

London TravelWatch Performance Report to 30.9.16

1 Introduction

- 1.1. This report sets out London TravelWatch's performance over the year to date and shows the financial position as at 30 September 2016. It confirms how London TravelWatch is working to meet its key business plan objectives and the outcomes it has achieved for transport users as a result of its work.
- 1.2. We prepare these reports on a regular basis to inform the Transport Committee of our financial and other performance against our business plan. Although this report is based on data to the end of the half year ending 30 September 2016 it was finalised in January 2017. As the last few months have been exceptionally busy, for completeness, we have added information about key policy and other developments to date.
- 1.3. The report also summarises the volume and type of casework activity London TravelWatch handled during the first two quarters and includes a short overview of the main issues raised by the public.

2 Key areas of achievement

- 2.1. London TravelWatch continues to make a real difference for the travelling public in and around London. We made an impact across a range of areas:
 - We reviewed London Underground's ticket office changes for the Mayor of London making a series of detailed recommendations on how to improve the passenger experience, all of which have been accepted.
 - We helped to secure fairer compensation for rail passengers
 - Our work to improve southern rail access for passengers to Heathrow Airport was recognised in Parliament.
 - Our casework team dealt with 5,956 written and telephone enquiries and complaints and took forward 481 appeals from people dissatisfied with how their transport operator had dealt with their original complaint. The vast majority of our casework concerned fares, refunds and performance.

3 Progress against the business plan objectives

- 3.1. This section highlights progress against London TravelWatch's key business plan objectives for 2016-17 and demonstrates the impact our work has had.

Rail services

- 3.2. We continue to produce our quarterly performance monitoring reports which provide independent scrutiny of operators' performance from the passenger perspective and highlight areas of concern for passengers that we raise with operators.
- 3.3. We made written and oral submissions to The House of Commons Transport Select Committee inquiries into improving the rail passenger experience and into rail franchising. We appeared before the Select Committee in June and October 2016. We took the opportunity to warn that many train operators currently see the requirements of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) as a regulator, and the specification of franchises by Department for Transport (DfT), as representing the needs of passengers - rather than seeking more direct engagement with passengers and their representatives.
- 3.4. We had a productive first meeting with new Rail Minister Paul Maynard at the end of September in which we discussed the particular challenges rail passengers in London face, Southern Rail's performance and the need for further rail devolution.
- 3.5. We consulted passengers over Greater Anglia's proposals for changes to Roydon Station, including the removal of a ticket office, and submitted a formal objection. Following our objection, the operator drew up an alternative proposal which dealt with almost all the concerns we raised. A recent visit confirmed that work to provide an additional ticket machine and CCTV on the country platform has been completed along with new customer information screens on both platforms. The London platform has been completely rebuilt, with improvements to the step/gap between train and platform. In addition, the old ticket office and waiting room has been redeveloped into an enlarged waiting room. We took a particular interest in this station following recommendations made by the Rail Accident Investigation Board about the potential for serious accidents when passengers have to use level crossings in order to purchase a ticket from a different platform from which their train would depart.

Southern Rail performance

- 3.6. Southern Rail passengers continued to suffer from poor service, particularly after the emergency timetable was put in place, which withdrew 341 trains a day from an already reduced timetable. We continued to express great concern about the poor performance and unreliability that Southern Rail passengers are facing, and called for an independent review of the franchise. The quarterly performance monitoring reports referred to in 3.2 mean that we can pick up downward trends in performance and that we have robust evidence of service deterioration.
- 3.7. We had several meetings with Chris Gibb to provide input from the passenger perspective into the Southern Rail resilience review he is carrying out for the Government. In addition, we met the passenger representative who is on the review board.

Rail devolution

- 3.8. We have been putting the case for devolving more suburban rail services to the Mayor for some time and wrote to the new Secretary of State for Transport on appointment highlighting the benefits to passengers. We received a positive response from the Transport Minister, Lord Ahmad, in which he thanked us for the passenger perspective we provided. We were disappointed at the announcement that the Government would not be proceeding with further devolution of rail services in the next round of rail franchising. However, we will continue to input to the franchising programme from the London passenger perspective and campaign for London's new franchises to deliver improvements for passengers at least as good as those TfL would have provided under devolution.

Securing fairer compensation for national rail passengers

- 3.9. Many rail passengers travelling in and around London, who make relatively short journeys, are regularly being inconvenienced by delays that can be as long as the scheduled journey time, with no right to any compensation if the delay is less than 30 minutes. We have been calling for compensation to be available to commuters after 15 minutes since December 2014, including in meetings with senior decision makers. In October 2016, the Government announced that rail passengers suffering from delays of between 15 and 29 minutes would soon be able to claim compensation of 25% of the cost of their fare. Compensation after 15 minutes will be included in all new rail franchises and the Government will be negotiating with existing operators, beginning with GTR, to get the threshold included as part of their delay repay arrangements. We are now helping to shape the new arrangements in meetings with the DfT.

Review of London Underground ticket offices

- 3.10. The Mayor of London commissioned us to review the impact on passengers of the London Underground ticket office changes. Our report looked in detail at how the system is working and whether it can be improved for commuters, occasional travellers and visitors to London. We put forward a range of recommendations that we believe are essential to mitigate the loss of the ticket offices, all of which have been accepted. TfL are preparing an action plan to respond to them.

Public transport access to London's airports

- 3.11. We have continued to promote the findings of our 2014 report into surface transport access to airports. We made a submission to the House of Commons Select Committee's inquiry on this issue and also discussed it at a recent meeting with the Rail Minister. One of the key issues we highlighted was the need for rail access to Heathrow from the south and our research was cited by the Rail Minister in an adjournment debate in Parliament on this.

Issues for bus passengers

- 3.12. Bus speeds have been declining in London, particularly in the centre. We were the first organisation to start to highlight the issue of slow bus speeds in our performance reports, at Board meetings and in press releases, securing a wide range of coverage in the national and local press. TfL are introducing longer hours on a number of bus lanes on their and borough roads to help improve traffic flows.
- 3.13. We continue to prioritise our time and respond only to TfL's consultations on individual bus routes where we think there are implications for passengers more widely across a local area. We have been pleased that, when we do think it appropriate to intervene, we have managed to secure a number of improvements.
- 3.14. During the research for our *Interchange Matters* report it became clear that, whilst train franchises and concessions set out the customer service standards that should be provided at railway stations, TfL do not have similar standards for their bus stations. We have had a number of meetings with staff at different levels within TfL and are pleased that they have accepted the need to agree and publicise what facilities and service passengers using bus stations should expect.

Cycling

- 3.15. We continued to attend TfL's Cycle Safety Working group and bus stop bypass working group to put forward the passenger view and met with all three borough mini-Holland teams as part of the Board's review of its perspectives on cycling.
- 3.16. We held a successful 'Cycling Cities' event in November dedicated to our late Deputy Chair, Ruth Thompson, an enthusiastic and experienced cyclist. This gave an insight into 100 years of urban cycling policy and practice in 14 European cities in nine countries. It showed how policy makers, activists, and ordinary citizens have been able to generate improvements. As intended, the event helped to promote debate on this issue.

Interchanges

- 3.17. In our *Interchange matters* report we highlighted the need for better information at transport interchanges including signage which is bespoke to its location, to enable passengers to identify the most convenient points to interchange and to help navigation around them. Following the publication of our report we raised the issue of onward travel information at stops with transport operators, urging them to improve the interchange experience for passengers. London Trams responded to our request, producing new signage at East Croydon which outlines walking routes and bus routes from the tram stop, together with information about which platform trams leave from. They will shortly be installing similar signage at Wimbledon.
- 3.18. We held the first of our six monthly *Interchange Matters* best practice seminars in June, bringing together a wide range of influential attendees from the transport industry and local government. We also began publishing the results of our systematic evaluations of the quality of interchange for passengers travelling to and from London's major airports by surface transport.

Pedestrians

- 3.19. For some time we have been highlighting the difficulties presented by highways obstructions, particularly traders' advertising boards, calling for them to be cleared off London's streets. We made the case in our *Inclusive Streets* report. We included this in our transport users' priorities document ahead of the Mayoral election (priority 7 'Transport networks accessible to all') and discussed the issue with the main candidates' campaign teams. The Mayor listed dealing with pavement obstructions as one of his four policing priorities at a recent TfL/police/ operators Safety Partnership meeting.

Communications and public engagement

- 3.20. Every year we highlight the impact our work has made to improve the consumer experience for the travelling public in and around London in our Annual Review which is sent out to key industry stakeholders and politicians. We have also added a new section on our website which shows how we are getting results for passengers, highlighting some of our recent successes.
- 3.21. Our website and the use of social media continue to provide an effective and cost efficient way to help engage the public in our work and to disseminate best practice to the industry.
- 3.22. We continued to 'live tweet' from our public meetings – issues discussed included plans to refocus bus services in central London, poor performance by GTR, declining bus speeds and accessibility on the transport system.
- 3.23. We held a successful Interchange Matters seminar in June. Speakers included TfL's Leon Daniels and David Begg from the Transport Times. We followed this up with another event in December which focused on accessibility, highlighting how much the passenger experience can be improved by organisations working together and providing improved information/customer service for passengers.
- 3.24. In September we attended the LPFA's annual pensions fair as we have done over the past few years, taking advantage of the opportunity to engage with pensioners about transport issues affecting them.
- 3.25. There were 151,649 unique visits to our website during the first six months of 2016/17. This is 10% lower than the same period the previous year but these figures were boosted significantly in August 2015 when there were Tube strikes.
- 3.26. Our most popular webpages continued to be: 'money saving tips'; the frequently asked question, 'where can I top up my Oyster card?' and our page on 'where to send complaints'. A lot of the topics covered derive from enquiries we receive in casework. We aim to better help the public who visit our website and to help reduce the number of unnecessary enquiries that we receive.

4 Casework

- 4.1. During the first 6 months of 2016-2017 our casework team dealt with 5,956 written and telephone enquiries and complaints. 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 vast majority of our general casework concerned fares, refunds and performance.
- 4.2. We investigated 481 appeals (compared to 465 for the same period in 2015-2016) from members of the public travelling in London and the surrounding areas.
- 4.3. The highest number of appeals we received concerned fares, complaint handling and performance.
- 4.4. Of those complaints that required further detailed investigation, 68% related to National Rail (compared to 60% for the same period last year). Over the past year, there has been a significant reduction in the number of appeal cases we need to take forward in respect of TfL's services. Conversely, there has been a big rise in the number of initial enquires we now receive relating to TfL. However, a large number of journeys in and around London are multi-modal. Hence the categories are not necessarily exclusive and some appeals need us to negotiate with more than one transport operator.
- 4.5. The range of problems experienced by Southern Rail has caused the number of appeals from passengers using this operator to double. Some of the issues are delays, lack of response to complaints and unsatisfactory compensation amounts. London TravelWatch has been successful in negotiating an improved outcome for many of these appellants.
- 4.6. The new National Rail Conditions of Travel and the Consumer Rights Act 2015, both valid for rail passengers, came into effect from 1 October 2016. These provide better protection for passengers and give statutory rights not previously available. As complaints are usually approximately six weeks old by the time they reach London TravelWatch as appeals, we are only now starting to see complaints where a rail operator could potentially be challenged by using one or both of these policies to support our case.

5 Financial outturn

- 5.1. Part 1 of the Annex gives details of expenditure against budget as at the end of September 2016. There was an underspend against budget of £18k for the first half of the financial year 2016/17.
- 5.2. There was also an underspend of £8k on staff and member costs due to a member of staff leaving the organisation, however the underspend is not expected to profile forward for the full year.
- 5.3. There was an underspend of £11k on supplies and services, however this is likely to be broadly in line with budget by the end of the year.

Risk areas

- 5.4. LFEPA notified us of a significant and unexpected increase in rent for the second half of the year. This could result in an overspend at year end and put significant pressure on cash reserves in 2017/18.
- 5.5. We are in negotiation with the Fire Brigade about the rent increase and are also considering what other options are available to us. However we have continued to freeze non-committed expenditure (such as research and recruitment to a vacant post) until the situation is clearer.
- 5.6. With a smaller staff complement, our principle risk for the future is that we will not have capacity for an unexpected and unavoidable rise in workload, which might be required to fulfil our statutory objectives, without extra expenditure and without draining our reserves to an unacceptable level.

Janet Cooke
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London TravelWatch

Annex: Performance information

1. Financial performance

The financial position as at the end of September 2016 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	390,600	390,600	383,000	7,600
Accommodation costs	67,450	67,450	68,000	(550)
Supplies & Services	53,250	53,600	43,000	10,600
Depreciation	6,350	6,350	6,000	350
Total Revenue Expenditure	517,650	518,000	500,000	18,000
Total Capital & Revenue Expenditure	517,650	518,000	500,000	18,000
INCOME				
Greater London Authority Funding	517,650	518,000	516,000	(2,000)
Transport Focus (cost recovery)	0	0	2,000	2,000
Bank Interest Receivable	0	0	18	18
Other income	0	0	0	0
Total Income	517,650	518,000	518,018	18
Revenue surplus transfer to general reserve	0	0	18,018	18,018

Note: Brief commentary relating to London TravelWatch's financial performance is set out in section 5 of the preceding report.