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Dear Keith

Door-to-door transport in London

Thank you for your letter of 28 April and for sharing the Transport Committee's report, *Door-to-door transport in London*. The Mayor has asked me to respond.

I welcome the Committee's work in this important area and read your report with interest.

Door-to-door transport services offer vital support for many Londoners with accessibility needs and are an essential part of our Capital's transport system. We have set out a vision for improving door-to-door and other assisted transport services in the Capital but accept there is more to do. I am pleased to say we have made progress on areas under our direct control, though progress has been slower where other parties are involved. Any support you and the Committee can provide in harnessing support for integrating and improving these vital services would be greatly appreciated.

Earlier this month we renamed Social Needs Transport as Assisted Transport Services (ATS) as this better reflects the vision we have for the service. The ATS programme will deliver more integrated services for customers facing accessibility challenges including more flexible door-to-door services and initiatives such as Travel Mentoring, which will help customers access the wider public transport network.

Our plans are now being reviewed by our Customer Service and Operational Performance Panel (CSOPP). This panel, chaired by TfL Board member Dr Mee Ling Ng OBE, focuses on delivery for our customers, including accessibility. It has nominated an 'ATS Champion', Anne McMeel, who will challenge and support the development of proposals. This will help with determining what core ATS services are required to support the wider transport network, what they should look like and who should provide them. This will all be considered in the context of the draft Mayor's Transport Strategy which was published for consultation last month.

We have given careful consideration to the Committee's recommendations, and have responded to each below.

Recommendation 1

TfL should set out a timed plan for implementation of its roadmap towards integration of door-to-door services. In view of the slow progress since the committee's last report, TfL should also provide written progress reports to the committee every six months for the remainder of this Mayoral term. We ask that TfL write to the committee by the end of July 2017 setting out its response to this recommendation.

Since the Committee published its report, we have been pressing ahead with our plans to improve door-to-door transport.

We have agreed a timetable with London Councils for the joint tendering for taxi and private hire contracts that contribute to London's door-to-door services, incorporating the taxi and private hire supply for Taxicard, Capital Call and a proportion of Dial-a-Ride journeys. This joint tender will deliver a common set of quality and performance standards across all three of these services helping to ensure a common journey experience for customers.

The tender specification, which also aims to introduce the potential for innovation through, for example, smartphone app and web based booking options for Taxicard, will be published in early August, with the contract award due in October and service commencing in April 2018. The tender proposal also makes preparations for further integration of services for customers, which we will be discussing with London Councils now the tender specification has been published.

Dial-a-Ride has introduced responsive scheduling of its buses across London, using mobile data terminals to enable customers to receive real-time information and, in coming months, there will be improvements to scheduling efficiency.

Dial-a-Ride has also awarded new Multi-Occupancy Assisted Transport contracts to 10 local community transport operators, providing them with much-needed financial security over the life of the contracts. This will help to strengthen the availability of minibus-type accessible transport services across London as these operators work in partnership with Dial-a-Ride to improve their service, vehicle quality and help to promote each other's services locally.

The CSOPP discussed the progress made on the proposals since the Assembly's report and the timetable for our planned next steps when it met on 13 July. I have attached the panel paper that informed its discussion. The panel will receive progress reports every six months on the ATS proposals and I will make sure these are shared with you.

Recommendation 2

TfL should explore the feasibility of introducing a system of personal budgets to an integrated door-to-door service, with a timed action to do this added to the service integration plan. This work should be carried out with a view to introducing a pilot scheme in a London borough to test the concept. We ask that TfL write to the committee by the end of July 2017 setting out its response to this recommendation.

I want us to improve choice and flexibility for our customers. However, as your report notes, there are a number of risks and challenges to introducing personal budgets in door-to-door services. These include:

- the potential difficulty for some service users in managing a personal budget, which can be addressed only with the support of London Councils and local boroughs
- financial risks if higher usage increases overall costs
- a need to determine the level of personal budget allocated to each individual while preventing potential fraudulent use

I believe though that the potential benefits do warrant a further examination of ways in which these challenges might be overcome.

A type of virtual personal budget service would, on the whole, be new to our Dial-a-Ride customers. However, both Taxicard and Capital Call already operate with such a system. We therefore propose a local pilot based around a trial integration of these existing services, retaining the best aspects of both services and a free on-demand Dial-a-Ride service.

Capital Call already provides a high level of customer choice as their virtual annual cash budget is spent by each member taking many short journeys or just one longer distance journey, using the list of approved suppliers. However, users are restricted to private hire vehicles (PHVs) only, with no options available for customers who need to travel in a wheelchair.

Taxicard, on the other hand, has more restrictions on how an individual's trip budget can be used. There are, for example, restrictions on journey length due to a monetary cap on the subsidy for each trip. It provides limited choice for customers wishing to use PHVs as predominantly Black Cabs are available.

A local pilot merging Capital Call and Taxicard funding into a single, simple, virtual cash budget will provide more flexibility. It could also reduce costs associated with the complex administration of the existing Taxicard virtual trip budget, freeing up additional resources to provide journeys for members. Such a scheme could, in addition, deliver the benefits of personal budgets alongside the safety net of continuing access to a free Dial-a-Ride service.

We are discussing the details and potential timelines for local pilots in two London boroughs; one each in inner and outer London, with London Councils and the boroughs themselves. Subject their agreement and to the agreement of the CSOP panel, our aim would be for these pilots to run for 12 months from next April, with plans for implementation finalised by the end of this year.

I hope this reassures the Committee of our commitment to improving transport provision for older and disabled Londoners who require door-to-door services.

Thank you again for your report.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Brown', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Brown MVO