

Our Ref: Outer London Commission

Your Ref:

5 May 2009

<http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/planning/olc/>

Dear Sirs

Outer London Commission, initial questions consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute your consultation. London TravelWatch is the independent statutory consumer body representing the interests of transport users in and around London. This means that we have a substantial interest in 'Outer London' and its development.

In preparing our response we have taken into account a number of broad principles that inform our policies. These are contained in our 'Manifesto for the new Mayoral term 2008 – 2012' which we published in 2008.

This can be found at :- <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/3159>

These principles are as follows:-

- Frequent, comprehensive and reliable public transport
- A transport network accessible to all
- A fair deal for travellers
- Health services that everyone can reach
- Room to breathe (relief of overcrowding)
- Priority for buses
- Transport systems that respect the environment
- Travelling with confidence (reduce fear of crime and anti-social behaviour on the network)
- Walking with pleasure
- A road network which is fit for purpose

We have also taken into account our previous research and evidence of user priorities. In relation to 'Outer London' we believe that the following would be helpful to the commission in coming to its conclusions:-

On the Buses: Views from the queues (March 2005)

<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/85/1844>

Sunday Bus Performance (October 2007)

<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/85/2960>

Getting to the Station (April 2006)

<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/85/2319>

Rail Passengers priorities for improvements – 2007 – qualitative research by Outlook for Passenger Focus (July 2007)

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/default.asp?keywords=&topic=1484&year=&type=&sdocsearch.x=34&sdocsearch.y=9>

We will also shortly be publishing research reports on 'Cycling in London' and 'Crossing the Border' (a revisit of our 2002 report on cross boundary bus services between Outer London and the surrounding areas), which you may find helpful in your deliberations.

Turning to your consultation, we note your objectives are to enable the growth of the Outer London economy and to do so 'sustainably'. The transport network is a major enabler of economic growth but it is also a major constraint where capacity is at a premium as evidence by congestion which is often as great a problem in Outer London as in Central London. In Outer London, the majority of journeys are made by private car, and this is likely to continue to be so. However, as there is no prospect of substantial road building or car park construction to accommodate any growth in usage, then any development in Outer London will be reliant on other modes such as public transport, walking and cycling to provide the capacity that will be required to enable any economic growth or regeneration either directly or indirectly by attracting car users to these modes and thus freeing capacity on the highway network. Developing these other modes will require a commitment to providing high quality interchanges not only at the 'super-hubs' but throughout Outer London at regional and neighbourhood level. We would define a good interchange as having clear information and signage, well lit, policed and direct pedestrian and cycle access routes, secure cycle storage, car parking where appropriate, easy transfer between bus and rail and a staffed presence for reassurance and information provision.

We would ask for clarification of the term 'super-hub' that you use to refer to Stratford, Croydon, Brent Cross and Heathrow. This is because our board have done previous work on these locations and these four areas have substantially different characteristics from each other such that we wonder how much these areas have in common. For example, Heathrow is a very wide geographic area, with different travel patterns needing to be accommodated for airport users, workers and support industries, with a high reliance on the private car, and very little scope for walking and cycling, whereas Croydon is a town centre where public transport, walking and cycling have a much greater role and perform different roles.

In your consultation you asked the following questions which are relevant to our remit:-

(15) How would you make the super-hubs you have indicated more generally accessible to residents and workers from across London and outside? What is an acceptable balance between public transport and provision for cars? Will this vary in different parts of Outer London e.g. in the Thames Gateway relative to West London.

The proposed outer London town centres, Stratford, Croydon, Brent Cross and Heathrow area, suggested as super-hubs, are generally well served by public transport. All four are suggested opportunity areas in the London Plan and are likely to grow. Like many other town centres in London they have traffic congestion issues that may well worsen as London employment and housing grows, particularly if increased travel demand translates to increased private vehicle journeys.

Transport 2025, Transport for London's (TfL) analysis of transport in London in the planning period to 2025, suggests there will be an additional 4 million journeys across London. London TravelWatch accepts the analysis of *Transport 2025*, that it is undesirable that these additional journeys translate to single occupancy, private car journeys, given the current strains on the road network. This means that use of capacity needs to be much 'smarter' making the best use of all modes.

It is not appropriate for London TravelWatch, as a consumer body, to prescribe an acceptable balance between public transport and provision for cars. We recognise that in outer London some journeys are more conveniently made by private vehicles and are more difficult to undertake by public transport. However, other journeys should be easy to accommodate on public transport, by cycle or on foot. We recognise the need to promote travel by the space efficient modes: public transport, cycling and walking in order that essential private vehicle journeys may be more reliable.

It is important that development of economic activity is matched by the development of the transport networks to accommodate the additional demand arising. It makes no sense to promote additional employment at locations which are inaccessible.

Transport users are interested in reliable and quick journey times. For many, private car use is seen by them as essential for their needs. However, present levels of private car use and parking, particularly along important bus routes, mean bus services are often significantly delayed, making them unattractive to passengers; and walking and cycling is discouraged either because of poor air quality or lack of alternative routes which are considered to be safer and more pleasant to use. We believe greater levels of bus priority and the management of demand for road space in outer London is therefore essential.

The case of the Thames Gateway is interesting. If development proceeds as it has in the past with no attempt to manage road space by mechanisms such as road user pricing then this will probably mean that the Thames Gateway will become as congested as elsewhere in London. A better model for development may well be to develop the Thames Gateway on the presumption, up front, that road user pricing will be implemented to manage demand.

(16) What approach should be taken to traffic management including car parking, congestion and pollution and the bearing these have on climate change? How could this bear specifically on super-hubs, and more generally across Outer London if employment growth rose above historic trends and travel patterns changed as Outer London became a more attractive place to work?

London has a mature developed transport system. It is generally accepted that little extra road building is likely in urban areas, nor desirable if we accept other environmental, social and economic policy objectives, such as improving the 'livability' of London, tackling climate change etc. In outer London as in the rest of London the solutions will continue to be around making best use of road space, prioritising the bus, improving cycling and walking conditions and managing the demand for road space by charging (Heathrow is already suggested as a possible focus for a road user charging scheme), parking control / charging and land use planning that encourages less travel.

Specifically this may well mean area wide congestion charging as part of the development of super-hubs – it is already suggested for Heathrow. It will mean greater levels of bus priority and improved conditions for cycling and walking.

There are often calls for new services in outer London, but these will provide poor value for money if they have to use roads that are congested such that buses suffer delays and are therefore an unattractive alternative. TfL maintains a database of many hundreds of locations where buses are delayed. The reasons for these delays need addressing by TfL and the London boroughs.

(17) Where traffic demand exceeds capacity in outer London, what tools would be most effective for smoothing traffic around town centres (and managing crowding) in addition to or where there is not scope for infrastructure improvements?

London TravelWatch supports the implementation of road user charging to manage demand where demand outstrips capacity. This would have the effect of smoothing traffic flow without the inherent problem of releasing suppressed demand for private car travel.

Again improving the alternatives of bus, cycle and walk would reduce the demand on the road network.

There is evidence that intensive awareness and travel planning campaigns, now known as smarter travel initiatives, can be effective in reducing travel and thereby smoothing traffic in town centres. We are particularly looking forward to seeing the outcomes of the work on smarter travel in Sutton. However, there is an important caveat that researchers looking at smarter travel initiatives emphasise: they report that the benefits of influencing travel mode in this way must be 'locked in', otherwise suppressed demand for travel will simply replace the journeys that have switched mode.

We do, of course, support TfL and London Council's in their work to manage road works better and have written to ministers to encourage them to progress the regulations necessary to enable this to happen.

(18) Extensive radial public transport networks already exist to town centres and some super-hubs, what needs to change to make them the modes of choice?

London TravelWatch believes that town centres in general and the suggested super-hubs, would benefit from becoming more accessible by improving public transport, cycling and walking and by managing demand. The priority for all London's town centres is to:

- make them more attractive places to walk to for local communities, so taking pressure off of public transport modes;
- make them more attractive to cyclists, (particularly providing good cycle parking provision) for local and nearby communities, so taking the pressure off of public transport modes;
- Though TfL constantly review services to identify gaps in the bus network there are still reported gaps. Whilst we generally accept TfL's bus network planning process we would welcome bus services that lead future demand for travel to growing town centres. Connecting these centres to areas of high unemployment would be welcome.
- increase the amount of whole route priority for buses – tackle TfL's known list of locations where buses are delayed;
- generally improving the frequency, reliability, comfort and safety of public transport;
- maintaining the value for money (cost) of public transport;
- improve interchange between modes in town centres and at transport interchanges;
- where appropriate continue to lobby for infrastructure improvements for national rail and for TfL to have a greater role in managing national rail services in London, as they presently have on the London Overground network. We are particularly keen to promote the infill electrification of the Barking to Gospel Oak line and other short, non-electrified links in the London area.

(19) The development of super-hubs is likely to require public transport improvements to make them more accessible. That in turn is likely to need residential densities to be optimised around and within the super-hubs to justify the necessary transport investment. Is this trade-off acceptable to secure better public transport access and employment growth and is there a particular, economically viable, balance to be struck between residential intensification, transport investment and employment growth?

The intensification of the super-hubs is a continuing process that is happening now. This will lead to greater transport demand. The challenge is to improve the local environmental quality by the improvements suggested in our response to question 18 to thereby reduce the impact of greater transport demand.

(20) Do super-hubs need to evolve into 'hub and spoke' networks serving the neighbouring areas to make the most of opportunities for local residents? How could a hub and spoke network service the more geographically extensive labour markets required to support super-hubs (and provide accessible opportunities to more workers within and outside London)? If these networks are road based systems, should options for further demand management be considered?

The super-hubs suggested, particularly Stratford and Croydon are already at the centre of transport networks. Brent Cross has comprehensive bus services serving it, but no good rail links. Heathrow has comprehensive bus services and good rail links from central London. That said, further intensification of these centres may well mean a review of service patterns becomes necessary.

All would benefit from managing demand and improvements to bus services, bus priority, cycling and walking.

(21) More generally, what are the key destinations/services which people in Outer London want access to?

Many hospitals have been located where there is poor public transport provision. Networks of bus services have developed to serve them, but there are still residual problems. A key improvement would be for the Health Service to take more seriously its role in travel planning. London TravelWatch has investigated this issue and too many hospitals have poor travel plans and so are unable to provide TfL with the data they need to properly plan services. Of the hospitals we have looked at only Northwick Park, in outer London, seems to take travel planning as seriously as one would expect.

For a number of years our Board and predecessor Committee's have been concerned with the issues of bus services crossing London's border. For passengers the border is irrelevant. Passengers want the same standards of service to and from London as within.

TfL has a duty to provide the means of travel to / from as well as within London. So if hubs in outer London have catchment areas which extend beyond London's border, TfL must ensure that the border is not a barrier and that these catchment areas are adequately served.

(22) How important is the provision of local transport infrastructure to the quality of living in outer London? How does this bear on the economy of outer London?

Rail infrastructure is very important to those areas of outer London it serves, but rail services are often radial and serve the needs of passengers travelling into central London.

Bus infrastructure, particularly bus priority is extremely important to outer London, but unfortunately competes with the needs of private vehicles for highway space and as such is problematic to implement. Disappointingly some boroughs are proposing the removal of bus priority infrastructure which we believe is to the detriment of both transport and wider social and economic priorities.

I hope that this response is helpful to you. In view of our previous interest in this subject and our knowledge of this area we would be keen to meet with you further.

Yours sincerely

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