the aging population. I have already mentioned a number of reasons for that.

On the way forward, thinking about this, it is all about the customer. That is what we come down to. They want choice, they want flexibility and they want a service that meets their needs. Then it is about cost as well. The key issue for the future is funding. The reason boroughs have changed their levels of subsidy is because of the financial pressures they are facing. All the time that Taxicard is a discretionary scheme, the boroughs will be looking at the amount they spend on Taxicard. Some spend nothing on Taxicard and rely solely on the TfL contribution. Others spend a great deal. It is an area that is going to be looked at in the coming years and we need to achieve further efficiencies. In achieving efficiency and achieving what customers want, we need to listen to the customers, find out what they need and actually develop perhaps a more co-ordinated, co-operative service in the future which will (a) address their needs and (b) reduce costs.

Richard Tracey AM: Faryal, what do you think of the analysis we have heard of the way it is going to go in the next 15 years?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I have quite a few thoughts. Absolutely, if you say to anybody, "Would you rather speak to a person or speak to a computer", the person will say, "I would rather speak to a person who understands my trips". We think that is good.

However, it almost feels like we are going back to the future a little bit. I remember six or seven years ago or maybe longer than that when Dial-a-Ride moved from local depot booking to the central Trapeze system that it uses currently. There has been a lot of work - in some cases quite arduous - on actually how you would that call centre and make it more personal. That in some ways is the future. The way that we can get reduced call waiting times in peak times for Dial-a-Ride is to have more call centre staff and that is important.

Also, we need to have the technology and booking systems and computer systems that can actually cope with a rather complex system. We need innovation. We need to see what is happening not just in the UK but around the world. How are door-to-door schemes across the world operating when they have a large amount of users and quite a complicated booking system? I would love to see that from TfL in particular. Let us see what is happening in other parts.

Absolutely, we say that there is an aging population and I will say it again because I have the opportunity: we have to have investment and political will as well and actually have attention from TfL and the Mayor to actually say, "Yes, door-to-door services are vitally important. Let us not have them on the outskirts as Cinderella services toiling away in the background. Actually, let us bring them to the foreground". That is really crucially important.

Also, there is connectivity. We have Crossrail opening and I am very pleased that after much of our campaigning Crossrail 2 will now be fully accessible. What about a system where we can get people from their houses using Dial-a-Ride to a local accessible Crossrail stop, for example, or a local Tube stop for that matter? It is joined-up thinking and getting door-to-door services to merge with those parts of the public transport network which are actually accessible.

Also, I came last time to the Committee to talk about taxis and private hire and we are seeing app bookings and things like that opening up and democratising, for example, the Taxicard system. Booking by app now is increasingly being used. Something which we raised with Dial-a-Ride's management was how we attract younger disabled people to Dial-a-Ride? At the moment, the constituency of people who use Dial-a-Ride are older or elderly. Certainly, there are younger people as well who would like to use it. They are some thoughts.

Richard Tracey AM: Good. Actually, you have just talked about some of our public services, Crossrail and the drive to make buses and trains more accessible. To what extent do you think more accessible public transport will reduce the demand on door-to-door services? Perhaps I could start with Joan on that one. Joan, do you think that buses and trains being more accessible will reduce the demand of door-to-door services? How will they mesh together? Do you think that is likely?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): From my experience on the buses, I do not think so. I have to have a carer to actually push me. At my local stop, the one that is closest to me, for some reason once the ramp comes down, the doors will not shut again. Sometimes it takes about ten minutes for me to get on the bus and then the doors will not shut. In the end, occasionally, everybody has to get off the bus and the bus goes off and they have to wait for another one to come along.

Richard Tracey AM: I've seen that happen.

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): It seems like it is very touch-and-go with these ramps and whether they work efficiently or not. Secondly, of course, when you get on the bus, it is if you can get on the bus. If there are a couple of pushchairs you cannot unless the driver insists that the pushchair people get off and then allow you on. Other than that, you have to wait for another bus. I am in a very, very busy part of London and once you are on the bus there are people packed all around you. When it is time to get off, people do not want to move to let you off.

Richard Tracey AM: You are in inner London in Lambeth, are you? Is that right?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): I am in Lambeth, yes.

Richard Tracey AM: Yes, that is what I thought.

I will come back to you, Faryal [Velmi], but let us just have the counter from Leon and Peter [Blake] at TfL. To what extent do you think that more accessible public transport will reduce the demand?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): London has led the country and the world in terms of having an accessible bus network. The deadline for full wheelchair accessibility on the national bus fleet is January 2017. In fact, we completed it some years ago. We are well ahead of that. As a result - no surprise at all - the use of buses by people in wheelchairs has grown extraordinarily. That is why, of course, as is ever the case with popularity, once there is a wheelchair on the bus, there is not always room for a second wheelchair user on the bus. The point Joan [Hunt] makes demonstrates just how popular it has been.

There is a question about the ramps. I think, Joan, you can have much more confidence in the ramps because, whilst there were some teething troubles when the technology was new, every ramp on every bus is tested every morning when the bus goes out into service. There is a very, very high level of reliability with those ramps. They fail only occasionally in service and we have to take the bus out of service when they do that.

As a result of that, people who can, if they are able to use mainstream public transport, have and with our encouragement moved on to it. If you can travel with the rest of the people travelling on the bus, it is a nice thing to be able to do. For a number of people, being able to travel with other people on the regular bus service in order to go to the shops with other people and so on is part of the triumph of keeping their respect and keeping their mobility. It is great.

I simply believe that it will not reduce the demand for accessible services, as I said in my previous short response. It unlocks capacity for more people who are currently housebound and who are currently unable to venture out and who perhaps do not understand what might be available to them. It is part of our job to encourage them to come out. I do not think it will suppress demand. It will help generate capacity for new users.

Richard Tracey AM: Faryal, what were you going to say?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): It is a good question. There will always be a need for door-to-door services to plug the gap in terms of accessibility issues. We are in a situation where, whilst progress is being made in terms of access, it is very slow. We have only 67 stations out of 270 which have some level of step-free access. When you look at the map closely, actually only half of those have full access from the street right into the train. Yes, absolutely, accessible buses have been a revelation in London. They have opened up the city for many people. The mobility card which scooter users use to enable them to access buses has also been fantastic.

However, the issue is that, yes, the ramps have improved but the problem now is the space. As I said, yesterday we spent a very interesting day debating in the Royal Courts of Justice around the contest of who actually has priority over that space. That court case will be quite seminal.

Richard Tracey AM: It did receive a lot of publicity on television and in the newspapers.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, it did, absolutely. That is an issue and that is why door-to-door transport complements.

I will say one thing which is important about door-to-door transport. We really passionately believe it should be not just for people who cannot use public transport but for people who have good and bad days as well. A lot of older people, for example, on a perfectly sunny summer's day would be happy to get on their local bus network if they can, but on a cold winter's day when it is icy outside would more or less be housebound. On those occasions, door-to-door transport services absolutely – and we have heard it said – are a lifeline. That flexibility is really important and we would like that to continue, too.

Richard Tracey AM: OK. The other point that we want to ask you about is the fact that the London Ambulance Service has said that it will not pick up some 999 calls if they are deemed to be non-emergencies.

Victoria Borwick AM: They are overstretched.

Richard Tracey AM: What is the feeling about that?

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): If they are a non-emergency, then they should not be carried by the ambulance service and of course should be carried by one of the services we provide, perhaps, or the hospital's own non-emergency transport service.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): You have given me the opportunity to plug a report we did, which we did send to a number of Assembly Members, called *Sick of Waiting*.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are going to come on to patient transport in detail at the end.

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

Ewan Jones (Deputy Chief Executive, Community Transport Association): In terms of the relationship between transport and health – and in my case particularly community transport – one of the key aspects that came through in the research we will be publishing later in the month was not so much the emergency services but non-emergency patient transport. We are constantly being told the criteria for who can travel and who cannot travel have not changed, but what we are seeing at the coalface is that the interpretation of those criteria is being tightened. We are finding that a lot of people are reporting that community transport is being relied on to provide more non-emergency health transport. It is the 'silo funding' mentality.

I am not sure if you are experiencing that here as well, but coming back to one or two of the points that Leon [Daniels] was making earlier on, you have ambulances, non-emergency ambulances, community transport, taxis, private hire vehicles (PHVs), the whole lot. Half the time you can go in that one but you cannot go in that one or they will both go the same way but, "No, we will not share the transport". We need much more integrated thinking to get that better efficiency.

Richard Tracey AM: We had a question about the extent of unmet demand for door-to-door services in London. Any comments on that?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I will say something. It was a really interesting point that Leon [Daniels] made about how we actually get those people that are currently now housebound out and about. This is always an issue for us. I am sure there are lots of people who would have loved to have come today but are unable to do so. That is something that Transport for All would like to focus on in the next year as well: housebound Londoners and how transport services can meet their needs. Unfortunately, even in 2014, there are people who are trapped indoors and so it is a really important point.

Richard Tracey AM: On the point of efficiency, can you suggest areas where there could be greater efficiency by greater integration of the services that are available? Ewan, you study this across the country. Do you have any ideas on that?

Ewan Jones (Deputy Chief Executive, Community Transport Association): Yes. In particular, we are finding that when it comes to public sector bodies that are either commissioning or funding services, there is an increasing expectation that the voluntary sector can pick things up. We are certainly seeing that we are different to London in that there have been a lot more cuts in public bus services and there is much more strain on a lot of other services. There is an expectation that the voluntary sector can do things cheaper and that is not necessarily the case. Certainly it is more appropriate at times but, again, it is shifting this, "If we can make savings in our budget, we are being more efficient". That does not mean that the wider transport sector as a whole is being more efficient.

There are some good examples. There is some good joint working going on in terms of the community and the health sectors talking to each other in places like Glasgow and others. At the end of the day, it is about focusing on the outcomes rather than counting the inputs we find, because the inputs tend to be counted at a certain level whereas the wider benefit is not necessarily being considered.

Richard Tracey AM: On costs, you brought up Manchester earlier on and that is one graphic example that we have been given with the contrast of £25 in London against just over £7 in Manchester. What is the explanation for that? Obviously London has a lot more congestion and is a very large place and so on, but it does seem an extraordinary difference between those two figures.

Ewan Jones (Deputy Chief Executive, Community Transport Association): I am not familiar with how the individual agencies calculate their costs per head. Manchester is run by Greater Manchester Accessible Transport Ltd, but they do use a mix of different services. They bring the Local Link in. I do not know if Local Link is included in that calculation, but some of these services are multi-occupancy and rather than doing one person door-to-door and then going to get someone else, Local Link will pick up a range of people.

The other thing we have seen since the Local Transport Act changed regulation around section 22 community buses in 2008 is that from a very, very low base of about 20 or 30 operators using these services around the country, at the last point when I checked with the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) there were in excess of 500 services being run under community bus permits. This means that local community transport (CT) operators are running sometimes fixed but frequently flexible routes. The general public can travel on them. They are generally accessible but they can be booked as well. The route can vary to pick people up. We are still seeing quite a rapid increase in that kind of service, bringing that degree of flexibility. Sometimes relatively minor changes in the legislative regime can unlock more flexibility.

Richard Tracey AM: TfL, I was going to ask what your view is on the disparity of costs.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): If we accept that the difference is about £18, about £12 of that £18 is the different paying conditions including pensions for the staff and traffic congestion, low traffic speeds and so on in London, which reduces efficiency because we are able to do fewer miles and therefore fewer journeys. The balance is caused by a lower than optimum number of passengers on the bus for the journeys.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): With some of what Leon was saying earlier, I thought he had been reading Val's mind or hearing our conversation before this meeting.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): It is the reason I was appointed: my ability to read Val's mind.

Andrew Boff AM: Just on something Mr Daniels was saying, it sounded to me like you were saying that your customers should change their expectations to suit the needs of the service. You were talking about collecting more than one person and how they would have to tolerate longer journeys. This was in the name of efficiency. Tell me I am wrong in that. What were you saying? It certainly sounded like that.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): Let me try to tell the story another way, which is that the service is free at the point of use. As evidenced, it is costly to do and it is paid for by taxpayers' money. The right thing to do therefore is to use - and I hope I said this - the right size vehicle for the right size job and it is not cost-effective to use a whole little bus to carry one person. Therefore, the best way of getting some more efficiency is to carry several people on that little bus because it makes the cost per person much better.

Andrew Boff AM: See, I must admit --

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): If I may just finish, in my experience outside London, wherever I have gone to see this - and you used the word 'tolerate' - the passengers were not tolerating longer journeys. The passengers were enjoying the spirit of travelling with friends and neighbours and others. Instead of them simply going - if I might say so to take an example - to a lunch club for a couple of hours with their friends, the fact that they spent 20 or 30 minutes on the bus going to and from it meant that they spent three hours with their friends.

Andrew Boff AM: They all know each other, do they?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): Indeed. They all know each other. They are all friends together. You said they were 'tolerating longer journeys'. They were enjoying longer journeys and it was part of the fun of going out on that expedition.

Andrew Boff AM: What you are saying is under this system somebody will call up to go on a bus, one of the small mini buses or whatever it is and will go with somebody they know on a longer journey. I do not understand. I do not understand how they all know each other. What a fantastic community.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): This is London, though.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): This is us being Londoners.

Andrew Boff AM: When I go on a bus, I know virtually nobody.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): They may not know each other at the start, but they certainly will at the end.

Darren Johnson AM: Andrew, in the north, people talk to each other on public transport. I am speaking as a northerner. It is a very, very big cultural divide.

Tom Copley AM: They thank the driver as well when they get off the bus.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I was just going to say that they may not know each other at the start but they certainly will at the end.

What I am saying for the record is that the experience outside London was that getting more efficiency by carrying more people on one of these buses was not seen by the users as a disadvantage. It was seen by the users as a positive thing. They enjoyed the friendship and the companionship of the journey. That was a positive experience for them. It helps to contribute to why the cost in other parts of the country is much lower than it is in London, where it is not actually cost-effective to spend £25 per journey by sending a driver and a bus.

Andrew Boff AM: I have always had a rather poor view of efficiency. It is much more efficient for everyone to stay home. I was wondering whether or not we should be talking about effectiveness. Only if we talk about the effectiveness of the service might we concentrate on the booking system and the criticisms that we have actually heard of the system rather than trying to get the customers to change their view of the service or to offer them a different service to the one that they actually want, which is transport from home to where they want to be and back again. I was just a little concerned with how we are shifting the expectations of the customers. That was my worry.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I would simply say we are enhancing their experience thanks to the warm community spirit that exists.

Andrew Boff AM: If I ordered a cab and I was told, "Yes, you can have a cab but you have to share it with three other people", whom I have never met before in my life, I would not call that an enhancement.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Nor would they, probably.

Andrew Boff AM: Nor would they. It would be all right for me.

Victoria Borwick AM: What is the difference between a bus and a cab?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Hold on. Let us let Leon respond to that and Ewan [Jones] wants to come in on this.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I can only respond by saying that ride-sharing in taxis and private hire vehicles is the next big step that is likely to take place in this city. There are people coming to the market now - generally people, Andrew, like yourself - who wish to split the cost of their journey by sharing it in a taxi with somebody else.

Andrew Boff AM: It is why I am committed to cycling.

Darren Johnson AM: It happened to me in Epping last week. It was good fun and a lot cheaper.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are side-tracking. Ewan [Jones] wanted to come in on your question, Andrew.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes, I was pleased about that.

Ewan Jones (Deputy Chief Executive, Community Transport Association): Just to back up some of what Leon [Daniels] has been saying, again, going back 10 or 15 years I have been involved in doing research

and producing videos about community transport. One of the key aspects that comes through frequently and is quite specifically put forward is the social aspect of the travel. That is one of the big things on community transport. It actually goes further in some cases: the journey was almost the most important element. It did not really matter where you were going. Sometimes that was on group services where people were coming together as a group and all going. Other times it was flexible bus services where different people were picked up in different places.

Andrew Boff AM: Let us ask Ms Hunt. Would you prefer a party on the bus or do you just want to go where you want to be? What is your expectation?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): I prefer to go where I want to go.

Andrew Boff AM: I thought so. Thank you very much.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Very good, thank you.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: I just want to pick up this point. I know we are going to come to patient travel later on. It is this point that the purpose of the journey is very important. If they are going for a social event, I can understand that. If people are going for a hospital appointment, they do not want to have a guided tour of the city in reaching there.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): Of course, as you know, Dial-a-Ride is not able to take people to hospital and I am afraid urgent medical appointments are not --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Not urgent; even routine.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): Even routine appointments at hospital are not part of the Dial-a-Ride service.

Victoria Borwick AM: They do. They drop them at the café nearby and things like that.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): Although we have highlighted this moving social club, what I said at the outset before I used that as an example was that it was about using the right size vehicle and the right sort of service for the right job. By way of example, I pointed out that there are those cases where having slightly longer journey times for several passengers together is the right thing to do. It is also equally the case that a smaller vehicle, a taxi or a private hire vehicle taking you directly from outside your house to the café next to the hospital where you want to go might also be the right thing. I was simply explaining that it is one of a range of things by example.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That leads us on. We have already been talking about the real understanding of the review of door-to-door and where these services need to go in the future.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): We need to try to bring some of this together now. We all express our appreciation for what Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard does for the community. They are much valued. Clearly, there are problems and frustrations about bureaucracy and reliability. Clearly, there is some incoherence between the different offers of the different services.

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): Yes, you cannot get them all the time.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): It is not a seamless service from the customer's point of view. There are these organisational silos and they all have their internal rationales and problems. We do appreciate the fact that these services are provided. Equally, we are very, very aware of the frustrations that users experience on all of these services.

From a Committee point of view, we have an additional frustration which is that we have been talking about reviews for well over six years now, I think, when we first came into this. This is our third look at this issue. There was talk about cross-service reviews so that issues of management efficiency from having organisations working together and perhaps some shared budget management and shared commissioning and those things were on the agenda. Actually, we have seen none of that progress. I am very distressed to hear today from Taxicard that there is an absence of consumer study and there is an absence of awareness of the detail of people's experience and expectations of Taxicard.

Let us just go back to the big picture. You have talked about the demographics and future demand and unmet demand. How does what is going on at the moment in your review relate principally to the needs and the experiences of the customer? What is being done to make sure that customers, stakeholders and passengers are involved in your review, TfL, and in any work that Taxicard is doing?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): We have not got there yet. That is the honest answer. We are conscious of the previous work that has gone on. I am still relatively new to TfL. I have gone through both the previous reports that London Councils have done and the reports that you have had here. It seems to me that there were a lot of good ideas there but what we need is a series of incremental steps to get there. That needs to be tested with users in terms of what an idea might be and users need to inform the way forward.

What we have is a start on a bit of empirical work that builds on some of the work you have pulled together previously and we are simply not at the point yet where we can say how we stitch this fog together to get a coherent offer with the various services that are out there. What steps do we need to make in policy terms? That might be quite difficult for some of the individual agencies, but nevertheless we should get out there. What are the probably far quicker operational changes that we can make that will have an impact? Then making sure we feed the customers into that conversation at an appropriate point.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Is there a plan to have stakeholder customer consultation as part of your review?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): When we take this forward, we will need to have customer considerations as part of that because that is the only way we are going to be --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I think you are misunderstanding me, Peter.

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): Sorry.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): The point I was making was whether what the customers need and expect should be right at the beginning of the review process. Are you not starting off by looking at the service and having a piece of research done asking the stakeholders, the customers and the users, "What is right, what is wrong and what do you need"?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): Sorry, I might not have explained. We are not starting from a blank canvas here. You have articulated yourself that there is an awful lot of work already gone on with this, but it is just that progress has not come forward in delivery, frankly. We are not starting from that point. We are picking up a baton to say, "How do we move this forward?" That is the point we are at in terms of taking it forward.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): We have talked a lot about the call centre. That is one of the big changes we have seen, the move from a local to a larger area call centre and vast investment in new technology. You are not starting from a point of view of actually checking how well that works with the customers?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): Transport for London checks that periodically. That is part of our customer assessment criteria in terms of dealing that. We do know and we made the point --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Have you done a stakeholder engagement programme about that?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): We do that on a periodic basis anyway to assess the customer view of the service. Therefore, we know and we articulated earlier on that actually the booking point is the point that some of the customers feel pain in terms of accessing the services. We understand that. What we need to do is to come forward with a mechanism that can try to do that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): You feel you have started the review with a really comprehensive, up-to-date view of what the customers' views and experiences are and what the stakeholders' views and experiences are of the service as currently provided?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I would say we have a very good understanding of what people think of the service. I would not expect any specific questioning to produce anything different to what we currently know. As I said previously, part of my focus is also about the non-users. It is about who does not use the service and why they do not use it. To reiterate, we understand and we have continuous evidence about how users and stakeholders feel about the service.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Have you done some work, then, with the potential market of non-users, Leon?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): No, part of the tricky bit, as I said earlier, is about identifying who they might be and why they do not use, but it is planned.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): All right. Peter, you said therefore that you are building on the historic work that has gone on in the past. How does this review relate to, say, the London Councils review that was done in 2008 - 2010?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): In terms of some of the suggested outcomes and recommendations, in broad terms they are saying there may well be some latent demand we are not dealing with and we recognise there is more work to do. Coordination per se will take us forward, certainly in terms of enhancing efficiencies. There is probably a question mark on what that co-ordination looks like, not least because water has gone under the bridge, certainly since 2008, around public spending levels and the like. That needs to be refreshed in terms of what co-ordination is.

Our conversation this morning has said that we operate a Dial-a-Ride system that is quite different to a Taxicard system and they do not necessarily relate. Community transport then is one step further down the line, let alone getting to special needs daycentre transport or whatever else. That mix exists. What the previous work clearly identified was that it does not hang together terribly well, certainly from a customer perspective, and progress on that would be beneficial. What that progress is, in a 2014 context, we need to continue to do more work with.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Does everyone around the table agree that greater integration of these services, possibly even to the point of joint commissioning, would be a desirable objective? Spencer?

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): To a certain extent, yes. I am sure there would be some areas where joint work and joint commissioning will work. In fact, the way we operate the Taxicard scheme is perhaps a good example of where we operate a scheme on behalf of 33 different local authorities, particularly now with the private hire vehicles being introduced as well. That is via a number of local subcontractors. We operate as one scheme. We have a single call centre for call bookings. A large part of that call centre is not based within London, yet we provide a local service because we have now a good computer system that provides that journey history. Even if they are not known to the people who are calling, they can see where they make their most common journeys. They can say, for example, "Are you going to the hairdressers again today", because that is their regular trip. Therefore, you can provide that personal level of service on a more efficient scale by bringing services together.

I would also like to address the critical comment you made of Taxicard earlier. Just to clarify, what I said is we have not researched in detail the reasons behind the recent decline in the Taxicard service. We are aware of some of the likely causes, but I have admitted we have not researched that at all. I am not saying we will not. It is something I would be very keen to look into in more detail.

You were saying that there is an absence of consumer view and expectations. That is not true. We meet regularly with Transport for All, for example, and other groups. We have that constant contact and feedback from our customers through our call centres and through correspondence and from working closely with boroughs and TfL as well. We do have that regular contact with our customers.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): You are talking to the people who are still using the service. You are not talking, presumably, to the people who have dropped out from the service. There is quite a large cadre of people who are ceasing to use the service, which is what we were picking up from the data.

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): Yes.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): What you are saying is you have not spoken to them. By definition, you are dealing with people who are still managing to get a benefit --

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): We have some anecdotal feedback, but I accept we can do further work into finding out why people are transferring to other services, perhaps.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Do you think the concept of greater integration would bring some benefit financially as well as in terms of customer service?

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): I believe there is scope for benefits in terms of improved service and, yes, cost efficiencies also.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): What about you, Ewan?

Ewan Jones (Deputy Chief Executive, Community Transport Association): The community transport sector in a number of areas, but in London in particular, feels that it has quite a lot to offer in terms of delivering some of the other services that it is not currently involved in, particularly services like door-to-door.

Perhaps it is not an issue here, but a lot of patients who are eligible for concession travel, for instance, do not have access to services and end up paying to go on community transport. That is one of the things that does not exist here, I suppose.

Community transport services generally are focused on need. They do start with the user. They look at what people want to do and where they want to go. A lot of the research that we have done in the CT sector over the years does not start with, "Where do you want to go?" It starts with, "What do you want to do? What can you not do? What are your issues? What are your problems?" Then we take that forward. Understanding those needs is important, but when you get to the integration point of view the fact of the matter is that using the best range of tools in the toolbox, if you like, means that you can get a more efficient system. If it is more efficient in some areas to use community transport or Taxicard or Dial-a-Ride, then that is what should be done.

There are good examples of joint commissioning, for instance, going on in places like Norfolk where they are looking at health transport, bus services and community transport. Let us look at that in the round. Let us look at where people want to go and when and let us see how we can deliver the most transport for the most people. It picks up Andrew's [Boff] point earlier to an extent in that if the option is whether they want direct transport from there to there when they want it or whether they want to go a slightly more circuitous route, a lot of people will go for that option. If it is whether they want to go the slightly more circuitous route or to have nothing, which is the issue for some people, then they go for a different option.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I remember that London Councils' review back in 2008 or something did look at joint commissioning. It was just such a massive beast that it was very unwieldy and did not really come up with any answers. TfA was involved in that by EO Consulting. It was interesting because it really did examine lots of the different elements of door-to-door provision but just could not sew them altogether because they are just so different.

There absolutely could be better integration. Actually, just to go back, I am not sure about joint commissioning until we see a model that we think works. Yes, there can be better integration. Let us look at the application forms for Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard; they are very different. Actually, Taxicard has two different types of application forms, which is also not so much an issue but that is just the way London is because every borough has its own priorities. Dial-a-Ride does say that if you are a member of Taxicard you can automatically become a member of Dial-a-Ride, which is great. Taxicard does not say that. They both have very different application processes. That, for starters, could be made more efficient and streamlined so that disabled and older people do not have to fill out and go through very different processes.

There was a scheme that operated in Newham for many years, the Door 2 Door scheme, which did actually integrate Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard. We have many members in Newham who really love that scheme. That is coming to an end. It was a very generous scheme as well. That is probably why they liked it, but that was bit

of an anomaly in London. Better integration is important and needed. Actually, maybe we could look to see how Newham did it and how they managed to integrate the two schemes to the benefit of users.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Joan, do you have any comments about whether or not the services ought to work in a more integrated way together?

Joan Hunt (door-to-door service user): That is beyond my comprehension, but I do think that if Taxicard incorporated minicabs along with its own service, it would certainly be a great help.

Victoria Borwick AM: More accessibility?

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): That is exactly what we are doing, yes.

Victoria Borwick AM: What about the accessibility issues?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That will help some. Some with accessibility issues can use minicabs.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): In terms of the timetable, then, is there going to be a moment when London Councils and Transport for London actually do have discussions about greater integration?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): Spencer [Palmer] and I met last week just to start the ideas rolling on what that might look like. Certainly in terms of the timescale we are working to, it is likely to be the early part of the New Year because we are conscious that we want to deliver a series of incremental steps. Delivering the ultimate end goal might take some time, but we have to start on that journey. We are consciously looking at making a series of steps to get in that direction. As part of today, any views that you as a group have, we would very much welcome feeding into that. Please be sure that Spencer and I will be seeing a little bit more of each other in the coming months as we take this forward.

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): We might say that we are conscious of the fact that most attempts to overhaul and review this sector in the past, after some worthy attempts, have gone into the 'too difficult' pile.

I hope you can tell from some of the things we have said this morning that we are passionate about trying to do something about it and we are determined to do so. This is our latest best chance to really try to make a difference, and we will. We will try to make this one stick in a way that ones in the past have failed.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I appreciate that none of you were around for the ones in the past, but is there anything you have learned from the obstacles that got in the way of better joint planning or integration last time?

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): My understanding of it - because I am relatively new as well and I have been in the role just over a year - is that there was a lack of a clear business case. In other words, there were lots of nice-to-haves. It made some clear recommendations that there would indeed be benefits to doing lots of different things - integration, joint commissioning and so on - but the problem was about being able to effectively cost those and to show clearly what those cost benefits would be and then some of the wider benefits that Leon [Daniels] mentioned earlier about lifestyle benefits, health benefits and so on.

The challenge is the business case because that is what is going to make boroughs listen. You are talking about 33 different London boroughs in this. If I can go to them and say, "Look, there is a clear business case for this. There is cost saving. There are wider benefits for your residents and your businesses", that is what is going to make the difference. We need to work to a clear business case for change and then we can make the change.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I know it is early days, but do you have any early thoughts on what the new ideal service might look like? Will it be a new, more integrated structure? Do you know where it is going?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I do not think we are in a position to say so today.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): How will you know if what you come up with is a success, then?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): We will offer it to a trial group of users.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): You are actually going to involve the stakeholders in a design and piloting process?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): It will be widely consulted upon. It will be trialled locally and we will see what the outcomes are.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Do you think you will be looking at the Newham experience, as Faryal [Velmi] suggests?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): Of course.

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): Any proposals for change will need to have clear success measures that any pilots or whatever can be measured against. That is something that we are keen to look at. As I say, since I came into the role, it is something I was keen to look at anyway. I was looking at the work that had been done in the past and then TfL approached us and said they were planning their own review, which we welcomed and as Peter [Blake] said, we have been working closely with TfL on the review that they're doing and continue that close working relationship.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

Andrew Boff AM: We have not talked a great deal about individual travel budgets. We have mentioned it a little bit. I have just added this per capita support that disabled people get for transport between Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard. It looks to me like if you just gave somebody the equivalent of an Oyster with £890 loaded on it and said, "That is your transport budget. Use that as you wish", and if you put the decision making ability in the hands of the customer, then surely the efficiencies sort themselves out.

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): It is an option that does need to be looked at. Personal travel budget may well be something that needs to be looked at. The likelihood is, though, that it will suit some and not others.

Andrew Boff AM: I do not disagree that there may need to be adjustments and we would want to perhaps put some people not on £891 but some a little less and some more. The requirements will be different. I get that. Actually putting the power in the hands of the people who are using the service surely is going to sort out those inefficiencies. Customer choice will determine which service they most want to use, surely, rather than spending an awful lot of time about systems integration.

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): This is something that many local authorities up and down the country are grappling with from a social care perspective. Certainly when they stray into the transport elements of that, one of the principal concerns they have is the availability of an appropriate level or appropriate type of service. If someone can jump in the back of a taxi and is using them on that basis, you could see how this would work. If someone is reliant on a more specialist type of provision, then you need to have confidence that that specialist type of provision will continue to exist. If you give all the money away, there is then no funding to maintain that.

Andrew Boff AM: I get that but all of a sudden, if you gave that to individuals, there would be something in the region - let us pick Bexley out of the air, for example - of well over £1.5 million of support going to the residents of Bexley who want transport services. I do not believe there would not be a supplier there who wants to provide the most appropriate services for the needs of those travellers.

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): The experience in social care across England at the moment is this is a very challenging question. Whilst I accept the assumption there will be a supplier there, actually the experience is not quite telling us that. What it is saying is that the supplier may be there at a certain cost and therefore the availability of a Dial-a-Ride service or type of service because the money for that essentially goes and they are not able to do the quantum of trips or the type of trips or anything else. You are right to raise it and it is something that needs to be considered, but something like that is not without risk, certainly if you are looking at a pan-London approach.

Andrew Boff AM: You said something needs to be considered. Will it be considered?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): That is something that we have asked our consultants to look at.

Andrew Boff AM: You are going to come back and give your opinion of individual travel budgets, and the possibility of this?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): We undertake to do that. Our greatest concern would be that giving the average-per-head to everybody might well suppress demand because there are some people who use the service only occasionally for whom the budget would be too great and there would be others who use the service extensively for good reason for whom it would be too little. The effect of that would be to suppress demand because the people who use the service extensively would not be able to do so. However, we will undertake to come back on it.

Andrew Boff AM: You will come back on it?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): Yes.

Ewan Jones (Deputy Chief Executive, Community Transport Association): I have seen anecdotal evidence of where an authority has been paying for a certain service - it might be 10 or 15 people all travelling to a daycentre or something like that or to a different service - and that has been devolved to the individuals.

They have then used that money to travel separately, individually, the way they want and have found that actually they get less for their money. When they try to go back to the service that was operated previously by the community transport service, because they have disbursed to other places, the original service has become unviable. Therefore, actually giving people more choice has resulted in them having less choice.

Andrew Boff AM: That is an argument I have heard before: more choice means less choice.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That is interesting. Thank you for that. I wanted to pick up before we move on to patient transport. I am not hearing about, as it were, future-proofing the service in terms of user technology. The example, Leon [Daniels], you have given is quite right. As far as there is a user profile at the moment, older users may be going to a luncheon club, going to the theatre, whatever it is and actually we want younger disabled people to use these services more. As people get older, more and more they are technology-savvy. An elderly lady I recently visited in hospice said, "There is no Wi-Fi here". She was quite shocked. "They have just refurbished. Why is there no Wi-Fi here? I want to be able to text people or email them", even though she was very ill. We have to think that people will want to book things online. They do not want to be hanging on the phone for 10 or 15 minutes.

I want to understand how you are looking at using technology, perhaps app and web-enabled ways of booking and using the services and managing the services. If you look at an email I had from London Councils today talking about Freedom Pass renewals, they are expecting 50% to be done online. That says that the 'silver surfers' or whatever you want to call the generation, people are more and more able to use the internet and it is cheaper for you to process if people use the internet. Is that going to be a key part of any service going forward?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I hope, Chair, I did say earlier that it would be a blend of technology and personal attention. That, frankly, is the difference between you as a technically savvy person pressing this and you ringing somebody at a call centre who will do it for you. Of course, the two things can properly coexist and we will be using technology extensively but only as part of a blend of the service we provide.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I appreciate it is not for everyone, but increasingly there are a lot of people who would rather do something online. For some people, they may not even be able to speak on phones and it is easier to be able to use that technology.

Victoria Borwick AM: I just wanted to say obviously for the record - and I would support that - that for those with learning disabilities, they do not use computers. Although I absolutely accept that the next generation will probably be more technically savvy, I have to say I know a lot of people who are totally unable and therefore would prefer to speak and then have it spoken back to them.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, there is a range of needs.

Victoria Borwick AM: I do think this morning has been quite disabled-focused as far as access is concerned. We have to realise there is the hidden and those with mental health and other needs, perhaps.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, of course.

Victoria Borwick AM: I just want to make sure everyone knows around this table, as I know we do but out there who are watching, that we are very conscious of the service having to provide for them, too. I do welcome your points, but not everybody can use a computer.

Patient transport is obviously something that traditionally was seen possibly in the past - and ambulances now have paramedics on board and are looking more to fulfil it - as a role that was perhaps for accident and emergency. I am sure Dr Sahota will agree with me there that we need the ambulances even more now, which means obviously they are no longer really around to take people and to transport people. Traditionally, if we had gone back ten something years, we would have seen the ambulance as a patient ferry to the appointment.

Would you like to give us bit of an update - and I know this is something you have indicated previously that you wanted to update us on - on the performance, on the variations around London and what we need to know as a Committee, please?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, Transport for All recently launched an investigation and a report into patient transport services in London. It was called *Sick of Waiting* to mirror the experiences of a lot of patients - in particular disabled and older patients - that we have heard. Our findings were pretty stark, actually. We surveyed patients across the city.

The first thing is that 57% of patient transport users were never told that patient transport exists, which is just ridiculous. Just to be clear as well, non-emergency patient transport are those services which take people for out-patient appointments. They play a vitally important role in getting people to the healthcare that they need and often much waited-for appointments. The fact that people are not being told that the service exists is a problem.

What we also found was that many trusts are contracting out their patient transport services to a myriad of different private companies. Unfortunately, what our results found was that patient transport on the whole in London is actually failing patients. We had some statistics that said 37% of users actually missed appointments because of patient transport not turning up. We have a high percentage of people who responded to our survey - users - saying they have had to wait in excess of two hours just to actually get a trip home after a procedure or an appointment.

On the whole, the picture is not good. What we would like to see is that at Transport for All we have produced a patient charter which has some standards that we think trusts and hospitals should be meeting around patient transport. We are very pleased that we have seen some stakeholders in the patient transport industry in wider London signing up to that. The London Procurement Partnership, which commissions transport for up to 52 trusts, has signed up to the charter. Guy's Hospital as well is considering signing up. We are seeing some nuggets of good practice that we would like emulated right across the city. That in a nutshell is what we found and our report is available on our website.

Yes, absolutely, Val. It is shocking. We would like to see attention brought onto this really important part of transport provision that many disabled and older people use. For some of the providers here, there is a lot of meeting -- for example, Dial-a-Ride, yes, absolutely, does not take people to hospital appointments, although some people use it to visit people. For Taxicard, some boroughs are quite strong in saying it should not be used for patient transport provision, but because of the state of patient transport people decide for their own comfort and health actually at the end of the day to use Taxicard. We think that is absolutely fair and should happen.

Victoria Borwick AM: The point is that this is obviously a National Health Service (NHS) issue. You are absolutely right. From somebody who takes people in and out of hospital quite a bit, we all know that the poor people are sitting around waiting in cold corridors for someone to come back. Fortunately, it is not TfL's nightmare yet.

Are you suggesting that the NHS should commission TfL? Let us be really honest and let us not beat about the bush in this room. This is not TfL's fault. This is the NHS's problem. I do not want anyone to go away after watching this in the ether and think that this is a TfL responsibility. It is currently a NHS responsibility. You are absolutely right. Anybody who has had anything to do with patient transport knows that it is not satisfactory either for getting people there on time or for the time it makes people wait afterwards to get them home and all the rest of it. It would need a major sea-change of the NHS to then think about how it was going to commission it. Is that what you would propose?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, absolutely. It is not Transport for London which runs patient transport services, absolutely, although some of the good guys providing patient transport are community transport providers and we support them because they know what they are doing and they value user experience. What we are seeing is a rush to the bottom and basically trusts trying to do things on the cheap and as a result, absolutely, these issues of people waiting ridiculously long times.

What is the solution? The solution firstly is to recognise that this is a problem and have a spotlight put on it. Getting trusts to sign up to the charter of minimum standards is really important and, beyond that, shaking up the system in order to try to move away from these contracts, some provided by some really big names, actually. Part of our report was to see which contractors are actually providing patient transport. There are some big names in there.

Victoria Borwick AM: It is rather like disabled transport for children going to and from school and also transport for getting people to go to daycentres. There tends to be a market for that which is going on all the time in all our boroughs. I am sure others might speak on it. Look at what has happened with disabled people's transport. It is a very, very complicated area. You are quite right. There is a whole range of things. Have you been in touch with the NHS to listen to you? This is really important, I am sure.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Who to, Victoria?

Victoria Borwick AM: Do you want to talk to Anne Rainsberry [Regional Director, London, NHS England]?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): It is a very good point. Individual trusts commission patient transport. You always go back to the trusts, particularly trust managers. Every trust is different as well. They have different ways of organising. Therefore, it is a really complex picture, even in one city let alone the rest of the UK. That is part of the problem.

You mentioned what in the future we would like to happen. We would like to see, as I said, trusts sign up to the charter and move away from contracts that are based just on putting profit before people and then also, yes, absolutely, look at other ways that people can be brought into hospital, if that was to work closely with London Councils and Taxicard, for example. People are using Taxicard anyway to get to hospital.

Victoria Borwick AM: Because they are so frustrated.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Maybe Taxicard's budget should get increased and actually they should have some of that money because they are doing the work.

Victoria Borwick AM: Spencer, did you want to talk about any of these things? They are very much local issues that affect all councils.

Spencer Palmer (Director of Transport and Mobility, London Councils): Yes, indeed. It is an area that we do not know a great deal about. Even when the study was done before, although it did look at NHS patient transport as well, it was an area that not so much information was available for. Clearly there has to be scope for improving the service. We have heard at least anecdotally of the concerns about usage of the service and we have all had some personal experience of it with our family and friends. Rather than a race to the bottom, really we should be looking at the customer and looking at ways that we can help and - perhaps from the experience of Taxicard and other services that are run by TfL - how the NHS can learn from our experience to improve the service.

Victoria Borwick AM: There are a range of contractors, obviously, in this business, as you say, day-care centres, education provision and obviously hospital transport. Therefore, there is a range of those sorts of vehicles around. They obviously need to be better organised. Leon, did you want to add your pennyworth into this debate?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): I firstly say thank you for reminding everybody that this is not our responsibility. I am grateful for that.

A couple of observations, if I may. Firstly, although we do not have any statutory obligations in respect of individual patient transport services, clearly, people use our network in order to go to hospitals and so on. I said earlier and I am just happy to reiterate that it seems to be completely ridiculous that there are different sets of vehicles and staff being used on discrete groups of transport for children, for patients and for people who cannot use mainstream public transport with some artificial restrictions in them about where they can go and what they can do. The problem of course is that it is a cross-government department activity; it is transport, health and education. Therefore, as ever, anything that crosses the boundaries of government departments is fiendishly tricky to bring together. We would certainly reinforce the fact that in the current economic climate we ought to be making best use of all of the resources and getting people to where they want to go as opposed to artificial distinctions between them.

Just to say on an entirely practical point, patient transport has a particular logistical problem, which is in my experience outside London. Of course, with apologies to Andrew [Boff], it is possible to group people together efficiently to take them to hospitals. In fact, some hospitals are terribly helpful. They give everybody the same time for their appointment and they all get there at exactly the same moment and can wait in the corridor for their appointment. Of course, everybody's treatment or appointment takes an indeterminate period of time. Whilst people can be quite efficiently brought to the hospital from local areas for 9.00am or 10.00am or whatever, everybody disburse at quite a random rate because sometimes people's appointments are only 10 minutes or 15 minutes. Sometimes it is an hour or more. Of course, it is sending people home that is the tricky logistical challenge of patient transport. Inevitably it causes people to have to wait an excessive period of time, sometimes, in order to be able to get transport away. That is one of the things where wider integration with a wider pool of resources might be able to help.

Victoria Borwick AM: The problem is that if you think about all the number of vehicles traipsing through our streets taking people to different things - the daycentres, the other provisions, the outings, the school transport - there is a lot of it going on there but there is not, as you say, at the moment any collective looking at what each of those vehicles are doing throughout the day and whether they could be better used in order to help this process. You are quite right. There is getting people there and then, once they are there, they have to hang around all day until, "You are finished with, are you? Fine. Let us try to get you back home again. Do you mind waiting in this draughty corridor while we sort that out?"

There are instances when I know that it has all worked fine and I am sure we will have people saying to us, “Yes, I have been quite satisfied and my hospital does it well”. However, we are here to make sure that we pick up the silent voices and those that are not heard rather than those where it is going well. Thank you for raising this publicly.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): What I am not clear on from what we have heard is how TfL/London Councils are getting NHS trusts and patient transport providers, many of which might be community transport, to feed into the review you are doing and to see whether there is a way you can share some of the money there or use some of the vehicles. How are they linked in or are they just not? Is this perhaps a “too difficult”?

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): At a strategic level, they are not. There are a series of very practical steps in ways of taking this forward. Clearly enhancing the links, for example, between TfL, Taxicard and community transport will feed into the overall mix. There was clearly work done on the previous reviews that was saying this bit about how we have different providers doing different things and whether borough transport fleets should be able to provide Dial-a-Ride locally. That is clearly an opportunity. What we have to do - going back to Spencer’s [Palmer] point - is to make the case and then probably come up with a series of whether it is pilots or whatever we call them. Let us go out there and literally take this for a spin and make sure we are getting the customer feedback on that. It is very much a series of incremental steps, short of going and knocking on the door of Department for Health and saying, “Actually, there is probably a better way of doing this”, but we would not be the first to do that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That is because NHS trusts have their own budget.

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): That is right.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You are saying the NHS could be a later step? If you get something up and running and it is much more integrated and is working, you could then talk to them about how --

Peter Blake (Director of Service Operations, Transport for London): It has to be the hope and expectation that we make a series of improvements and then we say, “Actually, we would like to go further with this”, because we have demonstrated the case in terms of whether it is funding or customer feedback or whatever else. Surely to build on that level of success we are probably more likely to get a better hearing. Certainly my experience elsewhere in England when we do that with the health agencies is that if you go with a good news story, with a business case and with the wherewithal to do this, frankly, they are far more likely to take you up on it because their issue is health and their issue is not transport, which is part of the problem because they are not giving transport due regard in terms of the decision-making.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: First of all, I am really glad this has been brought up to the surface. As a practising doctor in London I sympathise and see this problem all the time. Of course, the issue about it is that no one knows what the criteria are. I see patients who go to hospital doctors and they are told to go to their GP and the GP tells them to go to the hospital doctor. We do not know who is meant to do the booking. We do not know who is providing the booking or who is providing the transport. We see this all the time. You have highlighted a need for a strategic look across London at this important sector of door-to-door and there is no one taking responsibility for it at the moment. It is all very fragmented.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Absolutely. That was exactly the findings of our report. I remember from being involved in London Councils’ review, the last one in 2008 or something, that one of the stumbling blocks was actually getting the information from the then primary care trusts (PCTs) about patient

transport. As part of our research we did a freedom-of-information request to every single trust in London to get the information about eligibility, about waiting times, about who your contractor is. It was a very torturous process to extract that information. It has been paid for by public money and it is so difficult to actually get this information out. I remember that was one of the stumbling blocks.

Absolutely, there does need to be a shake-up. Unfortunately, when you go to NHS England or even if you go to the Department of Health, they just hold their hand up and say, "This is the trusts". That is the kind of landscape we are in at the moment. It is very fragmented.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: This is the landscape we see repeatedly here in the Chamber about what is happening with the NHS.

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

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: One of the things I am told is that for the transport provider, if they deliver patients late for appointments, there is no fining of them and there is no penalty for it.

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

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Why is that? Why do you think that would be? If any of us were doing it, there would be a penalty for it.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): That is a very good question and that is actually part of our charter. We did come across through our research that there are many trusts and when their contractor is not meeting obligations around time and delivery and all of that type of stuff, there are no financial penalties and they are just getting away with it.

Victoria Borwick AM: Maybe, Onkar, you could take that up with your Health Committee. You could set up and you could ask people to come in.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I think we all agree there is a problem here. I have had a recent experience as well with an elderly relative.

Just to hark back to the earlier work that this Committee did on bus services, Leon, one of the suggestions from this Committee was that TfL does need to give much more attention to ordinary bus routes serving hospitals. You might reduce some of the need for door-to-door services or patient transport if mainstream bus services, which are brilliantly accessible, went much closer to the hospitals and had good interchanges, et cetera. Is that something we are going to see TfL doing?

Leon Daniels (Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London): Following the Committee's report, we have refreshed our approach with the hospital trusts. The problem is that changes by the hospital trusts are often presented to us too late. Arrangements are made for moving hospitals, merging hospitals and so on, and in some cases the arrangements are too late for us to get to. We have several at the moment as a result of changes at the hospital.

In one particular case, the hospital has undertaken a redevelopment and has effectively shifted the main entrance from where the bus was to around the back to a place we cannot get to. We were onto this too late. We did not know about this until it was too late. Now we have a situation where service to the hospital is not as good as it should be. Therefore, we are trying to engage with the hospital trusts as quickly as possible to

get as much information as we can early. We are encouraging them to talk to us so that we can adjust our services as their situations and circumstances change and there is not a worsening of the services at hospitals. As a result of what we agreed previously, we are trying as hard as we can.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you very much indeed. We have had a really great discussion this morning. Thank you to our guests, Leon, Peter, Spencer, Ewan, Faryal and Joan. Thank you very much indeed for your insight into what it is like being a user of these services. We have really appreciated your contributions. If there has been any issue that you wanted to get in today and we have not asked you, please do put it in writing to us to feed into evidence for how we take this work moving forward.