

Transport Committee – 9 March 2016**Transcript of Agenda Item 5****Transport Accessibility for Londoners with a Sensory Impairment**

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): That takes us on to the main meat of the meeting, which is about transport accessibility for Londoners with a sensory impairment.

I would be really grateful if each of you could just introduce yourselves very briefly so that, for people with visual loss, they can put a name to the voice.

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): Good morning. I am Helen Drew. I am the Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager for Chiltern Railways.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, Transport for London): I am David McNeil. I am Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement at Transport for London (TfL).

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, Transport for London): I am Sarah Teichler and I work for London Underground as a Customer Strategy Manager.

Dr Roger Wicks (Director of Policy and Campaigns, Action on Hearing Loss): I am Roger Wicks, Director of Policy and Campaigns at Action on Hearing Loss.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Hi. I am Faryal. I am the Director of Transport for All.

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): Hi. Good morning. I am Patrick Roberts. I am a Trustee for Transport for All.

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): Hi. I am Tom Pey. I am Chief Executive of the Royal London Society for Blind People (RLSB) and Chairman of Wayfindr.net.

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): Robert Harris, Engagement Manager for Guide Dogs in London.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): We should just kick off by getting some opening comments. This is such a big topic and we have a wide range of experts here, but let us see where we get with this.

Perhaps I could ask all of our experts here if you have anything to say to us about which transport modes in London you feel have good accessibility for people with sensory impairments and which you would say were the modes and services that have particularly poor or difficult problems, and some general comments from you.

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): I would like to begin by saying that in terms of positive experiences our clients always praise Transport for London (TfL) staff at Tube stations and the skills

they have in guiding them to platforms and ticket barriers. That is something that everyone wanted me to mention.

Secondly, in terms of the slight negativity around accessibility, I would say it is when the client or guide dog owner gets to the ticket barrier and wants to continue on to a Network Rail service and the fact that guiding ends at the Tube. It stops there. You can book 24 hours in advance, but if you want to turn up at a Network Rail station *ad hoc* you will end up waiting a very long time. Those guiding skills and that positivity end there.

Also, the bus service is something that guide dog owners struggle with in terms of both waiting for the buses and the way in which they stack up. There are various other problems once on the bus, most notably the new floating bus stops or bus stop bypasses that are being built as part of the Cycle Superhighway, which as they gently open across the network are causing quite a lot of issues.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Thank you, Robert. We have some more detailed questions on all of those areas, including the turn-up-and-go issue, and so we will explore that in more detail through the meeting.

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): I wanted to give a voice to the 50% of disabled people who do not use public transport in London, generally not for accessibility reasons but for reasons of their fear for personal safety and their ability to complete a journey.

I would like to congratulate TfL on perhaps being one of the most innovative transport systems in the world in making London accessible for disabled people, but there is an enormous job to be done to allow all disabled people free access to London transport.

Dr Roger Wicks (Director of Policy and Campaigns, Action on Hearing Loss): In terms of issues affecting people with hearing loss, we are not in a position where we could distinguish between different modes of transport and say that one is an exemplar and another exhibits really poor practice. However, just to pull out a couple of examples, there is lots of good practice on the buses in terms of real-time visual displays and information on the buses. Similarly on the Tube, there is lots of good practice particularly on the Victoria line now and much more flexibility in terms of providing visual as well as aural information that can be flexible and react to the situation.

There are real challenges, however - and we will come on to some of the detail of those later - about real-time flexible information, particularly in emergency situations and really urgent situations such as evacuating a station, and a real lack of information for people with hearing loss and deafness about what they should do. We have stories and examples of people being left abandoned on buses and trains when these things happen.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Firstly, I would just say that we very much welcome the Committee turning its attention to disabled people with sensory impairments. As a pan-impairment organisation ourselves, we are very passionate about opening up the London transport network to people with sensory impairments and also those with hidden impairments as well like autism, learning disabilities and indeed mental health issues. It is really important and I hope that this investigation will throw up, as usual, some of your sharp recommendations to TfL and transport providers to push for awareness and investment as well in coming up with measures that will help disabled people with sensory impairments.

I will start with, briefly, some of the positive aspects that our members across London have seen over the last few years and that definitely has come from disabled people's organisations and disabled people lobbying TfL and providers.

In particular, I will maybe mention iBus, for example, which is definitely an investment in innovation that has helped visually impaired people (VIPs) and also other disabled people with sensory impairments to navigate themselves better. Obviously, it has to be turned on and set to the correct level, but generally that is a positive measure that we definitely would like spread right across the UK, which it is not at the moment.

The other thing - again, when it works and when staff are available - is assistance on the Tube network as well. That is something that is positive.

I will turn to Patrick now to maybe speak of some of the challenges.

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): In terms of the things that I have personally experienced, I would like to highlight the difference between somebody who is born without sight and somebody like me who loses their sight as a working-age adult and the challenges I have personally - and have been told by others - experienced.

The biggest barrier for me personally has been communication. Whether it is on the Tube, the train, the bus or whatever mode of transport, communication can be one of the biggest barriers. For example, if you are getting on a bus, you have the glass screen between you and the driver and you are trying to tell the driver where you need to go and the driver is gesturing to say that they have understood. However, being a VIP, how am I supposed to know that he has understood or has acknowledged where I wish to go to? On the Tube, we do not have that problem only insofar as the trains have to stop at various stations and, if they see me, they are not going to drive on, unlike the buses, which have a tendency to do that.

As I said, communication is a major issue. Constantly, we are being asked and told to play by the rules of the sighted individual, which is very challenging.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Thank you very much for that, Patrick. We will get into those issues further as well. Particular thanks to Transport for All for providing members who came to our site visit. We had a really interesting visit on one of the New Routemasters and we had the hearing loop system explained and demonstrated and some of those other issues as well. We will come back to those.

Can I just come to TfL and Chiltern Railways, then, with some specific questions to you? Obviously TfL has been given some laurels there for trying quite hard to make the services more accessible. I am sorry, Helen [Drew], if you are going to be blanket-blamed for everything that the rail industry gets wrong. It is not quite fair and I know that, but we need to air these issues.

What are you doing, both of you, to ensure more consistency of accessibility standards for people with sensory impairments across all modes? Of course, getting some good experience and some good communication, help, information and accessibility on one part of your journey is no good if on another part of your journey the whole thing falls over and you suffer appalling barriers. How are you tackling those weak links? Who would like to come in first?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): To answer that, I can pick up on a point that Robert [Harris] made about when people come off a TfL service on the

Underground and go into a National Rail station. At Marylebone Station, which is one of our stations, we have the Underground links with the National Rail network and we work quite closely with them to make sure that if they do have someone with a sensory impairment who comes off their services, they take them right up to our customer information point so that they get the consistency.

Also, in terms of the booking as well, you do not have to book to get assistance certainly on our services and I do talk for Chiltern Railways. You do not have to book at any of our stations. We have staff who are trained and can help with any turn-up-and-go issues there. Also, it is about our staff training as well. Every member of staff who works on the front line is trained in how to assist people with their journeys. That could be from [helping] a wheelchair user to guiding someone along the platform. Everyone has the same amount of training with refreshing training as well.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): How do you work with other operators to try to get consistent standards where, for example, you might be sharing a station?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): We operate all of our own stations but, say, we have CrossCountry come into some of our stations. If someone is alighting from a CrossCountry service to make a connection for a Chiltern Railways service, there is a process in place where either a train manager or someone from another station would phone ahead and make us aware that there is someone coming in on a service so that our staff can be there to meet that person from the train. It is station staff who are responsible for getting someone from a train safely and then to continue with their onward journey. There is a process and there is a communication network, if you like. We are not just relying on things like the Passenger Assist app, which does have the booked assistance listed on there. There are verbal communications between the operators as well.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Do you have a way of monitoring the performance and the service standards that you are actually providing?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) Disability Group does a mystery shopping exercise every year and quarterly we get the results from that. We can see for all operators, the good, the bad and the ugly, and we can learn from that as well.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): How do you know that the training you are offering your staff is of a good quality?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): Feedback. I remember helping someone when I was guiding them along the platform. It was a blind gentleman. He told me to relax my arm as I was guiding him. He was holding my elbow. When you learn about things like that, it is about making sure that it is fed back to the staff. A lot of it is to do with the feedback.

The Passenger Assist booking system has an option where, after you have received assistance, there is a feedback process there and there is a survey that can be filled in. That comes back to us as well.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Can I ask TfL to comment on this? What modes and what services are you finding very difficult to make more accessible and why?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): We are an integrated authority and so we try to maintain a consistent offer to customers. Managing consistency is very important and we are not complacent. Part of this is staff training. Part of this is monitoring; part of this is listening to complaints and encouraging complaints. Part of it is making sure that we are in constant dialogue with organisations like Patrick's [Roberts], Faryal's [Velmi], Tom's [Pey] and Robert's [Harris], and just making sure that we are on the case.

The invisible line between TfL's services and Network Rail's and the train operating companies' (TOCs) services is a very important issue. I will make a wider point that it is another good reason for rail devolution in that standards can be imposed in a singular way.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): For the people listening, shall we explain what that is, basically?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Yes. Rail devolution is, in effect, in the same way that London Overground, our network, and how we might specify and manage inner suburban services in London so that there is a consistent offer between the Tube, Docklands Light Railway (DLR), the trams and the classic rail service on the National Rail network.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): The TfL press office does not like me to say this, but it is basically TfL taking over the national railway services in London.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Yes.

Richard Tracey AM: There is nothing wrong with that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): No, it is a partnership. Fine.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): In some ways, Helen [Drew] speaking for the TOCs is a bit unfair because they are one of the better ones. Once you are handing over between different companies, you do have to make sure that there is a decent handover and on some services there is not. We have a turn-up-and-go service; other rail operators do not. We manage our stations and sometimes there is a line between our authority and theirs. Actually, it will be a continuing dialogue between us, ATOC and the TOCs, up until the point when we take them over.

Generally speaking, one of the concerns that we have is that as we invest in accessibility, as we invest in technology, as we invest in better customer information and as we invest in all of these things, they only work if we have the right human beings in the network doing the right things on a day-to-day, case-by-case basis. That is a really important for us as TfL to address across all of our services.

Some of our modes are more complicated. We have thousands of buses and therefore thousands of bus drivers working for us. Ensuring consistency across all of those people is a big challenge. That is about training. It is about about the operational management of those companies and about making sure that bus drivers have the right training to do the right things and to do the right things day in and day out. That is a big challenge, but it is something that we do take seriously and are working with the bus companies and bus drivers directly on. It has been a key feature of the way in which we are changing the training of bus drivers and centralising training as well.

Also, there is an issue about recruitment. Typically, bus drivers were recruited for being good drivers. Obviously we want them to be good drivers, but we also want them to be recruited on the basis of customer care skills, sensitivity and understanding of our customers' needs. There is a root-and-branch approach.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): That was very helpful. Thank you, David.

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): I just wanted to pick up on some of the aspects around training and some of the good practice that we have within TfL.

I wanted to mention that the buses accessibility training was developed with Transport for All and Age UK and consists of a video with disabled customers talking about their experiences, including visually impaired customers. London Underground works with Transport for All and Inclusion London to include a half day of training on accessibility in our five-day customer service course. Tramlink has worked with Disability Croydon, a local disabled people's organisation, to deliver its training. There is definitely some good cross-working.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Against what service standards do you measure performance on this particular aspect, then? Do you have a customer charter specifically for people with sensory disabilities?

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): Not specifically, but we do carry out accessibility mystery shopping, which enables us to gather the experiences of disabled assessors.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): If somebody with a sensory disability came to us and said, "Can you show me a charter of what I am entitled to on TfL", where would they find such a thing?

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): We do have a lot of information on our website about what customers can expect and there is a number of user guides that we have produced with some of our policies and some information about the accessibility on different modes. That does exist. It is not necessarily in a formal way but it does exist.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): If the Assembly would like us to try to look at a charter-like document that could be promoted with some commitments, then we would be very happy to take that back.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Certainly something that we have been talking to you about generally is developing customer service standards across the modes. Maybe there is a case - we should discuss this - as to whether or not we should be deepening that and looking at some people with particular needs.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): London Underground and London Overground have a turn-up-and-go service. The national rail providers and the TOCs ask you to book 24 hours in advance, although we have heard that Chiltern does offer a turn-up-and-go service.

I will go to Faryal first because she indicated. How well does the passenger assistance service actually work in practice? How well does it work across the whole network both for the Tube and Overground and for the TOCs?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Let us start with the rail companies first. It is nothing short of scandalous, really, that in 2016 in the UK we do not have a turn-up-and-go system across much of our railways. There are definitely some rail companies that do offer it but scandalously some rail companies even

ask for 48 hours' notice before a disabled person can book assistance. That is just scandalous. Rail companies are very good at making huge amounts of profit for their shareholders, but when it comes to actually providing a service that non-disabled people take for granted - the idea of being able to turn up at a station and travel - that has to be absolutely sorted out and dealt with. It is nothing short, really, of discriminatory against many disabled people.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Can you tell me which companies say 48 hours and which you would say are quite good?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes. We detailed this in our response. There are several rail companies - Southern, CrossCountry, Grand Central - that advise 48 hours ahead. There are some companies - even those companies - that have experiences of disabled people when they have *ad hoc* turn up and are given assistance, but it is about policy. That policy across the board and across the rail industry needs to change. There is change happening but the progress is too slow and it needs to be speeded up.

For that reason, we absolutely do support TfL taking over the suburban rail network in London. Like London Overground and like London Underground, the intention and policy of having turn-up-and-go assistance is there because, for VIPs as well as other disabled people with other impairments, having staff assistance is absolutely crucial.

This is what we would like to say: you can have the most high-tech, modern, 21st-century stations and rolling stock, but until you have staff who are visible, present, trained and confident to assist disabled people to get from A to B, then accessibility can be compromised.

I just want to very briefly touch upon disability policy training as well because there is lots of progress that is being made around that. For us, the standard is disability equality - not 'disability awareness' - training that is rooted in the social model of disability, is focused on disability rights and the equality of disabled people to travel as equal citizens, and is also developed and delivered by disabled trainers. That is the gold mark. That is the standard that all transport operators should be aspiring to. Some are. Certainly, with our partnership with London Underground and Dial-A-Ride and a few other transport providers as well, we are getting there. It is not just us who provide it, obviously, but lots of other good companies and trainers as well. That is what we should be looking at in terms of disability equality training.

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): I would like to say that recently Virgin Trains gave me an opportunity to attend one of their training sessions on disability awareness training for their staff in York. I would have to say that the training in terms of how it was provided was fairly comprehensive.

The question was asked about how we measure performance. That is where it then falls down insofar as, yes, the training is provided to the staff but then there is not adequate monitoring and there are no measures to say, "Are they actually delivering on the training they have received?"

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): It felt almost like, "Tick, we have done that", but was it going to be embedded throughout the working practice?

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): Exactly.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Just to put more of a spotlight on turn-up-and-go on the Tube network as well, we certainly have members for whom it works very well. However, there has been a reduction

of staff across the Tube network and there are members of ours who have felt that, especially at some of the larger stations, at peak times and also at times in the evening as well and, when changing lines, there is no one there to meet them or, when getting off a train at a Tube station, there is no one there to meet them. That is a problem.

One of the issues, again, is about communication between staff when turn-up-and-go assistance has been booked. There is nothing at the moment that logs, it seems. When someone turns up the gate line and says, "I need assistance to get from A to B on the Tube network", there does not seem to be any kind of technology or system that logs that person in, follows them through and makes sure that they have arrived. Often it is the case that they did not get the phone call or the walkie-talkie message or whatever. We need more innovation and investment in technologies that will support some of that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): I will pick that up with TfL in a bit.

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): I was just going to add that even coming here this morning I came via the Tube to London Bridge. I am kind of hesitant here because I am slightly annoyed. I was assisted to get on the Tube. I heard the staff radio ahead to tell them what carriage I was on and everything else. When I arrived at London Bridge, three or four Tubes went by before I was able to attract the attention of a passenger, somebody who was standing close by me, and ask them to go and see if they could find a member of staff to come and assist me. That was this morning coming here.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes. It is not slick. It is not happening as it should do.

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): No.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): We will pick that up with TfL in a minute. Thank you for that real example.

Perhaps, Robert, I could come to you first. You mentioned at the start about the turn-up-and-go and pre-booking service. For your members, how has it worked for them?

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): We have two perfect examples sitting right next to me and the dogs as well. Patrick gave a fantastic answer there. It is not perfect all the time, but the majority of times it does work. I cannot give any better answer than Faryal's actually. She has covered all of the main challenges.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): The main issues really are with the train companies?

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): Yes. It is unfair that as a fully sighted person I can go where I like and turn up at any Network Rail station and make a decision within a couple of hours that I would like to go somewhere, but our clients have to book that and decide 24 hours in advance.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Have many of your members talked to you about the recent staffing changes at stations and whether this has affected assistance provision?

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): Yes, we have had a couple anecdotally saying that they turn up and there is no one at the barrier and it is a case of just waiting around in the hope that a member

of the public can help them through. That has been something that has happened increasingly over the past six months, I would say.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I agree.

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): Any system that is human resource intensive is going to fail. We need to recognise that because you cannot have infinite resource waiting for people to turn up and so it needs to be a different solution. If we go back to what people were saying, we need different technological solutions and we need solutions that are tailored for the individual to help them to navigate through the morass of systems that we have as the transport system. However, they should not be seen as a substitute for human support.

Certainly for blind young people in London, the real problem that people find is being able to understand the complexity of the routes and having the ability to practice the routes. One of the things we need to talk about is the mentoring system that TfL is, I would say, 'piloting' rather than 'rolling out' because it is not yet at a size that it is beginning to bite. There is some significant investment that needs to go into this so that certainly blind people can learn how to navigate independently in the Underground and how to navigate independently in the Overground. Of course, the bus system has a whole different set of problems.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you very much for that. Let me come to the operators and let us do the TOCs first. I know, Helen, that you are specifically from Chiltern but maybe you know what is going on with some of the other companies. Clearly, there are some concerns with Southern yet again - we are quite obsessed with Southern because most of here use it - and its general poor performance. Forty-eight hours is really not acceptable. What is the industry doing to improve this?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): At the moment, most of the operators are working with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). We all have to produce a Disabled People's Protection Policy, which is published on all of our websites, and we have guidelines that we have to follow. The ORR is very keen that we lose the instruction, if you like, that people have to book a certain amount of time in advance. There are some operators that are more acceptable of that than others. I cannot speak for all of them, obviously, but at Chiltern we do appreciate that sometimes you wake up and it is a nice sunny day and you want to take the train to the seaside or something. We completely understand that, but not all of our stations are staffed and not all of our stations are staffed from the first to the last train. There are some restrictions and it is not always feasible to have staff there from the first to the last train. I appreciate that a lot of TfL stations do. It is almost like there is a compromise to be had, as long as we make people aware of the stations where we do have staff and when they are there so that we can assist people and that they do not have to book. For Chiltern Railways, that is the message that we are trying to get across at the moment.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): What about TfL? You have heard some quite right criticism there that it is not joined up and that people are being left. Patrick [Roberts] himself was left this morning. David, do you want to address that?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Yes, I do. First off, Patrick, I am very sorry about that. That was a failure of service.

There is something that is very important about the promise of turn-up-and-go. It makes us as operators think about how we ensure we can fulfil that promise in its entirety. This is easier said than done but, if you have

the turn-up-and-go promise, then you have to have stations staffed throughout all hours of operation. If you have station staff, the staff have to be trained properly. You have to have the facilities there to support customers with a range of different disabilities. That is an incredibly important thing to do, but it is a longer series of actions that you need to take to fulfil the promise. You need to be ensuring that you do that consistently. You need to de-glitch problems such as handovers at interchange points or destination stations. You need to make it resilient against different issues. The peak period is the peak period and everybody is busy, but that does not mean that you drop the turn-up-and-go service and the fulfilment of that promise. This is very important about how you manage the whole service, how you think about the training overall and how you organise your system.

It is a bigger and broader customer issue as well because it is not just people who are disabled who need support. There are all sorts of other reasons that people might need support from station staff.

It is very important. We would be the last to say that we have this perfect. We know that there is inconsistency. It is dealing with the inconsistency that is quite a trick. In dealing with the inconsistency, there will be more staff available when it is quieter than when it is busy, but that does not mean you drop the standard. These are important issues and there are important points to learn.

One of the things that we would always encourage Patrick [Roberts] and others who do face these problems to do is to let us know. If we know about it, we can probably do something to solve it and deal with it as an issue on the day and also think about the steps we might take to fix it in the long term.

I would just talk to Tom's [Pey] point about mentoring. Mentoring and giving disabled the confidence to use our network is really important. We are trialling this and pioneering this and have made a start. There are some reasonably good numbers. However, the confidence to travel is a barrier in its own right and, again, it goes back to whether we can fulfil the promise and whether we work hard to do it. We know that there are wider points such as the use of dial-a-ride services. Quite a lot of people who use free door-to-door dial-a-ride services could use the public transport system; it is just that they are not confident to use it. There are broader benefits - some of them are actually efficiency benefits - from doing this and it is something that we want to invest in and want to support further. Again, mentoring is not something that TfL can bomb our customer base with. It is something that we will need to work with organisations like Transport for All, Whizz-Kidz [disabled children's charity] and others to get the right type of mentoring for the right type of customer.

I would take Faryal's [Velmi] point about people with hidden disabilities and also those with learning difficulties as a really very good point. It is one of the least acknowledged issues around accessibility and one where actually some of the solutions are much more difficult to come by, but that does not mean we should give up and it does not mean we should not try. It is a very important point to make. Those hidden disabilities and those disabilities that are not easily visible to our staff or to other passengers are really important for us to get right. Every transport agency is quite a long way from that point.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Can I pick up the issue of staffing changes? We have heard from Faryal [Velmi] and we have heard from Robert [Harris] that there is a perception that there are not as many staff. London Underground's whole programme is supposed to be about getting staff from the ticket offices out to the front barriers. There is also an issue about the new uniform not being that visible. I have to say that I am spending more time than normal going around all sorts of stations in London and there are not always visible staff at the gate lines. This is a real issue if you are turning up and wanting assistance.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): I certainly can talk about the Fit for the Future - Stations programme in a bit more detail.

Ticket offices and the old back rooms behind locked security doors were not a great way of helping customers. The intention has always been to put more staff at gate lines, on concourses and on platforms to help customers. That is the case. There is an issue about how we develop new management models to make sure that that happens on a consistent basis and that is important, too. However, in many respects, for people with sensory impairments, the worst place for our staff to be was behind a locked window or behind a locked door in a room that was inaccessible to them. This is an attempt to do it.

Just on the issue of the uniform, the uniform was designed to try to make staff more visible. The old uniforms were dark blue with a white roundel, they were a little bit inconsistent and the roundels themselves were not terribly visible nor, often, repeated on the uniforms. There is a greater colour contrast and there are more roundels on people and so we think it is an improvement on the previous uniforms rather than a retrograde step. It is a change and people will need to get used to some of those changes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): At some key stations you are supposed to be putting tabards - or whatever you call them - in high-vis, although in certain colours because we understand that for emergencies you have different things.

There is a real issue. Particularly since we had a meeting with Transport for All and others over at your offices, I have really been looking and asking, "Where is there a member of staff?" It really is not obvious. That is something that you need to pick up. Do you have a shortage of staff at the moment? Is that part of the issue with the changes?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): No.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): At every station there should be staff at the gate line?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Yes.

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): Yes, absolutely.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): That is interesting because I do not think that that is necessarily always the case.

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): It might be that at some of our smaller stations where we have just one member of staff they might be off carrying out other duties at times.

One of the things that we are doing as part of the Fit for the Future stations programme is making sure that all of our ticket halls have Help Points installed. If it is not immediately obvious where a member of staff is, the customers can use the Help Points, which have induction loops installed in them as well, and can flag that they need assistance.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): TfL - I am going to say 'when' - when you get to take over suburban rail services in London, will we have turn-up-and-go assistance there and will we have fully staffed stations from the first to the last train?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Yes, that is our promise.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): That is fantastic. Great. That is really good. Then, Chiltern, just clarify the point that came up earlier or that you touched on earlier. When you are interchanging between services and it is run by other providers, what policy is there? Is there some work going on between the train companies and TfL to really improve that? That clearly is a huge barrier.

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): There is work going on and we are in communication with operators such as London Midland and CrossCountry to make sure that we do have a consistent service and to make sure when we do have staff training and our policies are written that we are all saying, "We will call ahead". We try to call ahead before we put the person on the train to make sure that there is staff available at their destination or interchange station. Certainly, for Chiltern Railways, we do with other operators that are on our lines.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Brilliant. That is a sign that it is in progress.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I would basically like to just speak out in the strongest terms possible, really, against the growing trend in London and across the UK for rail stations - and increasingly at Tube stations as well in London - without any staff. A hologram and a closed-circuit television camera cannot offer you assistance, cannot protect you against disability hate crime and cannot be there as a reassuring figure to help you if the barriers or whatever do not work. It is not suitable if we are going to have a modern, accessible transport network in one of the richest cities in the world to have a growing trend of stations that are just dark and dingy and have no staff present, especially towards the end of the day, as if disabled people do not want to travel and go out of an evening like everybody else. It is really important to speak out against that because we do see it as a growing trend.

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): Can I just reinforce that last point? Again, speaking on behalf of the disabled people who do not use the transport system, the main reason they give for doing it is not about physical accessibility, although that can improve all of the time. It is about their feeling for their own personal safety. Unless that problem is overcome and is overcome in a practical way, we are discriminating against 50% of disabled Londoners and their right to access the London transport system.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): TfL, do you want to respond to that? Our understanding is that all of your Underground and Overground stations are fully staffed. What about the DLR?

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): No, not necessarily.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): The DLR is not fully staffed?

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): Not at the stations themselves. There is always a member of staff on the trains but not within the stations, no.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): However, your rail and Underground are always staffed?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): They are always staffed and that is our commitment.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): For some of the train companies, there is a consultation, Val says, at the moment going on for --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) are consulting about the removal of staffing and the closure of ticket offices on a very large number of Southern and Southeastern stations.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes. For Southern it was written into the contract because that was what TfL managed to secure. Thank you very much. That was really helpful.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Thank you. We will now move on to some questions about passenger information.

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you, Chair. I am the Conservative lead on the Transport Committee.

Actually, before I move on to passenger information, there was one question that occurred to me while Caroline was asking questions. I wonder, has TfL considered putting an easily accessible intercom button into Tube stations that would allow those who need help to ask staff to come to them? It seems to me that that makes a lot of sense.

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): We do have Help Points. I referred to Help Points earlier. They are, basically, two-way intercom systems that have an induction loop installed within them. We have those in almost all of our stations and, as part of the Fit for the Future - Stations programme, we are addressing those places where we do not. We have them in ticket halls, we have a number of different ones on platforms and we have them in some of our route ways where they are longer or more complex. We do have those all over our stations.

Richard Tracey AM: Do you think you have enough of them?

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): I would say, yes, I think so. We do not have complaints that customers cannot find Help Points. They are in fairly consistent locations from station to station, yes.

Richard Tracey AM: All right. Thank you. On this matter of passenger information, you have been talking about the turn-up-and-go but now we really want to talk about actual passenger information that is available to those who need it.

I really want to ask this first question to Transport for All, to the RLSB, to Guide Dogs and to Action on Hearing Loss. It is this. What is best practice in the provision of passenger information and how well is it applied across London's transport system?

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): If we start with the logistics, I am planning a journey and I need the information and so, as a VIP, where can I get that information from home? It is either the telephone or, if I am capable of accessing it, the internet.

With respect to the rail operators, if you are accessing the internet and if you are visually impaired, you have to have a medium to high level of keyboard skills to enable you to access the internet and then to scroll through the vast amount of information. As has been said earlier, they do have the information there but is never at a

point or a central place where you can actually locate it and then be able to make a decision as to how you plan your journey. Therefore, there is clearly an issue there as to how and where that information is provided.

If, say, you arrive at a station and you are now looking for assistance to continue or make a journey, again, there is a requirement on the individual to be familiar with that station layout. You have to know where to go to look for that information.

If you are talking about other disabilities - although obviously I am not going to try to talk about everything because I do not know everything - there is also an issue about the type of signage that is provided and where and how you understand or recognise what is actually there.

Richard Tracey AM: It is rather complicated and the mass of it is too great for you, do you find?

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): Essentially. Let us say if we take the TfL website for planning a journey. The information that you are putting in initially is your start, your finish, the date and the time. Below that, they will have, "What are your accessibility needs?" You tab onto that and that opens up another series of things that you have to tab through. You then say, "OK, continue", but it then opens up a new window and you then have to list through. Sorry, for those who may not understand where I am coming from, I am using text-to-speech software and it is reading back to me exactly what is on the computer screen. It is reading everything back to me and that is what you have to follow. If you have to change that information, you have to go all the way back to the beginning. Again, you have to have a certain skill level and the patience to sit there and listen to that information.

When it comes to the rail operators, theirs is like a minefield insofar as there is so much information that they provide you with that you really are left to, "OK, let me make a phone call", and hope that the person you speak to can be pretty concise in terms of how they impart the information that you require.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Can I just very quickly add to that? There are two things that I would like to say to all transport providers when it comes to audio-visual (AV) information: turn it on and turn it up. It is the ultimate frustration when you board a train and you can see that the dot-matrix screen is there and you know that there is a public address (PA) system and it is not on. It is just absolutely frustrating and discriminatory and lazy. I know that there is regulation coming into force in the next four years that will put a legal requirement on that and we certainly will be testing that when the time comes. However, when you have the technology, turn it on and turn it up so that it can be used.

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you very much, Faryal. Now, Tom Pey from the RLSB, please tell us. What is your experience?

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): If there is one area that can be improved it is this particular area. Most of the people who we deal with - and indeed our client base - are very computer literate and find the system of planning journeys both confusing and oftentimes inaccurate. The inaccuracies will arise more particularly if you are trying to transit from an Overground to an Underground system or from one Overground to another Overground system.

I feel sorry for TfL in a way because it is using old technology to tackle a system that can be solved quite simply by modern cutting-edge technology. One of the things that we are doing is we are working closely with Google because we are working with it on other technology to look at how a voice command can be used to navigate the internet in terms of journey planning. However, in order for that to work, TfL really has to do

some hard work in the background to make sure that the information that it puts in is accurate enough and precise enough to give the person the best result.

I will give you a particular example. I wanted to plan a journey from Hayes in Bromley to Dalston in Hackney. If I had planned it on the TfL website, my journey would have taken me one hour and 40 minutes. If I had used another website, my journey would have been one hour and five minutes. When I did it in practice, it turned out to be one hour and 10 minutes. It was not just me because sighted colleagues tried the same thing for themselves from different locations and they had different answers. It is not just confusing for sighted people; it is confusing for all of us.

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you, Tom. Robert Harris, what is your experience?

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): I would echo Faryal's [Velmi] calls there regarding the AV information, especially the iBus system. Our clients would acknowledge that they are very lucky here in London to have that because elsewhere in the country it is not up to anywhere near the standard that we have here in London.

Richard Tracey AM: Really?

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): Guide Dogs works very closely with the bus network in training drivers and making sure that they know to turn the thing on and to make sure it is loud enough. I am not sure that drivers completely come up with a consistent excuse as to why that is the case when it is not turned on. Also, on the Tube the AV information is very important and is very good.

We are where we are. It is a good place for our clients to be in London. I have a colleague who says that if you have to be blind anywhere in the country be blind in London in terms of being able to get around because the system is so good. However, when it exists, it needs to work.

Richard Tracey AM: I am glad to hear that there is progress being made.

Dr Roger Wicks (Director of Policy and Campaigns, Action on Hearing Loss): The main challenge facing people with hearing loss is the lack of accurate, real-time visual information. That is probably the fundamental challenge. There are over 1 million people in London with hearing loss. When we last did a major survey in this area, over half of the people with hearing loss said that they travel by train at least once a year and, of that number, two-fifths reported problems receiving information *en route* during their journeys.

Technology has been a huge boon to people with hearing loss in particular with the greater ability to plan a journey through apps and going online. The challenge is keeping it up to date and being able to respond when events occur during your travel. I will give you an example of someone who contacted us on this issue. They said the following:

"Twice this last week I got on the wrong bus after using what I thought was a reliable TfL guide online through my smartphone. The first time I had not realised until everyone got off the bus and I was the last one sitting there, miles from home. I was not pleased that I had to walk three miles back in the freezing dark."

There we have two visions for the future. We have the "last one sitting there". Are people with hearing loss going to be the last ones sitting on the bus or the train? Alternatively, is there going to be a fully accessible

system for people with hearing loss and other disabilities? There are two competing visions of the future there.

Earlier, many of us said that there are signs of real progress. There is greater flexibility with visual displays on the Victoria line and I believe they are going to be rolled out on other lines as well.

There is another particular concern about receipt of information in emergency situations. There are extreme cases - but they do occur - when a station has to be evacuated or a train or a Tube has to be evacuated. Our supports have told us of feeling very concerned and anxious in those situations when an evacuation takes place and we have some very specific recommendations for TfL there in terms of development and implementing appropriate procedures.

Again, real-time displayed information is critical, but also staff trained in communicating appropriately with people with hearing loss is key. I believe we are talking more about staff training later, but that is really simple for people with hearing loss: speaking clearly, looking at the person. Also, is there is scope for staff wearing tabards with really clear bits of information in those extreme situations?

There are two visions of the future here. Are disabled people and people with hearing loss going to be the last ones to receive information or is there scope for a fully accessible system?

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you very much. Can we turn to TfL and Chiltern Railways now? What we would like to know is where we will be in five years' time with this sort of information. You have heard the criticisms and we have received quite a number of written submissions from various people who have had problems. Where are we going to be in five years?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): One of the things that we are looking at - and five years is probably a good timescale for it - on board our trains is the transference of a driver announcement or a train manager announcement into the written word onto our customer information system screens. I appreciate that if a train is in a tunnel or stuck somewhere an announcement for anyone with a hearing impairment is not much use for them. We are doing an investigation into the technology that is out there to see if that is something that exists and can be employed.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): People have made some very important points and one of the areas that we are keen to develop further is the real-time information on what is happening then and there. There are a number of solutions to that. There is not any kind of magic bullet. The example of the work that we are doing with Tom [Pey] on Wayfindr is a really important pointer to how we might work in the future to find new solutions to current problems, but the app industry and a whole series of other things can produce relatively quickly solutions.

For us, in five years' time, we will have improvements in information technology that we need to harness for the commercial sector and also the energy of organisations like Tom's [Pey], Faryal's [Velmi], Roger's [Wicks] and others just to try to give us some new ideas. The potential of that technology is really untapped at the moment and there is more that we can do. As the new buses come online, as new trains come online and as new infrastructure within the system comes online, we will have a much better quality of information provision and much better intelligence on an ongoing basis. It is very difficult to retrofit 21st-century information technology into an early 20th century or even older train network. However, modernisation will help to provide a number of opportunities.

Some of it is actually just listening and it is a fair point. If there are instances of being the last person left on the bus or the train, it is something that we can fix and it is something that we do not need to invent a new form of technology to fix. That is about paying attention. The lesson that we are getting in TfL is that the more we listen, the more we hear and the more we bring in organisations like Roger's [Wicks], the better we are going to get. As I said, we have made some progress in the next few years. Over the next five years we might be much better at listening and then acting on this in a way that provides that consistency, provides that thoughtfulness and provides that point of intervention not to forget that last person on the bus or the train. Those are very important things for the future. Some of them are technological and some of them are about things that have not been invented, but some of them are about things that are invented now: paying attention, being careful, being thoughtful and organising the system in a way that supports that.

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): Going back to the question of where we will be in five years' time, I will just mention our visual information on trains. At the moment we have visual information screens on all trains except the Bakerloo line; that is going to be addressed within the next five years.

I know that it is beyond five years, but we are working on our designs for the New Tube for London customer information, which will be a flat computer screen, if you like, and that will enable us to deliver a greater amount of different types of information. It is going to include a line diagram that moves along as you move along the stations. New types of information we will be able to provide. We will be able to provide better information about delays and disruptions because we will have more space. You will not have to scroll the text and it will be easier to read. Yes, that is the sort of improvement that we will see there.

Richard Tracey AM: There is one point that I would just like to raise with you. This is from one of our written submissions from somebody called Daniel Hill. He says:

"Why are information boards at train stations placed so far above head height, making them harder for visually impaired people to read?"

What is your answer to that?

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): These are the board with the next train information on them, yes?

Richard Tracey AM: Yes, but all kinds of information, really.

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): It is sad to hear that that makes it so much more difficult for VIPs to see. There are a couple of complexities. One is around head-height clearance, which means that we have to give enough clear space. The other one is around sightlines within a station. There is a lot of information that customers need to be able to see. Train operators need to be able to see and have a clear view of the platform to be able to operate safely. It is a really challenging environment to have to install that sort of equipment.

Richard Tracey AM: Another point that seems to me quite important is how operators track reported failures in AV announcements and speaker systems? The thing that I experience - and I do not have any impairment, fortunately - is the fact that very often the information on trains is set at such a low level of volume that you cannot even hear it. It does not matter what sort of passenger you are; you cannot hear it. Surely there

should be a common practice with train operators and I suppose TfL but particularly its train operators. I have experienced this. The driver or guard does not seem to realise how poor the AV system is.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): We have taken the point about turning up the volume. This is quite a complicated issue in some respects. We are encouraging drivers to speak in their own voices because we know that customers like that better.

Richard Tracey AM: Yes, very good. The Overground drivers are very good at that.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): However, for Roger [Wicks] and the people he represents, it is not very helpful at all and we need to echo that through some kind of visual display.

Richard Tracey AM: What about failures, though? Can you deal with that?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): One of the tricks is - and it is a fair point - that a lot of the information we have is flat. It is about what is happening. It is designed for the day-to-day. It is not necessarily designed for the moments of extremis. Technology is part of the solution to that. Training, looking at procedures and all of these things are parts of the solution to that. There will be a bit of everything there.

However, actually, there is a really very simple lesson that we are hearing, which is: turn the volume up. That is it. Also, I am taking away that point about the last person on the bus or the train. That is a really important point for us to then focus on.)

Richard Tracey AM: One would hope that there might be - volume is pretty straightforward - a warning light that indicates that the loudspeaker or the AV system in a particular carriage is just not working.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): We need to be a bit careful about not panicking people with big flashing lights but there must be ways of doing it better and it is our job to try to find out what they are.

Richard Tracey AM: Helen from Chiltern Railways, you are a train operator. What is your comment on these points?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): In terms of tracking faults and that, a lot of it depends on the type of train that we run. Some of our trains have auto-announcements and they tend to be driver-only. The driver would not necessarily know that the auto-announcement is not working and so a lot of it is done on feedback and staff travelling on the train feeding back to our engineering team that there is a fault and, likewise, if they were making manual announcements as well.

That is where things like Twitter feeds come in because you would see something like, "I cannot hear the driver's announcement". We can feed that, again, back to our engineering team. When the trains go through on their exams as well, one of the things that is tested are the systems.

I do not think the drivers or the train managers have a volume control or anything. It is just a speaker that they are speaking into. If there is a fault, it is a system fault rather than that someone has turned the volume down.

Richard Tracey AM: Perhaps they need to speak more clearly or get closer to the microphone.

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): It could be. It could be human error.

Richard Tracey AM: Now, the other related point is travelling alone and the Wayfindr developments and we would like some further information about that.

Perhaps, first of all, it might be useful for us and for anybody watching this on the webcast to hear how this Wayfindr system works. Could you describe it?

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): It is actually quite a simple system and, in transport infrastructure terms, quite an inexpensive system.

How it works, basically, is that we put Bluetooth beacons into, in this instance, London Underground. We have tried it in two stations in London now, the last one being Euston Station. These beacons are given a code, which is a location, and the beacon then can be picked up by a smartphone using ordinary Bluetooth. It does not require a big map. It does not require anybody to be able to locate the phone at a particular point. It means that if I want to go from the entrance of Euston Station to platform 2 on the Victoria line or whatever, it will pick up the beacons that are on that route and it will tell me to carry on, to turn right or to turn left and that I am coming to an escalator, coming to stairs and so on. I can put whatever information is required into that beacon. It also has the ability to transmit printed data. By simply changing the software within my smartphone, instead of it telling me through my earphones to turn right or carry it, it can print it if that is of any use.

In terms of navigating indoors, it is a cheap system. We, working with TfL, want to make this open-source. In other words, Google has put a lot of money into developing this as a worldwide standard, not just a standard for London, and TfL is of course trailblazing here in London and we are delighted to be working in partnership with TfL on this. However, the standard would be available to anybody free of charge for them to be able to use it.

We are also in discussions with some Overground and National Rail providers and TfL is working hard on our behalf, on its own behalf and on customers' behalf to see if we can trial an interface between an Underground station and a Network Rail station in London onto a Network Rail provider and to a destination - probably some place like Glasgow, for instance.

To give you some idea of cost, it costs somewhere in the region of £5,000 to £7,500 to put the beacons into a London Underground station. It costs a lot to develop the software that drives it.

Behind all of that, TfL is doing an enormous amount of work to make sure that this system does not fail. It is OK for us to put in a very nice, simple smartphone system, but then TfL has to make sure that it works and that, if it blocks off a particular exit or tunnel, the Bluetooth beacons are updated in real time or else you will have somebody going someplace they should not go. There is a lot of work to be done.

It is very exciting. It will revolutionise transport for print-disabled people in the future. I am glad to say that there are a number of cities worldwide that are really interested in it and are hanging onto every word of TfL to find out how it gets on and that we make this trial a success.

Richard Tracey AM: That is very good news. Can I put the question to TfL, though? We have heard a lot in here in our Budget Committee and so on about the problems with the Government cutting some of the TfL grant and we are about to have a mayoral election and there may be changes in funding. To what extent are some of these exciting advances potentially jeopardised by any funding cuts?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): We are at a particular stage in the cycle. We are working through the implications of the last spending round and there will be a new mayoralty with different priorities.

We are clear, though, that improvements in customer experience and improvements in the accessibility of our network are not separate issues. The issue of the way in which disabled Londoners access and use our network is the same as the quality of our customer experience and the offer that we make to London more generally. These are not different issues.

However, one of the things that is really interesting about the Wayfindr project is that it is a cost-effective solution to a real problem. We are working with Tom's [Pey] organisation. We are working with a number of technical specialists outside of TfL. We are leveraging money - or Tom is leveraging money - from Google and interest and expertise. It is a great example of the sort of projects we can do even in straitened financial times and, therefore, it is the sort of project that we would be wanting to do more of in the future because it shows the way. You do not have to have a huge grand project with internal committees, governance boards and all of those things that TfL does. You can actually do some amazing things in partnership and working imaginatively. We can bring our expertise to what is a great deal of expertise that we are getting from Tom and his colleagues and from some of the technical experts working with him. It is the sort of thing that we would want to continue to do. As a model, it is about how we can do with less money. It is a great model and, therefore, it is the sort of thing that we would want to do more and we would want to continue with.

Richard Tracey AM: You sound as though you are optimistic that you might be able to keep this going even if other things --

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Yes, we love this project.

Richard Tracey AM: Exactly. It does sound very exciting. What are your hopes for the next stages then both from you and from the blind community? What do you think?

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): In terms of London Underground, we have £250,000 committed to carrying out a further trial. The details of exactly what might arise are not determined but we are very keen to push the work forward. It is worth saying the trials at Euston and Pimlico were really very successful and helped to answer a lot more questions.

As Tom [Pey] said, there is still a way to go. We still have to iron out some of the issues in the technology. In autumn, we will have a better understanding of how the system can work making whole journeys rather than just journeys down to the platform. We will see what other kind of questions that throws up but we are really committed to pushing forward and continuing to explore technology. I am really pleased we are working with RLSB.

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): We should not underestimate and I commend TfL. It is not often I get the chance to do that and so I would like to do it. All of the work that they are doing to make this work in the London Underground it is going to also make available to every transport provider in the world. The effect of that is that it will make the transport provision across the world more accessible for print disabled people, not just blind people. Equally, what it means is that TfL will get a free source of learning because people across the world will feed in and will begin to offer improvements to the system because it is open and so we are all going to learn together to do it. It is truly ground-breaking from the point of view of an organisation that has been described as having a lot of governance and a lot of committees to be able to operate in this modern way. It is great and it must be encouraged.

I would say that we must not underestimate the effect that budget cuts could have on this type of learning - and this project in particular - because if TfL cuts the innovation budget or is forced to cut the innovation budget, then other good ideas are just not going to make it to the fore and we have to encourage that type of learning. It is not expensive learning today like it used to be in the past.

Richard Tracey AM: That is optimistic. What about the mainline train operators? Does Chiltern Railways accept the possibilities of some of this?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): Absolutely, yes. I am very interested to hear about the Wayfindr and, in terms of the funding, there are streams that we can go through to assist with things like this.

Richard Tracey AM: The last thing is to ask particularly TfL. Do you offer regular station orientation tours to essentially impaired people including the new Crossrail Elizabeth line stations? It sounds to me as though this is such a good idea that some sort of tour would be very helpful to people to know how it all works.

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): Absolutely.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): In terms of station orientation tours, we probably do not at the moment. I would be very interested to talk to all organisations about how we might do that. It is an element of mentoring as well. There are some very interesting challenges around the new Elizabeth line stations which is there is a very large, public realm. The Hanover Square entrance to the Elizabeth line, which is the Bond Street station, is nearer Oxford Circus than it is to Bond Street. How we might navigate that using things like Wayfindr will be quite challenging and also quite interesting. I would be keen to pick that up and see what we might do.

Richard Tracey AM: All right. We have probably covered all of that.

Darren Johnson AM: We will move on to buses. We will start with Transport for All, if we can, to get your reflections. What are the main problems that people with sensory impairment face when travelling by bus in London?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I will give an overview and then Patrick [Roberts] can jump in as well. We mentioned and we have spoken about iBus, which is definitely a positive innovation of the last few years, notwithstanding some of the concerns we have raised about it.

The other issue would be around hearing looping buses, definitely, from the site visit. A number of our members - and Michael, who is here as well today - have done work on this. The fact that the hearing loop

technology is only on some of the newer buses and even then there is quite a significant amount of interference is something that absolutely needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

Darren Johnson AM: Yes, we are aware of those. We will talk to you about those.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): The other thing to say is around bus design. We were speaking about where should we be in five years' time and there is absolutely an onus on TfL and bus companies to innovate and come up with a bus design that is not only spacious and accommodates things like assistance dogs but also really factors in grab rails and AV technology and everything that we would expect of a bus network in London.

Darren Johnson AM: Is this both the New Bus for London [New Routemaster] and the standard double-deckers that are being rolled out now or is it particularly the New Bus for London?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Do you mean for hearing loops?

Darren Johnson AM: No. I am saying just generally about design issues you have.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes. The New Bus for London was a real wasted opportunity. We built a bus from scratch, from design onwards, and the views of disabled and older Londoners primarily were ignored and some of the designers have gone on to really rubbish the idea of contrast grab rails and things like that. It was a real wasted opportunity and is a lesson for other transport providers, the New Tube for London, Crossrail, and all the other new infrastructure that is coming in: do not get it wrong, there are no excuses, use all of the best practices out there when it comes to this. We want to see bus design evolve because, at the moment, absolutely, there is an issue with grab rails in particular.

Darren Johnson AM: Is there any retrofitting that you want to see on existing buses, particularly on the older models, or is it just the design of the new buses?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, retrofitting that improves accessibility and ease of use for disabled people is absolutely something we would support. Bus companies run buses in London for profit. They are not doing it out of some kind of charitable gesture. They need to reinvest in their rolling stock that is coming out of date and look at introducing things like AV announcements and hearing loops for sure. Do you want to talk about floating bus stops?

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): Yes.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, because this is a big issue with floating bus stops.

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): If I just carry on from what has been said there, again, with the buses, whether they are the old type or the new type, there are certain issues and challenges especially if you are a guide dog owner or if you are a wheelchair user. It is about the bus stopping at the bus stop. If we get that right, then, hopefully, things can move on.

What tends to happen when somebody like me loses their sight is that you undergo mobility training through your rehab. Your mobility training says, "With your stick or with your guide dog, you stand at the bus stop post and the driver has you in his sightline and therefore pulls up alongside you". When the bus driver does not do that, then you are left all over the place. On entering the bus, there needs to be that communication

that says, "OK, this is my destination", and so on but then, moving inside the bus, it is being able to find a seat. One of the things that I never appreciated or realised when I was sighted was the fact that when you enter a bus with a guide dog - and especially one the size of mine, Rufus - there is not a seat that you can push him under. As a result, when you get on, you have only that wheelchair space that is practical for Rufus and me to go and sit at. When you have other passengers sitting there - and we are not talking about five years and we are not talking about a wheelchair being in that space but just the seating adjacent to that space - our profile does not fit that of a disabled person insofar as they will look at the blue signage and the labels and they will see the wheelchair sign, they will see the buggy sign, they will see a person with a stick and they will see a figure of somebody holding a small child but they will not see a person and a guide dog owner.

Darren Johnson AM: You are not seen as a legitimate user of that space.

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): You are not seen as a disabled person who should be given a seat or space. What otherwise then tends to happen is that you then block the exit. On the new buses, it is like war breaks out if I am just standing there because, if nobody is prepared to give me a seat and I am blocking the middle door, then people are coming in but they cannot get past me because we are standing there in that space. There is an issue with all of that.

There is another issue to do with the floating bus stops. We talked about passenger information. There has been a lot of development in terms of construction to do with the Cycle Superhighway and, as a result of that, a number of these floating bus stops are appearing although you go for a consultation, which, for the visually impaired, is pretty poor because there is no tactile information provided for a VIP. TfL is pushing ahead with floating bus stops with no consideration as to how a VIP or even a person in a wheelchair will access that bus stop.

I have recently been told that at St Thomas' Hospital there are proposals to put a floating bus stop at the entrance to that hospital, which has a low-vision clinic. Again, in terms of bus operators or TfL in terms of how you do your logistics and planning, there is real concern as to what risk assessments you carry out and who gets to see these risk assessments when you have individual pedestrians with sensory impairments.

Darren Johnson AM: On the floating bus stops, do you think there is not a place for them at all in London or do you think there are some design considerations that could be introduced through maybe learning lessons from elsewhere? They are pretty common around Germany and the rest of Europe and so on. Are there lessons that could be learned to make them more accessible and user-friendly or do you just think they are the wrong solution?

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): At this stage because, as I say, the information is not made public as to how they go about their design, the situation is that I would say no. They are not the thing to be putting in because, if you are talking about design considerations, we have issues around having audible pedestrian crossings where TfL planners and designers will say, "We will not put an audible pedestrian crossing here because it will either confuse other pedestrians or slow traffic up to such an extent that it brings the whole of London to a standstill".

Darren Johnson AM: That is a really helpful insight. Thank you. If I can turn now to Tom Pey from the Royal Society for Blind People, Tom, what do you see as the key problems for people with sensory impairments using buses in London?

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): I could just agree with everything that has been said before and say that floating bus stops do need a rethink if they are going to work for blind people. Some time ago when the AV announcements were being put on buses, we lost an opportunity at that point because there is a communication system on the bus that allows TfL to know where every bus in London is at any particular moment in time. That is a communication device that can communicate with a number of other devices including a smartphone, although at the time smartphones probably were not prevalent but today they are. There needs to be some form of investment put in place that allows the bus to be able to tell a blind person when it is coming. That will partly overcome some of the confusion that happens at some of the busier stops where two or three buses come together and you are not quite sure which one you are supposed to get on. By the time you get there, the bus you want to get on is gone. That is something on buses.

I am a guide dog user and I do depend quite a lot on the generosity of the London traveller, which sometimes can wear thin in rush hour. I have the same problem with a guide dog blocking the way and it is uncomfortable for other people and it is uncomfortable when they let you know that they are uncomfortable. Again, it is about education for passengers - maybe clearer signage about, "Please make a space available for the dog" - or it will become an obstacle rather than a guide.

Most importantly, the feeling amongst blind people that there is a lack of predictability of bus arrival; that is a major block to blind people using the transport system and the bus system and it drives them on to more expensive transport systems. Again, there is a technology solution to that, bearing in mind that not everybody who is blind or disabled is tech-savvy at this moment in time. Nonetheless, we have to start somewhere and we have to start solving the problem before we drive more people away from public transport either into isolation or into more expensive modes of transport.

Darren Johnson AM: Those are some very useful reflections.

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): A lot of this bus experience is down to bus driver communication and it is about this person being a human being and spotting someone with a cane or a guide dog and making sure that they pull up to the kerb and the bus driver actually communicates with this person and, if there is a problem with this priority space, in some way a bus driver can help. I know there a plastic screen exists that might be there for a reason but a bus driver coming to the aid of someone would be helpful.

On the floating bus stops issue, I would like to say that we are working with TfL along with some other stakeholder groups on redesigning the stops. We are part of a working group on that and a trial is due to be started in spring. I would like to say that it is a shame that that working group was not there before these were planned. That would have been hugely helpful.

Guide Dogs does not agree with the floating bus stop. As Patrick [Roberts] has said - and he has given you the reasons why - crossing a cycle lane is difficult for a VIP who cannot hear when the bikes are coming. It is also difficult when you actually get to the stop. Where do you stand? There are challenges you face when you alight from the bus at a floating bus stop. You do not know where you have alighted at that floating bus stop and you do not know where it is then safe to cross.

Guide dogs are very clever but what they cannot do is tell you when it is safe to cross a road. That is down to the user. When you have cyclists whizzing past you on what is called a 'Superhighway' and therefore a cyclist would assume they can get from A to B as quickly as possible, it is going to be very challenging for them to want to stop. One may but others may not and so you take your life in your own hands if you step out into a

cycle lane. That is one of the biggest challenges for us. We are finding that as these Cycle Superhighways open up, guide dog owners are getting in contact with me increasingly saying they can no longer get around their areas. Vauxhall Bridge is a fine example. If you approach that as a vision impaired person, it is almost impossible to navigate and cross over. I know that I find it difficult to locate the most appropriate place to cross the cycle lane and then try to get across the controlled crossing. It is a real shame and I hate receiving emails from our clients who say they can no longer get around their local areas.

Darren Johnson AM: This is clearly something that TfL will have to address. Let us just hear from Roger first in terms of the deaf community.

Dr Roger Wicks (Director of Policy and Campaigns, Action on Hearing Loss): Just quickly, I will make a point about the hearing loops and I saw the Committee experience some of the issues around hearing loops for themselves. It was very encouraging that they experienced that. Often with hearing loops it is a case of 'so near, yet so far' because often we see, for example, hearing loops are installed but are not working properly. There may be interference on the bus or the range may not be as it should or we may have hearing loops installed but there is no signage; people are not aware and they are not being advertised. Clearly, we want all of those things to happen. We need hearing loops to be (a) installed, (b) maintained properly and looked after and (c) advertised, and also that staff are aware of what their purpose is and how to use them as well.

Darren Johnson AM: That is very useful. You have heard a lot of points raised there, David and Sarah [Teichler]. Do you want to come back on those?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): On the hearing loops, in effect this is almost a trial at the moment and we are learning about things. There have been problems with interference on the buses. We have 2,000 buses out of roughly 9,000 buses that have them on. There is some issue about the coverage and there are some other technical issues that we just need to fix. Then we need to be working on how we specify future buses and how we make it work at a consistent level as we move forward. We are working to try to get it better. It is a step forward, what we have right now, but it is clearly not perfect and we need to be working on making it more perfect and spread it more across the fleet.

I will talk about behaviours and bus driver training. I will come to the bus bypasses later, if that is OK. Bus driver behaviour is a very important thing and that is why we are training and we have management action against the bus drivers who fail to abide by what they are doing. There are some physical issues and one of them is the accessibility of bus stops themselves. Being able to pull into a bus stop sometimes is limited by cars parked nearby, clutter on the pavement and others. We have a big programme of making bus stops accessible. One of those things is making sure there is a big enough box for the buses to pull up properly. The customers who have particular accessibility issues can get on those buses more effectively if grabs can be deployed and a whole series of other things. That is a big programme and we are making good progress on that.

There are issues to do with priority seats and the wheelchair space or pram space and this is a difficult one. A few weeks ago we had the Buggy Summit where, according to the bus drivers there and a few others, the biggest problem is mum-on-mum 'buggy rage', but this is about competition for a particular space in a particular way. There is a mix of issues for that and we are looking at that. Obviously, we might need to think about bus training and the guidance we give to bus drivers about how and when they intervene. Some of them are unsure about when they should get out of their cab and do something. Others are very active. Others are very passive and we need to make sure everybody is more active.

Darren Johnson AM: You will include appropriate dialogue with the relevant groups on this then given there is a feeling that blind people have been neglected in terms of information about that space on the buses.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL) Yes, and more generally we need to listen to lots of people. We need to listen to parents, we need to listen to wheelchair users and we need to listen to bus drivers. What is stopping them from doing the right thing in certain circumstances? It might be because there is a controller at the end of their radio telling them to hurry up. There are things we need to find out more about and we need to talk to quite a broad range of people about this.

We need to look at two things. One is making sure the physical infrastructure works properly, the buses are up to the right specification and the bus drivers are trained and encouraged to behave in the right way all the time. There is an important issue as well about customer understanding. The point that Patrick [Roberts] made about signage is a really interesting one about how somebody in a wheelchair is shorthand for 'disability' and we know that hidden disability and other forms of disability are equal barriers. There are some issues about how we communicate.

It was reported from the Buggy Summit that we are looking at an etiquette guide. That might be a little bit too fancy and formal but there is an issue about how we all work and how as Londoners we all use this network and look, take care and recognise there are often competing needs for the accessible space on buses in particular. We do not want to take away priority seating because there are a lot of people who need a seat. We do not want to throw parents off the bus because the last thing we want to do is have a parent and a baby on the street when they should be on our service. We also need to make sure that the network is accessible to people who have mobility problems. These are quite challenging issues and again --

Darren Johnson AM: There is a mixture of both design issues with the bus and cultural issues, which you are going to work to address.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL): Yes, and some of them might just be operational issues. The bus drivers are great. Sometimes when we talk about this there is the idea that we talk about bus drivers as somehow they are the enemy. They are not; they are the solution. Most of them are brilliant and they have a really difficult job.

Darren Johnson AM: They are often under some competing pressures. Maybe the contracts need to be looked at in this perspective.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL): We, as an organisation, need to make sure we are not sending conflicting messages to those people who are sitting in that driving seat.

Darren Johnson AM: It will include contract review as part of this process?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL): Yes. There are some issues around behaviour and people being more thoughtful and especially the case at the peak where things can be a little bit Darwinian. There is that.

Bus bypasses are a very difficult issue. On one level there is a very strong commitment to ensure a safe cycling environment, to encourage more cycling, to embrace issues around segregation and to have a much clearer infrastructure to support and encourage cycling. We are imposing it on a road network that has all sorts of functions. It is a bus network, it is a pavement environment and there are all these things. There are not

magic solutions always. I am interested in the point but I did not know about St Thomas'. I will specifically pick that issue up.

We are looking at where the physical infrastructure of the road is such that it is very difficult to not have these bus bypasses or these island bus stops or whatever you want to call them. We need to look at what we can do to mitigate some of the problems. We are looking at doing some testing around zebra crossings and mini zebra crossings, looking at the use of Belisha beacons and looking at other kinds of speed management. This is a challenge. We know this is a difficulty.

We are grateful for Robert [Harris] and his organisation and the others we are working with to help us.

Darren Johnson AM: With hindsight, was it a mistake to bring them into the process only very late on to have the dialogue?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL): I am always very careful not to look at things with the benefit of hindsight. The challenge right now is to look at what we can do and that is what we need to be doing.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Can I just make a really quick point about the wheelchair space on buses? They did not just fall out of the sky, or a benevolent gesture by a politician or a transport provider. It is part of a sustained movement of disabled people over many decades fighting for access on the streets and in Parliament and really putting their voice forward. That is why we have that wheelchair space there as a space primarily for wheelchair users but, hopefully, when we see evolution of bus space design, for other disabled people as well and indeed for parents with buggies should they choose to come.

Just on that point as well, the Buggy Summit was very positive. We would like to get an invitation next time to come.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL): You did.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): No, we did not. It is OK. One of the things I would really like to say is that it was a very positive move. Absolutely, it is a good thing to happen. One of the things that we would say is producing a kitemark for buggy manufacturers. If you have a mobility scooter, you have a mobility card that you are given and, if your scooter is the wrong dimensions or too big, you are not allowed on a London bus. However, buggy users can buy massive buggies and are able to board. I say this as a mum myself who chose to buy a very small buggy and I know that Caroline [Pidgeon MBE AM] is a mum --

Darren Johnson AM: Standardise them.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Yes, exactly. Definitely, a kitemark and smaller buggies would assist the situation, but please do not forget that that space is there because of a sustained movement. It is a continuance.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL): Faryal made a really important point. Indeed, many of the things we see and now take for granted are as a result of very active and sometimes quite assertive campaigning from the accessibility lobby. The point for organisations like TfL and the TOCs is to not leave it in a situation where Faryal and organisations like hers and others here have to bang

on our door to get in. We should be inviting them in at the beginning as part of the design processes as part of our thinking.

Darren Johnson AM: Is that an admission that that did not happen on the New Bus for London as well, then, because there has been quite a few concerns raised? It is a step backwards in terms of --

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL): I am going to make a general point that actually things are better organised, better managed and better planned when we are involving everybody who has a stake in that. That is a simple lesson. Even then that will not show up every snag, every issue and every problem. Not every voice can be heard all the time. Sometimes there are financial constraints; sometimes there are practical constraints. There is a general principle that we should be open and we should talk to as many people as we can.

On the Buggy Summit, I am very sorry. I thought you [Transport for All] were invited. I wondered why you were not there. I am very sorry.

The buggy issue is an important one. One of the ideas is the kitemark idea. TfL, as the largest transport operator in the country, is probably in a good place to be talking to retailers, manufacturers and others and to start talking about the urban buggy.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): That was one of the previous recommendations of this Transport Committee when we were last involved in looking at disability and transport.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes, it was.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): It was indeed. It is something that TfL needs to now take up. That would be very welcome.

Darren Johnson AM: Can I finally put a couple of questions that have come in during the consultation via members of the public?

The first is about how TfL is responding to concerns about silent buses, which are a problem for VIPs because they cannot hear them approaching. This is the new hybrids, which are much quieter and the electrics are much quieter.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): This is an issue about the quieter buses or 'stealth buses', as they are sometimes termed. This is a factor of the cleaner, greener engines of hybrid vehicles and electric vehicles.

Darren Johnson AM: When they switched from the old town gas to North Sea gas they fabricated a smell, didn't they, so that people would be familiar with it--

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): There is work going on at a European level about trying to minimise noise, but that does not really culminate until about 2021. What we are looking into at the moment is what we can do and what we can do earlier. It is an odd one and you are going to get competing views on this, but having some sense of where a bus is would be very important.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Sorry, just as Chair, may I just beg your indulgence to interrupt and say a word of welcome to the children and staff of the Al-Falah Primary School in Hackney? This is the Transport Committee and we are talking to people who have problems with their hearing or suffer from sight loss or blindness about how easy or difficult it is to get around on the transport system, and we are talking to the people who provide the transport system about what they can do to make travelling around more accessible for deaf people and for blind people. That is what we are doing today.

Darren Johnson AM: I just have one final question that has come in, then, and it is on the theme of bus stop information:

“Could buses have external speakers stating their route destination to avoid VIPs having to get on the bus to ask where it is going?”

That could provide a bit of engine noise to start things going as well, could it not? You could have all of your problems solved with a little loudspeaker on the front of the bus.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): We can look into it. Some of it could just be some basic stuff about the bus driver speaking and talking out loud to people, but technology is an issue. The iBus technology does offer some promise. One of the disappointments we have had – just going back to Tom’s point about the whole series of different Citymapper technology, which will give pretty accurate information about what the next bus is and when it is coming – and is quite frustrating is seeing the lack of take-up from the commercial app industry into variations of those apps that might provide more accessible journeys and more accessible information. We have done things, we have put prizes out and we have put money in to spur innovation in this area. There is a view amongst the app community that the market is not big enough and it will not be profitable enough.

We disagree with this. We think that we have a large and aging population. We are pushing on that, but obviously we also need to be thinking about maybe we might be the solution to some of those issues and so we are looking at different models and how we might use technology. At the moment there are some people who do not have smartphones, but the perception is that people will get smartphones if they are useful for them. At the moment there is not enough usefulness for some Londoners. The more useful they can be, the more people will take them up. There is something about us generally, all of us around this table and on this Assembly, helping to encourage the industry to try to develop those products, which really work. We need to help them.

Darren Johnson AM: Thank you. That has been a very useful exchange.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Thank you very much. Can I invite Dr Onkar Sahota to ask some questions about assistance dogs, guide dogs, etc?

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you. These questions, as the Chair says, are about assistance dogs and also private hire vehicles (PHVs). Let me address the question to Robert. Are assistance dog users able to access PHVs on an equal basis?

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): Currently the law says yes, but that is not the case.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: What is the experience on the ground?

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): The experience on the ground can be very distressing for some of our clients who book a taxi. They do not have to say that they have an assistance dog with them. We advise that perhaps it is worth mentioning. The call goes out from the office, the driver turns up and in quite a few cases you will get the driver saying, "I do not take dogs". You will find that that is a lucky outcome. Sometimes the driver will spot the dog from afar and just drive off, abandoning the guide dog owner by the side of the road, which has happened quite frequently.

We had conversations with TfL about nine months ago raising this very issue and that it was completely unacceptable that that would be the case with the PHV industry. We worked with them on a campaign surrounding assistance dogs and accessing PHVs. I congratulate TfL on that because after many talks finally something happened and brochures and material have been sent out to every office to educate about what an assistance dog is and the legality surrounding it.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you. Roger, did you want to say something about this?

Dr Roger Wicks (Director of Policy and Campaigns, Action on Hearing Loss): Only to echo my colleague, really, and to support him. That angle about hearing dogs and access to taxis is definitely very important. Robert [Harris] is right to say that it is enshrined in the Equality Act and so it should happen on the ground as well.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you. David, we have heard that you have been running this campaign. What has been the response from the campaign?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): It is not just the campaign. The campaign is a very important thing to remind taxi drivers of their obligations. They do not have a choice in this matter. They are obliged to do it and they need to do it. If they do not and if we hear about it, we will take action.

There is an enforcement element to that. We are beefing up on the enforcement. We are taking a zero-tolerance attitude to this. We are seeing some increase in the numbers of those that we are taking action against. Sometimes it is simply about ignorance. Sometimes it is about not understanding what an assistance dog is. Sometimes it is simply about dealing with some perceptions about whether they are supposed to do it or not do it.

This just needs to continue. We need to continue to put the pressure on enforcement and in terms of information. There are some questions about the material we produced and about the different types of assistance dogs. We are very happy to work with stakeholders to see if we have captured all of them. It is just going to be a continuous process, really. We just need to stay on it.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: How do you ensure that the campaign and the information you are passing on reaches the widest audience or all number of operators?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): The focus is at the moment on the taxi and private hire trade. It has been sent to everyone with a licence. It is being sent to minicab firms. It is being promoted through the bigger firms as well such as Addison Lee and others. We have an online magazine called *On Route*. We have regular weekly emails to the trade and it is being repeated in that. For us it is not a one-off go. From TfL's perspective, there needs to be regular reminders of it.

We also need to keep up the enforcement activity. This is a straightforward, very selfish, very thoughtless act. It is largely around dog hair on the backseats and things like that. It is not a good enough reason not to provide their service. It is an obligation. It is a licence requirement for all forms of PHV and it needs to be abided by. At the same time, we need to support drivers to understand what their obligations are and what the right thing to do is.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Does TfL run sting operations to see how --

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): We do not run mystery shopper ones on this. It is an idea. What we are much more interested in, generally across our network, is we want to hear in the real world what has happened. Patrick's [Roberts] example this morning about not being met at his station of destination is a really important one. We want to hear that. If we hear these real examples that happen on the day, we can do something about it. We do have the mechanisms for doing that. That is probably the thing that I would most encourage. You can talk about monitoring, you can talk about management information and you can talk about mystery shoppers, but really what TfL needs to hear about is the real incidents that happen on our network and on our services, whether those we regulate or those we run or contract. That is probably the best information. Tell us about it. Tell us about it on the day. We can take action and we can find out who it is and deal with it appropriately.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: I have a question which was raised by a person called Mr Mike Brace, who asks:

"Why do some buses have seats with space underneath blocked off, leaving no room for guide dogs?"

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): I do not know the answer to that. It may well be that there is some piece of equipment under it. I will find that out.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: That would be very helpful.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): I will write back to you on this one.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you very much.

Kemi Badenoch AM: David, it was about the enforcement that you talked about. Could you elaborate a bit more? When you say 'enforcement', what exactly happens? Are you taking licences away from drivers? Is it easy for people to know that this is something that can happen if they make a complaint? The advantage of PHVs is that people always know who they have booked or at least the company does.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL): Sanctions can be quite severe. We are a regulator. There are set rules about what taxi drivers should be and should not be doing. Ultimately, if they do not abide by those rules, they can lose their licence. That is clear. The balance between us being the heavy-handed regulator and us being the encourager of best behaviour is difficult. Just going out with a stick can actually be counterproductive in some senses. We are making it absolutely clear to the drivers that this is an issue about their licence and about their ability to practise. We need to be doing more to probably promote instances where sanctions have been levied against drivers. At the same time we also want to encourage them to want to do the right thing as well. This is another element of this campaign. The material has been produced in such a way as to get people to understand that this is an important thing that they do and adds value to their chosen career.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Do you have a figure perhaps for how many drivers or companies have had their licences revoked because they did not take --

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement TfL): The thing is relatively small. That one of the things that we would encourage on all of this: if you have been the victim of this problem, tell us. Please tell us. We can then take action. Recently we sacked about eight drivers and a similar number are currently under investigation. These are the numbers. They are not huge. The more we know about these problems the better. These problems seem pretty prevalent, but in terms of the number of reports we seem to get relatively small numbers. Again, from our organisation, please report it. We cannot take action if we do not know.

Kemi Badenoch AM: The only reason I am pushing on this is because it is a campaign that I have heard about for such a long time and it almost sounds like TfL is saying and talking about enforcement but is not really enforcing. That is how it has come about. I have not seen the figures and so I cannot say that this is final; it is just the impression that I get.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): The figures are relatively small. They will reflect the evidence we have and the reports of these incidents. Again, with everything, the more they are reported to us the more we can take action. We do take it seriously.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Thank you, David. That obviously inspired some strong feelings given the growth of the minicab industry is quite an issue at the moment. There are 100,000 minicabs and only eight reports. It would be helpful, David, as part of the follow-up if you could write to us with a bit more information about this --

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Yes, I am very happy to do that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): -- and also what your policy is. Do you have a 'two strikes and you are out' approach? What is the policy on licencing? How are you encouraging people to report and through what medium are you encouraging people? It is far more widespread than the eight per 100,000 minicab drivers.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, Transport for London): Yes, it is.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): This one is solvable with some focus.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Just a really small issue, but a private hire driver with a dog allergy can get an exemption from this and they get some sort of yellow mark or yellow sticker or something. What steps do they have to go through to prove that and how serious must the allergy be? I just worry that some people might use this as a reason because they do not want to take dogs in their vehicles.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): I do not know the details of that and so I will write back to you.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): I do not want that being a get-out and that suddenly everyone has a dog allergy.

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Yes. I will respond on that.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Can I just very briefly say something? Our submission is very good and it is fantastic that there has been this high-profile campaign. Long may it continue and may it be a sustained programme of publicity.

However, there are other issues as well. One of the big things that we have with our vision impaired members in the back of black cabs is they do not know what the meter is running to. That can be a big problem because the meter could be sky high and they do not know until the end of the journey. Talking meters at some point in the evolution of -- if we are talking about bus design, let us talk about black cab design as well. That would be a really great innovation.

Also, when it comes to minicabs and PHVs, the last investigation and report that the Assembly did on the PHV and taxi industry had a great recommendation about 25% of minicabs in London being accessible. That is absolutely something that we should be aspiring to. It is absolutely ridiculous in London that we have such a dearth of accessible minicabs, especially when other cities in the UK are doing a lot more to incentivise the PHV industry into getting accessible minicabs. That is not just wheelchair and mobility scooter accessible, but also contrast grab rails and hearing loops and all these type of things. There needs to be more incentivising from TfL's side as the regulator to really bring in more accessible minicabs into London, which would definitely benefit people with sensory impairments.

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): I was just going to add to what Rob [Harris] was saying because I followed the Guide Dogs Association's advice with regard to booking a cab. I always tell the operator that I am a guide dog owner and my destination, etc, so that when the cab driver turns up outside my front door -- this is what they say to me: they were never made aware that I have a guide dog. That is when they then say that they cannot take me because of whatever reasons they have; they cannot take me. You either end up in a stand-up argument outside and then friends saying, "Well, legally, you are supposed to take me", but they not interested in what the Equalities Act is or anything like that. All they know is that if you have a dog, they are not interested and are not taking you.

Then, on the point you have asked, which was about how you report this, you go back to the cab company where you made the initial booking and say, "Look, the guy is refusing to take me". They say, "Sorry, we will send somebody else".

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): We are looking to have a more direct route to report that. It is an important point that you have mentioned and this is some of the feedback we have from guide dog owners and others that we need to make it simpler and straightforward and not necessarily use the minicab firm as the first point of complaint. That was a good point, Patrick.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Thank you, David.

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): There is a weakness in the regulation system that is quite fundamental particularly for guide dog owners, but also for other disabled users. It is not an act of discrimination not to carry a disabled person; it is an act of discrimination to refuse to carry an individual. This is a very fundamental point. If, for instance, a minicab driver sees me with my guide dog on a wet day and decides that he does not want to carry me and carries on, it is not an act of discrimination. It is

an act of discrimination if he pulls up and says, "I am sorry. I am not carrying your guide dog". TfL has to do something in the regulations to make that an offence. In other words, to silently refuse or not to pull up has to be a breach of regulation. If it is not, then there is a significant loophole, which I have to say from personal experience and the experience of other disabled people happens not infrequently.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): OK. Thank you very much for that. We are going to have some correspondence with TfL on that particular issue.

Can we move on now to looking at issues of the streetscape, street clutter and shared space?

Tony Arbour AM: My question relates to clutter in streets, but before starting on that I would like to ask each of you for your views on the removal of clutter as happened in Exhibition Road. On the one hand, we think it is a good thing to remove clutter, but we understand that some groups - perhaps maybe Guide Dogs - do not want the clutter removed as has happened in Exhibition Road. Perhaps we could start with you on that one.

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): Exhibition Road is a fine example of how it should not be done in terms of a shared space environment. It is fair to say from an official Guide Dogs point of view that we are critical friends of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea when it comes to that scheme. We have a long history with it. It is still a nightmare place for a vision impaired person to navigate.

It depends what the street clutter is because - you are right - some street clutter if it stays there can be helpful as a navigating tool for anyone with a cane or a guide dog. Street clutter can take many forms from a wonderful architectural piece of art that is just stuck in the middle of a footway that might look lovely to us fully sighted people but might be an absolute nightmare to a vision impaired person, to randomly placed chairs, poles, signage that just does not appear to make any sense at all. When you have something like Exhibition Road where cars can park in unmarked spaces seemingly nearly on the pavement and cars can race up and down quite speedily along there, it is very difficult in a shared space area where you rely on an understanding between a driver and a pedestrian by sight that you are about to cross or where you step out as a sighted person in the hope that person will slow down. However, when you do not have sight in order to make that communication, everything breaks down and the space becomes completely unusable.

The sad thing is that while Exhibition Road is an example of this, others are popping up around London that are making it impossible for our clients to get to the shops to use their local communities effectively and the removal of signalised pedestrian crossings being replaced by informal crossings, which again rely on you being able to have sight communication with a driver.

Tony Arbour AM: Thank you for that. Do you agree with him, Patrick?

Patrick Roberts (Trustee, Transport for All): Yes. It is really extraordinary because I have been involved in a couple of consultations with TfL to do with shared space and also with my local authority and there just seems to be a non-acceptance that a vision impaired person will have concerns that when they are in a shared space there will be issues for them. The fact is that having lost my sight I have had to learn how to listen, how to make use of odours around me and everything else like that. When I am outside I have to listen for vehicles and everything like that. When you then create the shared space, you take all of that away because then everything is just hitting you from so many different directions that you are not sure where to go or anything like that.

When it comes to street clutter, again a major issue is where we know what is usual, which tends to be boards and chairs and all of that, but it is also where shops extend their frontage out on to the pavement. If you happen to be living in an area where the bus stop that you use regularly is literally directly opposite or in front of that shop and they have extended and have all their groceries out there and everything like that, getting off the bus in those sorts of situations becomes almost like a warfront because you are getting off with your guide dog and people are fighting to get on to the bus and people are fighting to get off behind you. I get off the bus and I then have to give a command to Rufus as to whether we are going left or right. He gets confused, I get confused and war breaks out.

Tony Arbour AM: Thank you. Is there a middle way, Tom, between too much and too little?

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): If I could deal with the issue of shared space first, in the design sense we mix up the concept of shared space and shared surface. Shared space can work; shared surface cannot work for blind people or for other disabled people. You do not have to listen and consult with disabled people in London to find out if that works. Look at the research from Europe. Look at the research from the United States. Disabled people have said, man and woman, "We do not go there any more". Please listen to that.

There is certain architecture that is required in the street space to allow it to be used not just by blind people but by older people and by people with other difficulties who need a certain level of delineation between the road and the footpath to be able to exist. You can still create the visual illusion that gives the same level of attention to drivers to induce them to slow down. That is a design solution that can be used in a shared space design. TfL has prosecuted shared surface for far too long and need to be stopped. It is an act of total discrimination against many disabled people and many older people.

Tony Arbour AM: Could you give us an example?

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): Yes. If you take Exhibition Road - and I was personally involved in Exhibition Road - in that design we spent an enormous length of time trying to find a tactile surface that would allow blind people to transition between a footpath and a roadway. We carried out an enormous amount of research at Imperial College in order to make it happen and blind people just do not go there anymore. They do not like it.

The other thing was that the whole idea in the end was that Exhibition Road was going to be a place where pedestrians were going to have a right of way over traffic. That has not occurred. The reason it has not occurred is because the Council cannot find a traffic regulation or a traffic sign that would allow that to occur.

There are many examples and I would defer to my Guide Dogs colleague, whom I am sure tracks this on a minute-by-minute basis as to practical examples across the UK. I have known of one in the west of England, for instance, where a blind person got knocked down by a bus because they walked out from what was supposed to be a safe space onto the road. It is happening. However, more importantly, what you are doing by putting these in is you are stopping people from going there. At the end of the day, people want to be safe.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): We definitely support everything that has been said in terms of shared space. When you remove the demarcation between the road and the pavement and you lose the kerb, essentially it causes a whole catalogue of problems in terms of navigation. It has been bulldozed through with

complete disregard for a lot of disabled Londoners and it puts sighted people at a disadvantage, too, versus vehicles.

I just wanted to say about street clutter because it is really important that shared space and street clutter are not the same thing. In terms of street clutter definitely there has been positive moves to remove A-boards and take action against A-boards and things that clutter the pavement and get in the way of VIPs and other disabled people just trying to walk down the street. There are some really good things happening. The pace of things like fixed-penalty notices and zero-tolerance areas for A-boards in particular needs to be spread right across London. Good things are happening but we need to see more of that and boroughs and TfL working together to completely sort this out. It is not just shopfronts extending their fruit and veg stores right out into the pavement, but it is also things like A-boards and vegetation. Parked cars as well cause a lot of problems and also not properly maintained footways.

I am sure we are going to get onto tactile paving as well because that is a massive issue.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Tom, you have touched on the initial question I was going to ask, which was about just how useful tactile paving is. I will move on to Robert [Harris] and just ask you to elaborate on anything you feel might not have been mentioned in terms of just how useful it is and more specifically what improvements both of you would like TfL to prioritise.

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): Thank you. Tactile paving, first of all, is very useful. It is very useful if it is laid properly. However, again, if we were to go across London, I have a colleague back in the office who is an expert in the initial regulations and designs for tactile paving who tells me that less than 30% of tactile paving in London is laid correctly. This means that it is reduced in the amount of information that it can transfer accurately to a vision impaired person. What we should do is just to encourage TfL when it is laying tactile paving in future to please stick to the regulations, lay it properly and lay the right tactile paving to give the correct message because that is not always done.

Robert Harris (Engagement Manager, Guide Dogs): There are many consultations ongoing at the moment that I lose track about tactile paving. There is one going on with the Department for Transport and TfL is doing its own and one of them proposes reducing the width or the length of what we call the 'tail' of the tactile paving, which extends from the kerbside out so that someone walking on the pavement can detect that there is a signalised crossing coming up if they walk over it. We would urge TfL to look very closely at whatever changes it is proposing there.

It is important to note that sometimes tactile paving can be used as an excuse to say that something has been done and can be used in the wrong way. In those cases such as the bus stop bypasses, the current proposals do not go far enough in what tactile paving could perhaps do and help in that situation. It is about making sure you are choosing the right one to go in the right place and, if it is dug up, putting it back properly and using the correct tactile paving where appropriate.

Kemi Badenoch AM: OK, thank you. My next question is to David and Helen [Drew] and it is just about the barriers to further rolling out of tactile paving. What are the barriers and how quickly can those that are worn down or damaged be replaced?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Obviously, it is difficult and not terribly cost effective to just install things without looking more broadly at projects. Quite a lot of what happens around the installation of tactile paving is part of wider schemes. I would not say that if there is

something horribly wrong somewhere we would not want to address it properly. I am interested in this 30% figure and we are consulting on this and maybe we need to have further discussion, have a pause and see whether we are consulting enough and asking and proposing big enough questions on that. That is something I am happy to take back.

I just want to touch on Tony Arbour's comment about shared space. One of the difficulties is that shared space is spoken about almost in evangelical terms. Shared space-like ideas are one of the ways you can make streetscapes more inviting, better for pedestrians, more useful and others. There are a series of tools. The key question is whether we are using the tools in the right way and whether the desire to have this dream Dutch environment is always going to be impractical in every area. We try as far as we can to make sure that we make the right decisions for the right area and the right circumstances.

Tactile paving is a very important thing. It is very important in our stations. It is very important on the roads and the pavement conditions. There are changes and proposals; it is quite a complicated area with DfT guidance and our own practice and guidance on streetscape that we give to boroughs. Again, there may be some questions about whether we might need to think about asking some wider questions and looking at a wider policy. I am happy to take back and facilitate. I know that you are all responding to that consultation and it may be that one of the outcomes of that consultation is that we have a bigger think about it.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you, David. Helen, do you have anything to add in terms of barriers and perhaps budgetary and practical constraints about why it is not happening more and faster?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): Our stations we lease from Network Rail. Work such as installing tactile paving where it is not there already has to go into its programme of work. We make a request and then it is up to it and its budget as to when it is installed and working with us on when it is practical to do that as well because essentially the line will have to be closed to install the paving because they are working too closely. It is either at night-time or when there is a block in that area anyway just so that there is not too much disruption as a result of that.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you.

Murad Qureshi AM: This has been touched on already and so I am not going to go over ground that has already been tackled. Can I firstly ask Transport for All what the key ongoing issues are that need to be addressed by staff training?

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): I spoke previously just briefly about training and said that for us it is an absolutely crucial element now of providing an accessible service to have staff who are disability equality trained and are not so based on the social model of disability as well. It is a difficult one because training budgets, as the name suggests, are about resources and money and we would really applaud those transport providers like London Underground and TfL that are investing in training and see it as an investment into their staff and making their services more accessible to disabled people.

It is a real challenge for us to say to transport providers, "You must invest in proper disability quality training, not a tick-box exercise". I am not going to knock online training and computerised stuff, but I do feel that is not a substitute for face-to-face training with a disabled trainer speaking about issues. There is no substitute for that. I would say that budgetary constraints and really persuading and lobbying transport providers to invest in training is a real challenge. In terms of the content of the training, is that what you are talking about?

Murad Qureshi AM: Yes.

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): It depends on the transport mode, of course, but the first starting point is absolutely with transport staff - I would not say that in a patronising way - and really looking at enhancing the customer service skills that they already have and educating them about, firstly, the rights that disabled people have to ride in London and also that disabled persons have an equal basis. That is a really good starting point. Whenever we have done training with disabled trainers, it is sometimes the first opportunity that that member of staff has had to speak to a disabled person if they do not have one in their family or friend network and ask them questions about the realities of getting out and about. That is really important.

Practical assistance is crucial too as much as possible. We are talking about a social model, we are talking about rights and we are talking about the legal framework that we have because it is the legal duty of transport providers to provide a good service. It is having all of that but then talking about real-life experiences as well and how people feel when they are let down and do not have the assistance that they need and the fact that they need to get about as much as possible. It is having a holistic approach and a real-life approach to training, but also giving staff the knowledge and skills about the law and about ways of thinking about disabled people.

Murad Qureshi AM: OK. There is no substitute for practical --

Faryal Velmi (Director, Transport for All): Face-to-face training, yes.

Murad Qureshi AM: Yes, and being involved. Does the RLSB concur with that analysis or was there anything else you wanted to add to that?

Dr Tom Pey (Chief Executive, Royal London Society for Blind People): We would like to applaud TfL. It is evident that the training that has been done over the last number of years has yielded enormous benefits for disabled people and for blind people across London. It is about making it better rather than repairing enormous gaps. That is what is about. It does come down to very practical things. It is about having mechanisms whereby a large operator like TfL can feedback to staff on the frontline some of the practical day-to-day issues that occur and some of the practical day-to-day mistakes that are made and how those are corrected so that the staff have a real sense of being able to improve at the front line and perhaps having the ability and the authority to be able to make those improvements themselves as they go along. That requires in itself some training that goes a little bit beyond disability training or disability facilitation training. It is about staff development. If we did that, we would see another enormous step forward.

Dr Roger Wicks (Director of Policy and Campaigns, Action on Hearing Loss): This was one of the bigger elements we fed back on in our written response. I will be brief and just say that the good news here is that lots of the training required for people with hearing loss is really simple. If you have hearing loss and you lip-read, for example, you need to make sure that the people you are speaking to in the station have good lighting around them and that they are facing the person when they speak. For people with hearing loss in general, just speaking very clearly and not speaking with your hand over your mouth is very important. They are really simple solutions.

As part of that, in staff training some of the things we picked up earlier such as how to provide good information in an emergency situation such as when a station is being evacuated and also around loop systems, again, which we touched on earlier, are the kinds of things that training should be made up of.

Murad Qureshi AM: OK, thanks. Can I just now turn to TfL and Chiltern Railways? It is my favourite rail franchise, given I walk through Marylebone station every day. David, you have a ringing endorsement there from some of the users there. How do you assess the staff communication skills and their understanding of the needs of people with impairments?

David McNeill (Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, TfL): Customer care skills and issues around accessibility training are part of a broader issue and this is how we treat Londoners and our customers. It is very important that we do this. From our perspective, it is a lesson for any transport operator - probably any public sector organisation - which is that if you design your training with organisations that represent disabled customers, you are going to get it much better. There is an issue as well about tone of voice. Most people want to do a good job and most people are decent people. It is not an issue like, "You must do the tick-box", or, "You must do X, Y and Z or you will be in trouble", but creating circumstances where our staff want to do this and where it becomes natural and a valued part of the work and the sense of satisfaction that they get. That is a really important thing. You need to create a positive loop.

The point that Tom [Pey] has made about continuous reminders about things that work and things that do not work as part of internal communications and as part of development is really important. Again, there are some big issues about staff development too as we as an organisation move towards what we want our particular front staff to be more recruited and measured and rewarded for customer care skills rather than technical skills or the compliance skills.

There is a very important issue about giving staff on the ground decision-making power. We see it, for example, when lifts break down in accessible stations that we have found the staff on the stations do not know that they are authorised to get a taxi. If they do know that they are authorised, they do not know what the circumstances might be. It is dealing with that and saying, "No, we expect you to get a taxi for that customer. Yes, you are not going to get in trouble for it. Yes, you can make a call". These are the bits of the machinery of TfL that will not necessarily work. You need to make sure that everybody is clear what they can do and what their powers of discretion are on the ground and create a positive loop. These are the things that trip up big organisations.

Murad Qureshi AM: I hope that many staff members are listening in and picking that up from you right now.

Sarah, on TfL, I just mentioned the Bakerloo. Will people on the Bakerloo line who are in part blind or deaf have to wait five years for improvements on their service? There are things like the training you can get on with, are there not?

Sarah Teichler (Customer Strategy Manager, London Underground, TfL): Absolutely. I mentioned it a little bit earlier, but all of our frontline staff are receiving a half day of accessibility training as part of the five-day customer service course. That covers the Bakerloo line staff as well. What I was referring to was seeing improvements in the division information on the Bakerloo line. Yes, absolutely, staff are crucial for making the service accessible and that is why we are investing money in this training.

I want to pick up on the point you made, Faryal, about disability equality training. That difference between equality and awareness training is why we asked Transport and Inclusion London to develop and deliver the

training. Certainly the other modes are moving much towards that model. For the trams, their training is disability equality training delivered by disabled trainers and we are certainly moving much towards involving disability organisations and disabled people in the other modes as well.

Murad Qureshi AM: OK, thanks. Helen, finally, do you have anything to add from a rail franchise perspective on training?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): Our training is delivered by someone with a hearing impairment and it is half classroom/half practical. He covers things like how to guide someone through the barrier line and then how to board the train safely and also using a wheelchair and deploying the ramps as well. Every single member of staff who joins Chiltern Railways goes through that from the managing director or someone who works in finance to someone who works on the stations. Staff, if they are at their home station, can help if they think a member of staff is off helping someone else and so they see someone who needs assistance; they have had that training as well.

Murad Qureshi AM: Marylebone is unusual in that you manage the station as well and not Network Rail.

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): Yes.

Murad Qureshi AM: Does that help?

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): It is all I know, to be honest, and so I am not sure how it would work.

Murad Qureshi AM: This is it. The standards there are quite different from other places. That is what I notice when I go to other stations. It is quite different because of that.

Helen Drew (Customer Services, Safety and Standards Manager, Chiltern Railways): Yes.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Chair): Yes, thank you. I am very sorry that we are releasing our guests so much later than usual but it has been a really interesting and valuable session and we packed a lot in there. There is encouraging good news as well difficult struggles ahead. Thank you to all of you and your organisations for your time today. It is very much appreciated.