

London TravelWatch Performance Report, November 2014

1. Introduction and highlights

- 1.1. This report sets out details of London TravelWatch's performance over the last six months and shows the financial position as at 30 September 2014, with developments to date included in the narrative where appropriate. It confirms how London TravelWatch has met its key business plan objectives and the outcomes it has achieved for transport users as a result of its work.
- 1.2. The report summarises the volume and type of casework activity handled by London TravelWatch during the period and includes a short overview of the main issues raised by the public.
- 1.3. During the year, our Board members reviewed the organisation's perspective on key transport policy areas to ensure that they remained up-to-date and relevant.
- 1.4. We continued to concentrate our efforts on areas where we can make a measurable difference for the benefit of transport users. Our 2014 Annual Review highlighted our contributions to improving the transport experience for travellers in and around London, such as the work we did to make the case for sufficient public transport funding against the backdrop of an ever-increasing population.
- 1.5. Highlights during the period included our report on improving public transport access to London's airports, our public consultation on Transport for London's (TfL) proposed ticket office changes and our research into what passengers think of value for money on London Overground services.
- 1.6. We continued to work collaboratively with the Transport Committee to coordinate work plans where possible. We met with as many Assembly Members as we could to learn about their concerns for transport users as we prepared our business plan for 2015-16.
- 1.7. We followed up on some of the key recommendations from the London Assembly Bus Scrutiny and incorporated the needs of bus passengers as part of our business plan priorities. In particular, we are developing an online bus community and have persuaded TfL to work more closely with us to improve their marketing and service information for both existing and potential passengers. We have recruited a Policy Officer with experience of community engagement to support our work with bus users.
- 1.8. After we expressed our concern that bus passengers lack targeted information, TfL are now using their Oyster data to provide detailed information by email about local routes to passengers who sign up for it. Our bus Policy Officer was a

keynote speaker at TfL's seminar on bus priority where many of the issues raised by the London Assembly were highlighted and the session was chaired by the Chair of our Policy Committee, John Stewart.

- 1.9. Planning our office move to Union Street has taken up a great deal of time in the period. We started work to upgrade the casework CRM computer software to ensure that our recording systems remain at a high standard.

2. Financial Outturn

- 2.1. Part 1 of the Annex gives details of expenditure against budget as at the end of September 2014. There was an underspend of £31,000 on supplies and services primarily because there was very little spend against the research budget in the first half of year as we used existing evidence sources for our access to airports report and TfL funded the London Overground research. This budget is expected to be spent in the second half of the financial year.
- 2.2. Accommodation costs are showing an underspend of £21,000 due to the delay in moving from the current Dexter House premises to Union Street where annual charges will be higher.
- 2.3. There was an £11,000 underspend against the staff budget due to a slight delay in appointing to a vacant post, combined with a small saving achieved by developing a shared service arrangement to replace our Senior Finance Officer post when he retired. We expect the staffing budget to be fully spent this year.
- 2.4. The factors outlined above have contributed to an overall underspend against the budget of £64,000.
- 2.5. The Board had agreed to earmark £40,000 of the reserves to fund improvements to IT infrastructure and professional fees in respect of the office move in 2014-15. This spending has been postponed until after the office move but has been committed.

Risk areas

- 2.6. With a smaller staff complement, the principal risk for the future is that an unexpected and unavoidable rise in workload, which might be required to fulfil our statutory objectives, could not be accommodated without extra expenditure and without draining the reserves to an unacceptable level. We continue to mitigate this risk by building flexibility into our job descriptions and doing what we can to ensure transport users get timely advice that may avoid them contacting us unnecessarily.

3. Progress against the business plan

- 3.1. This section highlights progress against our key business plan objectives for the first six months of the financial year, demonstrating the impact our work has had

and the outcomes we have achieved for the travelling public. We had intended to publish a report on transport interchanges during this period. Work is underway on the report but it has not yet been published as other areas of work, particularly the report on access to airports, the contribution to the franchising programme and our consultation on ticket office changes, affected our ability to complete it. We will publish the interchanges report early in 2015.

New research

3.2. We switched our business plan priorities to take the opportunity presented by the interim report of the Davies Commission and the findings of the London Assembly's own report, to update, consolidate and publish our research into improving transport access to London's airports. In September, we published our research demonstrating how public transport access to London's five major airports could be improved by making better use of the infrastructure already in place. The report called for improvements to surface access to London's airports, which will benefit passengers by providing them with more choice and better value for money, making it easier to use public transport to get to London's airports. Specific actions that London TravelWatch has identified include:

- extending London's Oyster/contactless payment ticketing system so that it covers journeys to and from all London's airports and improving the range of National Rail tickets available to purchase at airport stations
- improving customer service to ensure a joined-up approach at every stage of the passenger's journey between the airport and their home
- addressing legal and contractual barriers to allow Crossrail to serve Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport from its opening in 2018
- reducing the numbers of 'empty' taxi and private hire vehicles going to and from airports
- improving connections by providing direct rail links from South London, North West Surrey and the Thames Valley to Heathrow Airport and providing investment to ensure that rolling stock is appropriate for service users.

The report has been well-received and we have been invited to discuss it with the Davies Commission and with Robert Goodwill, the Minister for Aviation, as well as representatives from some of the airports. The Mayor has written to express his support for this work and to confirm that he has asked TfL to take up our recommendations with the industry.

3.3. We decided to commission a consultation on TfL's planned changes to ticket offices as an addition to our business plan because we were concerned that London Underground had no plans to consult passengers about how they might be affected. Our consultation asked people how they use ticket offices and about any difficulties they anticipate that they might have because of the proposed changes to help us to identify mitigation measures that could be implemented at their local stations. We accepted TfL's offer to fund Ipsos Mori, under our

independent control, to analyse the results. TfL put up our publicity posters at some (but by no means all) of their tube stations, on their website and in their regular Metro adverts. The survey was also publicised in the Evening Standard, local blogs, the local press, trade unions and via social media. We were particularly pleased with the publicity this was given by London Assembly Members. Each press release from Assembly Members produced a spike in numbers of people completing the survey. We received over 2,000 responses. The findings of our consultation, as well as a range of other evidence, were used to inform our initial response to TfL and were discussed at our Policy meeting in November. We will carry out further analysis in the coming months and update our proposals in 2015.

3.4. We completed our research into passenger views of value for money on London Overground services and published the report on our findings in October 2014. The report identified a number of actions that London Overground need to take to improve passenger perceptions of value for money including:

- improving awareness of what London Overground offers by establishing line based sub-brands (similar to London Underground line names)
- making ticket buying easier by improving fares information at stations and on the London Overground website and making ticket machines easier to use, including the ability to pay by cash
- improving the travelling experience by making stations and trains more accessible, investing in further gating schemes and improving the amount and quality of information given to passengers, particularly in times of disruption and where multiple operators serve the same station
- commissioning Passenger Focus to expand the National Rail Passenger Survey to cover all stations operated by London Overground and Greater Anglia which have never been surveyed, both before and after the change of concession in 2016
- surveying smaller stations not previously surveyed but operated by National Rail operators in the London area at the same time to provide a benchmark against which to compare London Overground's performance.

Fares and ticketing

3.5 We intervened when TfL announced that contactless payments would be extended to the Tube, DLR and London Overground in September but not to National Rail services in London that participate in Oyster pay as you go (PAYG). We urged TfL and train operating companies to work together to resolve the issues preventing the roll out, warning that failure to include National Rail in the scheme would be confusing and unfair to passengers. As a result of pressure from us and others, TfL managed to resolve these issues with National Rail operators and, in September, contactless payments were extended to National Rail services in London that participate in Oyster PAYG, in addition to the Tube, DLR and London Overground.

Franchising

- 3.6 We continue to take all opportunities to influence the rail and TfL franchising process to achieve the best possible consumer benefit from new franchise arrangements within the London area. These included Crossrail 2; the 'shadow' concessions for London Rail for the period between the end of the DfT franchise and the start of the full Crossrail service; the DLR and London Overground concessions; Essex Thameside franchise; and the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern (TSGN) franchise.
- 3.7 We built on the work carried out during the previous period in parallel with Passenger Focus to provide confidential comment to the DfT on the passenger facing elements of the different bids to help them assess the bids. We followed this up through senior-level meetings with Southeastern and the DfT where we made recommendations to them about the Direct Award and the potential improvements which could be made for passengers, many of which were included. We argued for the Direct Award to include more services between Dartford and Victoria, a commitment to extra staffing at stations and the extension of Oyster to Dartford and Swanley.

Campaigning

- 3.8 We have long been concerned about passengers having accidents because of the often excessive gaps between trains and platforms at London stations and have regularly raise these issues with key stakeholders, particularly the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) and Network Rail. We are starting to see a shift of emphasis in the industry and last year the ORR acknowledged this as an issue in its 2013/14 Annual Health and Safety Report and the industry is now establishing initiatives and programmes to deal with this risk.
- 3.9 We have responded to consultations to the Mayor's cycling vision schemes, including the most recent cycle superhighways proposals from our perspective of representing all the users of London's streets. We have always been supportive of more and safer cycling but expressed concerns about the impact on other road users, particularly bus passengers, pedestrians and disabled people. We continue to press TfL to do further work to analyse the impact on bus journey times of change to the road network and to publish this data.
- 3.10 We added our voice to those calling for improvements to the Tottenham Court Road area for many years as it suffers from congestion on both its roads and pavements. Tottenham Court Road will see a huge increase in activity after the opening of the Crossrail station in 2018. We welcomed the fact that Camden Council is now working on a scheme to transform the area and has recently put its plans out to consultation. The plans would represent a great improvement, which we hope would alleviate congestion on both roads and pavements, with wider pavements for pedestrians, improved conditions for cyclists and shorter journey times for most bus routes. In addition, it would improve access to the Tube stations on Tottenham Court Road as both north and south bound buses would serve them directly.

- 3.11 We submitted a petition to Parliament against the HS2 Bill in May 2014 in order to ensure that the impact it would have for London's travelling public is properly considered in the planning process, especially in the Euston area, and on passengers' access to connecting transport services.

4 Communications and public engagement

- 4.1. We continued to open our Board and committee meetings to the public. We discussed current issues for transport users, explored problems and looked at future services at our meetings. Topics during this period included London Underground's vision for the tube and ticket offices, rail franchise awards, proposals for Crossrail 2, river crossings, cycle highway schemes and buses. We continued to live tweet at our Board meetings to provide the public the opportunity to raise issues with us.
- 4.2. We sought meetings with key politicians and senior civil servants to promote better outcomes for the travelling public. Of particular value was the opportunity to share our priorities and concerns with the Minister for Transport, Baroness Kramer, who was very interested in matters relating to improving transport accessibility and keen to hear about examples of good practice in London which could be promoted more widely.
- 4.3. During the period, we attended the London Pensions Fund Authority's Annual Member Forum at the Southbank Centre and spoke to attendees about transport issues.

5 Casework

- 5.1. During the first half of 2014-2015, our casework team dealt with over 3,000 written and telephone enquiries and complaints, which is similar to the same period last year. Most of these could be dealt with quickly or passed on to the operator for an initial reply, as we only investigate cases where the complainant has not already received an adequate response. The issues raised with our casework team remain fairly consistent and include service performance, delays and early departures, penalty fares, lack of available information at point of travel and complaint handling by operators.
- 5.2. In the six months to the end of September, we investigated 583 appeals from members of the public travelling in London and the surrounding areas. We keep detailed management records which confirm that our performance continues to exceed key targets.
- 5.3. We achieved a notable success at Waterloo National Rail station after being contacted by a passenger who could not purchase the cheapest ticket at the ticket vending machine. The passenger knew that the ticket offered was not the cheapest and had to go to the ticket office in order to purchase it. London TravelWatch appealed the case because the passenger should have been able to purchase the correct ticket from a machine and other passengers would not know that there was a cheaper alternative to travel on the same train at the same time. Also at Waterloo, the ticket machines did not sell promotional tickets and,

again, this did not help passengers who were unaware of their options. South West Trains have since taken steps to improve their ticket machines. Their promotional tickets are now available and the machines indicate the availability of travelcards.

- 5.4. Of the casework we received which required further investigation, 64% related to National Rail, 9% related to buses, 6% related to London Underground, and 1% to London Overground, with the remaining relating to other issues, such as Oyster. A large proportion of journeys in and around London are multi-modal and some appeals need us to negotiate with more than one transport operator. Similarly, a lot of casework continues to include Oyster ticketing issues as Oyster is used across the entire London Network.

Janet Cooke
Chief Executive,
London TravelWatch
26 November 2014

Links to London TravelWatch research documents:

1. Improving public transport access to London's airports (September 2014)
http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3894&field=file
2. Value for money on London Overground – what passengers think (October 2014)
http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3896&field=file
3. Consultation on Transport for London's (TfL) proposed ticket office changes (November 2014)
http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3909&age=&field=file

Annex: Performance Information

1. Financial performance

The financial position as at the end of September 2014 is summarised below:

	Original Budget (Year to date)	Revised Budget (Year to date)	Actual Spend/ Income to date	Variance against revised budget (Year to date)
	£	£	£	£
REVENUE EXPENDITURE				
Chair, Members & Staff Costs	398,000	398,000	387,000	(11,000)
Accommodation costs	73,000	73,000	52,000	(21,000)
Supplies & Services	68,000	68,000	37,000	(31,000)
Depreciation	15,000	15,000	14,000	(1,000)
Total Revenue Expenditure	554,000	554,000	490,000	(64,000)
Total Capital & Revenue Expenditure	554,000	554,000	490,050	(64,000)
INCOME				
Greater London Authority Funding	528,000	528,000	528,000	0
Passenger Focus	0	0	2,000	(2,000)
Bank Interest Receivable	0	0	0	0
Other income	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
Total Income	529,000	529,000	530,000	(1,000)
Earmarked transfer from general reserves		40,000		

Note: Commentary relating to London TravelWatch's financial performance is set out in section 2 of the preceding report.