

London Assembly Transport Committee investigation into Using London's transport system with a sensory impairment

Individual submissions

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Rebekah Canning](#)
Subject: BikeHighWay/accessabilty/visually impairment
Date: 30 January 2016 12:55:07

Good morning Rebekih

I am pleased to have the opportunity to give you some of my comments:

As a Visually impaired Long cane user, I find many aspects of the Super Bike Highway totally impossible to navigate and am very disappointed that it has been introduced with no thought of Visually impaired travellers.

The Floating Bus Stops are a NO NO for us blind people. These stops are impossible for Visually impaired to locate as there are no markers on the pavement and if they were it would be still too dangerous for us to step in to the bike lane.

A way around this is to stop and ask a member of the public to assist, but I think this is taking away my independence. At certain times off the day you can wait a long time for someone to pass by. Having got on the bus, you have the same problem crossing back over the cycle lane if the stop is in the middle of the street. Audible announcements on the buses should be changed to alert disabled passengers that the next stop requires having to cross the bike lane to get back on the pavement.

My personal preference is to avoid using any route that involves these bike lanes. This means changing routes I've used for many years. For example I will no longer be using Southwark Station, as catching the 63 or 45 bus up to the river necessitates crossing the bike lane. I now use Blackfriars and use the subway on the south side of the bridge.

I have also noticed that some pedestrian crossings no longer cross the whole street but stop half way. An example of a crossing like this is the one at The Elephant and Castle..

This crosses St. George's road on the corner of princess street.

What is the point of having a cone on the crossing for blind people if then one has to wait for assistant to cross the bike lane? I just don't get it.

Also at the Elephant the bus stop In London road north bound the stop servicing the 63 45 and 100 as been removed. It is hard to now catch a bus here as too many buses are using the one remaining stop. When too many buses use the same stop, buses back up. Buses can stop 40m from the stop making it very difficult for disabled passengers to get to the bus in time. I have missed many a bus because of this.

The standard of bus driving has also gone down, with many buses stopping on crossings.

A driver should not cross a crossing until there is space on the other side. Using crossings has also become more dangerous as so much traffic backs up. Drivers are unaware that stopping on a crossing creates great problems and danger for us Visually impaired.

I think one of the reasons we have ended up with a scheme like this is because TFL has not listen to disable groups. At a meeting I attended at North Greenwich last year the chair man from TFL Demonstrated how little awareness he had by first inviting a room full of Blind and wheel chare users to help themselves to tea and coffee and pointed out the fire exits with a wave of his hand.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Blind and partially sighted people travelling in London
Date: 10 February 2016 22:14:07

Hello,

I am very pleased to see this meeting is taking place, so important. Please could the following points to be included in the discussion at the meeting on 9th March 2016:

1. **Tubes** – so many times I have stood on a platform beside the open doors of a tube listening to hear its destination being announced only for the doors to close before the announcement has finished – so frustrating! In my experience this happens too often on the westbound Piccadilly at both Hammersmith and Acton Town where the line divides and it is crucial to know the destination. Better driver awareness training needed please.
2. **Buses** – I have to get on a bus to ask where it is going, it would be really helpful if the bus had an external speaker to announce the number of the bus and where it's going, much better and quicker for all than waiting for a nodding driver to realise I haven't seen / understood his gestures!
3. **Buses** – request stops are a nightmare – could buses stop anyway if they see someone waiting?
4. **Escalators** – Swapping the direction of escalators – this has happens a lot – when the 'down' escalator on the left suddenly one morning became the 'up' escalator and the 'down' is now on the right, why, Is this really necessary when the next day it was back to normal??

Many thanks, I am sure there are other comments too.

Kind regards
Amanda

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Fw: Travelling with sensory impairment
Date: 07 February 2016 15:32:03

2nd try

Sent from Windows Mail

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 7 February 2016 15:10
To: valerie.shawcross@london.gov.uk
Cc: transportcommittee@london.gov.uk

Val,

I noted that the Transport Committee was seeking the experiences of people with sensory impairment use of London's Transport System.

I have become acutely aware of the issues facing people with visual impairment since my youngest son (age 26) was designated as severely sight impaired last year.

(The damage to his eyesight has been caused by insulin dependent diabetes which he has had since 13 months of age.)

Since being diagnosed and registered with the local authority he has obtained his Freedom Pass, but to the issues:

whilst the London underground and overground pose few problems and in general the signs are readable London Buses pose significant problems that often at night and during darkness my son is unable to identify where he is and a number of times alighted before his stop as the announcement only provide limited information and do not indicate future stops.

When moving around London it is often impossible to identify streets as street signs are placed at heights that cannot be seen, there have been occasions when he has been out going somewhere where I have been guiding him using a map on the computer, this is only possible given my knowledge of London.

The main issue has been returning home when travel involves using mainline rail transport where no staff are available at platform level and information flow is poor, leading to us in Rotherhithe trying to provide information to enable him to get home.

I wonder if the solution is for TfL to develop an app for mobile devices that would provide the required information using GPS facilities to identify locations.

I have copied this to the relevant email for the investigation.

If you require any further information please contact me.

[REDACTED]

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1. What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

Underground staff are excellent. The main stations that I use are Charing Cross, Goodge Street, Oxford Circus and Tottenham Court Road. The biggest challenges would be other passengers. Even when I am with a member of TfL staff and have my cane, other passengers will walk straight at us.

There is one road in Bromley that is now a shared space for pedestrians and other road users as they have dropped the pavement. I try and avoid this as it is like a no-go area for me because it feels too dangerous. Very difficult to know where you are.

2. How well do TfL, support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

Underground staff are excellent, they always phone ahead to the destination station and there will be someone there waiting for me. It is very rare that there is no one available to help.

The announcements are also very helpful on the train.

Buses are really good. I am now a regular on a few of the bus routes around where I live and the bus drivers will stop and wait for me if they see me coming round the corner and will help me on to the bus etc.

From: [REDACTED]
 To: [Transport Committee](#)
 Subject: Travelling with a sensory impairment
 Date: 26 January 2016 22:32:41

Dear Sirs,

I am responding to this 'call for evidence' as a London resident who has a visual impairment and regularly uses public transport for both commuting and leisure. Generally I travel independently without needing assistance.

What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

Buses

Route finding is hard for a person with a visual impairment. Timetables and spider maps on bus stops are often too small to easily read. They are also usually located behind the seats, meaning that it is difficult to get close enough to read them if people are sitting at the stop.

It is difficult to determine whether a bus is the one you want if you cannot read the number as it is approaching. This is particularly difficult when the stop has no countdown display or is served by many routes. This often leads to visually impaired people having to hail every bus that passes in the hope that it is the right one, to the frustration of the drivers and other passengers.

Also, when two or three buses stop at the same time, it is difficult to determine whether the bus you want has actually pulled in behind another bus, and by the time you realise, it has often already departed.

These issues are made worse if there is no clear line of sight of approaching buses due to street furniture or other vehicles blocking sight lines.

An issue also arises when routes heading in the same general direction serve different stops in the same area, as it is difficult to see an approaching bus in time to move to the appropriate stop for that route.

For example, at Streatham Station, buses towards Brixton leave from both the bus station and two stops outside Tesco, about 100m away. It is difficult for a visually impaired person standing at one stop to see a Brixton-bound bus approaching the other until too late.

Although some of the stops have countdown displays, they only show the buses due to stop at that particular stop.

Although the onboard iBus information system is a great benefit to visually impaired people, it is not always active on every bus. It also requires the user to know the name of the stop that they are intending to alight at.

It is also unreliable when buses are diverted or terminated short and drivers often do not make adequate manual announcements to compensate.

Underground

Wayfinding around stations is not always easy, especially when they are crowded, there is not always time to stop and get your bearings or search for a sign.

Next Train information on platforms is not easy to see from a distance and on many lines, there is often no audio information about the destination of the next train, or how long until the next train arrives.

National Rail

National Rail stations suffer similar wayfinding issues to the Underground.

It is difficult to read departure boards at National Rail stations as they are usually well above head height and there is no way for a visually impaired person to get close to them. Often there are no staff members on the platform to ask for assistance.

At termini, the audio announcement for a particular service is often only made a few minutes before it is due to depart, meaning visually impaired passengers then have to rush across a busy station to reach the platform, when those who can read the departure board will often know the platform much further in advance.

At some stations, the audio-visual announcement system does not work reliably, and most are also switched off in the evenings to avoid annoying local residents, making it difficult for visually impaired passengers to travel at this time.

Not all trains running in the London area have on-board audio-visual announcements, and even those that do don't always have them operating correctly, providing either no information, or worse, incorrect information.

Thameslink is a particularly bad offender for this.

Drivers and conductors don't make manual announcements to compensate for the lack of automatic announcements.

Finally, the fact that National Rail operators do not accept Disabled Persons' Freedom Passes before 0930 on weekdays limits the usefulness of these services to people with disabilities, if they live in a part of London only served by National Rail and need to access transport to employment or education.

Pedestrian Environment

On the pavement, A-boards, temporary roadworks signs, scaffolding and other obstacles act as trip hazards, particularly when the street is busy.

Cars and scooters parked on the pavement also act as obstacles, sometimes requiring pedestrians to walk in the road to get around them.

Cyclists on the pavement are also a significant hazard, as you can rarely hear their approach if coming from behind you.

When crossing roads where no signalled pedestrian crossing is available, it is very difficult to judge whether a gap in traffic is large enough to safely cross. Bicycles are a particular problem as they are often difficult to see from a distance, particularly at night when many have inadequate or no lights.

When crossing in stationary traffic, it is hard to spot bicycles or motorbikes overtaking other vehicles and weaving in and out of the traffic, until they are on top of you.

At signalled crossings, the gap between pedestrian phases is often several minutes, meaning it takes a long time to get across the road, especially if multiple separate crossings must be used (e.g. when crossing across a dual carriageway with separate crossings for each carriageway). A fully sighted person would often just dart through a gap in the traffic, but this is not a possibility for someone who is visually impaired.

Cyclists running red lights or failing to stop at zebra crossings are also a major problem, as it is very difficult to spot and avoid them, and it's not always clear whether they are going to stop in time.

How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers

of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

Transport for London operated services generally are very accessible for people with visual impairments, most buses and London Underground/London Overground services have audio-visual announcements which are of great benefit. However, other rail and bus operators are not always as good and don't provide the same standard of accessibility. Even where provision has been made, it cannot be guaranteed to be working reliably. The Freedom Pass greatly improves the accessibility of public transport to people with disabilities, but its time restrictions on National Rail are unhelpful and discriminatory.

How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

Buses

Ensure timetables and maps at stops are clear and easy to read, and are located in an area where they are not going to be obstructed.

Provide audio 'next bus' announcements at bus stops to complement the countdown displays, which play when the bus is approaching the stop, allowing a visually impaired

person to know when to hail the bus.

Introduce external announcements on buses that announce the route and destination to waiting passengers when the bus stops.

Where buses stop at multiple stops, ensure each stop has a realtime departure display that covers all of the stops in the area.

Add extra stop information to iBus, including 'Alight here for X' information for stations and major landmarks.

Oblige operators to provide reporting information on non-functional iBus systems, with penalties for operators who do not ensure that their services always have functioning audio-visual announcements.

Mandate that drivers have to make clear and regular manual announcements when the bus is diverted, bus stops are closed or the iBus system is unavailable.

National Rail

Mandate that all National Rail Operators must provide working onboard audio-visual passenger information. If, for any reason, the system is not working correctly, then on-train staff should be required to make manual announcements to compensate.

Operators should be required to regularly check that audio-visual announcements at stations and on trains are working correctly.

National Rail operators should be obliged to accept the Disabled Persons Freedom Pass before 0930, to avoid discriminating against disabled London residents who don't have access to TfL operated services.

Pedestrian Environment

Introduce byelaws to ensure that pavements remain clear of unnecessary obstructions, and ensure that they are enforced.

Contractors should be obliged to keep pavements as clear as possible.

Reduce the gap between pedestrian cycles at signalled crossings to allow disabled

people who rely on them to be able to cross roads quickly and efficiently.

Increase enforcement action against cyclists who cycle on pavements, run red lights, fail to stop at zebra crossings or cycle at night with inadequate or no lighting.

I hope this information is useful. Please feel free to contact me if you need any more details.

Kind Regards

[Redacted Signature]

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Sensory impairment on public transport
Date: 03 February 2016 19:14:41

To whom it may concern

I am responding to your enquiry. I am hearing disabled.

There are three aspects I consider to your enquiry.

- 1) Platform/station problems
- 2) Problems on the trains. Whether that be Tube, DLR, Overground or Rail services into London
- 3) Problems with buses both stops and the buses themselves.

1) Several times I have found the electronic signage out of date, showing incorrect information, or not operating.

Generally the tube service has good signage. On the overland I have several times encountered problems. I rarely use the DLR but have never encountered a problem, This is predominantly a problem on rail service platforms particularly southern and Thameslink. Without accurate signage information I am reliant on very unclear auditory updates.

2) Onboard trains, tubes, DLR and overland, signage is bad throughout, where it is there it often is not working. Service updates for delays do not seem to be signed and often the approaching station is not indicated. Therefore I am reliant on driver announcements which vary enormously in clarity.

3) A large number of bus stops do not have update information. This is not exclusively a problem for the disabled. However I have had occasions where the bus route has been altered and the sign has not reflected this. Again applies as a problem for all passengers. On board buses the stop signage is often not functioning and this is a problem for me as I cannot easily dialogue with other passengers or the driver to get the correct stop.

I hope this is useful information.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

London [REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Transport Network Usage as a Visually Impaired person
Date: 09 February 2016 12:13:02

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a totally Blind person using various means of Transport around London and I wish to add my views to your consultation.

Over the past years, I have been very impressed and appreciate the level of guidance and support of TFL staff on the Underground Network. The system of guiding me down to the relevant platform and phoning through to my destination is very impressive and most occasions works very well.

However, I am very concerned that in the coming years, the intention of TFL to reduce station staff numbers will affect the service which Visually Impaired customers receive. Priorities will change and such a good service may no longer be available.

Another very good development on London Buses is the use of Audible and Visual Indicators. Such an implementation has enabled more Disable people to use this service with much more independence and with confidence.

Many Disabled people rely on the Computer Cab service, which in part, is subsidised by Local Authorities. Firstly, I believe that this service should not be dependent on the much-constrained Budgets of Local Authorities. This service can be a life line, especially to wheelchair users. This scheme should be operated, funded and administered london-wide. Also, Customers should be given the choice as to how many swipes they wish to use on a specific journey. London Cabs are very expensive, which makes the service prohibitive to many.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]
Leytonstone

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Sensory Impairment review
Date: 20 January 2016 21:22:14

I have read in a newsletter that you are seeking submissions re how well TFL deliver services which assist people with sensory impairments travel independently in London. I'd like to make one small observation.
I used to travel regularly in London, now only occasionally. The provision of rolling screens, together with clear announcements of stops coming up on the buses is absolutely brilliant for me, as a hard of hearing person. The difference this makes is so empowering.
Thank you to the bus companies and anyone else involved in the implementation of such a helpful service.
[REDACTED]
Oxford.

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1. What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

Mainly travel on the underground and overground and the biggest problem is changing between platforms within the stations themselves.

Another big problem is the dropped pavements in the pedestrian environment. The pavements are being removed and tactile paving is not robust enough that I can often miss it completely. South Kensington for example is a no-go area for me because there are no clear marks for the edges of the pavement and this feels very unsafe.

2. How well do TfL, support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

Extremely well when the staff are available. Staff numbers being reduced over the last 3-4 years has meant that sometimes station staff will ring ahead and there will be no one available to help at the next station.

Tottenham Court Road and Embankment stations are stations I use often and this can happen fairly often. Totally blind people, need an actual person to help.

3. How could TfL and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

Staff availability is very important. Wayfinder technology could be very helpful as this is developed further. As a 70 year old though I do not have a smart phone or know how to use these.

Staff are now much more helpful and have been over the last 10 years. Staff training is noticeable, especially for bus drivers and this has been really helpful. The talking bus system has revolutionised and taken the stress out of travelling by bus.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Travel with a sensory impairment
Date: 25 January 2016 13:12:30

I have under 1% vision so I'm registered blind. I have lived & worked in London since 1981.

Issues:

Cyclists who ride on footpaths, jump red lights and refuse to stop at pedestrian crossings. I've been hit and injured by cyclists more than once when using a crossing. H

Tube trains where the destination announcement is switched off.

Dangerous steps at stations where they are not painted in a standard way to make them easier to see. Example is one entrance to Piccadilly Circus.

Pedestrian crossings / traffic lights with no audible signal - examples in Ealing St Mary's Avenue

Good points

Generally Rail, Tube & Bus services are accessible in London. The next stop and destination announcements are vital.

More driver training and education would help. I still sometimes get an abusive and confrontational bus driver who thinks all blind people have zero vision.

[REDACTED]

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1. What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

No curbs and shared space in the pedestrian environment is very challenging. Especially if you are in a new area that you are unfamiliar with, it is difficult to tell whether you are in the road or on the pavement etc.

2. How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

From a VI point of view, the announcements on the buses are particularly helpful. Drivers are generally much better at now waiting for people to sit down before pulling away. I think they must have had some training on this as there has been an improvement.

3. How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

The most important thing is the physical staff presence. The service where they collect you from the tube and a member of staff takes you to the correct exit is invaluable and makes travelling much safer. Those with a sensory impairment can be helped a bit by the technology but not for the whole of the journey. I appreciate the service very much.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: TRAVELLING IN LONDON WITH A SENSORY IMPAIRMENT
Date: 09 February 2016 15:50:39

I am responding to your request for information about experiences of blind and partially sighted people travelling in London.

I am totally blind, am aged 75, and a guide dog owner, and have travelled frequently to London from Westcliff-on-Sea to Fenchurch Street Station, and in the past changing at Barking on to the underground network. However, now I usually use black cab taxis from Fenchurch Street to various venues throughout the centre of London. I also travel from Liverpool Street Station to Clacton-on-Sea from time to time.

When travelling on the underground, as I had campaigned for many years for announcements to be made, it is so much easier now with announcements being made, but I do find, especially at Aldgate East, a lack of staff to assist me when transferring from the District to the Hammersmith line.

My real problems are with access to taxis. Despite the legislation, which I had campaigned for in the '70's, there are still black cab drivers that do not want to take me with my guide dog. It is very hard to track down the drivers, as it happens very quickly, and the sighted person with me is not quick enough to take their number so they can be reported. The way the drivers get away with it, when I arrive at Fenchurch Street station the staff member that takes me to the taxi rank will just tell me when the first driver that should take me looks at my dog and drives off. This has happened at other London stations as well.

I never travel by bus and I don't think you will be covering air travel. But if you are, please let me know.

With the introduction of shared space schemes, this does prevent me and other blind people from using those parts of London where we are left with no safe pavements to walk on or pedestrian crossings to cross the road safely. Also cyclists cause us lots of dangerous situations when they ride on footways and footpaths.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

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Meeting with [REDACTED] on Thursday 28th January 2016.

[REDACTED], The Public Liaison Officer for the North South Cycle Superhighway at TFL and her colleague, [REDACTED], Communications Specialist, met with [REDACTED], to examine the layout of the cycle route +changes relating to it, and to discuss the impact that this will have on visually-impaired pedestrians. [REDACTED], Portfolio Sponsor, also joined us briefly at the start of the meeting.

I am totally blind while [REDACTED], my partner, has a very small amount of residual vision. We are both Long Cane users. (Alan has circulated his own comments.)

Our observation of new features relating to the super cycle highway included:

- 1: Finding out the layout of a bus stop which can only be reached over the cycle lane. I.E. The one nearest to Southwark tube on Blackfriars Road.
- 2: Travelling to the Elephant and Castle by bus.
3. Crossing London Road and exploring the crossing on St George's Road at the other end of Princess Street.
4. Noticing the removal of a bus stop in London Road.
5. Alighting from a bus using a bus stop on the cycle route.

After describing each situation in more detail below, I have outlined my reasons why changes brought about by the construction of the cycling super highway present such difficulties for visually impaired travellers under the heading, Comment.

After this, I have listed the possible solutions we discussed, and finally, added my own general responses.

- 1: Finding out the layout of a bus stop which can only be reached over the cycle lane.

I approached the bus-stop nearest to Southwark tube on the Blackfriars Road from Southwark Tube itself. On the way, I encountered a misleading dropped kerb without bobbles amongst other pavement furniture. Having reached the correct crossing point, (a dropped kerb with bobbles) I was able to hear the full complement of traffic in both directions on the Blackfriars Road in front of me echoing under the railway bridge, punctuated by trains going over the bridge and bleeping from the pedestrian crossing further up the street.

Comment: Against this background, it would be hard to distinguish the sound of oncoming cyclists, because although they are nearer than the traffic, they are quieter, having no engines.

- 2: Travelling to the Elephant and Castle by bus.

We used the traffic lights outside Southwark tube to go to the correct bus stop for the Elephant and Castle.

Comment: To date, I had no idea that the bus stop for south-bound busses opposite the tube had been moved from its previous location to further along the Blackfriars Road, across Union Street.

This means that in future, if making use of this bus stop to get to Southwark tube, I will have to cross both sides of the junction, and as a blind pedestrian, I have to wait for the correct phase of the lights twice.

3. Crossing London Road and exploring the crossing on St George's Road at the other end of Princess Street. We turned right after getting off a 45 bus and crossed London Road without incident.

We walked along Princess Street, which is reasonably quiet, but has quite a lot of street furniture. The cycle path crossing on St. George's Road at the other end of Princess Street was reasonably easy to find, as the textured dropped kerb was near to the corner. Again, I was facing the traffic while listening out for nearly silent cyclists. I would not have wanted to cross it unassisted. Once over the cycle lane, I had to turn right and walk along the island in the middle of the road, on which there was just a low ledge between me and the traffic instead of railings, to find the dropped kerb and traffic light post. Once over St. George's Road, to find the requisite bus stop, it was necessary to turn left and cross over another side road.

Comment:

in order to find the crossing in London Road, the visually-impaired pedestrian has to know which direction to turn once off the bus, in relation to the bus number they are using.) This crossing is a standard traffic light, with a cone to use for the green light, and as with many similar crossings, the traffic, if heavy, is inclined to stop further forward than it is supposed to when stationary, thus blocking the way for the pedestrians trying to get over the road.

I used to be able to make use of the subways at the Elephant and Castle to walk between the bus stops in London Road going south, and the ones in St. George's Road going towards West Minster Bridge. Thus, in the daytime, I was able to cross under 3 roads completely independently.

4: Noticing the removal of a bus stop in London Road.

On the way back, we walked back to London Road, taking a bus towards Blackfriars Bridge in order to get off at the most appropriate stop nearest to that location.

■ pointed out that one of the 2 bus stops had been removed in London Road going north, requiring a great many busses to use the same stop.

Comment:

This always presents difficulties for visually-impaired travellers, as once there is a queue of busses, we are dependent on others to help us locate the appropriate one on our behalf while they may well be trying to catch a different bus themselves. Busses can also be missed as drivers a long way from the stop may well leave quickly after letting their passengers off.

5: Alighting from a bus using a bus stop on the cycle route.

None of us were sure which bus stops along the Blackfriars Road were in use, so after confirming with the driver, we decided to use the Southwark tube stop again. (on our journey to this stop, some of the announcements were incorrect.)

On alighting at this stop, although I realized that the low ledge denoted the edge of the cycle lane, I had no way of telling which direction to walk in to find the textured dropped kerb.

Comment:

Effectively, the bus has just dropped a disabled person off in the middle of the road in a location where it is potentially dangerous to cross back to the pavement, as cyclists, who have no obligation to slow down or stop will be using the super highway.!

At a standard bus-stop on a pavement, it may not always be possible to detect exactly where you are once dropped off, but walking away from the sound of the traffic initially will enable you to turn in the appropriate direction to continue your route safely having established where you are.

Possible solutions:

We all thought hard about resolving issues that had become apparent. [REDACTED] and her colleague [REDACTED] gave us plenty of time to do this.

A: Putting a post at the edge of the pavement near the textured dropped kerb with appropriately visible signage indicating the bus stop across the cycle lane for people with impaired sight.

B. Putting zebra crossing type markings on the road to further emphasize to cyclists that they need to stop for pedestrians.

C. Introducing some sort of tactile marking on the low ledge on the bus stop island to show blind travellers which way to turn to find the tactile paving to cross back over the cycle lane after getting off a bus.

There was recognition from all present that none of these solutions would radically change the situation that visually impaired pedestrians face, as cyclists are not bound by law to stop and let pedestrians over. Indeed, the purpose of the super highway is to allow cyclists to go as fast as they can without interruption.

My own response.

As a blind pedestrian, I accept, with resignation, that even standard bus stops are not fully accessible, but that I am prepared to use my own initiative to overcome the barriers of both not knowing which busses use a stop and the number of the approaching bus.

However, to negotiate a fast cycle lane each time I get onto or off a bus is not an option I can undertake safely unassisted.

This situation reduces the access I have to my own local bus stops. Also, the reason why I use busses for short distances is to reduce the pressure of negotiating complex junctions as a pedestrian. Effectively, I am now required to cross a busy street every time I catch or alight from a bus along the Blackfriars Road going north.

I am not convinced that having no railings will be advantageous on these island bus stops. A long cane user such as myself uses the most central part of a given pedestrian area to walk on, and only uses the edge of the area to find landmarks etc. A low ledge could be tripped, or even stepped over in error, whereas railings can be perceived, (even if not seen) from a distance and gaps etc where the crossing points are found could be more recognisable. Railings could also be used for tactile signage to indicate the correct direction to walk in.

I didn't realize that the cycle route would create so many changes of locations of bus stops on the other side of the road. I feel that at Southwark, the sense of a bus to train intersection has been lost by having to cross 2 sides of a junction. (As a blind person, I am unable to make the whole of both roads during one phase of green lights for the pedestrians.)

Normally, judging whether a side road is safe to cross or not is a challenge, but as it is at right angles to the sound of the traffic, and traffic has to slow down anyway, great care has to be taken, but it is generally just about possible. However, crossing directly towards or away from the sound of the traffic makes it much harder to hear whether the cycle path is clear or not, particularly as it is designed for cyclists not to have to slow down.

(A quote from an email sent to me by [REDACTED] from TFL in September 2015.) "Signalising the crossing over the cycle track would create longer waiting times for both pedestrians and cyclists and from our experience this would likely encourage red light running by cyclists, increasing the risk to pedestrians using the crossing. In addition, cyclists often move through signals in platoons and so there will be natural gaps in the flow when pedestrians can cross." There is nothing in place, therefore, to maintain the safety of a blind pedestrian when crossing the super highway.

Traffic congestion has increased hugely during the construction of the cycle highway, which means that cars back up over crossings which create safety issues for visually impaired pedestrians attempting to cross.

Also, cyclists still freely move through ordinary red lights when pedestrians are crossing, and ride on the pavement.

I think it is such a shame that the super highway has been designed as such an inconvenient hazard, since theoretically, I support safe cycling in the city, and would like cyclists to be able to travel about unimpeded, but visually impaired people should demand the same freedom.

After all, cyclists can tailor their journeys to their individual requirements, and even with reasonably accessible routes, blind people have to continually negotiate and face barriers of all sorts.

Of course there are many safe and generous-hearted cyclists, but there is a minority for whom the activity of cycling inspires somewhat wreckless behaviour.

Visually impaired and other disabled travellers are always obliged to err on the side of caution in order to minimize any risk to themselves or others.

At present, I feel as though I am having to restrict my own independence for the sake of cycling.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Rebekah Canning](#)
Subject: Using London's transport system with a sensory impairment
Date: 07 February 2016 22:02:14

Dear Rebekah Canning,

I have outlined my experiences below as a totally blind transport user in the London area. I have attempted to break my feedback down into topics and hope it is helpful. I feel, however, that there are many issues relating to the cycle super highway which need to be addressed and would like to be involved in further discussions about this.

If you need to contact me by phone, my landline is [REDACTED] and mobile, [REDACTED].

Regards,

[REDACTED]

Using busses:

Since the introduction of Audio announcements on busses, I have travelled on them much more frequently, and often used them as a way of getting across difficult road crossings. I have even gone on unfamiliar routes when appropriate.

However, as I live near the Blackfriars Road, where the cycle super highway is being constructed, I realize that I won't be able to make use of the bus stops across the cycle route on islands in the middle of the road, as cyclists aren't guaranteed to stop for pedestrians.

E.G. I used to use the bus stop nearest Southwark tube going towards Blackfriars Bridge regularly, but now I feel it has become inaccessible. As, once the correct crossing point has been reached, (a dropped kerb with bobbles,) the blind pedestrian is exposed to the sound of the full complement of traffic in both directions on the Blackfriars Road echoing under the railway bridge, punctuated by trains going over the bridge and bleeping from the pedestrian crossing further up the street. The sound of approaching cyclists is therefore completely masked.

When alighting from a bus on Blackfriars Bridge South side, (Once in use,) it would be necessary to find the way back off the island in the middle of the road, with cyclists free-wheeling south from the bridge.

In the past, at the Elephant and Castle, I perfected a route to change from and to appropriate busses via the underpass system, which gave me complete autonomy and independence. I only chose not to use this method at night. Now the underpasses have been closed altogether.

Lots of bus stops have been relocated on the opposite side of the road to the cycle route. I.E. The one opposite Southwark underground. As it is now over Union Street, it has become a far less effective intersection for the tube station.

A blind pedestrian has to wait for 2 phases of the traffic lights to cross to the tube safely.

I will probably have to default to using stops on Waterloo Bridge much more, and this is difficult as at least 16 different busses use it.

Living so close to the cycle route, I have found it has presented many diverse barriers for getting around.

Crossing pedestrian crossings using the cone for green light indication:

I have noticed that crossings using a rotating cone to indicate to blind people when the light is green, that when the traffic is congested, it backs up over the crossing. As a blind pedestrian is unaware of this, it creates a dangerous situation, as a vehicle is encountered in the middle of the road. There is then no escape. On Stamford Street, this has happened so often on the junction which crosses Cornwall Road, that I have started using the pedestrian crossing further east.

The underground:

I find that the underground is the easiest method of travelling around unassisted, as, in general, staff provide help if an interchange is unfamiliar. This means that the user can start to try out particular station changes regularly once they have had the initial help. The audible announcements which are now relayed on trains at all times unless there is a fault are also extremely helpful. These can become less reliable at ends of lines which is when they are most needed! It is a shame, however, that the destination of a train is announced last when the train is stationary, as the visually impaired passenger has to decide whether to board it or not.

Platform announcements about train destinations are, therefore, very helpful, but NOT when the train sound drowns it. Sometimes, there are too many other announcements on platforms, such as, "there is a good service on all lines."

The hardest thing to gauge on an underground station is the direction of the exit from whichever platform the train drops you on. I think that a lot could be done with tactile arrows or raised writing on parts of walls which are unobstructed. Similar signage could also be displayed on posts in the middle of island platforms.

The textured yellow line at the platform edge, and step markers are also very useful.

It's a shame that there is no way of telling which way an escalator is travelling, or which are the In or Out barriers.

Blackfriars South Entrance station:

When making use of Thames Link, I find that there are access issues, both in making use of Blackfriars South Entrance and once on the train itself.

In this station, there is not always help available. The station is so spacious that it is hard to learn routes unassisted and to use the lift, you have to know which level to go to for the correct platform for your train.

Even when assistance is available, there have been trains which have not made station announcements at all adequately. When going on the route from Blackfriars to Sevenoaks on a stopping train, this is often the case.

Difficulties also arise when travelling back into London, as it's not always clear whether trains are going to terminate at Blackfriars.

Due to the length of the platforms at Blackfriars, it is also very difficult to exit from this station.

Information points on large stations:

It is useful to have a knowledge of where information points are on large stations such as Waterloo. However, if these can't be found, it is sometimes difficult to find help.

Getting a seat on all transport:

Busses are all different designs these days, so finding a seat is a question of pot luck. If only going a short distance to avoid a crossing, I don't mind standing. However, it's sometimes difficult to stop people more disabled than myself giving me a seat.

Regarding busses, tubes and trains, if I know that there aren't any seats, I don't mind standing over longer distances, but there is often an empty seat that no one has told me about. It's also difficult for people to show visually impaired passengers to seats. However, there are times when able-bodied people push past visually impaired travellers who are standing, to find seats

for themselves, or able-bodied passengers sitting in seats which are prioritized for disabled passengers. Although I can't always be sure this is taking place, on occasions, it is all too obvious, but because I can't prove it, I can't challenge people about this.,

Transport Apps:

The transport apps on phones are very handy, especially if the name of the bus stop is listed that will be announced on the bus itself. However, it is hard to access these on streets or platforms, so all use of apps has to be done in advance.

Pedestrian areas:

I make frequent use of the South Bank as I live in the area. Although very pleasant, the open area with a whole mixture of street furniture, often with alterations being made, is a constant challenge. Although I am familiar with it, it takes a high level of concentration to orientate myself round obstacles the whole time.

I enjoy making use of The street behind Waterloo Station called Lower Marsh. Technically, this may not be a fully pedestrian area, but there isn't much traffic and plenty of shops, (some of which are independent.) Although I don't use the food stalls that have sprung up at lunch time, they create a lively atmosphere. I preferred the more traditional type of market stall that used to be in Lower Marsh.

Parks:

I make frequent use of the south side of Berney Spain Gardens, which is separated from the South Bank by the Road Upper Ground.

There used to be a zebra crossing in Upper Ground which was taken away when the road was refurbished in the late 90s. This has always been a great loss to me.

Once in the park, it is very easy to walk across to Stamford Street, as there are definite paths.

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- **What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?**

Pedestrian crossings are particularly difficult for those who are visually impaired as you cannot see the green man allowing you to cross and not all crossings have the twirling bit under the crossing button. I also did not realise that this was available until a friend made me aware of this – publicising this more would be very helpful as would ensuring that there was one on every crossing. If these were publicised more, other pedestrians might be more understanding of why I need to stand so close to the crossing button etc.

The Freedom Pass is extremely helpful and useful as I can present this to TfL staff who are then aware that I have a visual impairment. However, obtaining this pass was very difficult as the application is all written and online which I cannot use. Luckily I had support from family members who could help with my application but for anyone who did not have this support; it would be a very difficult process.

- **How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?**

If you are willing to ask for help then it is there for you. London Underground staff are really helpful as they will put on their yellow jackets and assist you to the correct platform, they also ring ahead to the station that you are alighting for another member of staff there to come and collect you, which I don't think happens anywhere else in the world. Train and tube stations are the most difficult to navigate as you cannot see the signs and some are a bit of a maze.

Overhead announcements over the tannoy are very helpful; it would be extremely problematic if they were to get rid of these.

- **How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?**

Support for filling out the Freedom Pass application forms would be very helpful. It is also important to keep the station staff on the ground who are able to help direct or assist you with your journey if necessary. Some stations are more problematic than others, for example Bank and Piccadilly Circus stations are busier, with less or no staff at all available to help you and these are very difficult stations to navigate. Other passengers at these stations are also less tolerant or willing to help because it is busier and they are trying to get to where they need to go as well.

Very excited that this work is happening now as since the Olympics and Paralympics a lot of work has been done to make London more accessible for those with

disabilities but there is much less support for those with sensory impairments. And navigating the transport network without sight is very difficult.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Travelling with Sensory Impairment
Date: 24 January 2016 19:29:39

Hello,

I am writing this email after reading about your request for people with sensory impairments who use London transport to share their experiences.

I have a rare genetic condition that not only affects my mobility, my internal functions but also some of my senses. I am extremely sensitive to sound and light when I am experiencing high levels of pain; so not only can travelling become physically challenging, but it is also difficult to prevent your sensitivity from overloading. When this happens it can often lead to more pain, reduced vision and speech, lots of tears and anxiety about completely the rest of my journey. Due to the nature of my disability I am very fragile, meaning the slightest knock or bump can have huge consequences (e.g. extreme pain, muscle seizures/spasms and dislocations). So I am naturally very nervous when travelling through London due to the fast pace and busy crowds. I cannot go anywhere without a carer and my wheelchair, but when travelling we often rely on additional assistance. However we have encountered a few difficult situations when using the London Underground because staff have been very unhelpful. This instantly puts a strain on my carer because moving me through a busy crowd can be so dangerous at times. It can also become almost impossible to move me safely if I begin to go into a sensory overload. It is obviously a very busy, noisy and bright environment which is a lot for someone in so much pain to withstand. I usually go armed with headphones and sunglasses when using the underground, but this sometimes isn't enough to prevent my symptoms from worsening.

As I stated above I am aware that London is a busy city, and I am continually impressed by the level of accessibility that is forever increasing. Because of this I am able to access places that I cannot access in my home city of Newcastle. I spend a lot of time in London for medical appointments, so we often use the tube, buses and taxis depending on where we are going. It can be difficult to use the tube due to the fact many stations aren't accessible, but having the option to ride any bus is amazing.

However, I do think there needs to be an increase in the level of assistance that is offered to people with any form of disability or sensory impairment. There have been several occasions when myself or my carer have asked for someone to guide us through the crowds, just to ensure nobody bumps me and I can be put onto the train without being pushed. Getting on and off the tube can be impossible for someone in a wheelchair when there is a large crowd, so having assistance is imperative. However we have been left to struggle on our own many times, making the journey almost impossible. Staff also need to be aware of a person's needs and respect the fact they may need to stop to compose themselves when going into a sensory overload. Staff should look into the various techniques that could potentially help someone during a sensory overload, or ask their carer what they can do to help. Advising people to use headphones or sunglasses could potentially make someone's next journey that bit easier.

I hope this email is useful, but should you require anymore information please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Rebekah Canning](mailto:Rebekah.Canning@london.gov.uk)
Subject: Re: SURVEY OF VISION IMPAIRED PASSENGERS USING TFL
Date: 02 February 2016 14:20:19

Glad to be of help: whilst writing something I left out of my earlier comments was the difficulty experienced on many of the outer London busses: firstly on one journey there are 3 different buses that I can take and they are all different in their layout so you are never sure where the luggage area is, where the standing area is (useful to stand there with the dog) and most importantly, what the layout of the seats are: Also on some of the buses the seats are blocked off underneath so the dog cannot get under the seat and out of the way and there is not enough room between my legs and the seat in front for the dog. We often cause an obstruction with the dog in the aisle and there is nowhere for her to go. Some general uniform layout would be very helpful with the underside of the seats open to allow the dog to go under as trained. Hope this helps and have asked friends and fellow VI travellers to fill in the survey. With best wishes.

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

On 2 Feb 2016, at 09:21, Rebekah Canning <Rebekah.Canning@london.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear [REDACTED]

Many thanks for taking the time to get back to us and for your comments. These are really useful to the Transport Committee's investigation.

Please do not hesitate to contact us again if you have any further queries or comments.

Best wishes

Rebekah

Rebekah Canning | Project Officer

LONDON ASSEMBLY | City Hall | The Queen's Walk | London | SE1 2AA
 Tel: 020 7983 6597 | rebekah.canning@london.gov.uk

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 01 February 2016 18:30
To: Transport Committee
Subject: SURVEY OF VISION IMPAIRED PASSENGERS USING TFL

I am a totally blind man aged 65 who has used the underground system for all of my adult life.

I use it for leisure, and for over 30 years commuted to work across London and regularly used four or five of the tube lines daily and also a number of London mainline stations.

I travelled at all times of the day and night either as part of my shift work or coming home late at night from work or leisure activities. Since retiring in 2012 I now use the busses locally and still use the underground on a regular basis.

Until five years ago I used a white cane and now use a guide dog.

POSITIVES

Over the many years I have used the underground I have encountered many members of staff and almost without exception they have been polite and helpful. I much value the customer assistance service whereby the staff member at my starting station rings through to either my interchange point or final destination stop to book assistance. I also value greatly the station announcements now on the tubes as I can independently know which station I am coming into and ensure I am ready to get off. I also appreciate that the trains stop virtually at the same position in the station each time so I know if I am in carriage one or three that I am needing to walk back, or forward for the entrance. I use the Tube Tracker app which is fantastic as it lets me know the destination of the train, which service it is and when the next one is.

I appreciate the tactile markings now on the edge of most platforms which enables me to know where the edge of the platform is when boarding.

I also feel that the station announcements on the platforms re information etc are better, clearer and provide good information. I also now use busses and the stop announcements are fantastic when they work!

NOT SO POSITIVE

With staff reductions on the outer lying stations I find it more difficult to find a member of staff to ask for assistance and for them to ring through to my interchange or destination station for help. If I cannot book the assistance I am less confident at travelling to stations I do not know or to undertake journeys which involve interchanges at stations I do not regularly use. More frequently, recently when staff have rung through there is no staff member available or there to assist. This does create anxiety and delay as frequently other passengers do not know the information.

Similarly, sometimes drivers either have switched off the on train station announcements, or have forgotten to switch them on. This is annoying as I then have to ask other passengers for information re the station etc. A small thing but totally avoidable. Similarly, I have recently started to use busses more frequently and a number of times the stop announcements have been switched off and I have missed my stop or am on edge as am not sure where I am especially in heavy traffic. I use the Tube Tracker app which is great but doesn't work with my phone provider underground which is when I need it most. If anything can be done to prioritise wifi connectivity on the underground so I can use the app that would be fantastic. I would also appreciate some additions or better information on the website. When I first got my dog and the escalator ban was in place I found it really difficult to find out which stations were "escalator free" as opposed to "step free". I could use steps but not escalators. Also is it possible to put more information on the web with a link say to each station which gives a brief description of the station ie when travelling west on the district line the stairs on the east bound platform at

say West Ham are at the front of the train or the steps for the interchange to other platforms at Earls Court on the East bound District line are in the middle of the train? I have also found that at times staff do seem to be less helpful or more reluctant to help on busy interchange stations.

I also do not find the system works as well at the rail stations within the London area many of which TFL now take responsibility for. I understand that a training programme for staff is underway and am happy to help with this if you need additional volunteers. Often if you arrive at a rail station other than by tube, you cannot find staff to assist. This is not just at the large mainline stations but at many of the smaller inner London rail stations. Getting them to ring through often doesn't work and you arrive at a station without knowing where the exit is and many still do not have tactile edging on the platforms to alert you to where the edge is.

This information would be helpful not just for someone like me but also any vision impaired visitors to London. I am sure that I, and a number of my vi colleagues would be willing to do audio, blogs or text descriptions on the website for vi users from London and abroad. If any of the above already exists, then my apologies and therefore more should be done to publicise its existence.

I would be happy to discuss any of the above further or to help to make our wonderful underground system and public travel services even better than they already are.

[REDACTED]

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Central London coffee bars and restaurants take up a lot of pavement space with outside seating areas. There should be a limit to the amount of space they can take up here and a white line should be painted around this area. The placard boards that many places have outside on the pavement are also interfering with the space. This is particularly an issue in High Holborn (between Southampton Row and Southampton Place).

Routemaster bus design is terrible. When passengers sit down, they cover the signs for disabled seats. This is the same for the underground as well. Having all of the seats the same colour is not helpful – disabled seats should be a different colour to stand out more.

The staff on the underground are very helpful.

Bicycles always jump the lights and I have been knocked down three times.

When the university students are on a break, they all just stand outside on the pavement and I can't get through. This happens a lot on Southampton place and the McDonalds in High Holborn.

Hi Sharon

Thanks for sending this out to all. I had hoped to submit a detailed report – but got wylaid by a chance to improve all of Barnets 200-odd Public Open Spaces and that took up most of my time over the last week. Will send you details later.

Comment on Richard Holmes report

Richard's report is thoroughly researched and covers a huge amopuint of information.

I feel; that if each point was numbered separately, it may impress the excellent issues raised and make a bigger impact on TfL.

My additional – or supportive comments are as follows:

1. Buses

1.1 Some drivers have been trained to stop with entrance by the person with white stick or guid dog.

1.2 Some drivers bring the bus close to the kerb edge

1.3 Some buses have sufficuently-loud announcements about the next bus stop

But many buses do not provide the above and even though I know my district extremely well, I have frequently got off at the wrong stop or have found it difficult to get off when the bus has stopped far from the kerb.

2. Underground Train Service

2.1 The staff are very pleasant, almost always well-trained, know how to guide a visually-impaired person, come quickly to “rescue” me and take me to the correct exit or, to the correct train at an interchange.

I cannot adequately express my admiration and pleasure to travel by underground train. The staff are superb

I've made several friendships with the staff. Congratulations !!

2.2 A grouse though – sometimes the platform announcements are not made. This is more than disconcerting.

It is worrying, because should there be an emergency evacuation and the public address system is not working – then you must have a plan “B” – emergency public announcements.

2.3 A connected problem arises when the platform announcement coincides with the announcement inside the carriages. Neither can be

understood. Something needs to be done so that one announcement overrides the other.

3.0 Overground Train Service

I never travel on my own by overground trains owing to the poor quality service and I would get lost.

3.1 Some station platforms have a map showing stations along the line

3.2 Usually there are no maps of stations along the line within the carriages.

3.3 Some train journeys give garbled announcements (ie very rapid and often omit en route stations)

3.4 At some railway stations there may be platform announcements for the train passengers just arriving

3.5 At some stations there may be staff to assist – but I haven't yet found them

I dare not travel independently on the overground train service as it is far too risky. I fear I would get lost in its labyrinthine network for which there seems to be no map or plan that I could follow to extricate myself.



Barnet Borough Sight Impaired Group
21 Febraury 2016

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#); [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Paul, do you have a sensory impairment? London Assembly wants to hear your views on transport
Date: 08 February 2016 16:59:21

Good afternoon

I am interested to be involved with this.

I am indeed deaf aided by a cochlear implant (but doesn't benefit me as much as I'd like it to because of a health condition I have which also has made me an electric wheelchair user. Sometimes I have trouble on buses and trains when the bus diverts or stops while on route and I don't have a clue what's happening until I notice lots of people getting off the bus. Yes I can see the visual indicator on the front of the bus but in the wheelchair space I generally have my back to the front of the bus therefore don't see the visual indicator And cannot understand the announcer neither.

Regards

Paul.

tFa member

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

On Monday, February 8, 2016, 4:46 pm, [REDACTED] [Transport for All](#) wrote:

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Dear Paul,

**Are you hard of hearing, deaf or are you visually impaired or blind?
 London Assembly wants to hear your views on transport**

The London Assembly Transport Committee is investigating the experiences of people with a sensory impairment using the London transport network. Your experiences of travel, and your thoughts on what needs to change, will help the Committee to understand what it's really like for a person with a sensory impairment to use the London transport network.

Whether you're a pedestrian, an Underground commuter, a bus passenger or prefer to travel in London's iconic black cabs, the London Assembly needs your stories and first-hand knowledge.

What do you think?

Have the staff on the Underground received enough training? Are businesses complying with the zero tolerance policy on street clutter? Have you ever had a lengthy discussion with a taxi driver before being allowed to travel with your

assistance dog? This investigation is a great opportunity for TfA members to share their examples of the best of the best and the worst of the worst.

To get involved, email transportcommittee@london.gov.uk and cc us in at lianna@transportforall.org.uk by Friday 12th February. You can also phone Rebekah Canning, from the Committee Secretariat, on [020 7983 659](tel:0207983659).

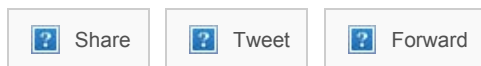
Join us at City Hall

TfA intend to give evidence to the Transport Committee at their meeting at City Hall on Wednesday 9th March; please email faryal@transportforall.org.uk if you would like to join us. The nearest station is London Bridge, which is step-free, and we can arrange for you to be met there if you would like someone to walk with you to the venue.

You can see a short online video about this investigation by [clicking here](#).

Best wishes,

Lianna Etkind, Campaigns and Outreach Officer



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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: BLIND PERSON TRAVELLING IN LONDON
Date: 09 February 2016 17:06:14

I am responding to the request for comments from blind people travelling in London.

I have been totally blind since birth. My mobility is very good, and I am a guide cane user. I often travel in London, either passing through or going to a meeting in London itself.

I live in Stockport, Cheshire, so I usually travel to Euston. When I get to Euston I usually know my way out of the station, and depending on where I am going will decide which exit I use. Sometimes I walk to Euston Square underground, to travel to Liverpool Street or Tower Hill, in order to visit parts of Essex. On my return journeys I sometimes go from Chalkwell to Barking, then get a tube to Aldgate East, and then another to Euston Square. On these routes I generally don't need any assistance.

Sometimes when I go to Essex from Liverpool Street, I will ask for assistance on my return journey, so I can be met at Liverpool Street and taken to the underground. Sometimes though this assistance is not there to meet me off the train, and I have to wait at the barrier which is annoying if timing of my connection at Euston is important.

On journeys from Liverpool Street I usually get good assistance to see me to the appropriate train to Essex, but sometimes at Euston Square, on my outward journey, before I board the tube, the staff phone through to Liverpool Street and ask if they can take a V I P. I don't like this, as it can delay my journey, and if they say they can't help me at Liverpool Street then I will go anyway, and get help if I need it from another passenger, which usually works very well.

Sometimes I go to Green Park from Euston on the Victoria Line, and again I sometimes experience this "can you take a V I P" problem, but most of the time I do get met at Green Park and am taken to the exit.

On my return journey to Stockport from Euston, I go to the Mobility Assistance office, and usually the staff are very good there, in getting me to the correct train for Stockport, but sometimes I have to wait longer than I think I should, and on occasions when this looks to be bad, I ask the staff to just give me the platform number and I will go there on my own as I am quite familiar with the layout of Euston. However, when I say I am going to go on my own, they sometimes panic, and they will then take me to the train immediately.

Occasionally I travel by bus. Although the audible announcements are very good, I often find that they are not switched on when I get on the bus, and I have to ask the driver to switch them on.

I hardly ever use taxis in London, as I find them slow and expensive.

When I am walking in London I have one serious concern. If I am standing at a crossing, and there is a lot of noise from the road I have been walking along, I cannot always hear traffic coming towards me from the side street, due to the noise of the traffic on the main road. I can usually cope with this quite well, but with the increase in the number of silent cars around, I cannot always be sure that the road is clear. I look forward to the day when all cars have to make a noise.

I hope you find this information useful, and would be happy to discuss any aspect with you.

[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Cc: [Transport for All](#)
Subject: Disabled people travel on TfL services
Date: 11 February 2016 18:52:21

Hi my name is [REDACTED] MBE I'm deaf person with learning disability, about traveling on TfL services; I feel it's not safe enough for deaf/blind with learning disability
 We have serious issues on TFL tube when the "night tube" starts in the spring this year
 1. How are you guarantee that TfL tube services improves disabled people travelling at night? For e.g people with LD will be left behind in rural areas Loughton in Essex, where no extreme emergency services, if there's serious problems?
 2. Do they have EasyRead training, how to support deaf/ blind people with LD giving information, also how to talk to them showing the way to TfL tube trains?
 3. How you prove you'll meet the Equality Act 2010(public duty) on accessibility travel in greater London on TfL services including TfL SouthWest Rail stopping services in 2017 & the extended TfL services from Liverpool Street to Paddington on CrossRail in 2018? They're serious issues for blind person with learning disability when travel on these TfL rail services?
 I would like some answers on your TfL plans for 2016 to 2019 for all disabled travellers on TfL services in Greater London
 Thank you

Sent from my iPhone

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Using London's transport system with a sensory impairment email response
Date: 12 February 2016 11:30:07

Please find below my responses to the questions being asked about using London's transport system with a sensory impairment.

(I am a Severely Visually Impaired Long Cane User. I am very experienced, skilled and very confident in travelling and using the London street environment and public transport systems.)

I think the questions below are too few and too broad and as such will not provide a full and sufficient response for meaningful analysis.

I have therefore expanded on the questions asked.

- What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

I need to break this question into separate parts in order to answer it in any useful detail.

1 Using the transport network.

Underground.

Stations with no ticket office are causing difficulties in locating assistance.

Reduced staffing levels leave some stations unable to provide support at busy times including central stations eg Oxford Circus and Euston. This is despite assurances from London Underground that staffing levels will not get worse.

Busses.

The huge variety of bus internal layouts makes using them difficult including finding seats.

The new Route Masters are awful and as I often stand at the front there are no secure hand holds. I hate using them.

The number of providers means training is widely different and I frequently experience having busses stop well [past me, opening the doors right in

or consultation.

Bus stop islands are creeping in to my area and I am deeply unhappy with this concept. Some cyclists are responsible but it is the irresponsible ones who will cause the accidents as often nearly happens at red traffic lights already as they speed through a changing light.

General issues.

Other members of the public behave and interact in a variety of ways towards us as Disabled people and behave in different ways towards people with different Impairments.

Often people try to assist or be helpful but often this is in inappropriate,, unhelpful and occasionally dangerous ways. Taking hold of me as I am about to step onto or off a moving escalator for example or as I am stepping off a bus without any warning or asking;/speaking to me.

Of course there is a limited amount that TFL can do about this but ensuring trained staff support is easily available helps and it also helps when the environment is properly accessible in the first place.

- How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

I need to break this question into separate parts in order to answer it in any useful detail.

1 How well does TFL support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

TFL provides useful information on their website for Disabled travellers. eg Journey planning for step free tube journeys and updates on disruptions, engineering works and diversions which is very helpful for travellers with Sensory Impairments in accessing the transport network.

When and where TFL works to bring transport providers and Disabled travellers including travellers with Sensory Impairments and our organisations together to discuss barriers, access and how to improve the travelling experiences of Disabled passengers TFL supports us well. EG When TFL worked with Transport for All in my locality bringing Disabled passengers into a bus garage to meet managers and, importantly, drivers and to demonstrate to drivers the difficulties we experience significant

improvements in awareness and practice can result.

When TFL supports meaningful initiatives on joint working on consultations by working with local travellers with Sensory Impairments on road traffic redevelopments and changes in their areas it supports us well.

When TFL does not effectively involve people with Sensory Impairments in consultations, this is the case with involvement with the Deaf community in particular, or does so in ways which are perceived as simply box ticking then TFL does not support us well.

I was involved in consultation on Bus Islands and it was clear that the initiative was being pushed through regardless of any views expressed due to it being a big political issue from the Mayor's office.

2 How well do Boroughs support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

I can only really answer this in respect of my own Borough, Lambeth.

The quality of support offered to travellers with Sensory Impairments in my own borough is patchy at best.

Providing information in accessible formats to residents with known access needs is not good at all. BSL interpreting is seldom if ever offered and letters are routinely sent out in standard font size.

Too much reliance is placed on our accessing poorly designed web sites for information and engagement despite the known difficulties significant numbers of us experience including having no internet access at home.

Much of the engagement that does occur is initiated by individuals with Sensory Impairments and through our own self organisation.

Engagement from the Borough is frequently too late when proposed changes to transport routes, roads, etc are being considered.

There is little or no consistency of approach in consulting us and when we do manage to get some reasonable support it isn't repeated when further changes are made and we find we have to start all over again.

The Mayor's Office and their support needs mentioning.

Currently Cyclists are clearly the number 1 priority;. I have no problem with promoting and supporting cycling except when it results in a network that is dangerous to pedestrians. Bus stop Islands are dangerous and obviously so. They should be scrapped before someone is seriously injured or killed. Shared surfaces are dangerous and make places no go areas for many including Visually Impaired people. They are a fashionable idea in planners minds but stupid in reality.

3 How well do rail providers support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

Support on London Underground is absolutely excellent. As a regular and frequent traveller who uses the underground network widely and frequently I find staff to be highly efficient and professional. Nearly all go the extra mile, Kings Cross staff regularly support Visually Impaired travellers to get right to the front door of the RNIB on Judd Street for example. I commute daily between Brixton and Vauxhall and staff know me by name and without exception provide me with an amazing service. Travelling to work is a pleasure even during the busiest times. My huge thanks to all my regular friends at both stations. Five star assistance.

Staff offer to support me learn station layouts by my coming down there at quiet times so I can walk around with their support learning routes so I can then travel unassisted. Marvellous! (Thanks Charlene at Stockwell and Lianna at Angel to name just two.)

The Victoria Line shows how well the Underground can be. Step free (except when the lift is out of use), raised platform levels, clear announcements including which side the doors will open. This all benefits everyone and shouldn't be seen as simply Disability related. Ditto the new Central Line trains.

Now we're losing station ticket office staff and despite assurances to the contrary staffing levels are worse. Finding no staff available to meet me off a train at busy stations like Euston or Oxford Circus isn't unusual. We're going backwards. Travelling when you're Blind is all about being confident and a bad experience can quickly result in a person finding using the network too stressful.

Overground support is exactly the opposite. As above in the first question, I have little positive to say and avoid the overground as much as possible.

Station platforms are frequently hazardous especially when they are curved which means wide gaps between platform and train.

Way too many stations do not have step free access.

Unstaffed stations are totally inaccessible.

Steps have edges which overhang the risers and are trip hazards.

On occasions when I have requested assistance at my destination it has not materialised. This is not just unhelpful but deeply unnerving when there is a four foot drop onto rail lines each side of you and you are trying to work out how to get off the platform.

Train announcements are often difficult or impossible to hear risking missing

stops.

Locating push button door openers has caused me to miss my stop on more than one occasion.

4 How well do bus providers support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

Not nearly well enough.

It is clear that a major barrier is simply the sheer number of provider companies. This means any consistency of approach, as we have on the Underground, is next to impossible.

Renationalise the bus network. It is a public service and should be run by a public provider in the interests of the public.

There are way too many different bus designs, Remembering the layout of each type is next to impossible. Many have seats high up, very low down and/or all right at the rear of the bus.

Mostly I just stand at the front even on long journeys such as from Brixton to Euston on the 59 route. The seats on these busses don't even start until you are halfway down the bus. If it is even slightly busy this is next to impossible to negotiate safely.

The new Route masters are awful. I now avoid the 159 route. Where are you meant to hold on if you stand towards the front of the bus:?

How do you know which door you have got on?

The I Bus audio announcements gets a big thumbs up and is excellent. Deaf travellers would like additional visual displays though.

Driver training is clearly still a problem. See my comments in the first question above.

Drivers needing to work to tight timetables means they are under pressure which can result in them "failing to see Wheelchair users, (putting ramps out and in takes time).

When two or three busses stop at one stop as a Visually Impaired person I can't tell what the back two are or get to them and then the bus at the back is off and I miss it. I use the bus checker app and so know this happens frequently at peak times. The rear bus can be around 20 meters or more away from the actual stop but "doesn't notice" me waving my cane as it speeds away behind the one(s) in front. (This happened this morning, 4 busses arrived at once and mine was at the rear. That's a very long way from the stop itself. It left without stopping at the actual stop and I had to wait for the next one. This isn't unusual.)

- How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

Removing Bus stop Islands and moving away from supporting shared surfaces. Scrapping level road surfaces and pavements at and around box junctions.

Pushing for consistency of bus internal layouts and scrapping the new route master busses.

Working with London Underground to increase the announcements on tube trains informing passengers which side the doors will open and ensuring all stations have step free access especially when major reconstruction work is carried out eg at Tottenham Court Road which reopened without step free access.

Pressing for the reintroduction of ticket offices and staff.

Not colluding with a political agenda from the Mayor's office to relegate pedestrians, public transport users and Disabled travellers into third class in transport priorities.

Promoting and providing Disability Awareness training, including Sensory Impairment awareness, training for staff and managers of public transport providers and for that training to be conducted by Disabled Peoples Organisations such as Inclusion London and/or Transport for All.

Ensuring full and meaningful consultation on traffic and transport network changes includes Disabled people and our representative organisations at the earliest stage and is accessible including in providing tactile representations of plans and changes.

Continuing to work on digital support for audio wayfinding in underground stations.



Member of Transport for All

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Blind and partially sighted people travelling in London
Date: 09 February 2016 15:22:46

Good afternoon,

I would like the opportunity to discuss with the committee on the 09th March the points listed below:-

1. New buses to have fitted external speakers at the entrance doors, so passengers are aware the number of the bus and destination e.g. 131 Tooting Broadway. This will avoid VI people jumping on and asking the driver. This system is used on the tram link from Wimbledon.
2. On all platforms at the bottom of stairs or the entrance to the platform the number of the platform is painted on the floor in a contrast colour between 4 and 6 foot. This to include mainline stations as well.
3. Also at the bottom of the stairs should be the location of the information hub which you press to speak to somebody. The system works well but the location of the them can be anywhere along the platform therefore difficult to locate if you are VI.
4. The problem is when you are approaching ticket barriers at all stations. If this could be standardised so that the left hand side is always "in" and when exiting the station the left hand side is always "out". The large disk which you swipe your freedom pass/oyster card on could be lit up in a bright fluorescent yellow colour when you approach them. Therefore, the ones not lit up would indicate they are exit only. This would not only greatly help what majority of people living with sight loss but also the elder generation. It is impossible for VI people to see a small green light.

I must take this opportunity to congratulate you on the service that you now provide at ticket barriers where staff members will escort you down to the right platform and ensure you are on the correct train. This is an invaluable service which I have found extremely useful.

I look forward to seeing you on the 09th March.

Warmest regards,
Roy

[REDACTED] MBE
 Director of Sport Development

[REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

E: roy.smith@metroblindsport.org

www.metroblindsport.org

(Free membership for under 18's-join online)

www.lvif.co.uk

www.pocklington-trust.org.uk

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Staff members from CLARITY

1. What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

Shared space environments where they get rid of pavements are the most difficult to navigate as you can't tell whether you're in the road or not. Guide dogs are trained to walk quite centrally as well so this can be an issue.

Currently the tube station at Walthamstow is undergoing refurbishments and during peak times the escalators are only switched on to go down. One person who works at CLARITY leaves very early in the morning in order to get there before the escalators are switched to go down so that he doesn't have to climb the stairs as he finds this very difficult. He gets to Walthamstow for 6.30am.

2. How well do TfL, support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

Tube staff are brilliant, I would give them 10 out of 10. They really go out of their way to help you and I think people living in London are really lucky to have this network.

Since TfL have taken over the Overground station at Walthamstow there are much more staff around which makes it safer as they are very helpful.

Talking bus stops (as being piloted in Edinburgh) could be a really good idea. I use the app 'Next Buses' which cost about £2.20 which is helpful. I found the TfL app to be a bit more problematic on the iPhone.

Announcements on buses are now much easier, only rarely are there problems with this (the announcements playing the for the wrong direction).

3. How could TfL and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

Wheelchair access to all stations would be the dream. Stations where there is a lack of staff means that there are more problems for sensory impaired people. If there were to be a reduction in staff at stations, this would be worrying.

The changes to Kings Cross station have made it very difficult to navigate for visually impaired. As it is now so wide, it is hard to get a sense of where you are.

1. Bus stops can be difficult to navigate. Especially if you are alone and there are several buses lined up. The public are not always very helpful. They are piloting talking bus stops somewhere and I think this would be really helpful to get around.
2. The staff on the underground have always been very helpful. No problems at all with the staff, they are brilliant.
3. Talking bus stops would be great, more announcements at stations and more staff available would be the things TfL could improve. When staff are lacking, you can feel very vulnerable.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Travelling with the sensory impairment
Date: 21 January 2016 16:25:10

Afternoon,

I am a regular traveller by using South West trains.

When there are any delays eg someone being hit by the train or similar to that event, I don't know what it is going on. It takes a while before the train information are updated.

If I'm travelling on the train I do not know the reason that the train will arrive at my arrival station if the train is being delayed. There is nothing to say on the visual information inside the coach.

Regards
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Sensory Impairment and use public transport
Date: 08 February 2016 20:24:36

Hello,

I am an active member of Transport for All and understand you are seeking people with sensory impairments who use public transport.

I lost my right visual field and also suffered right-sided hearing loss and visual difficulties in my left eye as well, from a stroke suffered in late February 2015. Prior to that, another disability (partial epileptic seizures triggered by certain frequencies and rhythms of sound) resulting from a brain tumour, required some dependence on tube station personnel when I needed to sit quietly and away from the noise and bustle of a station until the aura preceding the seizure had passed and I was safe to continue my journey.

With the effect of the stroke on my hearing, I am having fewer seizures, but am still vulnerable to them. For instance, I suffered a seizure in my own flat this morning from the buzzing sound of tree trimmers in the neighbourhood. It's hard to get dressed quickly to get out when you can't control the movements in your arms! I had planned a nice lie-in this morning.

Anyway.....

My vision in the left eye does not respond normally or quickly to changes in the light - so that when I step onto the platform from the tube, into a slightly different level of lighting, I have a very hard time seeing where I am going. It can be frightening in a crowd of people walking toward me, pulling suitcases which I can't see very well and over which I am likely to trip.

My favourite station at the moment is Hyde Park Corner at quiet times of the day when the escalator and platform are empty and I won't get shoved and bumped.

If the escalator is broken, I can't use the station because I can't walk down all those stairs.

I knew someone who was pushed off the crowded platform into the path of an oncoming train at Kings Cross a few years ago. That person was purposely pushed by someone with problems. The fear of being accidentally bumped by someone I don't see or slipping when I try to walk around a crowd of people blocking the platform when I can't see very well....

You get my drift. I'm in a state of fear much of the time which affects me when I arrive where I'm going - instead of just being happy to be there, I'm more stressed and that's not the way I want to live or the way I want to greet people.

There have been times I have asked station personnel to please walk me down the stairs to the platform because I don't think I can get there on my own. Walking across a bunch of people to get to the stairs or escalator when they are going the opposite direction or at an angle to me (Holborn...) and they don't know I can't see them.... It's really frightening. And then to walk out onto the crowded street in that state of adrenaline-pumping fear... It's not a good thing.

I've gotten on the wrong train because I didn't read the notice on the front correctly and gotten on trains going the wrong direction. I have lived in London a long time. I didn't do things like that before.

I have trouble hearing announcements sometimes and have to ask another passenger or someone on the platform. London being the most international city in the world, or close enough to the most - I often find the person I've asked for help with the announcement doesn't speak English and didn't understand it either.

I don't look any different than I did before the stroke. People always say to me, "But you

don't LOOK like someone who can't see." Not sure what visually impaired people are supposed to look like - but if people would watch me closely, they could tell I can't see. People move their heads differently when they can't see very well. They can't just move their eyes to scan the landscape. I tend to look downward - amazing how much litter people leave on the footpath and bottles and dangerous items on the stairs in tube stations.

With the loss of my right visual field, I have lost my depth perception. With the loss of hearing on the right, I can't hear and also can't tell where a sound is coming from. With the loss of normal pupillary response, when I step onto the platform or out of the sunlight into the station or change lighting sources, I am temporarily blinded - and nobody can tell.

I suffer loss of balance in low light so I'm a bit stumbly.

This is a nightmare for me but I refuse to sit home and hide under the bed. I need to go where I need to go and so I'm out there using public transport almost every day - and often terrified out of my wits in doing so. I depend on good station staff - reliable and knowledgeable and clearly visible station staff. With my hearing and also with the epilepsy, I can't use those "help points".

I don't see the computer screen very well - can only see part of it as I type this so can't really edit what I've written.

Not sure if this is the sort or format of information you wanted. I have hidden impairments unless someone is watching closely and most people in a crowded busy city don't have the time or attention span to watch a stranger moving slowly on the stairs, clinging to the handrail. I'm sure a lot of people wish I would just hurry up and wonder why I'm moving so slowly. I don't mean to. I just don't want to fall.

I need to hold onto the rail with my right hand. Shortly after the stroke, proud that I was out and about again, I was slowly walking down the stairs into a tube station, clinging to the handrail with my right hand. It wasn't crowded. A nasty young man shouted across the staircase at me that I should have used the handrail on the left. It really upset me.

Is this the sort of information you wanted? Anything I can do to help with regard to hidden disabilities and those of us who often need the help of station personnel or would feel more confident knowing where to find them -

It's really scary using stairs in rush hour - and if I knew there were lifts and where they are, I would feel a lot more confident using the tube. When I have tried to use them in the past, I found they were broken so I sort of gave up trying but I need them more now and need to know they're there and working well and where to find them.

Thank you. Anything I can do to help, please ask me.

_____, _____, _____

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