

**Transport Committee
9 September 2010**

Transcript of Item 7: Accessibility on the Transport Network

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): We now move on to our second meeting on accessibility on the transport network in London. Last time we heard principally from the passengers and from the representatives of organisations of disabled people. Today we have the operators in to talk about accessibility on all of our transport system.

I am particularly grateful to David Sindall from the Train Operators and from Gary Tordoff from Network Rail for coming in and also, as ever, to our colleagues from Transport for London. Geoff in charge of the trains, Mike from the buses and streets and, again, Richard from the Underground so thank you. I think Ian Brown from TfL Rail was intending to be here as well but ...

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): He offers his apologies.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Thank you very much for that. I do not know if you have seen the entire document we have got colleagues, but we have had some fantastically interesting and well-informed submissions from individuals and organisations right the way across London. I think we will be producing, I hope, a valuable report. There has been a fantastic amount of work gone into this, with some very, very interesting stuff.

Before I get my colleagues to quiz you on your various services and what your plans and arrangements are at the moment, can I just come in with, I guess, a corporate question. I was looking at some of the extensive information that TfL very kindly provided for us and what struck me was just how few interchanges we have in London where a number of modes meet which are completely and utterly accessible. It made me want to ask the lead question of: how do you plan together as services within London and within TfL to make sure that we have got an integrated approach to delivering a more accessible transport network?

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): From our side, we have done really quite a lot of work as part of the Mayor's Transport Strategy and then the subsequent work streams after that to look at the current distribution of step-free stations, what work we expect to be delivered over the next few years as part of the Department for Transport's (DfT) funded Access for All, stuff that we are funding - TfL that is - through our business plan. I think the Scrutiny Manager at the very least, maybe yourselves, have seen a large set of slides, which is quite involved and has lots of colourful graphics which sets out where all the stations are and where the geographical distribution looks skewed across all different parts of London.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Yes, Geoff the question was about how you work together.

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): First off, this gives you a view about National Rail and London Underground together. What one observes is that National Rail, for example, has better accessibility in the centre than London Underground and quite often vice versa: the Underground has a relative weight of certain accessible stations in the suburbs. From that you can then go forward and say, “Given where we know the trip is going to and from, what are the optimum distribution stations to take forward for accessibility thereafter?” That informs our view of which stations we would like the Department to fund for National Rail and which stations we would like to fund through the TfL business plan. So, we work with colleagues from Network Rail, from the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), from the rest of the railway industry, with the Department to put forward candidate stations for future phases for Access for All and inform our work through the TfL business plan. That is how it works together in conceptual terms.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): What about working together, for example, with London Buses for the physical improvements at interchanges with stations; is there co-ordinated planning and do you influence each other’s priorities of what gets done where?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, certainly if you look at individual schemes - Victoria Station is probably an example -there will be a cross-functional, cross-modal project looking at improvements that have been made at Victoria Station.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): That is at project level. When you are looking across London and the trips that people want to make, how do you allocate resources together to make sure that if we are going to have a cracking accessible station at one location, that the bus service is completely accessible to and from that station?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, clearly the big investment is being driven whether it is an Underground or a rail project. We certainly would be aware of those and we would work with the appropriate mode to see what bus improvements could be made on the back of that. Generally the bus improvements are going to be a lot more low cost. It might be a case of moving some stops or making the stops locally to the station.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): So you end up as the tail being wagged by the heavy rail dog, as it were.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Well, not the tail, it is purely driven by a bigger investment project and we need to make sure we are tied into it, and we are on a local basis.

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): The helpful thing is; all the bus routes have vehicles that are accessible and the bus stops themselves – is it about half?

Mike Weston (Operations Direct for Surface Transport, TfL): About half are accessible.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Can I just ask our colleagues from National Rail how you co-ordinate with London Buses on accessibility.

David Sindall (Head of Disability and Inclusion, Association of Train Operating Companies):

I think it is fair to say that there is room for improvement there, if we are going to be honest with you. Gary Tordoff and I have regular communication around, for example, the railway programme with our colleagues at DfT. One of the frustrations I think that we get from the passengers is a lack of co-ordination between different transport modes and so forth. We can make train services more accessible, we can make stations more accessible but there is still a gap between people getting from their home to the station.

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): I think it is also interesting that there are several different ways in which integrated accessibility is planned. There is the high level, where we have got a big programme that is government funded. The railway system goes in and then, as you have described, the bus network fits around it. Then you have the bottom-up way where Access for All has been developed, where we have specific sites that are not selected by us, that are selected by DfT, and what we then do is we consult with all stakeholders to try to ensure that what we do in a particular station at least has the opportunity to be integrated. I suspect in many cases, what will happen is because the funding streams are not in place to do that, it never happens. The intent is there, but there is not necessarily the funding streams, from the bottom up to do that.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): OK, so we have hit the big problem there I think.

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): There is one other element that is worthy of mention and that is a process called Station Travel Planning. It is a bit of jargon but what it means is National Rail's efforts to make individual stations more accessible, and I am using the broad definition of the word. That can mean everything from step-free routes through to cycle parking, through to where the bus route and bus stops are and so on and so forth. That is something that is built into individual rail franchises which means that you will not find it all the way round London, just the ones which have been done relatively recently, but it is a work in progress.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): So, there is not a corporate vision within TfL of which projects should be done cross mode and where, and which is disability access driven?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I would say that there is, Val. Obviously I hear the views of our colleagues from Network Rail and ATOC but there is always going to be room for improvement. Actually I do think the Mayor's Transport Strategy, and the work that goes in to support that, does provide a forum and a process by which the plans of any individual mode are brought together and subjected to an overview to ensure that there is genuine integration. Integration may not be immediate; of course, we are often doing the transport projects that play out over many, many years. It may, therefore, seem at any one point in time, "Well hang on a minute, this bit is successful, this bit is not" but actually there is very much an overarching review done to ensure that we do not end up with something that simply does not maximise the combined opportunity. To make the greatest value of the investment we absolutely do have to ensure that we are providing integrated accessible interchanges.

I think you are right; we start from a place where history has not given us particularly accessible interchanges. That is why the investment is now focused very much towards these larger significant

interchanges where they will make the greatest difference. King's Cross Station has its final lift on the Underground side coming into service within the next two to three weeks. We will then, combined with the work that is being done upstairs and is going upstairs, have a much greatly improved interchange. I think that is what we are going to see the investment go towards in the future.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): OK, I think I should probably let you talk a bit more about your specific plans now. I guess one of the things that helps unify our planning is that we are all worried about 2012 and making sure that people coming for the Paralympic Games get the best possible experience. Do each of you want to say something about your priorities for improving access in advance of the 2012 Games.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Obviously, we are very grateful for the opportunity to set out our plans and thank you for the opportunity to come back having had the earlier session. Clearly, as partly said in the previous answer, the Underground is a pretty inaccessible network to start with because of the history at a time when the Underground was built, little thought was given to accessibility. We have made significant progress over the last decade or so and we have got very clear plans to provide a level of accessibility to support both the Olympic Games and the needs of London beyond that. We have now got 61 stations that are step-free. That includes a number of stations that are key to the Olympic Games; that includes Stratford Station (where further improvements are being made and which is already step-free), North Greenwich Station, Southfields Station (which, of course, recently had a lift installed), Earl's Court Station, Wembley Park Station, and King's Cross Station, as I mentioned, which will become step-free to all platforms in the next two to three weeks.

We have ahead between now and summer 2012 some other additional key stations where step-free work will complete at Green Park step free, which is both a key station in its own right for the Games but also provides a sort of hub for accessible travel across London centred on the West End. We have improvements at Blackfriars and Farringdon stations where step-free access is being introduced there as part of the Thameslink project. So, we are seeing incremental material improvement to step-free access. We are also, of course, seeing over the next few years new trains coming to the Underground that will make a very big difference in terms of the accessibility of train service itself. We have ten trains or so now running on the Victoria line; we have the first of the brand new (trains running on the Metropolitan line, which is a massive difference compared with the 50-year-old trains that it will be replacing over the next 18 months. Of course, we are making other investments to improve the quality of the experience we have: much improved information systems; we have much improved colour contrast at all the stations that we have modernised; we have tactile strips on platforms and things of that sort that will all contribute to making the network more accessible.

Critically, of course, it is also about staff; we have, I believe, some of the highest performing staff in any transport system in terms of providing assistance to disabled people and others. It is also about information provision and we are working closely with the Olympic Delivery Authority [ODA] to make sure that we provide the best possible information provision for accessible travel for the Games as well.

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): About a third of London's 300 stations are step-free in terms of National Rail. Important for the Olympics, in particular, is the Docklands Light Railway. That has the advantage of having been built step-free to begin with so that makes narrowing

my task that bit easier in that regard. With respect of the London Overground, then that is obviously has a big role with respect to the Olympics going as it does towards the Olympic Park. There are lots of station projects happening at the moment: we have Stratford; we also expect Hackney Central Station, Highbury Station, and the new East London line stations recently opened in the last six months.

Also, as part of the stations, we are refurbishing them all which will, as Richard [Parry] mentioned, take into account the sorts of features you would expect at accessible stations, tactile paving and colour contrasts and all those sort of good things. The new trains have made a big difference and obviously are to standard of course, our staff on London Overground will be trained in all the necessary disability awareness and I'll also point towards TfL's general efforts in pre-journey planning available in various formats, hard copy on the Web and audio as well.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): OK, probably from a physical perspective, buses are in a, probably, far, far better position. The bus network as everybody is, I am sure, aware, low-floor wheelchair accessible since 2005 - we are ahead of legislation and the rest of country. Probably, looking towards what we need to achieve and what we will achieve by 2012, there are two or three significant areas of improvement. One will be the opportunity to use iBus data and for the passengers to be able, by 2012, to access route stop information and next stop prediction for buses by 2012 via mobile phones, via the internet etc, that will be huge improvement in terms of access to information.

The countdown replacement; we will provide a more reliable signage system and a clearer signage system and also increase the numbers by about 600 to about 2,500 stops. The bus stop accessibility programme is currently at 50 per cent, but it does not mean that all the other stops are not inaccessible they just do not meet our full criteria of accessibility. We need to make sure that during the next couple of years that programme, as it rolls out, is targeted at the places where it will get the maximum benefit for 2012, which we will do. Then, probably, driver training in terms of looking at how we can give the drivers the tools to deal with more unfamiliar passengers that we will have. How we can give them the tools to give that information to a lot more strangers than they would normally be subjected to Those are probably the three key areas of accessibility, better electronic information and the roll out of iBus – that passengers can access - and then driver training in terms of dealing with strangers and visitors to London.

David Sindall (Head of Disability and Inclusion, Association of Train Operating Companies): For the Train Operators, I think that we recognise that the Games in 2012 provide a unique opportunity in that we can help to ensure that people move from different modes of transport, perhaps road transport at the moment, where many disabled people are over dependent on road transport and start to make more rail journeys so that disabled and older people actually feel that rail is a viable alternative. In order for that to happen, as well as the infrastructure projects that Geoff [Hobbs] has mentioned, we also have to look at improving at how we deliver passenger assistance, we have to maximise the utilisation of funding streams such as DfT's Small Schemes Funding Scheme, which has supported Train Operating Companies quite well in helping to develop their initiatives as well. We have to basically improve our dialogue with our stakeholders out there as well and with older people representative organisations and with disabled people's organisations across London too and actually learn quite quickly where improvements need to be made. We have to ensure that those key

priority infrastructure projects that are taking place through the railway, through all programmes are actually completed on time.

Jennette Arnold (AM): Staying with the Underground, I would just like to start by just asking if there are any anticipated cuts to funding, and will you be applying quality impact assessments on those plans? If you are, can that documentation be shared with this Committee because, I think, that would be the starting point of that. One would assume that you have been using Quality Impact Assessments as a the tool all along but you might well need to now go back to that if you are going to be planning or looking to factor any more cuts in this area, so that is the first thing.

The other thing I would like to talk to you about and is Stratford International Station because a lot of you have mentioned that. Personally, we went on a visit and saw exactly what a number of people have complained to us about such as the gaps between the train and platforms, which in some instances are so wide that it takes at least two people to help someone in a wheelchair from platform to train. Now that cannot go on; certainly because you are expecting quite a number of wheelchair users through that major station. Also, I don't know whether you are aware of the structural problems with some lifts there, but it seems to me what the planning has been focused on around one wheelchair user at a time and not about a number of wheelchair users or a wheelchair user with a carer; so the waiting in the facilities that you are providing is just inadequate. Now, if you do not have the information about that do not answer today, but what we would like is for you to explore all these areas and come back to us.

From our experience we actually saw that when somebody with a new wheelchair and a carer was in a particular lift, that lift then refused to move. That was just an example. We believe that we could actually identify a number of more issues. So, things are not looking good there at the moment given that in under two years there is going to be a huge number of disabled people going through that major station.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Well, I will deal with all three in order, Jennette. Firstly, we are obliged under the relevant legislation to produce an Equality Impact Assessment for specific changes that we are making. So, I can assure you that all the projects that we undertake are subject to that and produce an Equality Impact Assessment for each of them and I do not think that that is something that is kept secret. So, subject to going about it in the right way, I am sure we can provide them to you. That is a commitment I can make. Certainly we do what we are obliged to in that regard and indeed, of course, we want to make sure that we do deliver projects that are genuinely about improving accessibility and wider equality where we can.

With regard to Stratford Station, there are a couple of observations and I am happy to follow up with you on the detail. First thing to say is with regards to accessible use at Stratford, we on the Underground would always recommend the Jubilee line as the route to get to Stratford where possible. It is, of course, the line that serves many other step-free stations and is step-free from the platform to the train by design. I know that the Central line, for example, is less easy to move from the platform to the train because of the history of when that was built many, many years ago, but we, in general, would not recommend people to use the Central line anyway. In fact, the Central line is relatively poorly served by other step-free stations, certainly from central London. So, it is partly about the overall recommendation that we make.

I would say with regards to the Central line itself, we did of course just in the last few weeks open another platform to serve the Central line from mezzanine side of Stratford. Whilst that, again, may not be perfect it certainly will be easier to access the Central line from that platform than it is from the old platform that I know has a significant step and gap. So where possible, and certainly from central London, it is much easier to use the Jubilee line to access Stratford.

With regard to the lift, as you know, the improvements at Stratford Station does include additional lift capacity. Additional lifts are being introduced at Stratford as part of the investment that the ODA is making so the issue of capacity with regards to the lifts is recognised; however, the observation that you are making about the capacity of a specific lift is something that we should certainly follow up. By providing added lift capacity, we have tried to work with the ODA to ensure that we do therefore have the ability to move the people that we will need to move for the Olympics and the Paralympics, but obviously we need to make sure that is absolutely the case.

Jennette Arnold (AM): What I think my colleagues would like to see a minimum standard and that standard would start where lifts could accommodate the needs of someone with their carer so that they do not have to go looking for the one lift that will accommodate them; that just does not work. When you talked about the Equality Impact Assessment, I would have hoped that that then fits in with other organisations' work as well.

Just briefly, you said you are going to produce the advice in terms of how to get to the Olympics. Will there be a comprehensive guidance? Some people will be coming from the Overground, from National Rail, so do you have plans to produce a comprehensive disability access plan for the Games and when will you start to do that work?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Well, I think the short answer, and perhaps I can write to confirm this, is that we are already working with the ODA to make sure that happens.

Jennette Arnold (AM): So, it is the ODA to produce that comprehensive plan?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Well, I think it is us doing it together to be honest. What we do not want to do is have TfL do something and the ODA do something slightly different.

Jennette Arnold (AM): Could you say who is leading on that comprehensive plan?

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): David, did you want to come in on this point?

David Sindall (Head of Disability and Inclusion, Association of Train Operating Companies): Yes, the ODA is taking responsibility for leading in this area. We had a meeting with the train operators, and the ODA transport co-ordinator Tuesday this week. Overall we met most of the 23 train operators from around Great Britain were in the room. Plans are developing and there is, again, accessibility transport network as well. We are mindful that we have to get the plan right; we have to get the information right as well. Public transport has this huge role to play in making sure

that the Games are a success, but the planning is in hand and the information channels that we are looking to developing as well are being explored. This way we can make sure that people coming to the Games actually use the best transport system that meets certain needs and can plan their journeys in advance as well. I believe there is a commitment from the ODA that everybody travelling to these Games will have an individual transport plan. We are mindful of that but we are working towards it.

Jennette Arnold (AM): What is the timescale? So can that work be shared with us at a preliminary stage so that we can get a sense of reassurance that that is meeting the queries we are picking up?

David Sindall (Head of Disability and Inclusion, Association of Train Operating Companies): I think that is a question for the ODA but with your permission I will take that away to my colleagues at the ODA.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Well, in fact we have got the ODA coming in November 2010 and so we need to make sure that we follow up on the disability issues.

Jennette Arnold (AM): Then just quickly if I could move away from Stratford to other local areas, because I am not sure how you factored in local areas of interest across London. Just staying with north London for a moment, and I was just looking at issues to do with Camden; that is, if you like, an attractive centre that people will want to go to. Well, are you going to be taking a sort of Barcelona approach where the cobbles will be covered over; I do not know whose responsibility this will be but have you done mapping to see where there will have to be extra litigation given and are you working with boroughs like Camden and elsewhere to ensure that things like toilets, where cobbles, where there currently is inadequate step-free access, is somebody working on that plan across London?

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): The ODA has a transport plan that sounds like a question that is best answered by your ODA witnesses in November 2010. They will know quite a lot about where they expect the people to go to and from the Games. With Camden in particular, Camden Road Station has an Access for All scheme in preparation with colleagues from Network Rail.

Jennette Arnold (AM): So, are you working with those particular boroughs to actually ensure that by the time that ODA produces their plan all the work that you could have done, will have been done; that is basically what I am asking?

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): The ODA is in the lead, they are in consultation with just about everybody you could ever possibly imagine in and around London and well beyond. I would leave it up to them to give you a definitive answer but I would be very surprised if they were not.

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): In terms of the access for all works at stations, particularly Camden, there is quite a specific remit from the Department for Transport. The remit is to actually do works from the station entrance using the main entrance to get you to platforms where are trains are. Once you get to that boundary, it goes a little back to what we talked about before, there is not a remit for us to do more work although we could if we were asked to do so; but I suspect the ODA have their own plans anyway.

Jennette Arnold (AM): Well, all this is up in the air because you have not been asked.

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): I think what has happened is we have been given a specific remit of things that we have been asked to do; this particular remit has many sides and I think the view is if we start to expand on that that we might confuse matters and I can understand why.

In terms of accessibility around the station, we are not best placed and I do not think it is Network Rail to decide what is the right thing to do beyond the confines of the station.

Jennette Arnold (AM): So, we have got a lot of questions for the ODA when we meet them in November 2010.

James Cleverly (AM): Going back to one of the things you touched upon earlier on which is about the integration of accessibility for your services, when we went on a site visit with a number of disabled people a real eye-opener for me was that whilst quite often the big ticket items were in place - lifts and that kind of stuff - the signage to and from those was actually appalling. So, what we found is that the really expensive bit of the business had been put in place but it was being under-utilised because where there was a lift tucked around the corner there was no sign directing you onto that lift. The lift was being unused and potential disabled passengers were left stranded or inconvenienced. The other thing that struck me, looking at this integration, was who has responsibility for signage within the Underground network highlighting people to accessibility to the surface rail network or to buses etc?

The final point of this question is where we have stations and facilities where either because of cost or time step-free accessibility is not going to be on the immediate agenda, how do we sign-post people to near and convenient alternatives? I am thinking, for example, where we have stations like Westminster Station and soon to be Green Park Station. Well, if you know, that is great but if you do not know and you are at a station nearby, what is there to say, "This station is not accessible; however, a short trip above ground or perhaps a short taxi ride or whatever can get you to a fully accessible station which is only a few minutes away"?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I could not agree with you more that there really is little point making a big investment if you do not get the small things right. We are very committed to doing what we can to get signage and other relatively low cost investments right to make the greatest use of the facilities. To be honest, we do not find our lifts are under-utilised. We do know that there is high usage of the lifts where we provide them, but actually if there are specific examples that you saw or that others have seen where they think we could do a better job then, of course, we would want to address that and I am very open to doing that.

With regards to your latter point about alternatives, I think this is where the role of staff and on-information becomes key because, actually, I do think if you try to sign people to other stations from stations that are not accessible, you start to find yourself getting into the problem of just how much information people can absorb from signage. I do think that is why our commitment is to having staff at all stations at all times who are very highly trained to be able to give customers information that

meets their needs whatever that is. If it is that they need step-free access then if you are at St James' Park Station and someone needs step-free access then they can guide them to Westminster Station and tell them how to get there.

That, combined with having information on the website, both TfL's own website and some of the organisations that we work with (Direct Enquiries for example who provide very detailed information about accessible routes through our stations and others). It is through directing people to those sources that I think we can most effectively help them. Perhaps signage has its vital role but I would argue that it is probably limited in terms of providing literally all the information that people might benefit from.

James Cleverly (AM): OK, could I open this up to the other organisations. I take that on board and I suspect there is a degree of crossover across the transport maze but the one thing that I am particularly keen on finding out about is, for example, signage to Underground provision but on the surface rail, real estate and vice versa. That was the things that if you are in the London Underground bit of the station at Liverpool Street Station, it tells you where the London Underground lift is; if you are on the surface rail bit of the station it is not saying, "Actually the London Underground lift is around that corner so you have to get down in to the London Underground bit."

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I did not answer that bit; I would agree with you. I would say London Underground has a responsibility to make sure it thinks beyond the curtilage of its own door step and vice versa.

James Cleverly (AM): Vice versa, absolutely.

David Sindall (Head of Disability and Inclusion, Association of Train Operating Companies): Could I ask the Committee Manager to hand around the leaflet I brought with me first of all which is Stations Made Easy?

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): OK, that is helpful. I would just like to explain John Barry [Senior Committee Officer] is handing round a question sheet for people. This had not been planned as an open microphone session, that was the last meeting, but we just wanted to make sure that if people did have a question, if we have got time at the end, we will get them in and that we capture everybody's questions today. We do have some microphones so if we do have time at the end of the session, we might try to take one or two people's questions. I am just looking at my watch and am thinking actually we are already overrunning so I am not sure that we will get there. So, at least write down your question for us and we will deal with them one or way or another.

David Sindall (Head of Disability and Inclusion, Association of Train Operating Companies): It is to do with your question. One way that train operating companies have improved signage at stations is through access through a government fund called Small Schemes Fund, match funded supported, so it is in their own franchise agreements as well there is a commitment to improve the quality of information to passengers and they are funding every train operating company project to actually improve station accessibility as well as station infrastructure.

The Stations Made Easy project is about giving people information prior to starting their journey. It was funded partly from Network Rail, partly from Transport Scotland and with support from DfT, but the major part of the funding came from train operators ourselves. We wanted to plan a way so that people, before they made their journey, could look at the facilities and look at the accessibility on the station network. They can then, when they look at the accessibility and interrogate these, print off a route at home that they can take with them. That gives them the basic information as to how to navigate their way around the station and they can make assessments as to whether or not they can actually deal with, for example, a set of stairs, a particular part of the station and so forth.

That in itself does not deal directly with your question but it does show a range of information we can provide prior to the passenger's journey to help them better navigate stations and get the best mode of facilities. I know, for example, of a number of disabled people who, through using Stations Made Easy, have found routes through stations that they did not previously know were possible. So we hope to use the intelligence we gathered from that project to improve the information we provide at stations generally so we can produce accessible routes through the railway station.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Sometimes you are travelling somewhere and you are being diverted and, of course, you have not got time or the opportunity - like during the strike - and you do not actually have access to the internet; so whilst this is all very sophisticated actually all we are looking for is some very, very simple signage because sometimes you need to know then and there because of some inopportune moment. - you may have planned your route but actually your route has to change and you need some flexibility. So, can we go back to the chalkboard almost rather than just thinking always about what is sophisticated.

David Sindall (Head of Disability and Inclusion, Association of Train Operating Companies): In those circumstances, where there is disruption where things happen that basically people did not anticipate happening the best resource we have available to us, as has already been mentioned, is our staff. Staff also need to be able help and support passengers on the rail network. Now this is a facility for the public but it is also a facility for rail employees as well so they have access to it. They can utilise it and use it to help people in exactly the sort of situation you described. I am not detracting from the fact that the point you both make is very well made, improving signage on the stations is an important priority and one that we want to address in the run up to 2012.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): OK.

James Cleverly (AM): I am hoping this is going to be a short sharp resounding yes: are you confident you are fully utilising disabled user groups in terms of the planning for this? Again, I get the feeling that there is a good level involvement for the big ticket stuff. For example, we saw at Liverpool Street Station some resurfacing had been made on the intersection between where the platforms come out to where the taxis are made available. That had been beautifully resurfaced, all lovely, smooth, very level, which is great if you are able to step up into a taxi, but where the pavement had been removed you actually now needed a ramp where historically you did not need a ramp. It seems like, again, it is one of these things that was beautiful in its broadest concept but let down at the detail where a wheelchair user would have said, "Actually, you know what, I know you think you are doing me a favour by getting rid of that bit of pavement but that actually made it a lot easier for me to

transfer from platform to taxi". So tell, me at that sharp point of delivery we are maintaining that relationship with user groups.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Well, what I would like to say from that example is it is hard to say the absolute yes that you are looking for James. I would say that notwithstanding getting that, we have to get the small things right to prove this. I do think we do consult very extensively with those who can help us get it right.

James Cleverly (AM): It is kind of what I wanted to hear.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): This was the Underground station at Liverpool Street.

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): It is part of the dialogue that is supposed to take place on a project which is why I am interested to hear what you are saying. Similarly, when you talk about the signage, I would be interested to know which Overground stations you visited where the signage is not as it should be. Colleagues are quite right: the intent is, if we are putting it in, it is there to be used; otherwise what is the point.

James Cleverly (AM): The examples I am referring to- and this is what I find a bit frustrating- are not catastrophic failures. It is not that there is no signing; it is the difference between nearly brilliant and brilliant. That slight difference is actually letting down some, what I know to be, fairly significant financial investment.

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): It is the very reason we need input from the users because we do not always get it right, to sit at a drawing board is not the same as actually being a user who uses it. So I am keen to --

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): I think probably what James is saying is we need a sort of an audit and fix process so that the things are being done. Maybe they are not as good as they could be but that there is some checking process where somebody can practically take some action and fix it, and it is not necessarily a big ticket item as James says. Do you have that sort of function?

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): We did have it the other way round where we have got success and we share best practice of what is a success. As I said, I am interested to understand which sites we are talking about because then we will feed that back.

James Cleverly (AM): Well, I can give you the precise one.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): We do not need to go into that detail but I think there is a general question really about de-snagging, how do you do de-snagging from a disability access point of view and how do you do an audit and update and that would be something we would like to see.

James Cleverly (AM): Perhaps you could write a letter back to us rather than thrashing it now.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Dick, you need to come in on the staffing issues I think.

Richard Tracey (AM): Yes, I think it was David particularly who mentioned the importance of staff, who very often have to deal with some of the accessibility problems. Although David has mentioned it, the question particularly ought to be aimed at Richard and London Underground. There has been the recent publicity about the various reductions in staff in ticket offices and, of course, various groups of people who are in some way or other disabled have said that they are going to lose out if the staff are not there. Can you give us reassurances that there will be other sorts of staff to deal with these problems?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Yes, which I am grateful for the opportunity, I can absolutely give you that reassurance, as you say our commitment is very much to provide a member of staff on all our stations at all times and to ensure that those staff are available to assist with customers which, I believe, is their primary purpose and the most useful thing they can be doing. We know that demand for ticket offices has reduced dramatically, that's a fact, and we know, therefore, that we can reduce the resource that is usually behind glass who are relatively inaccessible to customers, disabled or not, and instead focus our resource on being out in the public space where it can assist customers to use the network and with information of any sort. Our focus is very much on continuing to provide the same level of customer service and assistance particularly to those who need it most. The changes that we are seeing are largely about following on from the success of Oyster and the way it has changed the way our stations function.

Richard Tracey (AM): So, they will be there in concourses to help people that are not completely mobile towards the lift or given various assistance and then also, of course, importantly on the platforms to get them onto the trains.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Where that is necessary. Clearly, as you say, the most useful place generally for staff to be based is in that concourse area before people have entered the Underground where they can provide information, they can provide assistance. As you know, we provide staff on the busy platforms certainly to assist with the trains but also to assist with passengers and, you know, our staff are guided to do whatever they can to assist customers with their journeys.

Richard Tracey (AM): Yes. Now, can I just go on to several points? We were rather impressed, several of us were rather impressed by a point made by one of the group from Trailblazers who drew attention to the size of gaps between platforms and trains (in fact the ones singled out were Edgware Road, Stanmore and Hendon stations. Tanvi Vyas [Trailblazers, Muscular Dystrophy UK] suggested that manual ramps should be available. I am interested to see in this document that has come round, that manual ramps certainly are available for the mainline trains but why are there not more manual ramps available for Underground trains?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): It is probably a very fair point. The first thing to say is that we know that the history of the Underground means that several of the platforms, either because of a curvature or because of the height at which they were built are not level access to the trains. We are doing something about them where we can and we will talk about the platform humps that we are introducing; where we also have the scope to do it, where

we are re-laying track through a station then we will attempt to change the height of the track if that is possible to address that. Inevitably there will be some platforms where that is not possible. We do not believe that ramps are a good solution on the Underground, really, because of the nature of the service we are providing. We are providing a very high frequency, at the very height of capacity service, often very, very congested. Our view, and it is the view that we have when we have discussed this with some of the disability groups that we worked with in the past, they recognise that actually trying to put a ramp solution into that kind of environment would be very, very difficult because of the high frequency services. The impact it would have on the train service to try to position the ramp at the right place to get people on and off.

On the National Rail network you are generally dealing with a much lower frequency service where the dwell times in stations are often longer anyway and, therefore, it is more manageable to opt for that solution. Our intent instead is to look for other solutions to address this problem; we do not think that ramps would be something that we could make work within our environment.

Richard Tracey (AM): Another question about standard definition and a set of criteria for accessibility. It has been raised with us by the Royal National Institute of Deaf People, the Guide Dogs for Blind, and other organisations the issue of tactile pads for the deaf; and induction loops at help points; whereas the normal help points may be fine for the rest of us they are very unhelpful for somebody with a serious hearing problem. Have you got any kind of criteria for providing these sorts of things?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Yes, it part of our standard practice to do that, so all the help points that we have installed are fitted with induction loops and we work with RNID actually to ensure we get to a high standard of performance, so I think our help point is in the high 90's, something like 96 per cent of our inductions loops were found to be working in a survey we did recently supported by the RNID and we have rolled out a programme of installing tactile strips at platform edges which, not quite everywhere, but the vast majority of stations now do have such strips to help blind people ensure they can identify where the edge of the platform is. So I would agree with you that these investments are part of this package of things that we must do to address accessibility which, of course, has lots of components and we have been and will continue to do that.

Richard Tracey (AM): Do you think you are sufficiently amenable to suggestions from all these parties because, obviously, they have got enormous knowledge and expertise; you do not fob them off I hope?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I would very much hope we do not fob them off, I hope through what we have delivered in the last ten years demonstrated that we are absolutely not doing that. Clearly, we enter an era where funding will be much tighter and we are certainly going to look at a period of time where there will be much less opportunity for investing in improvements on stations; that is the reality we are in. We have made a number of improvements over the last ten years, we will continue to make improvements where investment is being made so all the significant station projects that we are taking forward, Victoria Station, Tottenham Court Road Station, they will all have the full compliment of accessibility improvements.

Richard Tracey (AM): Now, James has already talked in general about displays and signage but there has been an interesting point made to us by the London Borough of Barnet Learning Disabilities Partnership, who suggested replacing the dot matrix signs with higher resolution signs to improve the visibility of information, have you thought about that one?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Well, we are very conscious of the importance of clear legible signs, we have often found dot matrix indicators actually are quite popular with groups, we have looked at alternatives, certainly within the new trains that we are designing but, actually you are obviously limited by the environment that we are in. Clearly, we ensure that we meet all the legal requirements which, of course, themselves are determined by accessibility standards and that is very much an issue where we are working to ensure that we get it as right as we can. There are limitations, clearly again the investment challenge; we could not rip out all the dot matrix indicators tomorrow and replace them because it would not probably be seen as a high priority thing to do, where we are making investment we would want to make any new information provision as good as it can be.

Richard Tracey (AM): My colleague, Victoria, is reminding me that in fact the dot matrix systems are much more popular than television screens with information on.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Yes.

Victoria Borwick (AM): They are more readable.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you very much.

Jennette Arnold (AM): Well, what I think we have heard from Richard is we have got to test that, because what I have heard Richard say is that there will be no reduction based on the needs of the users of our stations because you will say that out of your Equality Impact Assessment. So if you are saying that staff are needed to enable disabled people to use stations, then you would then have to put forward a pretty convincing argument for taking out staff and leaving a station staff free.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): I think Caroline's got a similar point.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Yes, just to be very clear, all stations will be staffed and those staff will be trained to assist.

Jennette Arnold (AM): That is what I heard you say.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair) I would like to make a couple of points following on from what you said, Richard [Parry], and picking up what Richard [Tracey] has been asking you about.

In terms of station staffing, the concern that I have got is that there are a number of people who will need a ticket to be issued manually, they do not want to use a machine; or they cannot use the machine; they might require a ticket that is not available at that machine, for example. If you have got a Zone 1 and 2 Travelcard and you need an extension, you will end up having to pay more rather than

getting the cheaper boundary extension. In those circumstances, it seems reasonable to me for staff who are outside to be able to go into the ticket office and issue a ticket and I have been told by TfL that that will not be possible.

I think if you had flexibility that allowed somebody to be out helping people and then if, for example, a couple of people needed tickets to be issued manually and they did not want to use machines or they could not use machines, that person could go and assist them. I do not think people would have a problem that actually you may not always have someone sitting behind the counter because they are out and about but that they could go in; I think everyone would think that flexible use of staff it was a good idea but I am told that is not going to be the case

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Well, I would not have given you such an inflexible response. I think we recognise that in the absolute very, very, rare occasions where there is no alternative, that our staff should take the initiative and should have that as an option. However, Caroline, what I would say is what we are trying to do as an alternative to that is to ensure that ticket machines have an increased scope of what they can sell and that the staff who are available in the public space have the ability to use those machines. That seems to us a much better design of solution than something that requires them to disappear off into some back office. I recognise we have to work hard to make sure we have as a wide range of ticketing products and top-ups and whatever else available to customers at stations, but we are committed to trying to do that in a different way. Of course, right now there are lots of places at lots of times of day where tickets are not open; that is the current situation. So in a sense we are already dealing with this today and we really want to continue to deal with it in a constructive way going forward by trying to provide customers with the ability to get whatever they need from the machines even when they are not able to use the ticket office.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): There are times, and you can have as, an example, when my Oyster card stopped working two days ago. I did not know that could happen; it completely stopped working. I had to go to a Tube ticket office to queue up to get someone to replace the Oyster card because I could not then use the buses. I mean, drivers were generally very nice but some of them were querying whether they could let me on or not. There are times people need ticket offices. Why should that person then be struggling if they cannot use their ticket they have already got and which they have paid for. There are times like that where I think the flexibility of someone being able to go in and manually process and update the ticket is needed. Today we are looking into accessibility so I am trying not to stray into my views of something else but I think there are very real issues there.

My other question, picking up from what was asked, is that a station like Stanmore Station is supposedly fully accessible except you have got the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital nearby so you have a lot of people going there who are perhaps in a wheelchair and yet when you get there, there is a difference between the platform and the actual Tube train; even though it is at the end of the line! Surely you could have some kind of ramp to help those people; it is very simple. You still have a huge hike round - it is not straight forward - to get out of the station; but at the end of a line like that, and when you have got a very specific facility, surely you could be more reasonable and have a manual ramp which would cost about £60 or £70, and would really help those people get on and off the trains.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I think the point you make about the end of the line is more of a case to answer than busy stations in the centre of town so I am happy that we take that point away. I think it is much better to provide something that does not depend on that, that we provide the infrastructure provisions where we can; so if we can deal with it with humps, with replacing the track, for example; or if for some other reason we have got to make some intervention to the platform, we should do it another way. But I take your point that it may be something that might be more of an alternative at terminate stations.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): OK, just before we move to then to rail, can I just check with you Richard [Parry], in terms of staffing levels, what is the minimum level of staffing that might be on a Tube station at any one time? Is there a minimum number of people - I do not mean ticket offices, I mean everybody who is passenger-side on a station?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Well, the minimum number is one. There will be a number of stations today where for periods of time there will be one member of staff on the station. Stations that have deep tubes or have other safety requirements will have a minimum number often very much higher than that; so, for example, a station like Waterloo Station, the minimum number there will be in double figures because of the nature of that station and the number of platforms it has and the size of it. So we will observe the minimums where there is requirement and indeed will often be above the minimum. But our view is that at many of our stations that are very lightly used for periods of the day, one member of staff with the right support in terms of the equipment that they have and the training that they have is capable of providing support that customers need, given those low volumes at those stations.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): So, are you saying that you think it is adequate in terms of support for disabled passengers or passengers with difficulties to have only one staff member on a Tube station?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): On a quiet Tube station at quiet times, yes, I think it is.

Jennette Arnold (AM): Chair, can I just come in and say that London Underground must have taken that same view because on the Overground there is a minimum number at a number of stations; so I do not know if you are sharing the same specification or what.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Yes.

Jennette Arnold (AM): I can give you the stations where there is only one member of staff who sometimes have to leave a message on the platform, which at least informs you where the member of staff is.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Yes, absolutely there is that level of staffing at Overground stations. It is important that they are available, Jennette. I take your point absolutely that is something that we would work to achieve but compare us with many

metros that would not have station staff; we are committed to providing staff at all stations. We think it is very important that we do that. But one member of staff, I think, is sufficient.

Chris (Member of the audience): I want to ask one question. I use an Overground train all the time, How can I ask the staff for assistance with a speech disability or someone with poor arms who does not have the ability to press a button? How?

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Chris has written here a comment about the help points not necessarily being accessible to people, the buttons and the problems with speech impaired people and deaf people. Did you want to provide a quick response to that?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I think the recognition is that you can, where possible, provide a member of staff that can speak face-to-face. Inevitably, as Jennette has described, there will be situations where members of staff are called for other things; however many you have on a station, frankly, and if you provide some other way for customers to draw attention to their need for help then that is better than providing nothing. Except that we need to try and make sure it is as accessible as possible; clearly, that is what we would all want to try to do but. Clearly, providing staff there is the most useful thing we can do and we are committed to trying to do that.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I wanted to talk about some Overground stations. Under the Access for All national programme, within London there are 40 National Rail stations that are due to be step-free by 2018; are you on track to deliver that or is there a risk that the target is not going to be met?

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): Right, well actually our plan at the moment is to try to deliver them all by March 2014 not 2018. We have finished 12, we will have another 8 completed by the Games; so we are planning at the moment to finish by March 2014. But, we are currently in dialogue with DfT and whether a number of those will move into the finish and control period because, if you remember, Access for All is a ten year programme which started in 2005, so the original intention was it would finish March 2015. So we have an accelerated programme; that is what we are working to at the moment.

Whilst we cannot pre-empt what will come out of the Comprehensive Spending Review later in the year, we have had no indication from the DfT that they want us to stop anything that we are doing.

Joanne McCartney (AM): So, there is no indication that there will be cuts to the current programme, but are you expecting reduced funding post 2014/2018?

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): As I say, the Access for All programme we have got at the moment is the programme that Network Rail have got. I know DfT did have plans to do something because a published report from earlier in the year was talking about a follow-up programme. But I could not honestly tell you; it's a DfT decision now as to what happens post 2014 in terms of any programmes beyond the one we have today.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I also want to ask a little bit about the interchange between rail and Tube and especially representative in outer London boroughs where often there is more reliance on the bus network and rail network than there is on the Tube. It is vital that those interchanges work as we heard at our last evidence session that quite often people have no problems accessing the first part of their journey, but when it comes to getting onto a different mode of transport that is where the difficulties start.

I want to know, are those interchanges a priority in your work programmes for step-free access?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I guess the way that we prioritise to take into account a whole number of factors of which interchange will not be the only one; we will look at the value that we can provide by introducing step-free access through lifts etc, and obviously the opportunity to link with rail or a dense bus network will be part of that. Clearly, there will be other factors like just how many people are using the station at all, what sort of area does it serve, are there factors like hospitals as Caroline mentioned and other things like that and also, frankly, the cost of doing it, that's always a factor you have to take into account when prioritising. Whether a station is an interchange is one of the factors that we would look at in determining our priorities.

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): Linked to that is the sheer feasibility. So when the Department consults on tranches of the Access for All programme as it did over the first three, we took exactly the factors that Richard described and we also tried to demonstrate that our ideas were feasible, that it was possible to provide such a route, that it was not pie in the sky.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Looking forward, hopefully there will be further money available to make more stations step-free but it seems that TfL's current work does not factor in projected increases in an elderly population, is that correct? Have you factored in that factor at all?

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): I do not think so, where does that come from I wonder?

Joanne McCartney (AM): It was one of the submissions we had.

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): Well, we take into account the fact that there is growth in demand anticipated, that London is getting better, that there are more jobs and more population and then we look at the best possible future distribution of investment in better stations and step-free routes and we take into account all those factors and include future footfall, ie future levels of demand, amongst other factors.

Joanne McCartney (AM): When you are examining that future level of footfall, how do you assess the need and the age of the population and the vulnerability of that population as well; is that factored in in any way?

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): Yes, we take account of local amenities and the local demographic characteristics of particular areas. By local amenities I mean things like hospitals, for example, but also the nature of the local populations. So we know something from the

census, for example, about levels of long-term sickness for example; so to the extent that that is a factor we take account of it and things of that nature.

Joanne McCartney (AM): At that stage do you do any public consultation at all?

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): We do not do any consultation with a capital C, no.

Joanne McCartney (AM): You do not, ok. Do you think that is a failing and that you should be consulting? Do you not consult with stakeholders, for example?

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): Well, the department responsible for the Access for All programme is doing a consultation and we respond to their consultation so they will write to us and say, as they did in 2005 and again in 2007 and 2009 for the initial tranches and say, "We are thinking hard about which stations should form part of the access for all scheme, what do you think?" So we respond to their consultation as others can as well.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I think, Joanne, from the TfL perspective, where we are more in control of the investment, we have generally consulted at a network level rather than a case-by-case level because actually you do need to take a network perspective on this- to have the right distribution of access across the city,, so to take an example, you might have four stations next to each other that all on their own are a fantastic case for being made accessible but probably you would not invest in all four of them because actually you might end up with a whole corner of London with nothing if you did that. So, we have twice now in the last ten years done very major consultations around the network review and I am sure when we enter an age of having the funding available to really resurrect and put more life into more extensive step-free programmes we would want to do the same again.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): I wonder if it would be possible for TfL to share with us in writing some of their projections for the future in terms of what you are working on in terms of demographics on disability, demand from the older population. If you say you are planning on this basis we would like to see what you are planning, we think.

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): Sure, absolutely.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): You looked me in the eye and said you would, so we will look forward to that.

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): There is no escape from the Scrutiny Manager.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Is that the same planning process that you use with Network Rail as well or do you give any specific priorities to interchanges when you link with other forms of transport?

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): When we actually look at interchanges, what tends to happen or the way they are

structured is, we will enhance stations and modify stations when somebody comes to us and has effectively done that analysis and said, "This is what we want to do" so the work we do is actually at the project level rather than strategic level of looking at consultation for local users to see what their requirements are and what best fits as an interchange at a project level rather than a strategic level. Bearing in mind I am talking about where we do works on stations that train operators use; we have a strategic plan for the managed stations which we operate and the majority of those tend to be well served by other forms of transport in and around London. So we actually work at two different levels, if you like, on stations: there is our own portfolio which we operate and manage; and then we have got the other parts of the network we handle where we have a landlord of predominant people that do major works. So Access for All, for example, where we are putting in bridges and lifts, we do the work because that is the sort of thing we do, big civil engineering works.

In terms of how that is applied across the network, as was mentioned earlier, the strategic views taken by the DfT are based on a lot of input, not just from TfL but from Overground Rail, from train operating companies, from all the Passenger Transport Executives, and from various parties who are interested in understanding how the network is run .

Joanne McCartney (AM): I just have a couple of questions about interchanges. If I give you an example of Seven Sisters Station where you have Network Rail above and Seven Sisters down below - say there are people going off on holiday with heavy luggage or people that have also got disabilities - the interchange between both is very difficult and there is a very clear demarcation between staff as well. So, I am just wondering what directions do you give to staff and the same to TfL if you have a person with mobility problems who wants access to the rail; do you expect that person to accompany them onto the rail network and assist them on there or do you have protocols between the two?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Well, there are some protocols but I would generally expect staff to help if they can, in anyway they can, if that means taking someone some way towards where they would need to get to, the National Rail part of the station for example then I would expect that they would do that within reason. Regarding Seven Sisters Station, I'll make point that I was making about proximity and Tottenham Hale Station is step-free and that is the principal station for Stansted Airport, therefore, inevitably, Seven Sisters Station will probably have less investment from our point of view in terms of step-free access and given they have got that and we would obviously want to prioritise Finsbury Park Station should we find ourselves with available funds again.

The staff part of it, we would absolutely want them to take the initiative to be helpful but recognising that their accountability does not go beyond the Underground station so, obviously, they cannot get into dealings with assets or anything else beyond the limit of the Underground station, but I would hope that the respective employees would work together to take care of the customer; that is what we are all about.

Joanne McCartney (AM): So, what would happen if you had a single person on the Tube only, your minimum level, who had --

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): We would always have more than one at Seven Sisters Station given its deep aspects

Joanne McCartney (AM): So at an interchange you would expect to have more than one staff member?

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Generally depending on their physical characteristics but, yes, generally that would be the case.

Richard Tracey (AM): I am going to be blatantly in defence of my constituents on this one because part of my constituency is Wandsworth and James Cleverly [Assembly Member] represents Bexley and Bromley and, actually, in common with a lot of south London we have a dearth of Underground stations, if any at all. I have a few in Wandsworth but I mean we have a lot of mainline services and, of course, this question, therefore, about accessibility to platforms on mainline stations is actually really very important. Now, can I ask you Gary when are we going to tackle those enormous gaps at Clapham Junction which even the able bodied find very difficult to get across, let alone anybody with any sort of disability whether it be sight or another type of physical disability. When is that going to be done?

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): In terms of the specific questions for Clapham Station, I honestly could not give you the answer. I know we are looking at platforms 15 and 16 and I know there are proposals to do something with the platforms that are on the tight curve but I could not give you specific dates for that work.

It is interesting, listening to discussions about the Underground because it is not a problem as you say as much today; in fact, I think the problem is probably more widespread on the Overground network. It is something that we have been talking to DfT for some time about, looking at how we can actually improve stepping distances; we too have adopted what is called a platform hump but we are actually using that on lower level footfall stations particularly remote stations because they are not really suitable for the likes of Clapham Station.

So, to come right back to your original question, I could not tell you when it is going to happen at Clapham Station.

Richard Tracey (AM): You are putting in some splendid lifts there but it is actually getting on to the trains when you are on the platform that is very difficult for so many people.

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): I think the issue in Clapham Station, you are right, is that there are a number of platforms that are bad but it is not all the platforms and we knew when we originally started the Access for All programme that there was a plan to do the tight curve but as with all things on the railways, with all the different programmes that are taking place I am aware that those works potentially have been deferred. But, as I say, I could not tell you today, I will have to come back to you on that.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Could you write to us with the detail because I think the gaps at Clapham Station is something I have heard raised so many times and anybody with a small child let alone --

Richard Tracey (AM): It is such a major hub of course, that is the other thing. It is as big as any of the main terminals in London.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Frankly, I am surprised that it is considered safe from a health and safety point of view to operate with such enormous gaps and heights.

Gary Tordoff (Route Enhancement Manager and Access for All Programme Sponsor, Network Rail): It is perhaps worth saying - this is not a defence this is just historical information - when the Strategic Rail Authority did its reviews because it obviously started Access for All, it did look at platform stepping throughout the United Kingdom and the cost was such that they decided to take it out of the scope of Access for All, I think they estimated it was £3 billion nationally. So it was specifically excluded from the Access for All programme; I suppose the interesting thing is that the people who actually have the trouble using these ramps are the train operators, they are the people that do all the good work in getting people from the platform to the train and it is partly the responsibilities of the railways to ensure that if the train operators have identified how they can move people onto the train then that becomes the way we actually meet the requirements for accessibility. That does not preclude the fact that there are large gaps everywhere and there is potential for electrocution.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Yes, but of course we are not just interested in people with wheelchairs, we are interested in the 40 per cent of the population who have difficulties with steps of any kind. We do consider it, I think, quite a high priority and urgency and it is a bit distressing, actually, that you have got no idea when that is going to be sorted out, I think it is an embarrassment actually that that has been allowed to persist as long as it has. David?

David Sindall (Head of Disability and Inclusion, Association of Train Operating Companies): Yes, on that point, I mean, the single largest group that book assistance on the rail network is actually people who categorise themselves as elderly and we will use boarding ramps, for example, if they have got a mobility impairment, they are not necessarily a wheelchair user in fact only about 8 per cent of people in Great Britain are wheelchair users, but there is a high proportion of people such as guide dog users, people with visual impairments and elderly people who benefit from a ramp. So one way we get around that is through booked assistance at stations.

Richard Tracey (AM): Which does happen; I do see that happening indeed at Clapham Junction and there are ramps which they will use, but it is just one of those extraordinary things that has been mentioned for so many years.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): I have a quick comment on booked assistance - during 2012, who from abroad will really understand that they can use booked assistance to get from platform 15 onto a train? I personally feel booked assistance is quite a problem, the fact that people have to do that.

Richard Tracey (AM): You are talking, of course, about outside the Olympic family aren't you?

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Yes, sure, but people will be travelling all over London of course. I think we ought to be moving onto the buses, I mean, at the open microphone session, you know, the expectations of buses were really extremely, extremely high partly because of the physical

improvements there; but we had lots and lots of critical negative comments about training and behaviour and policy and Caroline [Pidgeon] and I went to visit a TfL course on bus drivers and found it deeply inadequate in every possible way and cannot tell you how poor it was. So we do need to get into some of those issues.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): What do you think TfL should be doing to help ensure that there is a consistent service by bus drivers for people with reduced mobility across the capital?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): I think we need to look back at where we have come from. If you look back ten years we did not provide any really co-ordination of training of drivers; clearly drivers had to have their legal driving licence and it was very much left to individual bus companies.

In 2003 we introduced the BTEC qualification and that was over and above what you are legally required to have to drive a bus; it is externally accredited so it has got some external accreditation in terms of its syllabus, and since then I think that syllabus has evolved and moved on and it has become more sophisticated; we have provided other materials to operators to aide the training process, DVD's, again, provide some consistent training, the Big Red Book which I think you had a copy of and I have got some spare copies if any other Assembly Members would like one. The book gives clear advice to drivers, pictorial examples of the best way of doing certain things and that has gone down very well and it has come a long way.

I welcome your comments from the session you went to, its sounds from the feedback that I have had that certainly in the morning it was not as interactive as perhaps you would probably expect from more modern training, I feel perhaps the trainer was slightly put off by the presence of his Managing Director and some other audience perhaps, I do not know. One thing we have been working on in the last six months - is we believe that the syllabus of the training - that Scope has had an input into - we believe that the syllabus is good and we have started to look at this and move onto delivering and trying to get consistency in terms of delivering; and we are going through a process now in the bus companies to get all the trainers to get a qualification called Preparing To Teach In Lifelong Learning Sector, which is a qualification which is more aimed at interactive teaching as opposed perhaps to traditional lecturing type teaching. So that is the next stage of the process.

I think we recognise that the training and qualifications we are trying to put in place will evolve and they need to evolve and need to be refreshed and need to develop to a certain degree and we welcome your observations that you have shared.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): I think we appreciate you have come a long way and I am not just saying that. However, you have got different companies across London, different drivers and different trainers and, great, if you are going to insist that the trainers who bus garages use are qualified and have a full understanding; but if you think that the materials and information you have provided really are going to deliver the sort of service that our users want and expect now, I think really you might want to talk to your colleague from TfL who came along to the course because it was a very academic, very intellectual, looking at the theory of equalities and whatever, it was not the practical one might have expected. Somebody is at your bus stop in a wheelchair, how do you communicate with them, how do you treat them, how do ensure that they have been treated as equally

as everyone else and respected and that is the issue and also challenging, when perhaps a driver might say something that perhaps can be seen as discrimination, they have been able to challenge it but in constructive way what people perhaps have said and, I think, for me the idea of sitting there, I mean, as you say, I think one of the nine modules of this course might be slightly more practical but I would have expected to have had perhaps a video of somebody getting on, perhaps they have got their guide dog with them or whatever, a bad example of doing it and to discuss that and then show it should be done, that to me would be really good training so you can talk about the really bad example and hopefully everyone would say, "Yes, that is not right, look how they treated that person, they were wrong. Their policy is this" and to have had a really good discussion about those scenarios.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): That is part of the overall training, I think in the afternoon it becomes a lot more interactive. We take on board the point that it is certainly, from your observations, I think you were for a couple of hours, it was probably a bit too much lecturing; in the afternoon it is more interactive, it is only one of the various sessions. I mean, we have --

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): I really think you should stop defending it actually, Mike, I think you need to go away and look at it. I am serious because when I chatted --

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, what I said earlier we recognise that it has evolved from when we introduced BTEC and it needs to continue to evolve.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): I have met with TfL buses a lot because I have a huge amount of case work across London on people who have issues with ramps and so on and I am going to come along to some other points in a minute, but actually, you have been told you had this comprehensive course that was rolled out and every bus company was introducing it and every driver had this training, made me think, "Great, it is being rolled out". The reality is the training is not up to what you think it is and I think you need to stop defending it and perhaps take a step back and review it because it really is not delivering what you want. I know what you want and it really is good what you want to achieve but it just is not delivering.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): No, I think the building blocks are there; there are some DVDs that we have produced that have those examples and they then lead to a discussion and I think this document is very clear in certain aspects of what a driver is supposed to do and the building blocks are there;, I recognise the point that we need to develop it further.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): I think it would be very unfortunate, Mike, if you took the fact that we had only been there for the morning as a reason to dismiss what we have got to say here. I gather that only one unit of the nine is scenario based but, you know, the location was at the top of a six storey building with the most appalling stairs, it was a cramped room, the trainer had clearly not had any qualifications or experience and it would be sad to stick it on the trainer as well because he was doing his best but unqualified people should not be let loose on these things. The curriculum materials were appalling and I was surprised when I heard that they were written by Scope - they were absolutely appalling and there are words I am not allowed to write in the report I would like say about this.

I, for years, have thought, "I wonder what is going on, I know TfL make a lot of effort to train people to be disability aware and helpful, how is it that people from the disabled community complain so bitterly?" and now I know, Mike, because the training is crap. You really do have to look at it, seriously and we do not wish to be destructive, we want you to improve this and get it right but if that was --

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): I think it would be wrong to give the impression with 22,000 and training all over London having seen two hours of training that we conclude that.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): I did not see anything there that was good at all from the building, to the materials, to the curriculum to the training, to the methodology, to the training materials in use, it was poor. Sorry, rant.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): I wonder how you are involving disabled people in bus driving? Are you going to be looking at actively engaging people with a range of disabilities in practical bus driver training?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): I know some companies do and when we owned East Thames Buses ourselves we had a couple of disabled users who used to come into some of the training sessions and we would that, I know a lot of other bus companies do and they do the practical side of demonstration especially when they are training on things like use of the ramps and some of the other features of the bus, they do have people coming in to help make it a more practical experience.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): Given that TfL have this element of training that they say is compulsory, and that is what we were told, "We are delivering TfL's training here", could you not bring into that far more training that really involves disabled people to make it real.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, we need to go away and look. I mean as I said, the syllabus has been accredited externally, Scope had a big input into the syllabus, we need to look at the delivery as well and we will take that away and look at it.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): I would hope you look at the Scope material as well, I was very sorry to see that stuff. It had a lot of mistakes in it.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): Given that, I asked a Mayor's question earlier in the year and I found out that in the first ten months of the year 2009/2010 there already over 4,200 complaints about behaviour of bus drivers towards disabled people. What do you do with that kind of figure and what do you do in terms of monitoring behaviour and actually learning from that to improve bus driver behaviour because that is staggering figure; so that must be about 5,000 complaints a year and that is just the people who bother to complain?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, it needs to be seen in the context of us carrying 6.5 million passengers a day, 22,000 bus drivers, it needs to be seen in that context to put it into context. But there is a whole host of monitoring from driver quality monitoring in

terms of the technical driving through to mystery traveller including the disabled mystery traveller surveys and the customer satisfaction and they are all then fed back to the individual companies through performance meetings, garage based, company based. There is a constant dialogue and feedback of all that information.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): So sort of complaints, so these, say, 5,000 complaints a year, do you drill down into them looking at the companies or do you maybe pick up that, actually a certain company has clearly got more problems on their bus routes, that clearly the training is worse there than elsewhere.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, we identify them down to a route, to a group of drivers, to a garage --

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): What do you do with that?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Well, our performance teams will go and raise those issues then with individual companies as part of our regular performance meeting and our regular dialogue that is going on all the time.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): What do you do if it keeps on time after time, month after month not improved in certain companies, are there any sanctions you can take?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Well, ultimately they would not win the re-award of that contract. Because on contracts re-awards we take into account not just local value for money, we take into account their current performance on a route --

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): That is for the wide range of performance, not just punctuality and whatever, but actually in terms of customer service?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, so ultimately the company could lose a route if they were not performing across the board on the route.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): OK, and what about looking it, I think London Underground have got regular accessibility staff and information survey which uses disabled assessors and London Overground has sort of specific service standards of people with reduced mobility. Are you looking to them to see what you can learn from them to actually ensure improvements in the bus service?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): In terms of surveys or...

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): In terms of surveys and how you can learn and improve the service for particularly disabled Londoners.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes because we carry out similar surveys in terms of mystery traveller and disabled mystery traveller surveys so that is the way we can capture consistently across the network what should be happening or what is happening.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): What about the specific service standards that London Overground has; have you got specific service standards for disabled people and other accessibility issues on the buses?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): We have in terms of wheelchair ramp performance, for example, in terms of how they should perform, what their criteria are and what should happen when they are not working, how quickly buses should be replaced.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): In terms of driver behaviour, perhaps, could that be looked at?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, well that is done through both customer satisfaction and mystery traveller surveys; that is how driver behaviour is assessed.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): Can I just talk about ramps and ramps is the issue. We all hear time and time again - and TfL has told me time and time again - that ramps on buses are always checked before they leave the garage and, in fact, the drivers on the training did say that it is always checked before it leaves the garage and if it is not in full working order they will not leave the garage and yet I hear time and time again from people that bus drivers tell wheelchair users that, "You are going to wait for the next bus because the ramp is not working" If the ramp is broken whilst they are out surely does that bus not go out of service, what are rules around that?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): If a ramp becomes inoperative during the day the bus should complete its journey on because and then be swapped over or returned to the garage as soon as possible. We are not expecting the ramp breaks down in service as long, as the vehicle can still move we are not expecting bus to be taken out of service at that point because, obviously, that may involve tipping off another 40 passengers on the bus; but we expect when it gets to the end of the route something to be done about it and the vehicle to be swapped over and another one --

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): Do you have an idea of how often these ramps break down and do you have any figures on that to give us?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, we both monitor it through the mileage report that the operators have to do us but we also do independent monitoring through the Freight Transport Association that goes out and does checks for us.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): So you will be able to give us that information because it just does not seem to add up that I hear so often from people, disabled users who are waiting for the bus, the bus turns up and they say, "Sorry, we cannot let you on, the ramp is not working".

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): I think one of the messages that I took from the previous scrutiny Committee was that I think there was a recommendation from a lot of members in the audience that the performance of the ramps has improved over the last, say, five to ten years and their big issue, and this is my take on the previous meeting, was that it is the internal conflict on the bus between wheelchair users, buggies, other passengers and the drivers. Generally, people are getting on the bus but then there is an issue about can they get into the wheelchair bay

because there is buggy users, can they get in because of other passengers; that is what I took from the previous meeting.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): Right, well I get a lot of casework about ramps but linked to that I guess is people getting off the bus in terms of buses not pulling up to the kerbside which may link to the training; but if they are not at the kerbside then the ramp cannot go out at the right angle to allow...

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, and if, for example, the bus stop does not meet all the criteria in terms of kerb height, it might mean that the ramp angle is a lot steeper than it should be and that is one of the drivers of the bus stop accessibility programme. Because the more stops we can get meeting the full criteria of accessibility in terms of kerb heights and other street furniture, the more chance the ramp has got of successfully deploying onto the pavement at the right angle.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): I also pick up examples the bus does not into the kerb, lets off able bodied passengers and then drives off, leaving the wheelchair passenger at the bus stop trying to get a --

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): It should not happen.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): I hear cases of this really far too often, it is not just one a month, it is a several a week --

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Every time I see a wheelchair user waiting to get on a bus, what I tend to do is stand a few yards away and wait for the bus to arrive and see what happens and observe it and most of the time it is successful; occasionally there is problems but most of the time it is successful.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): Are there other things you could do to improving the service so you could perhaps change the bus timetables to allow more time for stopping which would allow people who perhaps are older or need a bit more time to sit down or whatever, are there things like that that you could be doing?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Certainly the advice in the drivers book, "The Big Red Book" I have handed around, is very clear that the schedules at the moment are such that just allowing a little bit more time for somebody that looks like they need time to sit down or allow a wheelchair user more time to position themselves will have no real material impact on the overall reliability of the service. You could lose twenty times as much time at the next traffic lights if you just happen to miss the phasing for example. The schedules can cope with drivers being considerate to passengers that need a little bit more time or a wheelchair user that needs to get finally in position; that is not an issue.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): My final thing is that you have picked up the conflict between wheelchairs, buggies, people with luggage in that space. Are you looking or will you look at increasing the publicity to be very clear who can use wheelchair bays?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): One of the things we have changed in this edition of The Big Red Bus is based on feedback is that on a lot of buses, especially the newer ones that have got bigger wheelchair bays than what is legally required, in lots of the circumstances, the wheelchair user can get into position and then a buggy user can tuck it in front of them if it is a smallish buggy and we have made it clear in this document this time that if that can work, drivers should allow, there is no reason if passengers can work together to use the space more effectively then good, we should be supporting that.

Previously, the rules were a bit clear cut about wheelchair user and no buggy or the buggy must be folded down. What we are saying is if the wheelchair bay can cope with both then great, we should be allowing both and drivers should be doing that.

The big challenge is that we have a limited amount of space and we have a lot of demand on that space from buggy users and from wheelchair users; yes, we could take some seats out and put a buggy space in but then we have clearly got elderly and other disabled passengers that need to or want to sit down in the floor area; so we have just got this constant demand on that low floor space on the bus. What I took out the previous session is that is where the issue now is and we need to look about how we can get passengers and drivers to work a bit more together to share that space and we need to look at ways in which we can do that.

Jennette Arnold (AM): I just wanted to go back to Mike to just say I do wish you would stop thinking about where we were in 2001. Why I say that is because it was my work with disabled users that presented a report to the then Mayor that brought in the requirement that says no bus can leave a garage without the check. Now what we envisaged was the starting point and it just seems to me that that is really what has kept the thing going and we still have lots of work to do. The other area I would ask you to take away, and I have not seen the Big Red Book lately, but the growing elderly population and their needs for the staff to have insight into their needs with their trolleys or just their need to move slower is just not being taken on board by staff at the moment; and that for me, because I have had the waves of all the complaints, is where the majority of complaints, certainly in my office, is coming from now with the growth of elderly people using that with their trolleys and movement that the staff training, or whatever the guidance is, is not meeting their needs; so will you take that away?

What we have got to be hearing from you is year-on-year the monitoring and the improvement in terms of disability access on the buses rather than where we started in 2001 – woeful – we don't want to go there! What we should be looking at is how has it improved over the last year and in terms of seeing a reduction in the figures of complaints but also new initiatives that have been introduced.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): OK, I think one of the messages we really are trying to push the driver is the excuse that, "I am trying to stick to a schedule" is just not necessary, it is a marginal amount of time for passengers to take their seats and sit down if they appear to need that time. As I said earlier, you could lose twenty times that time at the next traffic lights and that is one clear message we are trying to get across

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): I have to say, to be nice to you, we did think this was rather nice [holds up The Big Red Book]. The only question that we did have about The Big Red Book was regarding the

very simplistic figurative representation of which kinds of wheelchairs are allowed and which are not and it did make me think that that is probably why there has been confusion about what sort of and size of scooter is allowed on buses.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): You have got it open at quite an opportune page actually because on the right hand side there is a walker that was actually our conditions or our rules did not allow that about two years ago. We worked with a chap in north west London, I cannot remember his name, and took him out and he uses one of them quite regularly and developed those guidelines based on his experience and based on his input.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Would you look again at the advice that is given regarding scooters?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): I think we are aware it is an area which affects all transport modes and somewhere where going forward. My view is the number of scooters on the bus network is relatively small and we are trying to keep the guidelines fairly simple but we are conscious that perhaps as the population gets more elderly there will be an increase in demand as some scooters come on buses, but I think it is an issue for trains, for the Underground etc about what type of scooters be allowed and to a certain extent we need to try to come up with some guidelines that are consistent as much as they can be across modes. In the case of buses perhaps consistent across the country. It is something I know that we have been talking to the DfT and the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (which is the bus industry UK association) about this.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): It needs resolving quickly and the drivers want to get it right don't they? They need to know.

Richard Tracey (AM): I wanted to look at this whole question of accessible bus stops and I particularly, I guess, you get problems about them on borough controlled roads rather than on the red routes, I am conscious that within my own boroughs there are frequently complaints about the stops being too long, therefore, the accessibility of people wanting to drop off people in cars being reduced and so on. Can you just take us through that, how do deal with it and whether you think you are on top of it or not?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): OK, in terms of accessibility at bus stops we have three basic criteria that defines whether a bus stop is fully accessible: is it protected by a bus stop clearway to stop other vehicles parking on it; is the kerb height is a minimum of 100 millimetres; and is it free of guard rails or other street furniture that could obstruct the ramp being deployed, for example, other passengers boarding access. So that is the three criteria. On that basis 50 per cent of the 18,000 bus stops in London are fully accessible. The important thing is that it does not mean the other 50 per cent are inaccessible; it means that some of them may not be quite ideal. For example, there may be a litter bin in a position which could be improved, so clear message is that it does not mean the other 50 per cent are not, they just do not meet the full criteria. In the moment in our business plan there is funding by 2017/2018 to improve that to 75 per cent, three-quarters of stops and we need to make sure that is targeted and that money goes either onto the red routes by TfL or by the boroughs to do so some of their stops. We need to look and make sure there are criteria as to how they are selected. Also, we had a conversation about 2012 in terms of improvements we want to make there; with 18,500 stops it is a very, very big task and we are halfway through it. But one

message is it does not mean the others are not accessible: it just means that it may be a bit more difficult for the drivers to stop in the ideal position, if they want to deploy the ramp in a slightly different position they normally would; so there is some work to do there.

Richard Tracey (AM): So, what is the necessary length of one of these stops? That seems to be one of the sticking points; they seem at times to be extraordinarily long.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, I have not got the exact length but what you have got to remember, if you have got a 10 or 11 metre bus and, an earlier comment from Caroline about buses getting in parallel to the kerb to make boarding either of wheelchair users or other people who just want step-free access easy, you have got to have a fairly long bus stop clearway for the bus to be able to pull in, get parallel to the kerb and to then to pull out again. I do not know what the exact dimensions would be, we can find out that for you.

Richard Tracey (AM): It does actually need to be up against the kerb for access does it?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Well, for the wheelchair ramp it does not need to be right next to the kerb but clearly for elderly people perhaps with shopping trolleys and buggy users, you want it very close to the kerb because you want a step-free crossing from the pavement to the kerb. So the result of that is the clearway that we need has to be of a reasonable length for the driver to be able to manoeuvre --

Richard Tracey (AM): How often do you often need to have more than one bus length? Because that seems to be a problem, are there occasions when ...

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): There are clearly locations in central London where you need to be able to accommodate on a very regular basis two or three buses. In most suburban areas one bus should be adequate most of the time.

Richard Tracey (AM): One point that has been mentioned to us is the possibility of audio announcements at bus stops, any ideas on that? I cannot think of any where either loud speaker announcements triggered by something or other or not.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): There are a whole host of issues I suppose. One clearly would be the investment and the cost of installing that type of equipment, but the other one would be around noise nuisance and residents. That would be our real big issue. We are looking at the moment on the back of the iBus system if whether for partially sighted or blind people etc we can provide them with some other form of access to that information which is personalised to them. I suppose to provide it to everybody in the location that would probably be the preferred way forward.

Richard Tracey (AM): Yes. In the design on the new Routemaster, or call it what you will, is that designing process going to make sure that that is able to gain access perhaps more easily than some of these great buses that you have been talking about?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Well, certainly the new bus, in terms of its manoeuvrability and its ability to pull in and out is no worse than most standard double decker buses and may be even slightly better; so, yes, it is certainly no worse than what we have currently got as the standard bus.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): Is it better?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): It is marginally better in terms of its turning circles because we can predict it. It is marginal, but it depends what you are comparing it with and what bus you compare it with.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Do you ever give up on bus stops? Do you ever give up on making bus stops accessible? I will give you, as an example, Muswell Hill in my constituency; it is on a very steep hill and there is no way people can board the bus if they have got mobility issues or whatever. I have raised this issue many times but the problem with that one is it services the only route to a new health centre and what factors do you take into account? I think TfL has looked at it along with the borough and have just come up with the fact that they could theoretically move it and take it off of somebody else's bus route or shift that bus route there; but it seems you have not given priority to the needs to have access to the new health centre that this bus route actually needs. So, when you look at bus stops, do you take into account the routes and where they serve or...?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, I do not know that particular example but it might be at certain locations when you go to try to make a bus stop more accessible you cannot meet all the criteria; but if, for example, it is on a very steep gradient it still means you can do other things like the clearways that the buses pull into and moving guard rails etc, they may be there. So it still does not mean that we do not do anything at that stop, it just might mean that you cannot meet every single criteria that we would ideally be looking for.

Joanne McCartney (AM): About the audio announcements; we had evidence last time, from a woman who said she had on occasion got on the wrong bus and had ended up miles away from her intended destination and she was visually impaired. Obviously when she discovered she was on the wrong bus, she could not then easily find her way back as she did not know where she was. She mentioned two simple solutions: one is you have buttons on the bus stops to light up the bus timetables at night, now, why could you not just have an announcement in there or secondly with the iBus, when the bus pulls into a stop (why couldn't you have an announcement come on, on the bus, "This is the 307 to..." wherever. That seems to me quite a cheap way that you could actually deal with visually impaired people that use the buses, neither of which is a loud speaker announcement to the residential areas surrounding it.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): It is a follow on from Richard Tracey's question. I think in terms of giving people that need that information the bus stop, we need to look at more personalised ways of doing it as opposed to an announcement that would be heard by potentially residents living in very close proximity. So what we are looking at is how we can personalise that information for them in some way, so they may pick it up in some other method from the iBus system.

Victoria Borwick (AM): The London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, for example, made a submission again about the need for making bus stops more accessible and also that people need to pre-plan their routes. To follow on, not only from this – I appreciate that you have some information that tells people (that pre-planning is successful but the same problem occurs if for some reason you need to change or you have made a mistake or whatever and you have not got access to the internet – you will always be able to revisit your route and I think there is the need to plan for when it goes wrong and not just when it goes right. So I just wanted to talk about that for a minute; as to how you are replicating on both the buses and, of course, Tubes.

My second question is just while we are talking about the buses is with this increasing attraction of step-free and shared streets and such like, obviously that makes it more difficult for the bus to dip and obviously where we know it has been designed to have a kerb, how would you tackle that?

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): In terms of accessible stops I think at some point we could produce a long list of 9,500 stops that are fully accessible but I think the reason I would be reluctant to do that is that one, it is a lot of information but also, secondly, the other 9,500 are not necessarily inaccessible– it just means that the driver might need to do something slightly different to accommodate certain users, so I am not sure it would be particularly helpful. In practice, probably nearly every bus stop is accessible if the driver is able to move the bus slightly or doing something to accommodate the passenger. I am not sure we need that level of detailed information for the bus network. In terms of the issue of shared space and when perhaps the kerb goes, the implication of that for buses is that the ramp becomes steeper because instead of deploying onto 100 millimetre kerb, it is deploying onto the ground so the ramp becomes steeper. What we can do about it? Not a great deal because clearly the buses are already low floor, their clearance from the road is probably at the minimum it can be because, obviously, you need to avoid other street furniture, high kerbs, speed humps, sleeping policemen etc. So you could not really lower the floor very much. The real solution if it becomes very common will be probably to make the ramp longer to reduce the angle.

Victoria Borwick (AM): There are parts of Oxford Street, of course, where they are trying to do the shared space – where the lay-by's used to be has now become a shared space for the buses to pull in; I think it is something you need to have on the agenda.

Mike Weston (Operations Director for Surface Transport, TfL): Clearly, if we do not make the ramp on buses longer then they need more space to deploy and more space and more space for the user too.

Victoria Borwick (AM): If I could move briefly on to the height of steps and platforms at Tube stations, I think it has mostly been covered with earlier questions, but again, it is what do we have to replicate that to help people when they are planning the whole journey? I think one of the things we are trying to bring out this afternoon is the need to realise that people may use more than one mode of transport from, obviously, at the beginning of their journey to the end of it and not just pre-planning it when it goes perfectly but to allow, obviously, for people to get other information whilst they are en-route that they may not be able to just sit down and plan on the internet. They may have done their best planning ever but something has happened which means they are not able to complete it as planned and the ability to get on site information about the exchange is obviously very important

for accessibility working; so I am asking you all about what you are going to do to work together to achieve that.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I think we do generally try very hard; I take a lot of input on board in providing a whole suite of ways of giving people information. The Underground alone, before you start thinking about the wider TfL sources, various forms of information in lots of detail, about the heights of platforms to guide people who really need that information, something that is not quite so detailed in that respect but provides other information. There are four or five different things; audio guides etc that we provide to try to find something that suits the individual. As you say, Victoria, unless you are carrying it in a bag it is not necessarily going to help you when you are suddenly confronted with something which is when you get into really about how staff are tuned in to helpfully navigate through the unexpected. I do not think we are ever going to design technical, physical solutions for people to suddenly receive information about any number of things that might happen, we can do what we can to help them plan, we can give them things they can carry with them that give them a certain amount of information and then the rest of it is supplemented by people who can guide them when they need it and I think, for me, that is the right mix of things, but we will always need to keep refining that mix.

Victoria Borwick (AM): I have to say as a parent of a child with disabilities I have certainly used the travel assist on the national railways which is very impressive and when my son is doing a journey, I send him with a card saying, "This is where I am trying to go, this is where I have come from, please take me here" that sort of thing. As somebody who is very conscious of what you do in that situation and I think, so far, I have always found it much easier on the rail but when you get in the myriad of other systems that are all available and then, of course, these people get confused and then do the daftest of things it all becomes quite difficult to cope with unless we have kept it calm and easy and accessible for them.

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): Yes. The environments that we are in, the urban environments, the entrances to Underground stations, places where buses pick up and drop off, there will always be things in that environment that we are trying to overcome to make it simple for people to use our networks. The key issue for me is that we are open to a whole range of things, new technologies where they help us, real time where we can, planned information where we can give that; but if there are more things that we can do, we are trying constantly to evolve that. So we deal with this almost inexhaustible demand for improving information and we will keep doing what we can.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): I wanted to pick up the issue of Journey Planner which is TfL's but also links in to National Rail enquiries and so on. What opportunities are there for you to amend it so it could have this information that Victoria's mentioning? It could be things like height of steps, platforms at stations, accessibility to the bus stops, National Rail service but also toilets and things like that. What is the opportunity for you to change that?

Then can I pick up a very specific issue, that people use the online Journey Planner a lot to work out routes; I use it for when I am going to a different bit of London and need to know how am I going to get there. But we have worked out that if you are somebody with a disability and you tick the relevant box and then you tick that you cannot use stairs or an escalator and that you are a wheelchair user,

Journey Planner then only will show you a Transport for London services; it does not show the rail services. So, actually, in some parts of London, the National Rail, the Network Rail stations and so on are far more accessible but they are not shown at all; they are wiped out completely. What are you doing to co-ordinate that kind of information? What can you do to rectify this huge, huge problem (in my view) and make sure that you have got every bit of information there so that anyone who has got mobility issues or whatever, or wherever they are living they can look at and plan their route with the exception they have got or with their care plan, plan the routes they can get from A to B? Granted, if there are issues en-route and will need to work with staff and so on; but actually to have all the information to hand and not be effectively discriminated against because perhaps they are in a wheelchair.

Geoff Hobbs (Head of Planning, London Rail, TfL): I think your point is well taken and I think there are a lot of ways in which National Rail enquiry service and TfL Journey Planner are inadequately linked together and one of the things that we are doing at the moment is to try to address just those sorts of things. Some of them are remarkably simple and not strictly relevant but, I am making your point for you as another example, just having the Underground service update on National Rail enquiries service, having through journeys on National Rail enquiries to take you to Underground stations as well; and all these things are in preparation and I think will be there by October. Now your point is another one still and I will take that up with colleagues from National Rail.

Caroline Pidgeon (Deputy Chair): Could you report back because I think that is a huge issue and particularly with your planning, for example, to go to the Olympics -my colleague, Dee Doocey [Chair of the Assembly] has done all this research, -going to the Olympics or Paralympics, from certain stations you list and you are given TfL routes. You spend a whole day on a bus probably getting from some parts of London now --

Richard Parry (Strategy and Commercial Director, London Underground): I think there will be a challenge with the real time aspect of things where you have got multi-agencies but I think there is information that is largely static, and we should be able to make sure that information is available and we will take it on board. As Geoff says, the work is in hand we will just make sure that it heads in the direction that you are describing and give you some feedback about it.

With regards to things like toilets, I think, again, it is a little bit for me, this horses for courses thing to an extent and rather than burden the Journey Planner with everything, we have got other sources like the Directory Enquiries website which is extremely detailed about the nature of the facilities that are there and I think if we can use these things in a complimentary way so that you can get from Journey Planner to the other, you know how to navigate, I think that may be better than just trying to shove everything into Journey Planner when actually 95 per cent of Journey Planner is about A to B, how do I get there and if you have questions about things like are there toilets, then you can be lead off somewhere else. The key thing is the user needs to work in a seamless way.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Here it is quite sensible, there seems to be a separate tab if you want to go into more detail. Journey Planner is there but if you want more you can then go into a second tab which you can drill down in order to get that other additional information as to where access points are.

Valerie Shawcross (Chair): Thank you colleagues, it is 5.00pm so I think we should release our guests and say thank you very, very much for engaging with us today. I think we are actually going to produce quite a practical, useful working document and we would also like to know if you have got any more submissions you want to come back with. If you decide, for example, to review information and co-ordination or bus training, do let us know before we finish our report; that would be fantastic. So thank you very much colleagues.