

Transport Committee

MBNA Thames Clippers Site Visit

Date	28 June 2018
Location	Starting and ending at London Bridge City Pier, travelling between Greenwich and Westminster.
Attendees	Caroline Pidgeon AM (Chair), Florence Eshalomi AM, Tom Copley AM, Keith Prince AM, Richard Berry, Tanya Lightfoot-Taylor, Samira Islam, Sam Casserly, Jo Driscoll.
Meeting	On board the Committee met with representatives of Thames Clippers and the Port of London Authority. A London Live reporter also attended.

Background

On 16 May 2018, the Transport Committee discussed River Bus Services with representatives of Transport for London (TfL), Port of London Authority, MBNA Thames Clippers and River Bus passengers.

This site visit is an opportunity was arranged to provide Committee Members with the chance to experience the River Bus service and see some of the issues discussed first hand.¹

Passenger experience

- The boat was not crowded when leaving central London, but became much busier on the return journey to central London.
- The boat provided a very steady ride. The boat is limited to 12 knots between Lambeth and east London, because of the effect of the wash, but can increase speed elsewhere.
- New boats have USB ports in the seats.
- In the Netherlands, passengers can bring bikes on board, supporting multi-modal travel.
- There is some congestion at piers, for example at Tower Pier, causing slow loading and unloading times. Some piers need expanding, others just better management.

Signage

- Around some piers there is poor signage. For instance, there is little indication from London Bridge train station that a pier is nearby, and the signage at the pier is non-standard.
- The operator would like to see the TfL roundel and London River Services (LRS) logo and each pier.
- Network Rail has been open to adding signs when stations are upgraded.
- The operator would like to see river services added to the tube map.

Ticketing

- MBNA Thames Clippers has a corporate agreement with PwC for staff travel between London Bridge and Westminster, where the company's offices are located.
- 80% of tickets are now cashless.

¹ This note summarises observations or views heard by Members on the visit. It does not represent the views of the Committee or any other organisation, unless stated.

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- Passengers can't use TfL travelcards to travel. The operator suggested allowing this would not be beneficial, as they would receive only a small fraction of the revenue, rather than the full cost of a ticket as at present.
- Everyone who buys a ticket is guaranteed a seat.
- If a boat ride cost the same as a train journey (as attempted by New York City), demand for the river would be too high – some rationing is needed.

Emissions

- Newer boats have 25% fewer emissions with the same capacity.
- The operator believes hydrogen fuel cells could be used on boats, but currently the Maritime and Coastguard Agency wouldn't consider this. This fuel type has not been used anywhere in the world yet.
- The Department for Transport is producing a Maritime 2050 strategy. This could address emissions.

Staffing

- More trained masters are needed in the sector.
- The operator wants to recruit more local people – those who live around the piers.
- The operator is looking to increase crew diversity. On International Women's Day they had the first female-only crew.

TfL support

- Until recently there had been an 18-month gap in focused support for river services from TfL, while the London River Services (LRS) unit was being restructured.
- The operator welcomes the fact that the new head of LRS is also overseeing Cycle Hire and the Air Line cable car, as these services fit well together.

Expansion

- A pier has been built as part of the Royal Wharves development, but as yet no bus service to the pier has been introduced.
- MBNA Thames Clippers has proposed a new electric ferry service for the Rotherhithe Crossing. Details are being shared separately with the Committee.