



Keith Prince AM
Chairman of the Transport Committee

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
(Sent by email)

22 January 2024

Dear Sadiq,

I am writing to share the findings of the Transport Committee's investigation into Transport in Outer London.

The Committee held two meetings on this topic, in July and September 2023. The first meeting focused on the strategic challenges of improving transport in Outer London, and included the following guests:

- Seb Dance, Deputy Mayor for Transport and Deputy Chair of Transport for London (TfL),
- Geoff Hobbs, Director of Public Transport Service Planning, TfL,
- Councillor Barry Lewis, Chair, Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee, London Borough of Sutton,
- Neil Stubbings, Executive Director for Place, London Borough of Havering,
- Alex Smith, Heads of Campaigns, London TravelWatch,
- Madeleine Stewart, Policy and Public Affairs Lead, Transport for All,¹ and
- Josh Cottell, Head of Research, Centre for London.

¹ Madeleine Stewart has since left this role

The meeting also explored the experience of disabled travellers, including the potential impact of proposals from the Rail Delivery Group to close ticket offices. The second meeting explored the issues affecting travellers in Outer London further, with a particular focus on metro rail services.

In September the Committee spoke with:

- Councillor Deirdre Costigan, Acting Chair, Transport and Environment Committee, London Councils (also Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Ealing Council)
- Councillor Nicholas Bennet JP, Executive Member for Transport, Highways and Road Safety, London Borough of Bromley,
- Geoff Hobbs, Director of Public Transport Service Planning, TfL,
- Angie Doll, Chief Operating Officer, Govia Thameslink Railway,
- Claire Mann, Managing Director, South Western Railway, and
- Steve White, Managing Director, Southeastern.

In addition, the Committee's investigation was informed by a briefing provided by London TravelWatch which set out key issues and trends in services in Outer London.

The Committee's conclusions and recommendations cover the following areas:

- 1. The need for more strategic planning and co-ordination in Outer London and with neighbouring authorities.**
- 2. The need to learn from the Superloop and provide more orbital transport options.**
- 3. The vital importance of Turn Up And Go (TUAG) services to support public transport use.**
- 4. The need for funding for new transport infrastructure in Outer London.**

1. Strategic planning and co-ordination in Outer London

Outer London, as defined in the London Plan, comprises 19 of London's 32 boroughs.² Approximately 5.4 million people live in Outer London, about 61 per cent of London's total population.³ It has less than half the population density of Inner London but is much denser than the average for the rest of England.⁴ On average, travel in Outer London is characterised by:

- Higher levels of car ownership and more trips undertaken by residents in private car, than Inner London⁵
- Lower public transport access levels than Inner London⁶
- Lower proportions of active travel compared with Inner London⁷

² Mayor of London, [London Plan](#), March 2021, p.489

³ Centre for London, [Moving with the Times: Supporting sustainable travel in outer London](#), 6 June 2023, p.17

⁴ Inner London has a density of 10,664 persons per km² and Outer London has a density of 4,307 persons per km². This is compared to 434 persons per km² in the rest of England. From: Centre for London, [Moving with the Times: Supporting sustainable travel in outer London](#), 6 June 2023

⁵ Centre for London, [Moving with the Times: Supporting sustainable travel in outer London](#), 6 June 2023

⁶ As defined by Transport for London' Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL): a measure which rates locations by distance from frequent public transport services, [WebCAT planning tool](#).

⁷ TfL, [Travel in London Report 15](#), p.99; [Mayor's Transport Strategy](#) pp.294-95

- Fewer orbital bus and rail routes than radial routes,⁸ making travel into Central London often far quicker than making relatively local trips by public transport.⁹

The Committee heard from Josh Cottell, Head of Research at Centre for London, which published a report in June 2023 recommending that the Mayor produces an Outer London Transport Strategy.¹⁰ He acknowledged at the Committee’s meeting in July 2023 that the “same thing could be delivered by just increasing details in the existing [Mayor’s] Transport Strategy (MTS) that relate specifically to Outer London.”¹¹

Similarly, Councillor Deirdre Costigan, representing London Councils, told the Committee in September:

“In general, it is not so much whether there should be a separate strategy. We are probably neutral on that. The point is the actions that are in that strategy. Whether it is separate or whether it is within an overarching strategy, we need to ensure that we address those gaps and that we connect up areas of Outer London, both on the orbital routes and the radial routes, to make a difference to the levels of connectivity we see at the moment.”¹²

While stakeholders were open to different approaches to presenting any strategy, it was clear that more strategic focus and partnership working to address the challenges of Outer London is needed. In particular, this includes ensuring improved connectivity ‘around’ London in terms of orbital routes, and across local authority boundaries – including between Outer London and neighbouring authorities. The Committee note that the Government have committed to establishing a new strategic partnership in London and the South East to coordinate timetabling and investments in rail,¹³ and this taskforce could build on this to cover strategic co-ordination across other transport modes.

- ***Recommendation 1: We recommend that the Mayor should convene a taskforce in 2024-25 to address the specific transport issues of Outer London. This would include working closely with neighbouring authorities to agree and implement a detailed series of improvements to address transport challenges in Outer London, including ‘orbital’ travel and across the Greater London boundary in the coming years.***

The Committee also considered the range of tools that can be used to assist decisions around public transport provision, including travel time mapping, catchment analysis and Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL) ratings, which essentially measure the density of the public transport network in a particular area.¹⁴

⁸ Orbital services connect points in the periphery while bypassing the centre. Radial routes connect points in the centre with point in the periphery.

⁹ TfL, [Travel in London Report 15](#), p.92

¹⁰ Centre for London, [Moving with the Times: Supporting sustainable travel in outer London](#), 6 June 2023

¹¹ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023 p.10

¹² London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023, p.2

¹³ [Letter from Minister of State for Transport to Chair of Transport Committee](#), April 2023

¹⁴ London Datastore [Public Transport Accessibility Levels](#)

Geoff Hobbs from TfL told the Committee, “It would be quite helpful from my perspective” for areas outside London to use PTAL ratings “as a way of seeing where places are over or under served compared to benchmarks.”¹⁵

- ***Recommendation 2: As part of a taskforce, TfL should work with neighbouring authorities to support them to measure and publish Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL) beyond Greater London to inform strategic planning and public transport services. TfL should also ensure that its existing measures remain up to date and available***

Geoff Hobbs also told the Committee that TfL has a lot of information about numbers of trips and the origin and destination, and some information about the age of those travelling, but much less about journey purpose, as this is “much harder to get into”.¹⁶ He described analysis that TfL have undertaken using computer learning to assess trip patterns, but said that asking people about their trip purpose is a “tricky thing to do”.¹⁷ However, increasingly this information is vital to understanding new travel patterns. The Committee heard in the September meeting that increasingly this is seen through commuters working in the office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, with lower morning peaks on Mondays and Fridays.¹⁸

Recommendation 3: TfL should take steps to better understand the journey purpose and demographics of travellers, so they can better plan services around the needs of Londoners ensuring that journeys outside commuting, including for caring purposes are sufficiently identified and supported.**2. Provision of additional ‘orbital’ public transport options**

The Superloop is a network of 10 express bus routes that will form a complete ring around outer London, including four existing routes (SL6, SL7, SL8, and SL9) and six new routes (SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4, SL5, and SL10).¹⁹ The first of these to carry the superloop branding (SL8) was introduced in July 2023 and the remaining routes SL2 and SL3 will be introduced by Spring 2023, with the exception of SL4 which will start when the Silvertown tunnel opens in 2025.²⁰

The Committee heard that the new Superloop services have been generally welcomed, but that there is a need for more of these types of orbital bus services (to include currently excluded boroughs such as Havering), and also for more bus priority measures.

Alex Smith, Head of Campaigns at London TravelWatch told the Committee “London TravelWatch has long been calling for orbital routes. Lots of modes focus on radial, going into central London. However, we know lots of people do not travel that way and people will travel around Outer boroughs.”²¹ She said that TravelWatch would like to see the Superloop “as a

¹⁵ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023 p.20

¹⁶ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023 p.10

¹⁷ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023 p.11

¹⁸ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023, p.5

¹⁹ <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/buses/superloop>

²⁰ <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2023/october/next-sections-of-superloop-network-in-outer-london-confirmed-by-tfl>

²¹ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023, p.37

stepping stone to introducing more routes. Some of the routes are pre-existing routes. The extra kilometres are very welcome, but we would like to see more.”²²

Neil Stubbings, Executive Director for Place at the London Borough of Havering said “I cannot really say very much about the Superloop in Havering, because all the benefits it is going to bring, we will not be getting them, because we are not included in it.”²³

Geoff Hobbs told the Committee that TfL has conducted analysis that shows that “90 per cent of residents will be within one interchange of a Superloop route.”²⁴ However, this average includes significant variation between boroughs, from 98% in Greenwich to just 35% in Havering.²⁵ In addition, this does not by itself give an indication of how attractive these journey options and interchanges are for Londoners, and the Committee considers that more analysis is needed.

The Committee supports the introduction of the Superloop, including the increased frequency of services on existing routes, and provision of new services. However, the Committee is concerned that there are significant areas (such as Havering) not served by these routes, and that more bus priority measures could make them more attractive.

- ***Recommendation 4: TfL should publish a detailed ‘6-month on’ review of Superloop services by March 2023, including trends in passenger numbers, and undertake (and publish) further research into how people access and interchange with these buses.***
- ***Recommendation 5: TfL should look to introduce other new orbital bus services to serve areas not covered by the current Superloop service, including extending new Superloop services to boroughs such as Havering.***
- ***Recommendation 6: TfL should investigate ways to introduce further bus priority measures (such as dedicated bus lanes or priority lights) for the Superloop to reduce journey times as well as expanding bus priority measures more generally across outer London.***

3. Frequency of services in Outer London

The Committee heard that public transport services can be infrequent and unreliable in some areas of Outer London, which puts people off using them. Disabled people are particularly impacted by the infrequency and unreliability of bus services. The Committee also took evidence on the impact of timetable changes to rail services and heard that reductions in services have had an impact on some routes.

The Committee heard from Madeleine Stewart from Transport for All that frequency and reliability of bus services is of particular concern to disabled people who are in need of a priority space. If buses come infrequently, and the priority spaces are taken up, disabled passengers have to wait longer for the next service.²⁶

²² London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023, p.37

²³ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023, p.38

²⁴ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023, p.39

²⁵ Correspondence from TfL received 10 January 2024, [Appendix 2 - Superloop Catchment Area](#)

²⁶ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023 p. 5

Alex Smith from London TravelWatch told the Committee that “if the frequency is lower our concern would be where that ceases to be a turn up and go service.”²⁷

The Committee also heard that commuting patterns are changing and many train companies are looking at how to adjust their timetables to support more people to travel.²⁸ Most Outer London rail lines, with the exception of the Elizabeth Line and London Overground, are run by private operators under contract from the Department for Transport, and have to justify any changes to the timetable. It is vital that urban areas in Outer London have regular, reliable, and frequent services, and opportunities to increase frequency of bus and train services are taken.

In addition, the Committee considers that it is important that all stations in London are properly staffed. In the meeting in September 2023, the Managing Director of Southeastern, Steve White said that, pending the outcome of consultation on the future of ticket offices, they had “not been recruiting people to fill ticket office vacancies.”²⁹ Given the decision by the government to not go ahead with planned ticket office closures following unprecedented response to the London Travelwatch and Transport Focus consultation,³⁰ it is important that stations are returned to full staffing. While TfL stations were not included in the ticket office proposals, the consultation response highlights the importance of visible staff to passengers, and it is important that all TfL stations in Outer London are adequately staffed at all times.

- ***Recommendation 7: The Mayor should work with the Government and Rail Operators to ensure that all metro rail services in Outer London centres achieve a turn-up-and-go (TUAG) frequency, with at least four services an hour.***
- ***Recommendation 8: The Mayor should look to increase the frequency of key bus routes in Outer London to ensure a regular and reliable TUAG frequency.***
- ***Recommendation 9: The Mayor and TfL should ensure that staffing models enable full staffing at all TfL rail and tube stations.***

4. Making the case for further devolution of rail services

The Committee considers in principle that greater devolution of rail services would benefit passengers, particularly in Outer London, and this is a good moment to revisit the strategic case for greater devolution. The Committee wrote a report on Devolving rail services to London in 2015,³¹ and in 2019, TfL produced a Strategic Case for Metroisation in south and south east London.³² In the July meeting, Deputy Mayor Seb Dance said:

“On metroisation...one of the question marks at the moment is Great British Railways (GBR) and the Government’s intention on that. It has been a long time coming. Again, I have heard very reassuring words from the [Rail] Minister himself that it is on track, pardon that non-

²⁷ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023 p.37

²⁸ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023

²⁹ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023, p19

³⁰ [Our role in the ticket office consultation - London TravelWatch](#)

³¹ London Assembly Transport Committee, [Devolving rail services to London](#), October 2015

³² TfL, [Strategic Case for Metroisation in south and south east London](#), March 2019

intentional pun. We have to see what happens with that. If it does not deliver the metroisation that everybody agrees we need then rail devolution would seem to be an alternative proposal.”³³

- ***Recommendation 10: TfL should publish updated analysis by October 2024 on how future devolution of suburban rail services in London would provide benefits to passengers and value to the taxpayer.***

5. Investment in strategic new transport infrastructure

The Committee heard that there is a need for new strategic infrastructure projects in Outer London, including those that support housing projects and improved access to jobs and other services.

The Committee heard from Neil Stubbings, London Borough of Havering, that the proposals for a new station at Beam Park “cannot get sign off from the DfT for actually building the station”, which is “purely around commercial”.³⁴ He told the Committee that Beam Park Station would “facilitate so much place-making, jobs and homes” however, DfT is “saying ‘it is going to cost too much, and we cannot have it’”.³⁵

Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP from the London Borough of Bromley told the Committee that he has “at least 100 projects I would like to advance. Most of that is done through the Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding. London Councils has very helpfully produced a set of statistics. In 2016/2017, we were getting £195 million to the London boroughs for LIP. This current year it is £65 million.”³⁶ Councillor Deidre Costigan, Acting Chair of the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee, highlighted that this funding works out at around £2 million an authority, which she said is “simply not sufficient really at the moment to address the need to move people into more sustainable modes of transport.”³⁷

Geoff Hobbs, Director of Public Transport Service Planning, Transport for London highlighted the following:

“Two examples - there are lots more - but the West London Orbital is an idea that we have been promoting and been developing, which will be an extension of the London Overground through parts of west London between Brent Cross and Brentford through Old Oak Common. As it happens, it goes through all sorts of London Plan opportunity areas, to lapse into jargon. Also, the DLR extension, Thamesmead, is a second one, both those projects [are] really worthwhile, both of which would immensely improve accessibility in those parts of the world, to what is already a pretty good offer in my opinion.”³⁸

³³ [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023, p30

³⁴ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023 p.28

³⁵ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting](#), 13 July 2023 p. 28

³⁶ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023 p.20; Historic LIP funding is available from: [MQ2021/3902](#); Current funding is available [here](#)

³⁷ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee Meeting \(part 2\)](#), 5 September 2023 p.21

³⁸ London Assembly, [London Assembly Transport Committee M10eeting](#), 13 July 2023 p.10

Many large infrastructure projects are focused on Central London or enabling routes into or across London. There is a need for continued focus on strategically important investments in Outer London too, including greater Local Implementation Plan funding. On 20 December 2023, the Government announced they are providing boroughs with an additional £235 million in funding to resurface roads over the next 11 years.³⁹

TfL should also prioritise future capital projects in Outer London that will increase the number of Londoners within 50 minutes of a job. In many cases, initial funding is needed for the business cases to be developed, with larger capital funding required for implementation of schemes. Ultimately a multi-year, long-term capital funding settlement for TfL from the Government is needed in order to plan ahead effectively.

- ***Recommendation 11: The Mayor and Deputy Mayor should continue to ask the Government to provide financial support to develop the case and provide significant funding for key Outer London infrastructure projects such as Beam Park Station, the Docklands Light Railway extension to Thamesmead, and the West London Orbital railway.***
- ***Recommendation 12: The Mayor should consider increasing funding for Local Implementation Plan transport projects in Outer London in his 2024/25 Budget.***

I hope that you will take these recommendations on board to ensure that there is greater strategic collaboration around decisions affecting Outer London, as well as investments in improvements to support sustainable travel choices.

Yours,



Keith Prince AM

Chairman of the Transport Committee

³⁹ Department for Transport, [Government invests £235 million to upgrade and repair roads across London](#) 20 Dec 2023