

Safer Routes Home

Report number: 4

Report to:	Transport Policy & SDS Committee	24 July 2001
Report of:	Director of Secretariat	
Summary		
This paper summarises work done by an Investigative Committee on safety and other aspects of late night travel home from central London and proposes further activities. The Committee concluded that areas around stations can be intimidating for passengers leaving trains late at night. Transport for London and railway companies need to work closely with the Police and local authorities to improve the safety of Londoners travelling at unsociable hours.		

Objectives

The TP&SDS Committee set up the Safer Routes Home Investigative Committee in July 2000. The remit of the new Committee was to investigate travelling home late at night from central London by public transport.

The investigation addressed two issues:

- a) the difficulty of travelling on public transport late at night;
- b) concerns about personal safety when travelling on public transport, particularly late at night.

Approach

On the evening of 3 March 2001 five Assembly Members took different routes and means of travel from central London to various destinations in outer London or beyond. Their trips and their findings are recorded in Appendix 1, giving a snapshot of late night travel in London.

The Members put the issues noted in Appendix 1 to transport user groups and transport providers at two public evidentiary hearings. Appendix 2 summarises their views and responses.

Appendix 3 lists the members of the Committee and the individuals who attended the hearings.

Findings

Late at night some members of the public can be intimidated and feel unsafe on empty or poorly lit platforms and walkways, or by the behaviour of other passengers. People feel safer and may be more likely to use public transport when they see staff or police patrolling at stations and in places that are brightly lit. The introduction of safety measures such as CCTV and Help Points can also have an impact. But providing these extra resources will have a financial impact on transport providers and the police.

There are other difficulties involved with travelling at night besides personal safety. Trains can be infrequent or cancelled. The trains and the underground system do not run throughout the night and so passengers fear missing the last service home or may have to cope with crowds waiting for the last scheduled service. The night bus service is reliable and quick but announcements and information about it could be improved. Integration between different modes of transport can be a major problem. For instance, it can be impossible to get a bus or a taxi at some stations late at night.

Lifts, escalators and indicator boards are sometimes out of service. Communication at stations and on services, whether in printed or spoken form, is often difficult for members of the public to understand. Inebriated fellow passengers may not be frightening but they can be unpleasant, and by the late evening litter and dirt can become a further deterrent. Finally, on the negative side, our late night public transport is not particularly cheap.

There were positive findings too. The Committee noted that London Buses, Railtrack and the boroughs are working together to introduce better waiting facilities for passengers at stations, and welcomed partnership initiatives to improve safety, such as the Secure Stations Scheme (being led by the DETR) and the operations being led by British Transport Police and by the Met.

Recommendations

The Committee concluded that there is room for improvement in late night travel facilities for the public in the four areas set out below.

1. Personal Safety and Resources

- a) Resources need to be targeted to provide staff and police at stations and on transport services to help deter crime and anti-social behaviour and to manage crowded platforms effectively.

- b) Transport providers to try and ensure where possible that stations should be manned by staff or security personnel at night. Where this is not possible then they should ensure that accessible exits remain open, help points are accessible and the lighting is good, possibly with CCTV installed.
- c) Transport providers to explore the possibility of having licensed taxi/mini-cab offices or phone lines to off-site mini-cab offices at stations, particularly in areas that become lonely or feel remote at night.

2. Co-ordination

- a) Transport providers to review their integrated transport strategies and resources to ensure that trains, underground and bus timetables, ticketing arrangements and services link up effectively.
- b) Transport providers to consider the feasibility of implementing a 24 hour tube and rail service either partially or fully during the week.

3. Communication and consultation

- a) Transport providers to review their communication strategies and look for improvement, measured by customer feedback.
- b) There needs to be greater emphasis on customer care training and providing correct information, particularly for bus drivers.
- c) Transport providers to review their consultation lists and explore ways of engaging the wider community.

4. Facilities at stations/platforms/bus stops

- a) Transport providers to review their current cleaning programmes at stations and on buses, tube trains and trains, to see if the frequency of cleaning can be improved and to explore the practicality and cost effectiveness of cleaning between trips.
- b) Transport providers to review their maintenance programme for escalators/lifts and provide accurate real time information about breakdowns.
- c) Transport providers to ensure where possible that disability ramps and equipment to aid access on transport and at stations are maintained regularly and effectively so that they are in working order. They should also review physical access at stations where feasible.

The Committee recognises that action in all these areas will require the allocation of funding and resources.

Issues of safety are for the Police and transport providers to action, using their specialised knowledge of such matters.

Accurate, concise and timely information should be available to passengers travelling at night.

Proposals for further work by the Assembly on facilities

The Committee's recommendations on facilities could benefit from further research and possibly from pilot project work. The Committee seeks approval to:

- research what has been done in London and elsewhere on improved facilities, such as lighting or staffing, to improve passenger safety when travelling late at night; and
- explore the potential for partnership working with user groups with a view to jointly funding one or two small pilot projects

Strategy implications

The TP&SDS Committee may wish to consider whether the findings and recommendations in this report have relevance to its review of the Mayor's transport Strategy.

Financial implications

The costs of this review and any activities arising from it can be met from the current year's scrutiny budget.

Recommendation

The TP&SDS Committee is asked to:

- Accept and endorse the findings and recommendations of the Investigative Committee
- Present the Investigative Committee's recommendations on safety, communication and on joined up services to the Mayor, TfL and other transport providers
- Approve the Investigative Committee's proposals for further work on facilities, and recommend them to the Scrutiny Management Committee

Documents used in the preparation of this report: none

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Appendix 1

Five journeys were made between 11-12pm on Saturday 3 March 2001.

1. **Roger Evans** – Piccadilly Line from Covent Garden to Holborn, Central Line from Holborn to Liverpool Street and train from Liverpool Street to Romford.

Issues

- One lift was out of order at Covent Garden Underground station. This resulted in congestion and made it difficult to get to the platform on the lower level. The Assembly member and Minder had to walk down the stairs which were slippery and wet.
- One escalator out of order at Holborn Underground station. There were two escalators working, one in each direction. However, the upward escalator was congested.
- There were mice on the Central Line platform at Holborn as well as the tracks.
- Main entrance to Romford Station closed so had to walk down a dark alleyway to the High Street.
- There were no trains going back into Liverpool Street station from Romford.
- The bus station at Romford was unpleasant, deserted and there were no buses running.
- There were no black taxis available so had to get a minicab home.

Good aspects

- ✓ The journey from Covent Garden to Romford was very quick.
- ✓ The signage and indicator boards on the underground and at Liverpool Street train station worked.
- ✓ The train left Liverpool Street on time at 11.47pm and arrived at Romford on time at 12.10am.
- ✓ The train from Liverpool Street was not crowded and the behaviour of other passengers was satisfactory. There were a few drunks but nothing serious happened.

2. Sally Hamwee – Walk from Trafalgar Square to Embankment Underground, District Line to Hammersmith and bus from Hammersmith to Mortlake.

Issues

- The walk between Covent Garden and Embankment was busy, noisy and unpleasant. There were drunks and there was a lot of rubbish in the streets mainly in refuse sacks which made the pavement impassable in places. There were no street lights at the bottom of Villiers Street, which runs from the Strand down the side of Charing Cross Station to Embankment station.
- Indicator board at Embankment showed that an Ealing train was due but a Richmond train arrived.
- Female passenger semi-conscious through alcohol excess. Then vomited on the train before staggering from the train.
- At Hammersmith the exit at one end of the platform was closed and most people were going up a set of stairs labelled Emergency Exit. The designated exit was not well signed.
- There had been drunks earlier in the evening at Hammersmith underground who were returning from the rugby international at Twickenham. Two went into the waiting room where a young woman was waiting alone and they sat either side of her and engaged her in conversation. She did not seem intimidated but other women on their own may have been.
- Noticed earlier in the evening that there were groups of young women behaving loudly. Also noticed that the majority of passengers were young.
- There were only details at Hammersmith bus station about buses going into the bus station. There were no details about buses going through Hammersmith.
- Staff visible at both Embankment and Hammersmith stations but not on the platforms.
- Noticed that face and hands were dirtier than usual after travelling on Public transport.
- The timetable at the bus stop in Mortlake was not easy to read. Buses were not frequent earlier in the evening when travelling from Mortlake into London for the event. One bus did not stop even though it was a request stop.
- The litter bin for used tickets is at the entrance of the bus rather than the exit, hence there are lots of used tickets discarded on the floor of the bus.

Good aspects

- ✓ The 209 bus was new and clean.
- ✓ Lift at Hammersmith from bus station to the concourse.
- ✓ The journey on the tube into London was comfortable with plenty of room.
- ✓ The buses from Hammersmith to Mortlake were relatively frequent, within 10 minutes of waiting. The bus was full but the driver was good tempered.
- ✓ The journey was easier than expected and took about 70 minutes.

3. Lynne Featherstone – Walk from Trafalgar Square to Leicester Square Underground and then Northern line tube to Highgate.

Issues

- Leicester Square tube station congested with revellers, some drunk.
- Northern Line platform at Leicester Square very congested, difficult to get down the stairs to the platform.
- Indicator Board on Northern Line platform at Leicester Square not working.
- Departed the tube at Goodge Street which was deserted. Empty platforms can be intimidating places.
- Changed at Camden for the Barnet tube train and encountered miscellaneous drunks and other young revellers. Group of drunks, one unconscious, at Highgate station.
- Dark and lonely walk from Highgate station. Nervousness as someone approaches. Highlights possible dangers of travelling home alone late at night.

Good aspects

- ✓ Journey was relatively straightforward and quick.

4. Jenny Jones – Walk from Trafalgar Square to Charing Cross train Station and then train from Charing Cross to Sidcup.

Issues

- The train from Charing Cross was messy with litter and very dirty.
- The toilet on the train was locked.
- There were a few drunks but nothing serious.
- There was no shelter at Sidcup station so it would be unpleasant in cold and wet weather.

Good aspects

- ✓ The journey was relatively straightforward and quick.

- 5. John Biggs** – Bus from Trafalgar Square to Victoria Station, train from Victoria to East Croydon, night bus from East Croydon to Oxford Circus and then night bus from Oxford Circus to Stepney Green.

Issues

- Many drunks around in central London. High police presence around Trafalgar Square and Victoria. Witnessed one drunken arrest in Trafalgar Square where a man kicked a bus that drove off without him.
- Took 24 bus from Whitehall to Victoria. Was unable to confirm if bus came on time as the wrong timetable was displayed at the stop.
- There were no announcements on 24 bus so it was difficult to know when to get off at the correct stop.
- Took train from Victoria to East Croydon which left on time and was uneventful but cost £3.60 single.
- There was a group of extremely loud and drunk football fans in one carriage of the Croydon train which other travellers visibly avoided.
- The train was advertised to stop at Clapham Junction and East Croydon but also stopped at Selhurst, which confused some passengers who mistakenly got out there thinking it was Croydon. There was no announcement made which would have been helpful.
- East Croydon was busy and the queue for the taxis was very long and taxis were scarce, so the night bus was used instead.
- N159 bus from Croydon to Oxford Circus (fare £1.50) which took 50 minutes. This was well used particularly taking people to and from Croydon and Brixton. The bus was modern but not low floor which raises a concern about the procurement for night bus services. Again no announcements made.
- Night bus from Oxford Circus to Stepney which took 30 minutes. This bus was modern and had a low floor. Lack of announcements was again a problem.
- The bus driver of the night bus to Stepney seemed ill-equipped to provide advice to passengers regarding the journey. There were many travellers who were seeking directions or advice as to whether this was the right bus but were turned away by bad advice from the driver e.g one traveller asked if the bus went to the Barbican but was told it did not even though it did.
- The cumulative fares for trains and buses were quite high (£7.60).
- Lack of announcements throughout the TfL system.

Good aspects

- ✓ Overall a good network appears to exist covering primary routes.
- ✓ Impressed with the speed of night buses.
- ✓ Had a seat at every stage of the journey.
- ✓ Drivers on night buses were willing to be patient with passengers and accept late entrants.
- ✓ The timetable for the night bus to Stepney indicated that the service was very frequent running every ten minutes throughout the night at weekends.

Summary of findings from the hearings

Alternatives to walking home late at night

The Committee heard evidence from user groups regarding the difficulty of getting home from some stations. When there are no buses or taxis available, people may have a lonely walk in dimly lit streets and fear being attacked. User groups this is the main reason why many people, particularly the elderly and women, avoid travelling late at night. It may not be cost effective to introduce a bus service and, even if there were one introduced, there would still be passengers who would have to walk some of the way home.

Passengers may also be deterred from taking an unlicensed mini-cab home. There may be an opportunity for the transport provider to liaise with local licensed mini-cab firms to set up a scheme at the station to take passengers home. Some passengers may be able to park their cars at the station and drive home. However, not everyone will have access to a car or there will be occasions when people will not be able to drive if they have been drinking alcohol. Therefore, the safest alternative to walking would be a licensed taxi or mini-cab.

Reducing crime

The Committee welcomes initiatives to help reduce crime and improve passengers' fears of crime. Operation Seneca is a partnership between the Metropolitan Police and London Buses aimed at reducing crime on buses and increasing safety. Measures include more CCTV on buses to deter criminal activity and joint working by police and London Buses officials.

The Secure Stations Scheme was established by DETR in 1998 with joint working between transport providers and the British Transport Police who judge the accreditation. The Scheme looks at ways of improving the quality of passenger travel by introducing measures at stations which help to tackle crime and improve the perceptions of the public. Better co-ordination is needed amongst the transport providers if more stations are to be accredited under this scheme. There is some concern over the cost of the Scheme which London Underground estimates costs about £3k per station. London Underground is conducting a customer survey on the Secure Stations Scheme and will send the Committee a copy of the findings when it is published in Summer 2001.

British Transport Police and transport providers are also working together on other initiatives such as Operation Farrow (pickpockets), Operation Furze (nuisance crime at London Bridge), and Operation Eagle Eye (robbery).

Integrating services

The Committee heard evidence from user groups about the difficulties of using public transport because the public transport system was not particularly joined up. In their view stations need better interchange facilities, and timetables for the underground, trains and buses should be co-ordinated.

Frequency and continuity of services

User groups expressed a need for improved journey times and improved frequency of service for public transport. They also suggested that the hours of service of the transport network could be extended, perhaps at weekends, to accommodate increased usage by passengers and shift workers. They explained that London has become a 24 hour city enjoyed by Londoners and visitors alike, but the transport system does not cater for this change in the habits of London's society.

TfL confirmed that they were targeting investment in buses to improve the frequency and reliability of service and to expand towards a 24 hour network. London Underground and ATOC reported that they had no plans in the near future to extend services, even at weekends, as the majority of track and infrastructure maintenance and cleaning was done during these periods and running a 24 hour system would have resource and cost implications.

Ticketing

User groups mentioned that there should be more integrated ticketing between modes of transport, cheaper night bus tickets, and consistent concessions. TfL confirmed that from the Summer 2001 one day passes and travelcards would be accepted on night buses, day fares would apply on night buses and bus saver carnet tickets would be introduced.

The British Transport Police reported that they have instituted a system for formal liaison with transport providers, as part of the Police Services Agreement, and there is satisfactory co-ordination between them. They also confirmed that there is excellent co-operation between the Metropolitan Police Service and the British Transport Police.

There are also good working relationships between Transport for London and the police, for instance on Operation Seneca, which aims at reducing crime on buses. The Association of Train Operating Companies said they work closely with British Transport Police, particularly on the Secure Stations Scheme. London Underground confirmed that they were working closely with British Transport Police to try and reduce crime across the network.

Timetables

User groups felt timetables need to be improved to provide better quality information and to take account of the special needs of many passengers. They suggested better lighting would help passengers to read the timetables at night, and that timetables should also be in braille for blind passengers. User groups felt that timetables should be integrated among all modes of transport, and timetable information should be standardised and updated regularly.

Signage

The Committee agreed with user groups that signage should be clear and should be in Plain English. It should be produced in a form that is as easy to understand as possible. For example, a good many people are colour blind and so the use of colour coding should be thought through carefully. Red lettering should be avoided as it is difficult for some people to read.

Information on services/delays/emergencies

Clear, simple and well-articulated communication is required at stations and on transport services to provide passengers with clear and accurate information on services, delays and emergencies. There needs to be a system in place where indicator boards are maintained regularly and malfunctions are monitored and fixed promptly. Clear announcements at stations and on services and the introduction of next stop indicators on buses and trains could considerably improve the journeys for members of the public, including those with disabilities.

Customer Care

User groups would like to see considerable improvement in customer care from transport providers and Police when dealing with the public at stations and on transport services. They felt that passengers need to be treated better, to receive the information they require and to have their complaints addressed properly. This was particularly apparent on transport services where drivers did not deal effectively and appropriately with the public and did not provide them with information regarding the service.

Community Engagement

User groups would like to see greater consultation with the various ethnic communities in London on their views about transport issues and improvements needed to the networks.

Cleaning

There was an issue raised regarding the cleanliness of stations, platforms and trains and buses. It was reported that they were dirty, there was too much litter and mice were often spotted on the platforms as well as on the tracks.

Maintenance

Lifts and escalators frequently breaking down adds to the difficulties of travelling for the public. There needs to be accurate real time information given about breakdowns and maintenance work for lifts and escalators needs to be properly planned to avoid maximum disruption.

Waiting Areas

It was confirmed that London Buses, Railtrack and boroughs were liaising together to improve waiting areas and facilities at stations for bus and rail passengers.

Mobility/Access

The user groups mentioned that ramps and equipment to aid access at stations and on transport were sometimes out of order and that there should be better physical access at stations.

Appendix 3

Safer Routes Home Investigative Committee:

Roger Evans (Chair)
Lynne Featherstone
John Biggs
Jenny Jones

(Sally Hamwee took part in the safer routes home event on 3 March 2001 but is not a member of the Investigative Committee.)

GLA Team

Richard Davies, Scrutiny Manager
Sue Riley, Committee Co-ordinator

Safer Routes Home Evidentiary Hearings:

Evidentiary Hearing 1, Tuesday 27 March 2001

John Cartledge	– London Transport Users Committee
Diana Lamplugh	– Suzy Lamplugh Trust
Reg McLaughlin, Brenda Ellis	– Greater London Action on Disability
Cynthia Hay	– Capital Transport Campaign

Evidentiary Hearing 2, Thursday 29 March 2001

Dave Wetzal, John Willis,	
Beverley Hall	– Transport for London
Steve Wright	– London Underground
Paul Smith	- Association of Train Operating Companies