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**21 October 2011**

Dear Peter

**Response to TfL's draft report 'Taking forward the Mayor's Transport Strategy Accessibility Implementation Plan'**

I am writing, on behalf of the Transport Committee, to set out our response to TfL's draft report 'Taking forward the Mayor's Transport Strategy Accessibility Implementation Plan.'

We welcome TfL's draft report which goes some way towards meeting recommendations in our report, *Accessibility of the transport network* (November 2010). We had proposed TfL produce, by June 2011, a future physical accessibility strategy setting out its plans for the period up until 2018, and the options thereafter, for providing more step-free access at stations and fully accessible bus stops. We also recommended that the strategy be published for consultation so Londoners with reduced mobility and relevant organisations could offer views and comments to inform future decisions about improvements.

Our response to the draft report draws on our report on accessibility and other relevant work. This includes our past reports on door-to-door transport and walking. All our reports are available to view online at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/the-london-assembly/publications/transport>. We are responding to all parts of the first consultation question and also offer comments in response to the second question.

*1a) What do you think the focus should be beyond 2015 (beyond 2014 for National Rail improvements) with regard to improving physical accessibility of the transport system?*

TfL should focus on ensuring there are more step-free Tube and rail stations and more fully accessible bus stops. In our report on accessibility, we highlighted the gap between the demand for accessible transport and provision which is set to widen as the number of Londoners with reduced mobility increases. At present, only around one-quarter of Tube stations and one-third of London's rail stations have step-free access from street level to platform and only half of all bus stops are full accessible. Whilst funding for major schemes might be limited, TfL should build upon its intention to make two-thirds of bus stops fully accessible by 2015. It should set out its aim to make all bus stops fully accessible. Similarly TfL should make clear its commitment to increasing the number of Tube and rail stations with step-free access. In our report on accessibility, we urged the Mayor and TfL to take every opportunity to identify and secure further funding to provide more accessible stations and bus stops.

TfL should prioritise investment in the areas of most need. In our report we highlighted the current mismatch between where people with reduced mobility live and the provision of accessible stations and bus stops. For example, in four London Boroughs with the highest number of residents with reduced mobility, fewer than half the stations and fewer than half the bus stops are accessible. In its draft

report, TfL sets out proposals which would achieve an even spatial spread of step-free access across London. Whilst this approach could mean the average additional journey time between step-free routes and quickest routes is halved, it does not necessarily take account of the areas where most people with reduced mobility live. In addition to focusing on these areas, we support interchanges being a priority for physical improvements.

We welcome TfL's proposals for other improvements to physical accessibility. These include installing platform humps on the Tube and upgrades to Underground stations such as the installation of wide aisle gates. We have recommended that, wherever possible, TfL consider other low-cost measures to improve physical accessibility. For example, we suggested that TfL should allow people to use their own manual ramps on the Tube and Overground rail networks especially at terminating stations. We also support TfL's proposals to realise more accessible streets. In our report on walking (October 2010), we highlighted the need for improvements to streets including to pedestrian crossings. We recommended that TfL ensure all pedestrian crossings meet the Government's standards for minimum crossing times and include audible signals and tactile, rotating cones.

**The Committee proposes that TfL should focus on providing more step-free access at Tube and rail stations and more fully accessible bus stops. TfL should prioritise investment in the areas where most people with reduced mobility live and in interchange stations.**

**TfL should also continue to focus on other low-cost measures to improve physical accessibility. It should allow people to use manual ramps wherever possible on the Tube and rail networks and it should ensure all pedestrian crossings comply with the Government's minimum standards for crossing times and include audible signals and tactile, rotating cones.**

*1b) What do you think the focus should be beyond 2015 with regard to improving the availability, quality, quantity and timeliness of information about the transport system?*

We support TfL's proposals to expand the travel mentoring service and improve accessibility information provided through Journey Planner. In our report on accessibility, we recommended a number of improvements to pre-journey information. We wanted TfL to update the Journey Planner to include more details on the heights of steps and platforms at stations and the accessibility of bus stops. We also suggested that TfL should streamline, in consultation with relevant groups, its range of publications and maps about accessibility. Our report highlighted that the travel mentoring service was working well for people with reduced mobility. We therefore recommended that TfL should, in collaboration with London Boroughs and others, extend the scheme so it supported more than 10,000 journeys per annum.

**The Committee agrees that TfL should focus on expanding the travel mentoring scheme and changing Journey Planner to improve its accessibility information. TfL should also consider streamlining, in consultation with relevant groups, its range of publications and maps about accessibility.**

*1c) What do you think the focus should be beyond 2015 with regard to improving the attitudes of transport staff and travellers towards each other?*

In our report on accessibility, we highlighted particular issues between transport staff and travellers on buses. We found elderly and disabled travellers could sometimes experience poor attitudes from bus drivers and from fellow passengers including people using buggies or prams. We recommended the provision of more on-board publicity to make clear who is entitled to use the accessibility bays and the standards of service that passengers with reduced mobility should expect to receive. For example, the publicity could highlight that bus drivers should provide sufficient time for people with reduced mobility to settle in seats before buses pull away from bus stops and that the on-board iBus information system should be switched on at all times. Such publicity could build upon TfL's proposals to re-launch its considerate travel marketing campaign and work with schools and other young people's organisations to help improve the attitudes of some groups of travellers towards others.

**The Committee proposes that, in order to help improve the attitudes of transport staff and travellers, TfL should provide more publicity on buses to highlight who is entitled to use accessibility bays and the service standards that people with reduced mobility can expect to receive.**

*1d) What do you think the focus should be beyond 2015 with regard to improving staff availability and staff training?*

TfL should maximise the availability of staff wherever possible and where there are few staff ensure adequate measures are in place to support passengers with reduced mobility. In our report on accessibility, we reported on actions that could be taken to mitigate any adverse impact of the loss of ticket office staff at Tube stations. For example, TfL could provide more on-board mechanisms so disabled passengers could alert Tube drivers of their presence. TfL could provide more help points at Tube stations and on platforms, and switch any CCTV monitors to view the help-points whenever they are pressed so any staff monitoring CCTV could see the passengers and attend to them if required.

At interchanges, we found there was scope to improve the service transport staff provided. We recommended that TfL should appoint an existing member of staff to act as an "accessibility champion" at each interchange to ensure a co-ordinated approach to accessibility across all transport operators. These "accessibility champions" could ensure all staff receive appropriate training. We note from the draft report that TfL has already piloted a project at Finsbury Park station with a similar aim. We support this initiative which provided for all staff to attend accessibility seminars. Subject to any lessons learned from the pilot, we would welcome the roll-out of this project to other stations.

TfL needs to focus on improving its bus driver training. In our report on accessibility we recommended that the bus driver training should be redeveloped by June 2011 to ensure it was more practical than theory based and involved people with reduced mobility sharing their experiences directly or through videos. In its draft report TfL refers to its work with bus operators to ensure all the trainers delivering the training are qualified to nationally recognised levels and that older and disabled bus users have regular dialogue with trainers. We are disappointed that TfL has not gone further and committed to ensuring bus drivers themselves hear from or see, via video, the experiences of passengers with reduced mobility. In addition to improving bus driver training, we think there is scope to improve the guidance for bus drivers provided in the Big Red Book including in relation to the types of mobility scooters that may be permitted on buses.

**The Committee proposes that TfL should focus on maximising the availability of staff wherever possible and where there are few staff putting in place measures to help support passengers with reduced mobility e.g. installing more help points at Tube stations. TfL should also introduce "accessibility champions" at interchanges, or roll-out its project at Finsbury Park station, to help ensure staff from different transport operators provide a consistent service.**

**TfL should focus on improving training for bus drivers so it is more practical and involves people with reduced mobility sharing their experiences. TfL should also improve the next edition of the Big Red Book to ensure its advice is clear in relation to mobility scooters which can be permitted on buses.**

*1e) What do you think the focus should be beyond 2015 with regard to improving door-to-door services for people with mobility problems who require this form of transport?*

TfL should focus on improving Dial-a-Ride. We are disappointed that the draft report contains little information on TfL's future proposals for this and other door-to-door transport services. In our report of June 2010, we found that whilst Dial-a-Ride had improved some problems remained including in relation to service availability and efficiency. TfL has reported that it is continuing to implement fleet replacement and better working practices but has provided no other information on actions it is taking to improve Dial-a-Ride. It has yet to respond in full to some of our recommendations for improvement. For example, we suggested that TfL should review, in consultation with users, the Dial-a-Ride customer charter so it contained more precise statements about the number of trips they could expect to receive. TfL said it would do so by the end of 2010. TfL also reported that it would provide more information on the steps taken to identify more satellite depots which could cut costs and improve the service.

There is no mention in the draft report of the ongoing review by London Councils into the future of door-to-door transport in London. In our report of June 2010, we explored the potential for this review to improve the co-ordination of different door-to-door services including Dial-a-Ride, NHS patient transport and local community transport. We recommended that any proposals emerging from this review, including any potential for users to be allocated control of their own budgets for door-to-door transport, should be published so people with reduced mobility could give their views at an early stage.

**The Committee proposes that TfL should focus on continuing to make improvements to the Dial-a-Ride service which is a vital service for many people with reduced mobility. In the absence of any proposals emerging from London Councils' review into door-to-door transport, TfL should publish details of how it will work to deliver co-ordinated services.**

*2) Is there anything missing from this report, or anything else you would like to tell us?*

Whilst we welcome the draft report, we would like to see more of a sense of urgency for improving accessibility. A recent report from Age UK London, Transport for All and the Greater London Forum for Older People, 'On the buses', (September 2011), showed that many of the issues we highlighted in our past work remain. Passengers with reduced mobility are continuing to experience problems such as bus drivers not allowing enough time for them to sit down before driving off. Such issues could be

addressed through relatively simple, low cost, measures such as improvements to bus driver training. These improvements should not have to wait until 2015 or beyond before they are implemented.

In a period of limited funding, it is vital that TfL works closely with relevant organisations to identify where there might be scope to make improvements to accessibility now and where any funding for more substantial improvements is best invested. TfL's final report should not mark the end of the dialogue but part of an ongoing process to identify, in consultation with people with reduced mobility, how best to improve transport accessibility in the short and long-term.

We trust this response will inform the final report and look forward to receiving this in due course.

Yours sincerely



**Caroline Pidgeon AM**  
Chair of the Transport Committee

