

Social Needs Transport

A Roadmap for Future Provision

1 Executive Summary

Provision of social needs transport is a complex area with a number of operators providing different services across London:

- The TfL Dial-a-Ride service provides a door-to-door multi-occupancy London wide bus service that is free to users.
- Taxicard is an on demand, guaranteed, subsidised kerb-to-kerb taxi service for mobility impaired Londoners paid for by TfL and London boroughs. This is complemented by the smaller Capital Call Service.
- TfL also provides a travel mentoring service to encourage disabled people to make use of mainstream transport services.
- A number of independent, borough based, Community Transport (CT) operators provide transport, usually for group travel. These operators are charities, and any surplus profits they make are reinvested in the communities they serve.
- Statutory Transport comprises Local Authority social care and special education needs transport services, and NHS non-emergency Patient Transport Services.

The table below shows the key features of these services.

Service	Operator	Cost and Funding	Membership & Usage
Dial-a-Ride	TfL in-house operation supplemented by taxi, private hire and MOAT provision (currently provided by CTs)	£34m in 2014/15 100% funded by TfL	48,000 members 1.3m passenger journeys per year Free to use No journey limit 90% of journey requests accommodated
Taxicard	Operates across all London boroughs Booking, scheduling and dispatch operated by London Councils on behalf of TfL and the boroughs Travel services provided by a taxi consolidator service (CityFleet)	£11.7m in 2014/15 83% funded by TfL (9.6m) 17% funded by boroughs (£1.9m) TfL's funding contribution has increased from 38% in 2002/03 to 83% in 2014/15	83,000 members 1.3m trips per year Subsidised cost Journey limits apply On demand, guaranteed service
Capital Call	Operates across 10 London boroughs Membership and booking, scheduling and dispatch operated by Hackney CT. Travel services provided by local private hire companies.	£460k per year 100% funded by TfL	2,000 members 23,000 trips per year Subsidised cost Journey limits apply On demand, guaranteed service
Travel Mentoring	TfL in partnership with local authorities, disability organisations, and health and social care professionals.	£300k in 2014/15 100% funded by TfL	12,000 accompanied journeys 59 multi-occupancy bus days for 1,900 people
Community Transport	22 independent operators covering 29 boroughs	290 full time staff 320 part time staff Overall costs not aggregated	1.8m trips per year

Dial-a-Ride and the other social needs transport services play a vital role in enriching the lives of people who would otherwise be unable to travel, providing a vital lifeline to the housebound – and TfL believes there is significant latent demand for such services. They also provide a saving to the community as a whole, as every housebound person they help get out is one less house call for the NHS or social services.

The number of people in London eligible for these services is growing and is set to rise. It is predicted that by 2018 there could be nearly 40,000 more people with reduced mobility, and by 2031 there could be a further 150,000. This would bring the total of Londoners with reduced mobility to more than 1,000,000.

In addition, the number of people over the age of 85 (the age of automatic eligibility for Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard) is estimated to rise by about 48,000 to 181,000 in 2024 and by another 42,000 between then and 2031. Future use of the Dial-a-Ride service is likely to rise to between 1.6m and 1.8m trips per year by 2020 as the demographics of London change and the population ages.

Despite the great advances that have been made to improve the accessibility of London's passenger transport network in recent years (fully accessible bus fleet, 95 per cent of bus stops to be accessible by end of 2015/16, a third of Network Rail stations and 20 per cent of Underground stations accessible from street to platform and the DLR and Tramlink networks both fully accessible from street to carriage), the scale of increase in demand means it is unlikely that it will be fully offset by improvements in the accessibility of mainstream transport. While TfL is committed to continuing improvement, they are likely to be incremental rather than the 'big wins' seen in the past decade.

This report reviews current social needs transport provision and provides a high level roadmap for TfL's provision of social needs transport.

Drawing on findings and recommendations from the Transport for Communities Review of Social Needs Transport in London (commissioned by TfL) and the London Assembly Transport Committee Review into Door-to-Door transport in London, this report sets out the steps that TfL will take to improve social needs transport provision, enhance the customer offering and address the growth in demand for such services.

Booking, Scheduling and Dispatch (BSD)

Short term: Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and the Travel Mentoring service to have a single customer complaint and feedback process, a single set of eligibility criteria and a single membership process.

Medium term: The introduction of a single booking process for customers, , Capital Call subsumed into other duplicate services, the potential trialling of a local, decentralised booking process, and will look to increase the current five mile limit for Dial-a-Ride services.

Long term: TfL will seek to expand the role of the BSD operation to secure more cooperation and coordination with other providers across London, ultimately leading to the BSD operation becoming the single commissioning body for all non-statutory social needs transport across London, and closer links with statutory providers of such transport.

Transport Services

Medium Term: TfL to increase the use of the taxi and private hire sector in social transport, in tandem with the introduction of specialist driver training for the sector, review of current contractual arrangements for Multi-Occupancy Accessible Transport (MOAT) (currently provided by the CT sector) and the Taxi & Private hire sector, improved efficiency of Dial-a-Ride fleet, and the capability to identify and contact drivers in real-time.

Long term: Diversification of the Dial-a-Ride fleet, contracting out to other service providers who also have a need for the fleet's specialist vehicles and trained drivers.

Other

Medium Term: Introduction of handheld mobile data terminals to provide scheduling information to drivers and of an app and/or online booking facility for customers.

1.1 Dial-a-Ride

Dial-a-Ride is a door-to-door (as opposed to kerb-to-kerb), free at point of use, multi-occupancy London wide accessible transport service. It provides independent travel for those who cannot use mainstream public transport for journeys that they wish to make (excluding journeys made by other statutory provision).¹ It can be used for many types of journeys, making it easier for disabled people or people with lower levels of mobility to go shopping, visit friends or go to the GP. Eligibility for Dial-a-Ride membership includes everyone over 85 and people who have a permanent or long-term disability which means they find it hard or impossible to use mainstream public transport services some or all of the time.

Dial-a-Ride carries around 1.3 million passengers every year, predominantly using specially adapted vehicles, supplemented by taxi, private hire and MOAT provision (currently provided by CTs). It currently has around 48,000 members. The cost to TfL of providing this service was £34m in 2014/15. Dial-a-Ride operates from 06:00 to 02:00, 365 days a year (including Christmas day) and provides local journeys of up to five miles which are pre-booked through a central call centre.

Dial-a-Ride, unlike other services, has no individual journey limit for members. Members may book as many journeys as they wish within the available resources and the demands of fellow members. The service seeks to satisfy a wide range of customer demands within finite funding constraints, accommodating bookings on a first come, first served basis.

The existing Dial-a-Ride service may be considered as being operated in two distinct parts:

- Firstly, the booking, scheduling and dispatch (BSD) element of the service, which receives trips requests from customers (members) of the scheme, collates journey requests, plans and optimises routes and assesses vehicle requirements on a daily basis. The BSD service is currently delivered wholly in house by TfL.
- Secondly, the provision of vehicles and drivers (and therefore the delivery of actual transport services to customers) is currently delivered by a combination of an in-house TfL fleet of around 360 specialist accessible vehicles; vehicles and drivers supplied on a daily basis through 'call-off' contracts with MOAT providers; and accessible taxi and private hire vehicles procured through a similar contractual arrangement with a taxi and private hire vehicle 'consolidator' (City Fleet).

The two main elements of the service have differing standards of performance and effectiveness.

¹ Further details of statutory provision can be found in section 1.6

Booking, Scheduling & Dispatch: The BSD service currently meets about 90 per cent of the trip requests made by members of the scheme. In bench-marking this, the TfC review identified that this compares relatively unfavourably with the Greater Manchester scheme, which schedules around 95 per cent of trip requests. The service currently only guarantees to provide trips within a five mile radius of the members' homes. In spite of the fact that around 50 per cent of trips requests beyond this distance are still met by the service, the London Assembly review nevertheless identified that was a significant source of frustration to users. As a result of these issues, customer satisfaction with the BSD element service (at 78 per cent) is significantly lower than the 95 per cent customer satisfaction with overall service provision which, by definition, only surveys those customers who have had a trip scheduled (rather than all those actually *requesting* a trip).

Transport Service: In relation to the actual transport element of the service, although user satisfaction is very high (at 92 per cent), so is the overall cost of provision. The TfC review identified that, at £25.05 per trip, the cost of operation of London Dial-a-Ride is more than three times more expensive than the equivalent service they bench-marked in Greater Manchester. Two thirds of this difference can be explained by differing pay, terms and conditions and training standards (54 per cent); additional vehicles and driver resources arising from operating on London's more densely trafficked roads (7 per cent) and; differences in the accounting of vehicle costs (6 per cent). Overall customer satisfaction with the Manchester scheme is also broadly comparable with London Dial-a-Ride, at 93 per cent. All of this indicates that there is potentially significant room for improvement in the overall efficiency of operation of the service, without lost of quality (Detailed information on the comparative costs of the two services is available on pages 41 and 42 of the TfC review)

At present, the vast majority of transport service provision (83 per cent) is provided by the in-house fleet which (at £21.79 per trip) is significantly more expensive than those elements of the service provided by the CT sector (who provide 11 per cent of the service at an average cost of £12.92 per trip) and the taxi & private hire element (six per cent of the service at £17.70 a trip).

Although, on the face of it, there are therefore potentially substantial cost savings to be made in transferring more of the service to MOAT and taxi and private hire sector provision, this is complicated by two further factors.

Firstly, neither of these sectors operates with the specialist accessible vehicles required to safely transport many members of the scheme. Only the in-house TfL fleet is therefore capable of providing for many of these trips (London Dial-a-Ride already out-sources considerably more of its trips to the CT and taxi & private hires sectors than Greater Manchester (over 170,000 trips a year in London compared to just 101 in Manchester in 2012/13).

Secondly, the specialist nature of care provision (and therefore driver training standards) required to transport many of these customers is a significant barrier to transferring more journeys. Dial-a-Ride in-house fleet drivers undergo six weeks of specialist training before they are able to provide services. While MiDAS (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme) training in the CT sector ensures consistency and also goes some way towards meeting these needs, drivers of services provided through the current taxi & private hire consolidation contracts receive no specialist training. The result of the latter is that, even at the current levels of provision, customer complaints about taxi & private hire provided journeys are already several times higher (at 4.18 complaints per 1,000 journeys) than the in-house provided service at just 0.56 complaints per 1,000 trips (and 1.18 per 1,000 trips for CT provided journeys). Customers frequently complain that drivers have not come to their door to pick them up and, as journeys are procured indirectly through a taxi consolidator, the BSD has no way of immediately knowing who the drivers concerned are or of contacting them directly.

Therefore, for a variety of vehicle, driver training and other reasons, it is not immediately possible to transfer a much larger proportion of trip provision to either the MOAT/CT or taxi & private hire sectors. Nevertheless, TfL has been seeking to make more use of these sectors in recent years (increasing the proportion of trips delivered by them from 10 per cent in 2010/11 to 17 per cent today) and will continue to do so into the future, as it can resolve or overcome the impediments outlined above.

1.2 Taxicard

Taxicard is a taxi (and private hire vehicle) based transport service intended for Londoners with serious mobility impairments, whose condition usually prevents them from being able to access mainstream public transport. Taxicard provides a kerb-to-kerb (opposed to a door-to-door) subsidised service². Taxicard is an on demand, guaranteed service with 83,000 members and delivers 1.3m trips per year. Customers pay £2.50 of each £10.30 on the meter up to a total amount of £20.60. Members have a trip entitlement of 104 trips per year, although there are local variations in some boroughs.³ The scheme covers all 33 London boroughs and aims to increase the independence and the mobility of disabled people by providing subsidised trips in licensed London taxis and private hire vehicles.

The service is funded jointly by TfL and London boroughs, with TfL providing £9.6m (83 per cent) of the cost and the boroughs collectively £1.9m (17 per cent) of the overall £11.7m cost. The booking, scheduling and dispatch (BSD) service for Taxicard is currently operated by London Councils on behalf of TfL and the boroughs. The current funding agreement runs until March 2016.

² Where private hire vehicles are used by Dial-a-Ride, they are required to provide a door-to-door service.

³ Taxicard trips are stages on a journey and not an end to end journey as with Dial-a-Ride.

Taxicard vehicles are provided by CityFleet (the same taxi consolidator service that provides vehicles and drivers for the Dial-a-Ride operation). Taxicard works to an availability target: no fewer than 95 per cent of taxis requested by users must arrive within a maximum 15 minute window either side of the time requested by the user. The BSD service is split between London Councils and CityFleet, with the former managing the membership and the latter booking journeys and arranging dispatch of vehicles. No customer satisfaction or complaints information is available.

Originally the Taxicard service was only operated with licensed hackney carriage taxis (i.e. 'Black Cabs'). However, following changes made in 2011, an increasing number of Taxicard trips are being made in minicabs rather than by taxi. As of October 2013, 16 per cent of Taxicard trips were made in minicabs.

London Councils report that demand for the service is down 6.7 per cent compared with 2013/14 and the forecast is that this trend will continue. This follows year on year reductions in demand since 2010/11; an overall reduction of around 30 per cent. This is generally thought to be the result of rises in the cost of the service to customers in recent years as boroughs have sought to reduce the overall impact of funding the service on their dwindling finances. As a result, TfL's funding contribution to the scheme has increased from 38 per cent (£3.3m) in 2002/03, to 83 per cent in 2014.

1.3 Capital Call

While Taxicard operates across all 33 London boroughs, in 2003, following concerns about the availability of vehicles in a number of boroughs (Bexley, Ealing, Enfield, Haringey, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton and Southwark), TfL introduced an additional service 'Capital Call' to cater for these areas, providing a subsidy for qualifying members to take trips in private hire vehicles. The service was introduced in those boroughs where, at the time, taxi availability fell below 90 per cent.

This service is offered in addition to (not instead of) Taxicard in these 10 boroughs. Capital Call is therefore not a replacement service for Taxicard; to join Capital Call you must be a member of Taxicard and members can use their Capital Call allowances in addition to their Taxicard ones.

Capital Call is fully funded by TfL (at a cost of £460k a year) and its membership and BSD service is operated by Hackney CT, with local private hire companies providing the vehicles. No customer satisfaction or complaints information is available.

Capital Call currently has just over 2,000 members across the 10 boroughs where it operates. However, it is only regularly used by around only 1,300 people, with just 23,000 trips being made across the whole scheme in 2014/15. This is because, unlike a decade ago, there is no longer a shortage of vehicles available to provide Taxicard services. This is illustrated by the changes in the overall availability of taxis in the 10 boroughs concerned since 2003, set out in the table below – as can be seen, availability is now consistently above 90 per cent in all 10 boroughs:

Taxicard Availability 2012/13 and 2013/14

	2014-15 April – Feb	2013/14	2012/13
All London boroughs	95.96%	96.25%	96.52%
Capital Call boroughs	95.20%	95.47%	94.90%

Capital Call boroughs			
Bexley	97.11%	97.11%	96.33%
Ealing	95.86%	96.77%	95.98%
Enfield	93.34%	93.54%	89.77%
Haringey	95.24%	94.64%	92.41%
Hillingdon	94.21%	94.74%	93.30%
Hounslow	96.15%	96.51%	95.48%
Lambeth	92.92%	92.78%	94.40%
Lewisham	96.50%	96.84%	97.36%
Merton	96.49%	97.47%	98.44%
Southwark	94.36%	94.32%	95.62%

In addition to this, the expansion of the Taxicard scheme to include the use of private hire vehicles has further improved vehicle availability in the boroughs. As a result, Capital Card usage is falling. Taxicard membership is ten times higher across the 10 Capital Call boroughs than Capital Call membership (23,000 Taxicard members as opposed to 2,000 Capital Call members). In every borough in which Capital Call operates, there is at least double the number of regular Taxicard users as Capital Call users.

Capital Call customers pay the first £1.50 of each £11.80 segment of the journey, to a maximum journey cost of £59. Taxicard customers pay the first £2.50 of each £10.30 segment of the journey up to a maximum journey cost of £20.60, making Capital Call considerably cheaper to use. Although Capital Call users have an annual subsidy limit of £200 each per year, Capital Call users can also use the Taxicard scheme.

As there is now no shortage of vehicles available to provide Taxicard services, in effect Capital Call duplicates the Taxicard service and provides those eligible with an unjustifiable additional financial benefit not available to mobility impaired Londoners in the 23 boroughs where it doesn't operate. TfL therefore believes that the service is no longer necessary. In 2014 TfL consulted on closing Capital Call and has currently suspended all applications from new members pending the outcome of this review.

1.4 Travel Mentoring

TfL also provides a travel mentoring service to encourage disabled people to make use of mainstream transport services. The travel mentoring service works in partnership with local authorities, disability organisations, and health and social care professionals to help them set up their own mentoring services. It also offers individual telephone advice and helps disabled travellers to plan an accessible route. Where appropriate the service can also provide a mentor to accompany a disabled traveller for the first few journeys on mainstream transport to help them gain confidence.

In the last financial year the Travel Mentoring service provided over 12,000 confidence building, accompanied public transport journeys for disabled people and 59 multiple occupancy bus days, attended by over 1,900 disabled people, which are designed to help disabled people feel comfortable with bus travel. The service costs around £300,000 a year to deliver.

With the increasing availability of fully accessible public transport services (by the end of 2015/16, 95 per cent of bus stops, 100 per cent of buses and 20 per cent of tube stations will be fully accessible, together with 100 per cent of the DLR and Croydon Tramlink - with further improvements yet to come), TfL believe that the Travel Mentoring service can continue to provide mobility impaired Londoners with more travel options into the future.

1.5 Community Transport

CT operators are borough-based, not-for-profit social enterprises specialising in providing transport for groups (often by vehicle-only hires) or individuals whose needs are not met by other transport options. They are community-owned and managed, and independent of private or public organisations. There are 22 independent operators in London, covering 29 boroughs. They are generally small organisations varying in size between 4-25 vehicles with a total staffing across London of around 190 full time staff and 320 part time staff. A variety of vehicles are used, depending on the services operated. These range from 4 – 50 seater vehicles, the most common being a 15 seater goods van derived minibus with tail lifts. Voluntary drivers are also used.

The most commonly provided service in London is group transport activity, where passengers travel as a pre-booked group with others for all or part of a journey, for example to day centres or luncheon clubs. The core clientele for this work are local community and voluntary sector organisations. CT operators also provide services to individuals where journeys are booked individually, but passengers may still travel with others; these journeys are generally commissioned by statutory organisations.

The CTs currently used to deliver Dial-a-Ride services were awarded contracts through a competitive process that was not reserved to the CT sector.

In addition to their support for the London Dial-a-Ride service outlined in section 1.1, the CT sector in London currently provide around 1.8m trips a year for disabled and mobility impaired Londoners.

1.6 Statutory Transport Provision

Local authority **social care and special educational needs** transport services provide bespoke transport solutions in fulfilment of statutory obligations; in particular to facilitate access to school or day centre provision.

Non-emergency **Patient Transport Services** (PTS) provide statutory access to medical appointments at hospital facilities based on medical criteria. Like local authority provision, PTS services cannot be considered as a primary component of an accessible public transport network. They are nevertheless an important element of the social needs transport mix, both in terms of the customer offer, and the opportunities to co-ordinate services to best effect.

Because of the fragmented nature of PTS provision, with each Hospital Trust or Community Care Group contracting separately for the provision of PTS, it is difficult to know the scale of provision. The London Councils 2009 'A Future Door to Door Strategy for London' estimated that the journey workload per weekday is of the order of 6,500 patient journeys (3,500 patients).⁴

⁴ Further details on this report can be found in the link in appendix 4

2 Previous Reviews

There have been a number of reviews of door-to-door, accessible transport services in London. The most recent of these are the Transport for Communities (TfC) review of social needs transport commissioned by TfL in 2014 (which concentrated on London Dial-a-Ride), and the London Assembly Transport Committee report, 'Improving door-to-door transport in London', which focused on the wider provision of social needs transport generally across London, which also more closely reflects the scope of this document.

Findings and recommendations from these reviews are summarised in the following sections and the full reports also appended.

2.1 Transport for Communities Review

TfC carried out an extensive review of Dial-a-Ride services in London, talking to a wide variety of stakeholder and community groups⁵, and bench-marking provision against similar services in Manchester. Their report⁶ findings can be summarised as follows:

- All of the current stakeholders agreed that there are clearly issues to be addressed regarding the future management, delivery and funding of social needs transport;
- Respondents believed Dial-a-Ride delivers a high volume, pan-London service, which was safe, secure and reliable; an accessible service being an essential component of the public transport network;
- Dial-a-Ride driving staff are valued for their professional, customer focused services;
- Customers value the fact that the Dial-a-Ride service is free to users;
- The CT sector was recognised for its locally focused services, and is perceived as inclusive, caring and cost effective, providing a good level of service, with little funding and limited resources;
- The CT sector is seen as flexible and responsive to the needs of vulnerable users and has a track record of successful collaborative working;
- Respondents suggested Dial-a-Ride could improve the whole Booking, Scheduling and Dispatch (BSD) procedure, with better scheduling resulting in improved efficiency through better vehicle utilisation, reduced trip duplication and more journeys per shift;
- Respondents also felt demand for trips outstrips supply and social needs transport providers were not meeting the need of Londoners and this would be a greater challenge in the future with changing demographics and some non-statutory services losing funding;

⁵ Stakeholders consulted included CT groups, Disability and Mobility groups, London Boroughs, Taxi and private hire groups. Responses were mixed, with a very high response from the CT sector (over 90 per cent) and relatively low response rates from London boroughs (27 per cent) and disability and mobility groups (just 16 per cent). No responses were received at all from the taxi and private hire industry groups contacted.

⁶ This report can be found in Appendix 1

- Stakeholders identified opportunities for improvement that included more effective operational models and greater collaborative working.

TfC proposed a series of short term wins in areas such as: greater flexibility in scheduling; review of taxi and CT contractor services; tackling the cancellation rate; and a review of engineering services. The report also advocates the introduction of two pilot projects with partner agencies to explore further options of decentralisation. In the longer term, they recommended:

- TfL should reflect on how Dial-a-Ride should be structured, whether provision should be centralised or localised, whether maintenance arrangements and costs could be reduced, and whether increased usage of CT providers would provide more trips;
- TfL should look at improving the existing provision by decoupling centralised administrative functions from those concerned with service delivery, thereby supporting a more competitive market, greater working with other service providers and greater exploitation of commercial opportunities.

The review also makes clear the wider benefits of securing greater coordination and collaboration in the provision of SNT services, although it recognises that the sheer complexity of provision is a barrier to integration.

2.2 London Assembly Transport Committee

In January 2015, the London Assembly Transport Committee published the findings of its review of social needs transport in London and made recommendations for actions to be taken to improve provision across London (Improving door-to-door transport in London). The findings of this report (referred to as the London Assembly Report) were based on performance and financial data, along with meetings with both service users and representatives of organisations delivering and commissioning services (including TfL).⁷

The review made a number of recommendations designed to address concerns raised, to continue to improve the performance of Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard, and pursue greater co-ordination of social needs transport services to the benefit of customers. The recommendations were split into short-term, medium-term and long-term changes to reflect the fact that social needs provision is complex with a number of different funders, providers and commissioners, and as such, reform cannot happen overnight.

Key concerns raised by the London Assembly Report were as follows:

- The performance of Dial-a-Ride has improved since 2009 but is still below required levels, with a recent rise in complaints and booking refusals, and there has been no increase in efficiency;
- Dial-a-Ride's policy of limiting journeys to five miles places an arbitrary restriction on its members' mobility, and is arbitrary when, for example, you consider the relative sizes of a borough such as Southwark compared with Havering, which covers a much larger geographical area;

⁷ This report can be found in Appendix 2

- There has been a significant underspend in the Taxicard budget for the past two years: higher costs have been imposed on passengers and usage of the service is falling;
- The highly regarded Capital Call service is facing closure by TfL, but as yet there is no clear plan for alleviating the effect of this or reinvesting savings;
- NHS Patient Transport services are below expected standards in many parts of London, and need to be reviewed urgently;
- It is likely there is unmet demand for door-to-door services, and demand is set to grow as London's population changes, in particular as the number of older people increase, but TfL has no plans to increase provision;
- There has been no progress towards integration of different door-to-door services, which is required to deliver better, more efficient service for users.

The recommendations made in the London Assembly Report were as follows:

Short-term (within six months)

- TfL should review its policy of limiting the distance of Dial-a-Ride journeys to less than five miles. Any new distance limit should take into account differences in population density across London;
- TfL and London Councils should investigate why Taxicard usage is falling and why expenditure is significantly below budget. Any underspend from 2014/15 should be reinvested in measures designed to ensure Taxicard reaches all users who need the service;
- TfL should delay any decision on the closure of Capital Call until after the conclusion of the Social Needs Transport Review. If the closure goes ahead, TfL should reinvest the Capital Call budget in other door-to-door services and work with London Councils to ensure that Taxicard offers the same service standards and flexibility as Capital Call;
- NHS England London should instigate a review of the provision of Patient Transport services by NHS Trusts in London, with the objective to define and enforce minimum service standards.

Medium-term (within the next 1-2 years)

- Consistent eligibility criteria should be established for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and NHS Patient Transport, and a single application process for people wanting to become users of these services should be introduced.
- A single customer feedback system for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and NHS Patient Transport should be established. This would enable complaints about all services to be directed to the same place. User surveys should also be integrated across these services.

Long-term (over the next 3-5 years)

- A single booking process for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and NHS Patient Transport should be established. This would enable service users to request journeys from any of these services at a single online source, or from local call centres covering all services.
- All door-to-door services should be commissioned jointly by TfL, boroughs and NHS Trusts. Commissioning should take place at a local or sub-regional level. Commissioners should seek to deliver a mix of regular and on-demand services, operated by public, private or voluntary sector providers. Funding would be provided by TfL, boroughs and NHS Trusts according to existing expenditure levels. The introduction of individual travel budgets for service users should also be considered.
- TfL should review the structure of Dial-a-Ride, as part of the changes proposed under Recommendation 8. TfL should continue to provide the Dial-a-Ride service for the foreseeable future, but it should be commissioned locally rather than operated as a centralised, London-wide service.

TfL response to the review

In response to the London Assembly review, TfL agreed to:

- Review the existing five mile trip distance limit policy;
- Participate in research London Councils are undertaking on the use of Taxicard;
- Keep Capital Call open for existing members while it completes its review of its role in overall social needs transport provision in London, but suspend applications for new members pending a final decision on whether to close it or not;
- Work to deliver a single customer feedback system for the three services it has whole or part responsibility for - Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard and Capital Call;
- Work to deliver consistent eligibility criteria and a single application process for the three services
- Work towards achieving a single booking process across the three services;

TfL also warmly welcomed the concept of joint or integrated commissioning with external parties, including the NHS, and committed to working towards that goal in the longer term. TfL's full formal response to this report can be found in Appendix 3.

2.3 London Councils Strategy

Prior to these two reviews, London Councils published 'A Future Door to Door Strategy for London' in 2009.⁸ Although this Strategy is now over five years old, a number of findings and recommendations chime with the thrust of this paper.

- Transport is seen as the biggest challenge facing disabled people in achieving more independence. However, there is no cohesive 'vision' or medium to long-term plan for door-to-door and assisted transport services across London;

⁸<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/transport/transportservices/doortodoorstrategy.htm>

- Services users want high quality, cost effective, reliable and adaptable services. Users want independence, choice, one multi-service assessment process and clarity of information through a single source. The diversity of present arrangements for door-to-door service does not meet these requirements;
- The services available are diverse, delivered through different governance, different management with different budget holders and with varying levels of resource. There are variations both within, and between, services in terms of eligibility, entitlement and in trip costs. This makes door-to-door services confusing to the user and integration complex;
- Door-to-door transport should be integrated and simplified, based on properly resourced teams that can deliver services in partnership;
- A more holistic and integrated governance and management could deliver important benefits to users and providers, whilst delivering significant savings;
- A central call centre would be of benefit to users as it would simplify booking procedures but would need complex data handling systems and well-trained staff;
- Proposals are put forward for a formal agreement between TfL and boroughs in setting customer satisfaction standards, quality standards, de-minimus eligibility criteria.

3 Proposals for Social Needs Transport - Way Forward

Given the increases in demand for social needs based transport services likely to materialise in the future as London's population (and age profile) grows, it is clear that the services provided by all those involved (and those provided or funded/supported by TfL in particular), will continue to play an increasingly important role in facilitating the transport needs of mobility impaired Londoners into the future.

Although all developed originally for quite valid and separate reasons, it is also clear that the main services provided by TfL (Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and the Travel Mentoring Service), and indeed those provided elsewhere for education and health related reasons, are all really just different facets of the same overall objective – to provide the best possible, highest quality, most cost effective transport provision for mobility impaired Londoners, regardless of whether this is for: employment, education, leisure, retail, health or any other purpose.

Greater integration and coordination of the provision of these services, as called for by many stakeholders and, in particular, as set out the recent London Assembly Transport Committee report, is unarguable. TfL is therefore in strong agreement with the overall thrust of the Committee's broad recommendations to move towards greater integration, both in terms of customer facing services and operational transport delivery.

TfL's objective is that, in the long term, it moves towards a single integrated way of delivering all such services to mobility impaired customers. Starting with the services it provides or funds itself, it will seek to develop a fully integrated approach to booking, scheduling and dispatch (BSD) operations across all its services, building this over time into a single operation, offering all of the facilities (and potentially more) of the individual schemes today. This will include development of a single booking process and customer feedback system and, over time, a single set of criteria for access and eligibility to its social needs transport services. In the longer term it would like to work proactively with the health and education sectors to integrate this with the provision of those services as well.

This vision will be supported by the development of a more integrated approach to the provision of transport services themselves, taking advantage of the extensive capacity that already exists in the MOAT/CT and Taxi & Private Hire sectors, as well as its own in-house fleet operations and, in the longer term, within the education and health sectors. In doing this, TfL aims to deliver improved value by reducing the cost per journey, freeing up funding to increase capacity and raising the standard of the overall customer offer.

TfL will also take advantage of opportunities that will present themselves over time (for example the end of the current Taxicard funding agreement in 2016 and the expiry of existing taxi consolidation and MOAT contracts) to develop a more integrated approach to provision.

The remainder of this report therefore sets out a roadmap for the achievement of such a vision.

3.1 Booking / Scheduling / Dispatch Integration

Short Term Opportunities

In the short term, two opportunities present themselves:

- To review and introduce a single customer complaints and feedback process for existing Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and Travel Mentoring services and;
- To develop a single set of eligibility criteria and membership process for them.

Single Customer Feedback Process: TfL and London Councils routinely share a range of data on performance, customer complaints and satisfaction. Moving to a single customer complaints and feedback system and integrated customer surveys is a key step towards delivering integrated services for customers

TfL would like to work with London Councils to deliver a single customer complaint and feedback system for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and Travel Mentoring, along with integrated customer surveys of these services.

In addition to delivering a simplified service to customers and one that is cheaper to administer, a unified approach to complaints and customer feedback will help us understand our customers' view of the service they are receiving in a more consistent manner, leading to more meaningful comparisons across the different services.

Delivery date: **March 2016** (subject to agreement). Parties involved: TfL, London Councils

Single Eligibility Criteria and Membership Process: Currently, the different service providers have different membership criteria (with membership of one service not automatically giving membership of another), separate application processes, and separate customer feedback and customer complaints processes. Bringing these together will simplify and improve customer experience and reduce costs. While there is a large crossover in membership between different services, there may also be many people who use one service without being aware of others.

TfL would like to work with London Councils to deliver a single and consistent eligibility criteria for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and Travel Mentoring, and a single application process for people wanting to use these services.

Delivery date: **March 2016** (subject to agreement). Parties involved: TfL, London Councils

Capital Call: As stated earlier, TfL also believes that, given the now adequate availability of taxis in all London boroughs, and the expansion of the Taxicard scheme to include the provision of private hire vehicles, Capital Call now provides an inequitable financial benefit to those entitled to use it who happen to be living in a borough where there was previously a shortage of taxis. TfL is therefore no longer accepting new applications for the scheme.

In 2014, TfL consulted on, and conducted an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the closure of Capital Call. Rather than closing the scheme on the basis that it is no longer required, we have taken on board the views of existing users and other stakeholders, including the London Assembly Transport Committee, who felt that the scheme should not be closed until clear alternative provision was in place. We have therefore decided that the scheme will remain open to existing users until a new single integrated booking service (envisaged below) is in place. We will however take steps towards equalising the cost of the scheme with that of Taxicard by raising the charge per segment from £1.50 to £2.50 and reducing the segment component from £11.80 to £10.30.

Delivery date: **March 2016**

Medium Term Opportunities

Single Booking Process: In the medium term, the expiry of the existing Taxicard funding arrangement in 2016 provides the opportunity to fully integrate these services with a single booking process and giving mobility impaired Londoners the ability to access the benefits of all of the existing services via a single service.

A single booking process could start simply with a single phone number (with customers patched through to the relevant call centre) but with no significant changes to how the operation works. However the more fundamental step would be to progress to a single call centre so the BSD service can be run across all four services. This will mean a single phone call for the customer and 24 hours booking notice, leading to improved scheduling.

As part of the integration of these services, it will be possible to review the existing five mile limit on the booking of Dial-a-Ride services. As outlined earlier, Dial-a-Ride already schedules a significant proportion (around 50 per cent) of trip requests above this limit. It should therefore be possible to review and raise this limit to a (yet to be defined) greater distance. This higher limit would then be applied more rigorously than is currently the case; however any customer requesting a trip that cannot be accommodated could immediately be offered a Taxicard alternative.

Given that TfL already funds over 80 per cent of the current Taxicard scheme costs - and over 95 per cent of the combined cost of all four services – TfL anticipates that the efficiencies derived will enable us to save London's boroughs the £1.9m they currently contribute towards the cost of these services without any detriment to overall service provision.

Anticipated delivery date: **March 2017**

Capital Call: Once single booking process is in place, and the inequality of price between the two schemes has been eliminated, there would only be a small difference between Capital Call and Taxicard. Capital Call would therefore effectively cease to exist as a separate entity at this point. Anticipated delivery date: **March 2017**

Trial of local decentralised booking processes: One of the recommendations of the Transport for Communities review of Dial-a-Ride was the suggestion of trialling a more localised approach to booking, scheduling and dispatch services, as opposed to the centralised London-wide call centre service currently employed. This is on the basis of significant stakeholder opinion that the more localised knowledge likely to be possessed by a locally based operator would most likely lead to more effective booking and scheduling and a more personalised customer service. It suggested trials in two locations (involving Ealing CT in West London and Havering Council in East London) to test this out and compare it with the existing centralised service.

TfL believes that the wider integration of the four services now envisaged means that the trials should not be attempted until we have the single integrated BSD service now proposed. However TfL is happy in principle to trial such an approach, subject to the agreement of a common set of performance criteria (between the main centralised and pilot decentralised BSD operations) upon which to judge their relative effectiveness. These would most likely include:

- An increased targeted percentage of Dial-a-Ride trip requests scheduled, for example more akin to that achieved by the Greater Manchester scheme (i.e. 95 per cent, compared to the current London DAR performance of 90 per cent)
- Improved customer satisfaction with BSD services (i.e. Improving on the 2013/14 DAR performance of 78 per cent)
- Targets to reduce the overall cost per trip of services provided, to enable greater provision in the future
- Customer contact centre performance targets around call answering, complaint handling, etc.

Delivery date: March 2018. Parties involved: Other interested providers - potentially Ealing CT and Havering Council

Longer Term Opportunities

Wider integration with other SNT providers: TfL considers wider integration and joint or integrated commissioning essential to meet the challenges caused by additional projected demands on door to door services and future customer expectations.

London currently has a complex mix of service commission and service delivery. This includes multiple commissioners, and a large and diverse group of providers under various contracts without common termination dates. Once TfL has completed the steps necessary to ensure full integration of the services it funds, TfL will expand the role of the BSD operation to secure more cooperation and coordination with other providers across London with the view to commissioning provision from the most appropriate and cost effective providers across London.

Delivery date: Dependent on progress with external parties. Parties involved: TfL, other providers of CT services (including local education authorities and hospital trusts, NHS London).

3.2 Transport Procurement Opportunities

Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Provision

The taxi and private hire industry now provides significant transport services to both the Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard schemes. Given its overall cost-effectiveness, going forward TfL will look to increase its use of this sector to provide transport for both schemes. However, in order to do this, a number of significant impediments first need to be overcome.

As outlined earlier, lack of driver training and a current inability to identify and engage with drivers on a real time basis are currently the source of a very high proportion of complaints received about the Dial-a-Ride service and are therefore a significant barrier to making more use of this sector under the current arrangements.

To remedy this, TfL intends to introduce and develop a formal social needs transport provision driver training requirement (potentially akin to the BTEC qualification currently required to be a London bus driver). This would be based around the high standard of training already given to in-house fleet Dial-a-Ride drivers but could potentially operate at two different levels, one related to door-to-door type services (i.e. Dial-a-Ride) and another, simpler, qualification related to kerb-to-kerb services (i.e. Taxicard). Over time, TfL would look to mandate this as a condition of providing driver services for the two schemes. TfL would initially envisage developing and providing this training in-house although, over time, there would be no reason why this could not be outsourced at some point in the future.

To remedy the real time driver identification and engagement issue, TfL needs to move away from the current 'taxi consolidator' contract approach, where journey requirements for the following day are 'bundled' up and set to the taxi consolidator firm en-masse and it is left to them to source drivers and vehicles – which could be either taxis or private hire vehicles and (in the case of private hire vehicles) through operators not known to the BSD service.

TfL will therefore develop a new contracting framework, letting a series of contracts either directly to Private Hire Operators or (in the case of taxis) still through taxi consolidation firms that require both the training requirements and the capability to identify and contact drivers in real time set out above. This does not necessarily have to involve the BSD service operators talking to drivers directly, but it would require them to have instant communication with an operator/consolidator operative who *is* in direct contact with the driver.

Anticipated delivery date: **January 2017**

CT Sector Provision

Although it currently only provides around 11 per cent of the overall service, TfL's experience of the MOAT market as evidenced by its experience with its current providers (who are CTs) is that it has been demonstrably shown to provide amongst the most cost effective transport provision within the existing Dial-a-Ride scheme. Moreover, the sector's van derived minibuses get down roads, through width restrictions and into height restricted locations that Dial-a-Ride vehicles can't. It is also ready and willing to play a greater part in provision of services provision in the future. However, if they are to invest in the vehicles (helping to generate an optimum market), drivers and training required to enable this to happen, it will need greater contractual security than it presently has with the existing MOAT contracts, which are of a 'call off' only nature and do not guarantee any specific levels or types of work.

TfL therefore intends to review these contractual arrangements and potentially re-let these contracts in a form that will deliver greater long-term contract security and enable successful tenderers to invest in the vehicles, drivers and training requirements necessary for them to play a greater role in the provision of these services in the future.

Anticipated delivery date: **March 2016**

TfL In-house Fleet Vehicle Provision

As set out earlier, the TfL in-house fleet provides dedicated and highly specialised service using around 360 vehicles and 380 drivers. The nature of the vehicles and the standards of drivers training required mean that it is currently the only option available to BSD planners for many Dial-a-Ride customers. Customer satisfaction with the current service is also very high and complaint levels are correspondingly low. However it is demonstrably the most expensive element of current service provision and bench-marking with the Greater Manchester scheme has indicated that, notwithstanding the higher costs of vehicle provision, driver terms and conditions, training and traffic conditions, it should be possible to improve the overall efficiency of its operation.

One potential way to achieve this is to make greater use of the existing fleet by diversifying the nature of the services it provides. At present the fleet only provides transport services for the Dial-a-Ride scheme, however significant proportions of special needs education and patient transport services in London also have a need for similar specialist transport provision. As the ability/capability of the MOAT/CT and Taxi & Private Hire sectors to deliver high quality mobility impaired transport provision increases, TfL will look to diversify the use of its fleet over the next few years, moving from a position of 100 per cent reliance on the Dial-a-Ride operation and targeting securing of up to 20 per cent of its work from other customers by 2020 (subject to appropriate licensing). It should be noted that, if the fleet division were to provide 20 per cent or more of its services to other organisations, TfL may no longer be able to regard it as "in-house", in which case TfL would no longer be able to require it to deliver services without a competition.

Where the fleet division offers services to third parties, it will have to do so on a fully commercial basis, showing that there is no subsidy in its commercial operation from TfL.

In addition to improving the overall efficiency of use of TfL's in-house vehicle fleet, this will start to integrate the services TfL provides with those in the education and health sectors, in advance of attempting to integrate the booking, scheduling and dispatch elements of those services.

Anticipated delivery date: **March 2016**

3.3 Other Measures

TfL will also put in place a number of further initiatives designed to improve the service provided to customers and / or lower the cost per journey:

- We will introduce mobile data terminals which will enable communication of scheduling information between on the road drivers and the BSD operation, which will substantially improve efficiency, both within the booking and scheduling centre and the fleet, and provide enhanced customer information. The terminals will also have reporting facilities which will provide data that will enable enhanced service design and performance.

Anticipated delivery date: **December 2017**

- An internet or app based booking service will also be offered alongside the more traditional call centre. This will enable customers to book at a time convenient to them without having to wait on the phone. It may also allow customers a full view of the journey times available to them and help to reduce the cost of delivering BSD.

Anticipated delivery date: **To be confirmed**

Appendices

1. **A Review of Social Needs Transport in London:** a TfL commissioned independent review of the London Dial-a-Ride service by Transport for Communities

This document is appended separately.

2. **London Assembly Transport Committee Report – Improving door-to-door transport in London**

<https://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/improving-door-to-door-transport-in-london-next-steps>

3. **TfL Response to the London Assembly Transport Committee Report into Improving door-to-door transport in London**

This document is appended separately.

4. London Councils Report

<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/transport/transportservices/doortodoorstategy.htm>