

London Assembly 7 July Review Committee

TfL further responses to follow up questions:

Recommendation 4 - CONNECT rollout - (a) what is the current state of play and what is the projected completion date for the rollout of CONNECT on the Underground? (b) what is the expected proportion of coverage of the network by Airwave once CONNECT is fully rolled out? Have any problems been encountered and if so what has been done / is planned to address them?

The successful rollout of the Connect system is continuing in line with the timetable set out by Tim O'Toole in his evidence to the Committee in November. We continue to be pleased with the performance of the system. It is presenting far fewer challenges and teething problems than one usually finds with a change of such magnitude, and our employees welcome the dramatic improvement in clarity and coverage of the system. The rollout will be complete by the end of 2007 with the ability to introduce Airwave across the system in 2008. Connect is now operating on the Circle, District, East London, Hammersmith & City, Metropolitan and Victoria lines. It will be introduced shortly on the Piccadilly and Bakerloo lines.¹ The remaining lines all have more modern trains with sophisticated train management systems (TMS) and they will adopt the full Connect functionality as the train maintainers complete the software modifications that allow Connect to be integrated with the respective TMS. Notwithstanding the need for this integration of systems on the Central, Jubilee, Northern and Waterloo & City lines, the installation of Connect on those lines will be complete in 2007, allowing for use of Connect hand portables and Airwave as it is rolled out.

All 125 "Section 12" stations will have "Airwave in the London Underground coverage" during 2008. An extensive initial trial is planned for June 2007 on the East London line.

Recommendation 6 - has any further work been undertaken to identify alternative / back-up radio systems in advance of full rollout of CONNECT and as a back-up system for communicating underground in the event of a CONNECT failure?

Airwave Direct radios are already provided to drivers above ground during existing radio failures. This is separate from the "Airwave in the London Underground" initiative to enable all emergency services to communicate underground.

The new Connect radio system has been designed to have high levels of availability and graceful degradation during failure (i.e. it will continue to perform at some level if some components fail). As with any system, total failure cannot be ruled out, but the probability of this is small.

¹ Further update provided by TfL on 2 July 2007: "The Piccadilly and Bakerloo lines are the first non-automatically operated deep level Tube lines to receive the new radio system. Because of this there are some specific additional requirements relating to the transmission of alarms over the radio system to the Line Controller. During comprehensive testing of the radio with our contractor, we have experienced some issues in this respect which need to be resolved. Our contractor has developed solutions for these issues which they are currently implementing, after which we will resume final testing and then go live."

Both the British Transport Police and the London Fire Brigade already have contingency arrangements to run additional leaky feeder cables if required.

Our focus has therefore been on delivering Connect and the benefits this brings, rather than on back up systems which would require further space, power and which would not be fast to implement. Reviews are being undertaken to consider the risk areas in the Connect system and determine what measures can be taken to improve the availability of the radio system still further.

Recommendations 8-11, Emergency Response Unit: (a) has any progress been made in lobbying for blue light status for the Emergency Response Unit? (b) Is the Emergency Response Unit now fully exempt from the Congestion Charge as well as TfL bus lane restrictions? (c) What progress has been made in obtaining exemption from borough bus lane restrictions for ERU vehicles? (d) What progress has been made with the pilots of Personal Role Radios by the Emergency Response Unit?

a) The extension of 'blue light' status has been the subject of detailed review with ACPO, the Metropolitan Police and Government and the matter continues to be looked at. The Emergency Response Unit is currently conducting an ongoing review on the impact of traffic delays on their response times to specific incidents. As things stand, vehicles attending emergencies can be escorted to the site by Police vehicles where required and where practicable.

b) In respect of the Congestion Charge, this was suspended on the day of the July attacks. Where this remains in force during/following any future major incident, the Principal Order has been varied to permit designated ERU vehicles to be eligible for a 100% discount.

c) Following review, ERU vehicles will use bus lanes where appropriate, e.g. attending incidents where potential injury or loss of life is involved. TfL will identify any such vehicles through notification of the incident(s) and the response and waive any penalty incurred by the vehicle(s) in question.

TfL cannot answer for exemptions to bus lane restrictions on borough roads as these are enforced by the boroughs. However, in practice, although the ERU sometimes receives fines for using Borough bus lanes, these have always been waived.

d) We understand from Tube Lines that the pilots of Personal Role Radios (PRRs) took place and were successful. The ERU are now moving towards purchasing some as a back up system. However, it is clear that PRRs are not suitable for all incidents and would also only meet the needs of certain groups, given that they have a very limited geographical range.

Recommendation 23 - Has any further work been undertaken to improve communications with passengers who are stuck in tunnels during an emergency, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing?

As per previous response, all stations have hand held loudhailers as part of their emergency equipment.

Clearly these would not enable communication with deaf / hard of hearing customers; such communication would, currently, need to be delivered in person by LU or emergency services staff. All LU operational staff receive regular training designed to ensure they understand the needs of deaf / hard of hearing customers.

In the longer term, new rolling stock to be introduced as part of the upgrading of the network will incorporate visual displays that complement audible announcements in such circumstances.

Recommendation 24 - The recommendation asked for an update by May 2007.

[The wording of recommendation 24 was as follows : 'We recommend that Transport for London conduct a feasibility study on 2 alternative forms of emergency lighting for new/refurbished rolling stock, and report back to us by May 2007. We recommend that Transport for London review the potential for providing torches in drivers' cabs for use in the event of loss of lighting and failure of emergency lights.']

As stated in previous written evidence to the Committee, The tunnel lights and emergency car lights do work in the event of power loss. However, any emergency lighting is dependent on cables still being intact, and also on bulbs not being destroyed by blast damage or obscured by dust clouds. Tunnel lighting did switch on automatically when the traction current was discharged to assist evacuation. Although London Underground's power and lighting system is robust, it will never be completely immune to the effects of an explosion.

London Underground has conducted a review of emergency equipment. This review has found that the vast majority of existing equipment is fit for purpose, and has identified solutions for where gaps exist – for example the multi-casualty first aid kit.

All drivers are already supplied with a torch (the Bardic lamp) which they are required to carry with them at all times, and stations are equipped with torches and portable lights. As a result of the emergency equipment review, all stations, and emergency equipment pods in train cabs, will additionally be equipped with a hands free torch. This can be used as a head lamp, or clipped onto clothing, to assist staff to respond to an emergency. Roll out to stations has commenced - there is a delay with the roll out to trains but the supplier is sourcing more stock.

We have investigated the use of light sticks (or snap wands). We have yet to find one on the market which complies with our fire regulations and provides a suitable level of lighting. Even if one were found, there is no appropriate storage facility in train carriages which enable these sticks to be secured from theft, yet be accessible during an emergency. As an alternative we are supplying the hands free torches mentioned above.

Recommendations 25/ 26 - What progress has been made in the work on installing emergency equipment pods at underground stations?

The NHS is conducting a trial with Network Rail which has involved the location of medical 'pods' at four NR stations. Further to this they are looking to roll out such equipment at 48 other NR stations across the country. In addition to this the NHS have reviewed their storage locations and other procedures. London Underground will receive around 35 NHS Packs to store at locations on the LU network. Roll out will commence in June. In addition we have supplied multi casualty first aid kits to 170 locations across the Underground system.