

# LONDON ASSEMBLY

## City Hall

Kamal Chunchie Way  
London  
E16 1ZE

Tel: 020 7983 4000

[www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)



**Keith Prince AM**

**Chairman of the Transport Committee**

The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

(Sent by email)

22 January 2024

Dear Mark,

I am writing to share the findings of the London Assembly Transport Committee's investigation into Transport in Outer London. The Committee are writing to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, with recommendations on a number of issues, but there are four areas that we want to write to the Government about, as these are more directly within your control.

The Committee held two meetings on this topic, in July and September 2023. The first meeting focused on the strategic challenges of improving transport in Outer London, and included the following guests:

- Seb Dance, Deputy Mayor for Transport and Deputy Chair of Transport for London (TfL),
- Geoff Hobbs, Director of Public Transport Service Planning, TfL,
- Councillor Barry Lewis, Chair, Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee, London Borough of Sutton,
- Neil Stubbings, Executive Director for Place, London Borough of Havering,
- Alex Smith, Heads of Campaigns, London TravelWatch,

- Madeleine Stewart, Policy and Public Affairs Lead, Transport for All,<sup>1</sup> and
- Josh Cottell, Head of Research, Centre for London.

The meeting in July 2023 also explored the experience of disabled travellers, including the potential impact of proposals from the Rail Delivery Group to close ticket offices. The second meeting in September 2023 explored the issues affecting travellers in Outer London further, with a particular focus on metro rail services, and included the following guests:

- Councillor Deirdre Costigan, Acting Chair, Transport and Environment Committee, London Councils (also Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Ealing Council)
- Councillor Nicholas Bennet JP, Executive Member for Transport, Highways and Road Safety, London Borough of Bromley,
- Geoff Hobbs, Director of Public Transport Service Planning, TfL,
- Angie Doll, Chief Operating Officer, Govia Thameslink Railway,
- Claire Mann, Managing Director, South Western Railway, and
- Steve White, Managing Director, Southeastern.

For information I attach a copy of the letter to the Mayor.

The findings I wanted to highlight to you relate to:

- Integration of contactless travel outside London and reforms to pricing
- Plans for ticket offices
- Devolution of suburban rail services
- The need for long-term capital funding

### **1. Integration of contactless travel outside London and reforms to pricing**

The Committee heard in September 2023 from senior representatives from some of the train operating companies that cover London. Angie Doll, Chief Operating Officer of Govia Thameslink, outlined the Department for Transport (DfT)-funded project to upgrade and install barcode readers on 40 of the TfL-managed stations where there is an interface with Govia Thameslink services.<sup>2</sup> Geoff Hobbs, Director of Public Transport Service Planning at TfL told the Committee about the project to expand contactless readers to 53 stations across the wider southeast of England in the immediate Home Counties.<sup>3</sup> These were due to go live in December 2023, but while single-leg travel has been introduced (including a new evening peak), the contactless service is yet to go live – and it has been reported that this has been delayed to spring 2024 at the earliest.<sup>4</sup> **The Committee welcomes these moves to better integrate travel between London and the surrounding areas, which include the introduction of single-leg pricing on some routes. The Committee considers that there is the potential for further reform of rail pricing and integration with TfL systems across a wider area, and that new contactless services should be introduced as soon as possible.**

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<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Stewart has since left this role

<sup>2</sup> London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023, p.6

<sup>3</sup> London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023, p.17;  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/53-train-stations-to-benefit-from-tap-in-tap-out-rollout>

<sup>4</sup> Evening Standard , [Rail commuters warned of new peak-hour fares as Contactless plan is delayed](#) 2 December 2023

## **2. Plans for ticket offices and need to ensure all are fully staffed**

As part of the investigation, the Committee heard from London TravelWatch and Transport for All in July 2023 about their concerns that the proposed ticket office closures would have on passengers.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the Committee responded to the London TravelWatch consultation on ticket office closures stating that the proposals should not proceed unless measures were taken to ensure that stations remain accessible to all, including any ticket machines continuing to be fully accessible to disabled passengers with a full range of impairments, and that more thorough consultation and equalities impact assessments be carried out.<sup>6</sup> We were therefore pleased when the decision was announced not to proceed with the planned closures, and that there are plans to consult on a draft National Rail Accessibility Strategy this year.<sup>7</sup> During our meeting in September, the Managing Director of Southeastern, Steve White said that, pending the outcome of consultation on the future of ticket offices, they had “not been recruiting people to fill ticket office vacancies.”<sup>8</sup> **The Committee considers that staff at stations including rail ticket offices are important to assisting with passenger journeys, and that all should be fully staffed.**

## **3. Devolution of suburban rail services**

As discussed, the Committee welcome the changes to ticketing arrangements around suburban rail services which cover Outer London and surrounding areas. The Committee consider in principle that greater devolution and metroisation<sup>9</sup> of rail services would benefit passengers, particularly in Outer London and those travelling between London and surrounding areas. **The Committee considers it to be a good moment for the Government and TfL to look again at the case for further devolution of rail services.**

## **4. The need for long-term capital funding**

In its investigation, the Committee heard that there is a need for new strategic infrastructure projects in Outer London, including those that support housing projects and improved access to jobs and other services. Some of these include Beam Park Station, the Docklands Light Railway extension to Thamesmead, and the West London Orbital railway, as well as potentially exploring new tram services.

The Committee welcomes the additional £235 million in funding provided to boroughs to resurface roads over the next 11 years.<sup>10</sup> However, a multi-year, long-term capital funding settlement for TfL is vital to allow effective planning of new projects. While now too late for this year’s budget process, **the Committee considers that the Government should agree a multi-year funding agreement with TfL as a priority.**

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<sup>5</sup> [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023

<sup>6</sup> [Ticket Office Closures Letter | London City Hall](#)

<sup>7</sup> DfT, [Transport Secretary responds to Passenger Bodies on Ticket Office Consultation](#) 31 Oct 2023

<sup>8</sup> London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023, p19

<sup>9</sup> <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/planning-for-the-future/developing-the-rail-network>

<sup>10</sup> Department for Transport, [Government invests £235 million to upgrade and repair roads across London](#), 20 December 2023

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Keith Prince AM**

**Chairman of the Transport Committee**