

Chair of the Transport Committee

Dr Alison Moore AM

Londonwide London Assembly Member



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4 September 2020

Paul Plummer

Chief Executive, Rail Delivery Group

2nd Floor, 200 Aldersgate St

London EC1A 4HD

(By email)

Dear Paul,

Impact of COVID-19 on London's Transport Network

On 15 June 2020, the London Assembly Transport Committee held a meeting with Transport for London (TfL) to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on London's transport network. The Committee is aware of the scale and complexity of the COVID-19 crisis, and how this has affected, and continues to affect, how people live and move around the capital.

Rail Delivery Group (RDG) members play a crucial role in London's transport network, particularly at key interchanges. We commend RDG members' work to help maintain transport services during the first few months of the crisis, and for the continued efforts to keep rail staff and Londoners safe in their essential journeys.

As such, several pertinent areas arose during the Committee's June meeting that would greatly benefit from RDG's insight. This would deepen the Committee's understanding of the pandemic's impact on London's transport network, particularly given that demand on rail services is anticipated to increase considerably as lockdown restrictions continue to be eased.

Ensuring safety across London's transport network

We are aware that the RDG has helped the rail industry implement a range of measures to ensure the safety of the network during COVID-19, and welcome this. At the June meeting, the Committee was informed that the RDG is "taking a lead... to ensure that we have consistency across the rail industry and make sure that we follow Public Health England

(PHE) advice and also apply it in a practical way so that we can maintain those essential, safety-critical roles.”¹

The requirement for passengers to wear face coverings on public transport became mandatory on 15 June 2020 and is being enforced on all transport services, and compliance is being enforced by British Transport Police. Passengers who refuse to wear a face covering can be fined up to £100 for noncompliance. Passengers can also be barred from travelling. With the recent change in guidance, and with expected rises in passenger numbers, the Committee is concerned about the safety risks posed to frontline workers monitoring compliance. **It would be helpful for the Committee if you could provide any details from your membership that operate in London relating to:**

- **The current levels of compliance in the wearing of face masks, and how this has changed since they were made mandatory on 15 June;**
- **How they are currently ensuring passenger compliance, and their plans to maintain this as passenger numbers increase; and,**
- **Any measures to ensure the safety of workers monitoring compliance.**

We are conscious that BAME members of society in particular, as well as men and older people, are disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The report from Public Health England released on 16 June 2020, *Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups*, for instance, highlighted the disproportionate mortality rate among black and Asian men. In Deputy Mayor for Transport, Heidi Alexander’s opening remarks to the Committee on 15 June 2020, she drew our attention to those frontline transport workers across the TfL network and rail network who have lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic.² TfL staff have been required by the Mayor of London to conduct self-report risk assessments to help those who are disproportionately affected by COVID-19. **The Committee would welcome information about any measures that RDG members are taking to ensure the safety of BAME colleagues.**

Managing key transport interchanges

Despite the safety practices implemented across London’s transport network, we recognise that interchange stations can pose difficulties with inconsistencies in messaging and safety measures between TfL and other railway operating companies. On 15 June 2020 the Committee was informed that there has been frequent communication and collaboration with The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport, as well as senior representatives at Network Rail and National Rail members of the RDG to discuss TfL and Department for Transport (DfT) matters during the pandemic.³ **Considering the large number of interchange stations across the capital, the Committee would value any information you can provide about:**

- **Any measures your members have put in place to ensure continuity of messaging and to guarantee that safety remains high across all interchanges;**

¹ London Assembly Transport Committee (15 June 2020), *Item 9 – Impact of COVID-19 on London’s Transport Network*, <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/b19239/Draft%20Minutes%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20COVID-19%20and%20Londons%20Transport%20Network%20Monday%2015-Jun-2020%2014.00%20Tran.pdf?T=9>, pg. 29.

² London Assembly Transport Committee (15 June 2020), *Item 9 – Impact of COVID-19 on London’s Transport Network*, pg.1.

³ Ibid, pg.6.

- Any innovations that your members have introduced to help passengers use the train network safely at this time;
- How consideration is given to the safety and access needs of passengers with disabilities and sensory impairments, including, but not limited to, signage, messaging and direct assistance measures in the context of social distancing; and,
- What work your members have undertaken with Network Rail to help manage demand and passenger flow in ways that maintain social distancing.

There are additional measures that could be considered by DfT, TfL and train operating companies to assist passengers to choose alternative routes with greater carriage space to help ensure social distancing as passenger numbers increase over the coming weeks and months. For instance, as the Committee identified during its investigation into improving the accessibility of public transport in London,⁴ raising awareness of the availability of Thameslink would open up a significant part of the transport network for everyone, in particular for disabled and older passengers. This could be achieved by TfL adding Thameslink to the Tube Map. Also, DfT could consider incorporating the Southeastern High Speed route between St Pancras International and Stratford International in the Travelcard zonal system. As pointed out by London TravelWatch, this would mean a lower fare for passengers wanting to travel on the route from Stratford to central and West London, and so could help ease the pressure on the Central and Jubilee lines.

The Committee appreciates any support you can give to our ongoing investigation. **We would appreciate a response by 30 September 2020.** Please contact Haley Bowcock (haley.bowcock@london.gov.uk), Senior Policy Adviser, if you have any questions about the contents of this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Moore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Alison Moore AM
Chair, Transport Committee

⁴ London Assembly Transport Committee, 2020: [From Step-Free to Stress-Free: Accessible and inclusive transport in London](#)