

Call for evidence: bus services

December 2016

The London Assembly's Transport Committee has launched two investigations into major issues facing the bus system:

- How Transport for London plans the bus network
- The safety of bus passengers and other road users

This paper invites organisations and individuals to submit views and information to the committee on both investigations, giving you the opportunity to inform our work and influence our recommendations. We pose a number of key questions to be answered.



1. Bus network planning

Buses are the busiest form of public transport in London. The city has 675 bus routes, with around 9,000 buses in operation and over 19,000 bus stops. Approximately 2.5 billion bus passenger trips are made every year, around double the number made on London Underground.

Transport for London (TfL) commissions all public bus services in London from bus operators including Abellio, Arriva, London United, London Sovereign, Metrobus, and Metrolink.¹ Every year, around 90-120 bus routes are subject to tender (10-15 per cent of the network), with TfL awarding seven-year contracts.

A number of indicators have suggested the performance of the bus network has deteriorated recently, particularly:

- **Usage has fallen:** The number of passenger journeys has started to fall after a long period of increase – in the past year the number of bus journeys made fell by 3.7 per cent. This has had an effect on revenue, which has fallen by 2 per cent.²
- **Reliability has deteriorated:** Excess waiting times for buses have increased from an average of 1 minute in 2013/14 to 1.2 minutes in 2015/16.³

Worsening congestion in central London has been blamed for the increasing unreliability of the bus network and is cited as one reason why more people are choosing other modes of transport over buses.

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The Mayor and TfL are making efforts to improve bus services including the introduction of a hopper ticket, enhanced passenger information, new services and a major review of Central London bus route planning (part of plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street), which launched in November 2016.⁴

This investigation will consider how TfL plans bus routes across London, examine the opportunities and risks associated with redesigning London's bus network, and consider what changes to route planning could achieve better outcomes.

General questions

1. Is London's bus network fit for purpose?
2. How does the bus system compare in inner and outer London?
3. What different challenges do the inner and outer networks face?

Designing the bus network

4. How well do TfL currently plan bus routes?
5. Does TfL take account of the London Plan and housing developments when planning bus routes? Could they improve the way they make these decisions?

6. What bus priority measures has TfL already introduced and how successful are they?
7. What impact could the introduction and development of the hopper ticket have on the design of London's bus network?
8. Does TfL plan new bus services to stimulate demand or just to respond to existing demand?
9. What tools does TfL have to monitor and forecast demand?

Alternative models and approaches

10. What other approaches to network design should TfL be considering? As appropriate, please make reference to these or others:
 - orbital routes
 - through routes
 - bus rapid transit systems
 - shuttles and hubs
11. Is it a good idea for TfL to consider different types of network for different areas of London? How could this work in practice?
12. How successful have existing express routes been, such as X26 and 607?

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Making changes to the network

13. What can we learn from other cities about successful/unsuccessful bus network redesign?
14. What are the challenges associated with this kind of large-scale change to the bus system?
15. Could TfL improve the way it consults the public on proposed changes to bus routes? How?

2. Bus safety

This investigation will review how TfL is trying to improve bus safety, in part by assessing the first year of TfL's Bus Safety Programme, which was launched in February 2016. The investigation will consider a range of factors that are likely to influence bus safety, such as incentives and targets set by TfL, bus driver training, plans for new technologies and the influence of road design.

Bus and coach collision casualty rates (killed or seriously injured – KSIs) have roughly halved between 2006 and 2014.⁵ Despite this apparent improvement, casualty rates have risen recently. Between 2014 and 2015, the number of fatalities in bus collisions increased from 10 to 14 (40 per cent), and the total number of injuries requiring hospital treatment increased from 1,300 to 1,585 (22 per cent).⁶

Bus operators

Bus drivers, employed and (for the most part) trained by bus operators, are often the focus of efforts to improve bus services. There have, for example, been calls for improvements in driving skills to reduce collisions.

TfL includes 'quality incentives' in the contracts it enters into with bus operators. These include financial incentives for meeting performance/reliability measures like Excess Wait Time (EWT) targets. The committee will examine how effectively contracts incentivise operators to prioritise safety, and also explore why some operators have stronger safety records than others.

This is also an opportunity to consider how incidents are managed by TfL, both in terms of the experience passengers have during an incident and any follow up, and in terms of the procedure followed to log, report and learn from incidents.

Bus safety programme

The previous Mayor and TfL launched a Bus Safety Programme in February 2016, as part of work to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the capital's roads by 50 per cent by 2020.⁷ It includes:

- providing new, centralised TfL safety training to all bus drivers
- publishing more bus collision data

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- putting more safety incentives in operator contracts
- trialling and introducing more on-board safety technology

The committee will review progress so far with this programme, and consider what other measures need to be taken to make buses an even safer form of transport in London.

General questions

1. What should TfL's priorities be for delivering a safe bus network?
2. Are you aware of any particular accident blackspots?
3. What are the particular safety concerns for:
 - Passengers on buses
 - Other road users

Operators and drivers

4. How are operators and drivers incentivised to prioritise safety?
5. Should operators face contractual financial penalties for poor safety records?
6. Are drivers provided with adequate 'driving skills' training?
7. How effective is this training (which is delivered by individual operators)?
8. Should there be a 'London standard' for driving skills training (which would likely result in TfL managing the training)?

9. How are incidents managed by TfL and by the operators? What kind of support is available to those involved in bus collisions and incidents?

Technology

10. Has TfL taken advantage of new technologies to make buses safer?
11. What other technology advances should TfL consider piloting?

Infrastructure and design

12. Are there any problems caused by bus and cycling infrastructure sharing road space (particularly kerb side) and how could these be resolved?
13. Would expanding 20mph zones be a good way of reducing collisions?
14. Would further investment in bus priority measures like bus lanes be a good way of reducing bus collisions?

How to contribute to the investigation

We welcome submissions from any organisations and individuals with views and information to share on this topic. Submissions should aim to address any of the questions outlined above, and other issues you think it important for the investigation to cover.

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We are keen to hear from bus operators, bus drivers, bus users, other road users, organisations delivering services on roads, businesses, London boroughs, campaigners, transport experts and others.

To contribute, please send submissions to the Committee by the deadline of **10 February 2017** using the details below.⁸

Email submissions	TransportCommittee@london.gov.uk
Postal submissions	Georgina Wells, London Assembly, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA
Further information	020 7983 4510
Media enquiries	020 7983 4228

About the Committee

The Transport Committee examines all aspects of the capital's transport system in order to press for improvements for Londoners. The Committee monitors how the Mayor's Transport Strategy is being implemented, and scrutinises the work of Transport for London and other transport operators.

Committee Members are:

- Caroline Pidgeon, Chair (Liberal Democrat)
- Keith Prince, Deputy Chair (Conservative)
- Kemi Badenoch (Conservative)
- Tom Copley (Labour)
- Florence Eshalomi (Labour)
- David Kurten (UK Independence Party)
- Joanne McCartney (Labour)
- Steve O'Connell (Conservative)
- Caroline Russell (Green)
- Navin Shah (Labour)

You can find out more about the Committee's investigations and read our reports here:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/london-assembly/transport-committee>

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Endnotes

¹ This includes some routes which extend beyond the Greater London boundary. Some buses are run commercially rather than being commissioned by TfL – TfL provides permits for these services.

² Transport for London quarterly performance report: Quarter 1 2016/17

³ The number of minutes that a passenger has had to wait in excess of the time that they should expect to wait if buses ran as scheduled.

⁴ <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/buses/west-end-bus-changes/>

⁵ <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/long-term-bus-casualty-trends-paper.pdf> (uses Metropolitan Police data, STATS19)

⁶ <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/bus-safety-data>

⁷ <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2016/february/mayor-launches-world-leading-bus-safety-program>

⁸ We will publish written submissions online unless they are marked as confidential or there is a legal reason for non-publication. We may be required to release a copy of your submission under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, even if it has been marked as confidential.