

## **Meeting Transcript- Transport Committee roundtable with bus Operators (Private Hearing)**

**Date:** Tuesday, 14 February 2017

**Start time:** 10.30am

**Location:** Committee Room 2, City Hall

### **Attendees:**

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair)

Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman)

Florence Eshalomi AM

David Kurten AM

Steve O'Connell AM

Caroline Russell AM

Richard Berry, Officer, Greater London Authority

Georgina Wells, Officer, Greater London Authority

Operator 1, Bus Operator Representative

Operator 2, Bus Operator Representative

Operator 3, Bus Operator Representative

Operator 4, Bus Operator Representative

Operator 5, Bus Operator Representative

Operator 6, Bus Operator Representative

Operator 7, Bus Operator Representative

Operator 8, Bus Operator Representative

Operator 9, Bus Operator Representative

***Please note that names and other identifying details have been redacted to maintain anonymity of guest speakers.***

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1. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Let us kick off. We may be expecting another couple of my colleagues on the Assembly.
2. Thank you very much indeed for giving up some of your time this morning and coming in to talk to us. We are the Transport Committee on the Assembly and we are doing a piece of working looking at safety on buses. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I recognise a number of you around the table. We have met over recent years at different events. Thank you for coming in.
3. We have had a roundtable with drivers and we have a roundtable with a bus safety campaigner in a couple of weeks' time, but we wanted from you as operators. We will be recording this so that we can get an accurate transcript, but we will send that around to make sure you are happy with it. If there is something you wanted to say - and I am not saying there is - but you did not want it attributed, if you perhaps make that clear, then that would be fine. For the drivers, we completely anonymised it because not everyone would know that their drivers were coming and they wanted

to say things quite openly in order to get them talking. If there is something you want to flag, please do feel free to do so.

4. Let us go around the table and do introductions and then we will move into our general areas of questions. I am Caroline Pidgeon. I chair the Transport Committee.
5. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Hello. I am Keith Prince. I am Deputy Chairman.
6. **David Kurten AM:** I am David Kurten. I am on the Transport Committee as well.
7. **Operator 1:** I am [REDACTED].
8. **Operator 2:** [REDACTED].
9. **Operator 3:** [REDACTED].
10. **Operator 4:** [REDACTED].
11. **Operator 5:** I am [REDACTED].
12. **Operator 6:** I am [REDACTED].
13. **Operator 7:** I am [REDACTED].
14. **Operator 8:** I am [REDACTED].  
[REDACTED].
15. **Operator 9:** I am [REDACTED].
16. **Richard Berry (Officer, Greater London Authority):** I am Richard Berry. I am the Scrutiny Manager for the Transport Committee.
17. **Georgina Wells (Officer, Greater London Authority):** I am Georgie Wells. I am the Assisting Scrutiny Manager.
18. **Caroline Russell AM:** I am Caroline Russell. I am also a Member of the Transport Committee.
19. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** We are expecting Florence [Eshalomi AM] and Steve [O'Connell AM], hopefully, today as well. They are two other Members of the Committee.
20. If I kick off with maybe just a general opener, what are the most common safety problems you experience while operating services in London? Do you think Transport for London (TfL) provides enough clear direction on safety or do you think other things are more of a priority? There is an opener for you. Who would like to go first?

21. **Operator 6:** In terms of TfL, it does provide a pretty clear lead in terms of safety, but, certainly for my company, I would say that we are focused on safety for our own reasons - not causing collisions and injuries to passengers - and also commercial reasons because of the cost of the business. It does work quite well for us with the organisation and with TfL and it does scrutinise what we do.
22. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** What are the most common safety problems that you face, would you say?
23. **Operator 7:** Certainly passengers on board buses falling --
24. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** On the bus?
25. **Operator 7:** -- slipping, tripping or falling on the bus. Outside the bus, it is the conflict with the vulnerable road users like cyclists and pedestrians, particularly over the last two years with the reduction in road space that has been available. That seems to have had a detrimental influence on the safety aspects of our operations.
26. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** There have been more collisions because of the Cycle Superhighways and the like?
27. **Operator 7:** Not particularly because of the Cycle Superhighways; because of taking the impact of taking the road space away has meant that the rest of the traffic is funnelled into less road space. Therefore, there is more congestion and people vying for the same space. The figures show for themselves that over the past two years both collisions and injuries have increased.
28. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Can I ask: is that collisions and injuries with the public and cyclists or with other road vehicles?
29. **Operator 7:** The figure I am thinking about is general. Even though it is quite high profile, the number of incidents with cyclists is still quite low.
30. **Operator 2:** We would call it metal-on-metal. Actually, generally, most of our collisions are either us being hit or us hitting a third-party car. In answer to your question about the causes, my view is that 90% of the incidents will involve some form of human error, whether it is our human or whether it is the third-party human or whether it is another human in the car, etc, doing something, having a lack of concentration, making a mistake or a culmination of those events and someone doing wrong, having their headphones in and not listening, stepping out, looking the wrong way, etc. It is, inevitably, fairly difficult to try to manage all of those out of the system when we have human error.
31. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Obviously, it is pedestrianisation, it is Cycle Superhighways, it is changing gyratories and all of that, which may well mean reallocating the road space, but there has been a huge increase in private hire vehicles on the roads. We have all seen a huge increase in delivery vehicles. Are you

finding some of your collisions are with those who perhaps are less familiar with the roads or who are rushing?

32. **Operator 2:** Yes, I think so. Everyone is busier. In a weird sort of way, you can make it completely safe but you would not move very quickly. The 20-mile-an-hour speed limits are achieving what they are trying to achieve in slowing traffic down, but I wonder if there are some issues behind that. When you slow people down, then everyone is time-poor, and so you would think, whether it is a deliverer trying to get a slot or whether it is a bus driver trying to run a good service, does that put pressure on their ability to then play catch-up?
33. **Caroline Russell AM:** I am sorry. Do you mind if I just come in here?
34. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** No.
35. **Caroline Russell AM:** Twenty miles an hour means that the likelihood of any collision happening is lessened and also means that the outcome of a collision is less bad because there is less speed involved in it. My understanding is that the journey times do not increase when you slow speeds down because speed of journey is dictated by how many vehicles get through the traffic lights when they are green rather than by the speed at which people drive between the different traffic lights.
36. Just generally, you have raised the issue of people making mistakes and we all know that at pub closing time there could be pedestrians who have had a drink or maybe even two drinks and are not concentrating when they are crossing the road. This is one of the things that people who are driving vehicles, whether it is buses or anything, have to deal with.
37. Do you think that there is a broad feeling that 20 miles an hour does help to reduce the likelihood of collisions?
38. **Operator 1:** There is a distinction between the likelihood and the severity. [REDACTED] might have a perspective on this because he has, I am sure, done a lot of work in the actual claims. However, speed is not an issue with our incidents, generally. They are generally low-speed incidents. Actually, when congestion is at its highest, that is when we have most incidents.
39. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** When you are not moving?
40. **Operator 1:** When we are not moving, yes. There is more opportunity to hit things. There is a distinction between how hard you hit and how often you hit, without a shadow of a doubt. If we could reduce the congestion, we would have fewer incidents. I do not think there (Overspeaking)
41. **Operator 2:** The analogy there is actually motorways. They are probably the safest roads you will ever drive on but it will be the fastest you will be going at. If you have an incident on the motorway, it will be, generally, high-impact. I have a view that says that 20 miles an hour inevitably will reduce the severity of the injury and reduce

numbers killed or seriously injured (KSIs), but does it challenge people's concentration levels to be sitting in a lot of traffic, not going anywhere, when their mind then gets distracted? I have a view that if you are always moving, you will be focused on your driving.

42. **Caroline Russell AM:** People are more likely to keep the traffic moving if you overall slow the speeds down because you get less of the bunching and stop-start driving?
43. **Male Speaker:** No, rubbish.
44. **Caroline Russell AM:** There is evidence to show that, but let us not get into that.
45. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** OK, but we are trying to get evidence from everyone, not put our views across.
46. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes.
47. **Operator 2:** If you take congestion out of it, on Caroline's [Pidgeon MBE AM] point about bringing in more minicabs and more delivery vans, if you could take that scenario out and take the congestion away, then you will increase traffic speeds and then 20 miles an hour would be a feasible option.
48. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** OK. [REDACTED] you wanted to come in?
49. **Operator 3:** Yes, it is probably frustration, not so much in the peak because at 20 miles an hour you are not even going to be doing that --
50. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** You would be lucky to do, yes.
51. **Operator 3:** -- but, off peak, if you hit a 20-mile-an-hour zone, people will keep to it but be frustrated and then will speed up afterwards.
52. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** You think that that is because it is just in bits rather than blanket, people will --
53. **Operator 3:** Yes, because it is artificially low for most cars if you are in the right gear. It is about the frustration that they have.
54. Just another point. We run mostly bus services in the suburbs and one of the issues that we have is that the buses are getting bigger and the roads are not. There are more parked cars. There tends to be more metal-to-metal, as John said, and also potential for passenger injuries.
55. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Size of buses is an issue?
56. **Operator 3:** Yes.

57. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** [REDACTED] did you want to come in on any research you may have done on this?
58. **Operator 9:** Yes. It is fair to say that what [REDACTED] says is correct. Probably close to 90% of the collisions that we have would be at well less than 20 miles an hour. Some research that we have been doing recently suggests that close to 50% of the incidents that we have - and I can speak only for [REDACTED], obviously - are when we are changing lanes and that can be when we are pulling into or out of bus stops. There is a great propensity - and other people have probably seen this as well - for other motorists to fail to see a bus that is stationary at a bus stop. You would be surprised how many times we get hit while we are stationary. I do not understand how people fail to see a big red box right in front of them, but they do.
59. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Wow, yes.
60. **Operator 9:** When people are effectively competing for road space and when roads are narrowing, there is a big issue when cars see an opportunity to save three seconds of their time by getting in front of a bus, despite the fact that the bus will be pulling over 50 metres up the road.
61. **Operator 4:** That does not just lead to a metal-on-metal. It can often lead to a harsh braking environment when passengers fall over.
62. **Operator 9:** Of course it can, yes.
63. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** (Overspeaking) as well, yes. Let us move into some specific areas. Keith, do you want to take the next one?
64. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Yes. Thank you. This is really about how you ensure your drivers are fit to carry out their duties so that they are not tired from stress or overwork. Could I ask you first of all: how do you log how often your drivers are finishing work later than expected?
65. **Operator 6:** What is the question? How can we log it?
66. **Operator 5:** No, how do you log it?
67. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** How do you log it? How do you log how often your drivers are finishing work later than expected? In other words, do you keep a record of how often your drivers finish later than expected?
68. **Operator 6:** We do not. As a company, we do not report on it, but every time a driver finishes late they will be paid overtime and so we do have a record of it. More recently, we have experienced a lot more drivers finishing a lot later and that is due to congestion in central London. That is a frustration. Before now, I would say, a couple of years ago, in northwest London, drivers tended to finish close to their finishing time.

69. **Operator 1:** We were all asked to supply data recently to TfL either identifying our one, two, three, four, five, six worst routes and company did the whole thing because it was just easier. We do have those records and we have talked to TfL about them and --
70. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Perhaps we could get that information.
71. **Operator 1:** It is what you do next that is the difficult thing. I think the other day I spoke about how we schedule only for a medium case, if you like. We do not schedule for the best scenario; we do not schedule for the worst. If we all scheduled for the worst and reflected the road speeds that we are experiencing at the moment, we would need a massive amount of extra resource to maintain the same frequencies. You could have a very reliable bus service but it would cost you a fortune and there are trade-offs that you have to do.
72. The information is there. Trying to find some solutions on a widespread basis is very difficult. I am sure that we are all working on individual cases to try to improve some of those particularly poorly performing routes or the ones where we get late finishes more often, but it is a difficult thing to overcome.
73. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Does it tend to be route-specific rather than driver-specific?
74. **Operator 1:** It is route-specific, yes.
75. **Operator 5:** Yes, corridor-specific.
76. **Operator 1:** Yes, it tends to be. We will all have similar corridors, too, because we run side-by-side on many roads. We will all have the same thing happening on the same corridors (Overspeaking)
77. **Operator 2:** The great example at the moment is Threadneedle Street, Cannon Street and Bank, all going on at the same time, three different sets of works, which has brought the City part to a standstill. We have 60-minute late running, generally, there most days and that will go on until the end of April. Inevitably, a lot of our routes are radial and so all of us will probably touch the City and will be affected by that, which cause issues with late running and buses being trapped and not being able to get back on time or back to be finished.
78. In answer to your first question, really, all of us will have a computerised system. It starts with a time schedule. That gets turned into a duty schedule, which gets put into the allocation system. That will govern drivers' hours, when they are finishing and what they get paid. We are, to varying degrees, able to interrogate that and tell what is happening on various routes, with different garages and with different people to say if we really have a problem.

79. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** What do you do to mitigate that? If you have a route that is underperforming and you know that your drivers are not finishing on time, what do you do to mitigate that?
80. **Operator 6:** If we want to try to deal with the circumstances on the day, then we have service controllers who will adjust the service. They would curtail a vehicle short of its normal destination so that it can get back and perhaps come back on its return journey on time. That would be an intervention that happens all the time, but sometimes it is more severe with some of those decisions we make.
81. If it is an endemic problem with the route, we would go to TfL and seek to get more reliability inserted, which means that either we would have to put additional vehicles on there or, if it is outside peak hours, we would just put in additional time for drivers to complete their journeys.
82. **Operator 2:** A good example of that is with the City works that we have at the moment because it is a fairly short-term set; not short-term as in the end of April, which is a fairly long time, but in terms of the Elephant and Castle scheme, which was almost a year. We have an agreement - I do not know if the other guys do - that when it gets to 40-minute late running, we are then able to curtail away from it. What they want us to do is to run through it, but that is pointless if you are just going to sit there going nowhere.
83. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Can I just ask, though? You have negotiated that with TfL but, otherwise, is your contract set up that, as a company, you want to run the whole route because that is what you get paid?
84. **Operator 2:** Yes.
85. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** That is what came out from drivers and I was very concerned that you would have drivers who are maybe having to work an hour extra and it is all right because you might be paying them, but what if they have childcare or other responsibilities? It is a real pressure if you have that. I know from running for the train - and I am not driving some heavy bus - the stress. How do you manage that? It is about their quality of life.
86. **Operator 6:** If we have a persistent late-running problem, we would be failing in our duty as employers to those drivers to not address it because - you are right - people have lives outside of their work as bus drivers. Absolutely, we would be tackling it. If it was persistent, we could not tackle it just by simply adjusting services on the day. We would need to put those arrangements in with TfL if it was about curtailing vehicles or rescheduling and we would do that.
87. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** If it was a constant thing, you would talk to TfL or you would reschedule it so that you did not have this week after week on that route for drivers?



88. **Operator 6:** Yes, but it depends on the circumstances. We have not operated, for instance, in some of the worst areas most recently. You have the areas that John has talked about, areas like Elephant and Castle, which have been warzones --
89. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Yes, awful.
90. **Operator 6:** -- in terms of running services and, thankfully, we have not run there during the time that it has been particularly bad. There, you would need to have schedules in place. However, if you have a situation which might be running for a month, it is not necessarily something that you could put a schedule in for very easily, and you would adjust or put some sort of emergency arrangements in place.
91. **Operator 7:** We have to be clear that this is not a problem that manifests itself just around major sets of roadworks. One of the by-products of all the changes that have been made to the road network is that, as it takes capacity out, it reduces the resilience of the road network. Things happen on a day-to-day basis. You have a vehicle broken down or the Blackwell Tunnel closes. All of those sorts of problems happen on a day-to-day basis, but the consequent effect of that lasts for longer and is more severe than it was three or four years ago. Drivers are finishing late a lot more regularly now, often for relatively small problems that can have quite a serious impact on the operation of the service.
92. Our controllers are trying to balance the requirements of the passengers to get to where they want to go against the requirements of the drivers who want to have a realistic expectation of finishing around the time they expect to. It is a constant balancing act between those two and, over the past few years, maybe the drivers have gone down in the pecking order a little bit.
93. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** You would say that the Cycle Superhighways or whatever they are called are a contributing factor to reducing that resilience on the roads?
94. **Operator 7:** Yes, absolutely, and not just those but the general change to the road network has reduced the amount of road space that is available to general traffic. That means that the consequence of any problem has an impact over a wider area and lasts for a lot longer.
95. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** All right. That was very helpful. Thank you. Can you tell me: do you monitor whether your drivers are answering their calls from the controllers whilst the bus is moving? Do you have any way of monitoring that or not?
96. **Operator 5:** We cannot monitor it, but they are instructed not to do that, obviously, for safety reasons.
97. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** All right, because we heard a report from one driver where the controller was demanding that they answer the call but the driver was going around [REDACTED] at the time. Eventually, when they got to the

bus stop, which of course could take some time on [REDACTED], the controller was threatening to put them on report because they had not answered immediately.

98. **Operator 1:** I am sure that it does happen but, because of the lag on the real-time system, you cannot be sure that the bus is stationary even when you are looking at the screen and so it must happen. However, the design of the foot pedal to operate the radio on most vehicles prevents you, realistically, operating the radio. It does not prevent the call coming in, of course, and you being distracted.
99. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** No, but I thought that it was a very good feature that you literally cannot, can you, answer the radio?
100. **Male Speaker:** You cannot take it off the perch, no.
101. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** That is very sensible.
102. **Operator 1:** You can get the incoming calls, still. You cannot get a text message unless you are stationary, I believe, but you can get the voice.
103. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Interesting.
104. **Caroline Russell AM:** Do you think that the voice is stressful? If you are a driver who is running late, do you think that getting those calls coming in adds to the stress?
105. **Operator 1:** I am sure it is and I am sure that we are all trying to get our service controllers to be more user-friendly and take more of a professional call centre approach and not to have those sorts of conversations.
106. **Operator 5:** I can only speak for us. We all do our own thing with our controllers. That is one of the few things that is still left to the operator to decide: to determine how best to run the services. At Arriva - and I cannot speak for anybody else - we record all of the messages between the controllers and the drivers.
107. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Do you then monitor it or play it back to say, "Actually, you are calling too much. They are driving"?
108. **Operator 5:** Yes. Clearly, we do.
109. **Operator 2:** We cannot because our policy will not allow us to randomly do that unless someone raises an issue about a controller or a driver. We are not randomly looking at it because the trade union would not allow us to do that.
110. **Operator 1:** Yes, we randomly check the controllers rather than the drivers for their user-friendliness, which may be a (Overspeaking)
111. **Operator 5:** (Overspeaking) for both members of staff. It is a good training aid because it does help.

112. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** (Overspeaking)
113. **Operator 6:** It sounds like we all have a recording system because we do it as well.
114. **Operator 7:** Most controllers know the general conditions out on the road and they are not going to ask a driver why they are late if they know the reason why. They tend to be dealing with the exceptions like the driver who is running late when everybody else on the same route seems to be on time or the driver who is early when everybody else on the route is late. Those tend to be the exceptions that controllers will home in on to ask the questions.
115. **Operator 2:** It is fair to say that, in an ideal world, I would expect the time schedule that we create to make that service run 90% of the time and, for the rest of that time when it goes slightly wrong, the controller would step in and adjust it and curtail and manage the service.
116. Where we have come to over this 18 months is actually that time schedule generally is not fit for purpose and is out of date quite quickly because of the dynamics. Therefore, the controller is becoming involved probably 30% or 35% of the time, which inevitably is now causing more conflict, if that makes sense.
117. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** That is an interesting point. Do you know what percentage of your drivers have second jobs and do you consider this practice to be a problem in terms of their ability to drive safely?
118. **Operator 6:** I would say that any fulltime member of staff does not have a second job and we would know if they --
119. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** It could not be a driving job. We realise that.
120. **Operator 6:** It could not be a driving job, but they are required as part of their employment for this to be a whole-time occupation and they are to advise us if they are going to do anything else. If they are a part-time driver, it is possible that they do other jobs. Absolutely, I would say almost hand on heart that there is no driver doing a second job.
121. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Known to you?
122. **Operator 6:** Known to me, yes, but they do pop up and advise us.
123. **Operator 2:** Yes, and we deal with them, but there is a policy. It is exactly the same.
124. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Is that written into the contracts that they are (Overspeaking)
125. **Operator 2:** They have to seek our authority to take alternative or other employment.

126. **Operator 9:** We randomly check our car-parks where drivers park their cars for any taxi licences.
127. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Interesting.
128. **Operator 9:** A couple of years ago, we did find a car parked with a taxi licence on it and that was dealt with because, as [REDACTED] says, we can only deal with what we know.
129. **Operator 2:** If we are about to do an exercise on that, TfL will provide us with a database of every registered taxi driver in London and we will run it through our human resources (HR) system to see if people have both. It does not mean they are doing it but --
130. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** There is a lot of rumour around there saying that bus drivers are Uber drivers. That might just be a conspiracy theory that we hear, but we have heard about a lot of --
131. **Operator 3:** The trouble is they may be a registered driver but not actually active --
132. **Operator 5:** Not active, yes.
133. **Operator 3:** -- and so they have just kept the licence up, which is fair enough if they are driving a bus now.
134. **Operator 5:** It stays in perpetuity and so they cannot cancel it.
135. **Operator 7:** With the advent of firms like Uber, there is a greater opportunity now than there was, certainly, and it seems to be much easier for somebody to take a second job if they want one.
136. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Is there plenty of overtime available to drivers? I suppose they tend to earn their overtime when they are running late rather than being called (Overspeaking)
137. **Operator 1:** Rest-day working becomes a feature of the business, yes. It is the same with us as everybody else. Where staff shortages arise, most of us have that --
138. **Caroline Russell AM:** Sorry, "rest-day working", did you say?
139. **Operator 1:** Yes.
140. **Caroline Russell AM:** The time that they would have been recovering from tiredness, from --
141. **Operator 1:** Yes, their choice.
142. **Operator 2:** There are legal limits with drivers' hours and so they can do what we call a 13-day fortnight. That is generally the maximum they can do, but generally that is

unusual. There are people who want to work all the hours and the longest jobs to earn the most money. That is the reality.

143. **Caroline Russell AM:** Is there any correlation between people working longer hours and having more collisions?
144. **Operator 2:** We have researched that: none that you would be able to hang your hat on.
145. **Operator 1:** Nor particularly time of shift, either, which is quite bizarre. We have done quite a lot of work on that and there are no distinct peaks. You would think of people being tired at the end of the day --
146. **Operator 5:** Or the end of the week.
147. **Operator 1:** -- and itching to get back. It does not seem to follow.
148. **Operator 4:** We have also looked at commute times. If somebody has a longer commute time before they start work, there is no correlation with that and collision time as well.
149. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** At the Bus Awards, a guy I was chatting to at my table lived in Kent and worked from the Willesden Garage. I could not believe it. He said, "I drive up really early in the morning and so I get there at some ridiculous time". He just loves working at the garage and has for decades.
150. **Operator 5:** He could come to work for me and cut his journey in half.
151. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** He was lovely. He was up for an award. He was really dedicated to his job. Let us look at training. Caroline?
152. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes. There is one other thing on the fatigue and stress element, which was access to toilets. We did hear from drivers who said that sometimes they could have a 40-minute break and it would be 15 minutes to walk up the road to a Costa or somewhere where they could access a toilet, a cup of tea or coffee and a sandwich, and then 15 minutes' walk back. They had 10 minutes to go to the loo and try to eat some lunch, which is not fantastic.
153. Are you doing anything to increase the numbers of toilets that are available to bus drivers? Frankly, if you are crossing your legs, it is not great. Also, it is particularly an issue for women who may be menstruating. Any input on toilets?
154. **Operator 6:** We sometimes hear examples like that. When I hear them, I like to know the detail of them because there are no circumstances in the scheduling that we do when someone would have to do that and, in effect, get only 10 minutes' break. That is not credible.

155. **Caroline Russell AM:** I think it was to do when buses were running late and were curtailed or something. It was that kind of circumstance.
156. **Operator 6:** Under those circumstances, we would guarantee a minimum of a half-hour break. That is a guarantee.
157. **Caroline Russell AM:** Allowing them to walk to where they could go to --
158. **Operator 6:** Yes. Our scheduling would allow walking time to the facility that we have identified and so that is --
159. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** On top of that break?
160. **Operator 6:** On top of that break, yes. If there is a ten-minute walk both ways, then we would allow an hour because we schedule for a minimum of 40 minutes. We would allow an hour for people in that break time. That is how we would accommodate a break.
161. **Caroline Russell AM:** That is for Metrolink. Are all of you confident that everyone has access to toilet facilities?
162. **Operator 2:** In the honest answer to your question on whether there are enough toilets out on all of our routes, absolutely not. People are closing them down and cannot afford to keep running them or they are not open for the whole traffic day. We have issues certainly late at night with getting access. It certainly is a bigger issue for women.
163. In fairness to TfL, it has promised to resurrect it and make it a bit more high profile, but we have been talking about toilets now for --
164. **Operator 7:** Decades.
165. **Operator 5:** (Overspeaking) fifty years, I think.
166. **Operator 2:** -- a long time. Actually, the promise was that its aim was one at each end but at least one set of toilets on every route in London.
167. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** We should raise that with the Mayor.
168. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes, indeed.
169. **Operator 3:** A lot of it is to do with planning and the like. I have a good example at Banstead, which is actually in Surrey but at the terminal end. A lot of routes go cross-boundary and that is harder because we do not have jurisdiction over that. By doing my own thing, I have talked about it to the council. You can get the public toilets open later but then you have to buy a licence or it is the world's most expensive locksmith who comes in and puts a combination lock on. We try to do that and we

always make sure that wherever our drivers are, they have shelter, either mobile or fixed.

170. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Florence wants to come in on that.
171. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** Just really quickly on that, again, it is something that I have been campaigning on since I was first elected in 2006 to Lambeth Council. Toilets are a big issue. Excuse my ignorance, but on routes where there are Underground stations or London Overground stations, is there not an agreement to use those toilets?
172. **Operator 5:** No.
173. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** Seriously?
174. **Operator 6:** It is quite (Overspeaking)
175. **Operator 4:** It is by exception.
176. **Operator 6:** Yes, it is quite bespoke.
177. **Operator 4:** Yes, it is by exception.
178. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** We did pick up evidence and drivers told us that they had been told - I think it was going out into the 'sticks' routes in the suburbs and further beyond - to try to find a resident in that street who you can be (Overspeaking). That was the advice they told us they had been given, which sounded a bit unsatisfactory at all levels.
179. **Operator 1:** It is not confined to the sticks. One of our central London services is a big service. We have just celebrated that we have a toilet at one end and that is after many years.
180. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Wow.
181. **Operator 1:** TfL is aware of it. There has been a working party ever since I have been around, trying to get toilets on routes, but they are not there.
182. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** We will pick that up. That is something that we (Overspeaking)
183. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes, we will move on.
184. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Yes, we will move on to training.
185. **Caroline Russell AM:** Moving swiftly on to training, as I understand it, the operators are responsible individually for the training of their drivers. Just for starters, what safety training have you delivered to your drivers in the last year?

186. **Operator 1:** I will give the reply I gave the other day and give these guys a chance to think. We have deployed the “In the Zone” TfL defensive driving. It is a mind-set of driving module within a wider Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) module that takes a whole day. We had a discussion the other day about the fact that “In the Zone” was about four hours and so, to try to put it into something that made sense for us, we tacked on more safety training in terms of driver first-use checks and checking the vehicle before they go out for the day. We called it “Safety Matters” as the umbrella.
187. Prior to that, we had done a defensive driving CPC module. Over the last two years, broadly, drivers have had those two modules, plus now Hello London, which has a little bit of an interest in safety as well as all of the customer service types of things.
188. **Caroline Russell AM:** Thank you. Others?
189. **Operator 3:** We have done cycle awareness, when we get drivers on bikes, which is quite funny sometimes, to get them aware of what cyclists have to do. That was sponsored through TfL.
190. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** They swap places, yes.
191. **Operator 3:** Yes, it puts them in that position.
192. **Caroline Russell AM:** Is that something that is done commonly? Do all companies do cycle awareness training?
193. **Operator 5:** I have.
194. **Operator 2:** Our challenge is that every driver - when I say this, most of us will do it this way - will get at least seven hours of training every year because they have to get 35 hours of training every five years to maintain their licence, which is called a CPC.
195. TfL has now said to us that it wants every driver to go through Hello London, which is a two-day course. That is challenging and that course will last two-and-a-half years. It is our ability to do other stuff and, as [REDACTED] has indicated, there are some safety elements in the Hello London stuff: how we communicate with people, how drivers and controllers get on, for instance.
196. For the “In the Zone” training, which was based on the Sarah Hope [Victim Support Consultant, TfL, and Founder, Sarah Hope Line and Elizabeth’s Legacy of Hope] story, all of us had a different second half to our seven-hour day. This is also still running and drivers are going on it.
197. What we would tend to do if someone is having lots of stupid accidents or has just come out of training and is still learning the job is that they would get specific help and mentoring to help them be a better bus driver.



198. **Operator 4:** We run an advanced driver training programme. We train anything between 500 and 1,000 drivers a year on this programme. It is called "Visual Vanguard". I suppose you could describe it as an off-the-shelf package. Cameras are fitted onto a vehicle and it is driven under instruction and then they replay all of the information afterwards. There is a strong coaching element and picking up how drivers are performing on that particular drive.
199. We have found that much more successful than a one-to-one drive without the audio-visual aids because there is always this view, "I did not do that. I was not that close to the kerb". However, with the feedback from the video, it is very clear-cut. We have had huge success with this with a huge reduction in incidents thereafter when they have been through the training.
200. The other thing is that at the minute we are tending to focus on a particular set of drivers. We have been putting through the 10% who tend to have accidents or tend to generate the most complaints about their driving standards. We are really focusing on those particularly and then we are working our way down the pecking order. We will do another 10% this year. It has been hugely successful. I do not know whether other operators do the same.
201. **Caroline Russell AM:** One of the things we heard from the drivers about advanced driving was that, if they completely practised everything they had learned on advanced driving, they tended to get more stuff in their ears from the controllers about not losing headway. Do you think that there is a tension between the need to maintain headway and satisfy the controllers and safe driving?
202. **Operator 7:** We do need to make the distinction. This is not to satisfy the controllers. The controllers are there to try to run the best quality of service they can for the passengers. That is deemed by TfL to have a good headway. If you are running a high-frequency service on a good headway, it is deemed to be the best quality of service to the customer. The controllers get bad press with the drivers, but really they are the custodians of the passenger --
203. **Caroline Russell AM:** Experience.
204. **Operator 7:** -- quality within the business and the passenger experience. Yes, there is a tension there. There is a tension if you drive your own car and are held up and have to get somewhere at a particular time. There is a tension. We know that when people then try to press time or to get time back, generally, standards will start to fall. In an industry like ours, which is about time and is about operating to time, there is always that tension. The key is how to manage it in a way that does not seriously reduce the safety of the operation. No driver in my company has been disciplined for running late.
205. **Operator 5:** We all have --
206. **Operator 7:** You may think they have if you listen to them but, factually, they do not.

207. **Operator 5:** No.
208. **Caroline Russell AM:** Is it common across all companies that people will not be disciplined for running late?
209. **Operator 5:** There are exceptions because, if you employ thousands of bus drivers, there is always going to be the exception. There will be the odd driver who, for whatever reason, is not playing the game. We will know who they are because they do it all the time and they will have to be dealt with because, obviously, we are here to serve the public.
210. The conflict, if there is one, is that often a driver is running late and would like to be turned to get them back on time for the return journey, but the controller cannot do that because the controller can see the whole picture and can see that that bus has to go through because it has to get to its destination; otherwise there is a huge gap in service for people waiting for the bus to come back. They do their best to explain to the drivers that in this particular circumstance they are asking them to go through, but some drivers do not like it for all the reasons that you can imagine.
211. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes.
212. **Operator 5:** It is all about people management. We all have regular meetings with our unions, at least monthly, usually involving a fulltime officer. If it was a massive running sore in the business, it would be constantly on the radar and it is not in our business. It is bread-and-butter. It is what people do. To a degree, bus drivers expect to finish late on occasions because that is the nature of the work in London.
213. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** They must know what routes - say, bigger routes - run late?
214. **Operator 5:** Of course, yes. As we said, we compensate them handsomely, usually, when they do finish late and so most drivers do not really mind that much. If it really falls apart - and there are times when you have huge amounts of roadworks on and an accident happens or you could have a march - and suddenly London grinds to a halt, then the controllers have to do a bit of kerbside scheduling and try to adjust the service to the circumstances at the time. That requires a huge amount of co-operation and understanding with the drivers, 99% of whom understand the issue because they are driving in it and are very helpful because everybody is on the same side.
215. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Just as a quick aside, you must have routes that you know are going to run late because there are roadworks.
216. **Operator 5:** Yes.
217. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** For instance, using Caroline's [Pidgeon MBE AM] example - and it was a good one, Caroline - if you have a mother who has responsibility for collecting her child, could she refuse that route and say, "Look, I

have to pick my child up at 4 o'clock and so I really cannot afford to be running an hour late"?

218. **Operator 5:** Yes. A lot of us have family-friendly rotas within the garages, which enable the staff to pick and choose a lifestyle choice. The youngsters who are after loads of money probably like working the late shifts, for which a lot of operators pay a premium, and so they will go after those types of jobs. Other people who perhaps have children to pick up will go for shift patterns that allow them to do that. It is in our best interests to accommodate people. Otherwise, they will not (a) come and work for us and (b) stay working for us if it does not suit.
219. **Operator 6:** It does not necessarily have to be a permanent schedule because we run only so many duties per day and so there is flexibility to allow people on specific occasions to be allocated to earlier shifts if they give us notice. There is a lot of flexibility for drivers.
220. **Operator 5:** Yes.
221. **Caroline Russell AM:** Just taking us back to training, we were talking earlier about the different kinds of training that are available. Do you think it would be helpful if there was London-wide training that was common across all bus operators?
222. **Operator 7:** We are just in the middle of the first joint TfL/bus operator training at the moment, which I think we all agree has been --
223. **Male Speaker:** Successful.
224. **Male Speaker:** Very good, yes.
225. **Operator 7:** -- very successful. Given the emphasis that we are aware of now that is being placed on safety within TfL, it would seem to be a logical next step to make.
226. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes, and --
227. **Operator 7:** Sorry, there is --
228. **Operator 6:** With one caveat --
229. **Operator 7:** Sorry, you go on.
230. **Operator 6:** Yes. My caveat to that is that, as [REDACTED] said before, we all have our own training programmes that we are introducing and they are all quite specific to our companies and the companies' needs. If we identified issues that we had for our drivers that might be different to what is going on in [REDACTED], we might add it to our training programme. We have used the equivalent programme that TfL is running today as training in order to deal with our company issues. One London-wide training programme would not necessarily suit our requirements.

231. **Caroline Russell AM:** Certainly the flexibility --
232. **Operator 2:** The (Overspeaking), Caroline, is that you end up doing what we call 'sheep-dipping' and everyone just gets dipped in it and out they come, whereas we all compete with each other for tenders and for routes. That is a healthy situation. I want to run the best training courses that are fit for my business, give me a competitive advantage and make my customer satisfaction go up or my reliability scores go up or my safety record better.
233. The CPC is a European Union (EU) directive. They are talking to the industry at the moment about enhancing that, etc. Our challenge almost is - and I am pretty sure that you will have also a desire - that they are now making it mandatory that one of those seven-hour courses in the 35-hour block will be about disability and one will be about safety. They are almost driving it down that way anyway but, like Sean, it does not mean that my course has to be the same as his because we are different companies.
234. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes, and you want that input, but having some basic, common, core standards to be met is something that --
235. **Operator 6:** That is a good thing, yes.
236. **Operator 1:** Sorry, just on Hello London, it sounds like we all agree that it is brilliant but - and I have said this to Gareth Powell [Director of Strategy and Contracted Services, TfL] - at any point in time, which might be another year's time, it stops. As we all have probably 20% turnover, very quickly we will have a workforce that has never been on Hello London. Now that we have started it, it is almost like we cannot stop it. That is seriously challenging for TfL in terms of financing it, I am sure. It cannot just be done once for those people who happen to be here and then it just fritters away. It is a very difficult challenge.
237. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes. Something else that relates to the turnover of staff is the training that drivers get before they start on a new route or when they switch to a new bus model or even a new bus company. Is there anything you would like to say about that?
238. **Operator 5:** They all get training on each type of vehicle so that they are certified to drive that type of vehicle and then route training as well so that they are familiar. They are not released until they are absolutely familiar. It is not just with the regular routes but the diversions and all of the other things.
239. It is true to say that if you get a new driver with a new licence, it tends to be when they have the accidents to start with. I do not know if you agree with me, but they have to go out solo at some point and it is usually then that they have at least one and you put that down to experience. In my experience, that will be the case, particularly where you have very tight routes going down back streets and what-have-you. It is usually just the bumper touching a car or a mirror or something, not

necessarily dangerous, but that tends to happen. They do get a lot of it, but you can never teach experience. That is the thing.

240. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** The drivers did give that fabulous example.
241. **Caroline Russell AM:** They did.
242. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** You were trained when the bus was empty but, when you have 70 passengers on board and you brake --
243. **Operator 9:** That is true.
244. **Caroline Russell AM:** It is a very different feeling.
245. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** That was just almost like --
246. **Operator 3:** Yes. You cannot really recreate that in training. Sometimes you can have a mentor who will go out with someone, but even then they are behind the wheel and they are in charge.
247. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Yes. It was just quite interesting. They all felt --
248. **Operator 5:** We all do our own thing. TfL has not absolutely prescribed what we do for every new member of staff, but most of us, logically, have ended up going through three years of experience knowing that it is unwise not to buddy someone up when they are new or take special account of the fact that they might be driving in the dark for the first time, which is an issue, and of course the point has been made that a heavily laden bus in the peak as your first journey in anger is not a good place to learn that buses brake differently when they are full of people.
249. **Caroline Russell AM:** Some of the older drivers were suggesting that it used to be longer that you were mentored for or that you had someone with you and in the old days you felt really proud to get through your bus training. They felt that people now were going through the training more quickly. Is that something that any of you would recognise?
250. **Operator 7:** A lot of us go back to London Transport days in this room. In the London Transport days, there was no buddying or mentoring at all. You went to Chiswick and, yes, you drove a bus on a skidpan with some sandbags on the top, but the moment you got to the garage you were thrown into the deep end without any form of assistance whatsoever. It has actually got better than in the old days.
251. **Operator 2:** You probably never got any training afterwards, either --
252. **Operator 7:** No.
253. **Operator 2:** -- whereas now CPC has been introduced --

254. **Caroline Russell AM:** You have something continuous going on?
255. **Operator 2:** -- you are getting something every year as a minimum and some are getting even more than that.
256. The other thing that is probably worth saying is that I have 17 garages across London and my worst - or best - garage has 16 routes running from that garage. I have been in the industry a long time and I would struggle to remember 16 routes having just come out of training. What we will do now is we will let them do only two routes for six months until they have learned them, until they have bedded in and until they have - [REDACTED] point - that experience. A mentor will not only stay with them for the first week but revisit them and become their point of contact and bed them in. Then, if they want to learn more routes, we let them because they then have more experience to do that.
257. The first six months is really tough because - you are right - we teach them to drive that vehicle, which generally takes about five weeks, and they will pass their tests and will be full of the information and their heads will be full. They then go out and learn 16 routes and you wonder why they would have an accident. We have learned from that and we will manage their expectations and bring them on when they are ready.
258. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** I was on the bus the other night and it went around a roundabout and I thought, "That was strange".
259. **Operator 2:** Twice?
260. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** No, just the once but, obviously, he had missed the turning.
261. **Operator 2:** He had missed the turning. All right.
262. **Operator 4:** Typically, a bus driver learns a route by going to ride on the service bus and so what we have started to do now is to supplement that learning with DVDs. We have pre-recorded the routes and we are putting messages on the DVDs. When you are sitting there just watching a bus go around a roundabout, you are not aware of the hazards or particular other incidents that could occur. On the DVDs, we are giving those messages to drivers, yes.
263. **Operator 5:** They watch them on their mobile phones.
264. **Operator 4:** They watch them on mobile phones. We have just set up an app system --
265. **Male Speaker:** Not while they are driving?
266. **Male Speaker:** Not while they are driving, no!

267. **Operator 9:** At [REDACTED], we have introduced a course called “Master Your Route”. Any driver who comes to the garage is taught their first route. When they are ready to move on to another route, they have to apply to learn the route and then they are placed on a voluntary course, which will be a four-hour session or half-day session, which they are not paid for at the time. They will get paid for learning the route when they drive their first duty on it. That is to discourage drivers going out and trying to learn all of the routes and just getting paid overtime. As part of the course, they are taken out with a mentor driver, they are given the videos of the routes and then they are tested at the end of it. If they do not pass the test, they have to go through the course again before they are allowed to go out on the route.
268. **Caroline Russell AM:** Just one more on training: do you think it would be useful for your drivers to know basic first aid?
269. **Operator 6:** Probably not.
270. **Operator 3:** No. A little knowledge is dangerous, in many ways. In my experience, even when we have done four-day, very detailed first aid is that people even in the office are reluctant to apply other than the basics and they would call an ambulance. I have never seen a situation where someone would have been saved through a bus driver knowing that. A little knowledge is dangerous, actually.
271. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** In life or just in this?
272. **Operator 3:** Maybe if you have no hope, but you know what I am saying.
273. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Yes, I do.
274. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes. Thank you.
275. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Lovely. Can we move on to look at maintenance, Florence?
276. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** Yes. I suppose buses catching fire has been on all our minds recently. Just before Christmas another bus caught fire.
277. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Yes.
278. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** It is very rare, thank God. The other thing that can cause some of the traffic is buses breaking down, when you finally get to that bus stop and you learn that this was the cause of the hold-up. In terms of maintaining the vehicles, which I am sure all of you do have forward planning for, if there is an issue with one of the buses, whose responsibility is it to spot and report that?
279. **Operator 7:** Everybody’s, yes, but primarily the driver’s. When the driver signs on in the morning, they have to do what they call a ‘first-use check’, which is a walk-around check designed to ensure that the bus is safe to go out on the road. Then, if they spot anything on that check, they have to report it through to the engineers. If

it is a safety-critical defect, it would have to be fixed before that bus is allowed out on the road. There are some defects that the bus could go out into service as long as it was pulled in at the earliest opportunity to sort it out.

280. I would say that lost mileage to breakdowns in London now is probably the lowest it has been for an awfully long time and that is against a backdrop of the buses getting far more complex than they were. The engine systems and the emission control systems are far more complex and far more likely to stop a vehicle from working if safety tolerances are not achieved. Against that backdrop, I think we do quite a good job at keeping the buses out on the road.
281. **Operator 5:** Yes. The other thing is that they are on the road virtually 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and so are heavily used and very intensively used. If a double-decker breaks down, it is very high profile and everybody spots it, but there are breakdowns all over London all the time. It is just that they are not so high profile.
282. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** In situations where you may have delays and may be short of staff or something and there is a big rush at the garage in terms of changing maybe from night staff to day staff, has there ever been a situation when there has not been a check on a bus before it went out or are all your buses checked before they leave?
283. **Operator 5:** It is a legal requirement both on the business and on the individual.
284. **Operator 3:** A driver will not take it out without checking it. Sometimes if they are running late they might get someone else to check it and they will take a view on it, but even then they might want to go around it.
285. **Operator 2:** The sting in the tail is actually the police officer or Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) inspector. If a defect is seen on that vehicle that would be what we call 'driver detectable', not only do we get penalised but the driver will get penalised and have points on their licence.
286. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** What do you do for what I could call '*en route* swap-overs', like when the bus will be stopping for two minutes to change the driver?
287. **Operator 5:** On the larger routes, yes. In those circumstances, the driver checks the vehicle at the next available opportunity, which would be at the next standpoint. It is the driver's legal responsibility to ensure that his or her bus is safe at all times, but we cannot ask them to check the vehicle in the middle of the road and get run over while they are doing an exterior check. It has to be practical and pragmatic but, at the end of the day, the driver is never off the hook, in reality.
288. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** I suppose for some of you who operate some of the bigger routes and quite a number of buses, do you feel that you have enough engineers around your different routes to properly maintain those buses?
289. **Operator 2:** How many times, Florence, would you service your vehicle in a year?



290. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** Once a year.
291. **Operator 2:** Every one of us - and I do not know but let me just guess - and every operator certainly in London will be inspecting or servicing their vehicles every 28 to 30 days, year in, year out. There are different sorts of servicing as you go through that year and then, every year, they will have an MOT or freedom from defect (FFD) [certification], as we call it, where it will get a major service and will be off the road for a week, generally. In some respects, we probably over-maintain the vehicles and certainly inspect them an awful lot.
292. Does that stop them breaking down? Absolutely not because stuff still goes wrong, but that is where the driver comes in. The driver is part of the maintenance system. That vehicle not only is being inspected by a qualified engineer every 28 to 30 days, but is being inspected by a driver who has been trained to do a walk-around check and then feeds that into the engineer, "There is a panel missing here", or, "There is a light not working at the back". We have that level of inspection.
293. We are monitored by the DVSA and are judged by what is called an Operator Compliance Risk Score (OCRS). Every public transport operator in the United Kingdom (UK) will have an OCRS. The Ministry [Department for Transport] will turn up and do a random check. If you have it wrong and you have not checked your vehicle, you will get what is known as 'PG-9' and that is not good news. We do it and we have to man our garages - and we have women engineers as well - so that they can carry out the level of inspection and servicing that maintains those vehicles.
294. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Are those scores public knowledge?
295. **Operator 2:** Yes.
296. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Each bus company has a score?
297. **Operator 2:** Yes.
298. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Do you know your scores?
299. **Operator 2:** Yes.
300. **Male Speaker:** Yes.
301. **Operator 6:** Yes.
302. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** We will look at that. Thanks.
303. **Operator 2:** It is fair to say that virtually every London operator, if not every London operator, has a 'green' score, which is very good.
304. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Is it a numerical score or --

305. **Operator 6:** There is a numerical score, yes.
306. **Operator 2:** Green, zero-zero, is the best score.
307. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Does anyone have that?
308. **Operator 2:** Yes.
309. **Operator 6:** Yes. Your question was about numbers of engineers.
310. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** Yes, do you have enough? Do you feel that you have enough?
311. **Operator 6:** I am assuming that that was a criticism that came from drivers. It is always a bit of a challenge managing the engineers because they are a skilled group of people, they require a lot of training and, in the outside world, there are lots of opportunities for them to go elsewhere. In some ways, it is always a bit of a challenge.
312. The way we deal with that is probably in two key ways. There are opportunities to get temporary engineering staff in who are skilled at bus engineering and we use that as a safety valve. The long game is apprenticeships. We have an apprenticeship scheme that currently has about 30 apprentices in it that we are bringing through to become the bus engineers of the future. That is something that I think most companies are doing because of what we can see looming, which is not a crisis but is an issue with older engineers leaving the industry.
313. **Operator 7:** It is fair to say that London has suffered from a skilled engineer shortage for a long time. Really, the only way to manage that is through apprenticeship schemes.
314. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** We did hear about how the retrofitting of aftermarket mirrors had been a bit of a problem insofar as you had a factory-fitted mirror that was a certain size, shape, length, etc, and then, because it gets broken, which often does happen, an aftermarket mirror is fitted which may be of different dimensions, length and so on.
315. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Quality.
316. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Then, of course, you have spent the morning driving one kind of bus and then you drive the same bus with a different sized mirror. That can cause judgement challenges.
317. **Operator 3:** We have Mercedes buses - as I know some of the other guys here do - which have very good mirrors, a bit like on a coach. They are electrically adjustable. There just seems to be something. I do not know whether the street furniture is nearer the edge, but we just cannot keep them. They just keep hitting them and

smashing them. They are £800 each and so we tend to put in one that is easy to replace. It is not for want of trying. The visibility is not as good. Of course, the (Overspeaking) screen does not help --

318. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** I do not think that the visibility was the questioning. It was because it is a different dimension. As you sweep in, you --
319. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** It was both.
320. **Caroline Russell AM:** It was both.
321. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Yes, you would miss with one but then, because you had another one that sticks out a bit more, you would break something. They said that trees were a real problem. I have noticed that.
322. **Operator 3:** Yes, and workers. There are a lot of places where there are warnings to keep away, especially in a double-decker, because they are overhanging the road and so you have to keep out.
323. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Yes. They used to be trimmed, though, did they not, those trees?
324. **Operator 3:** Yes, but we are talking about big branches that would not be. There are, especially up in (Overspeaking)
325. **Operator 6:** Trees are an interesting issue and often branches can be trimmed but what you cannot trim is the trunk. There are a number of roads in London.
326. **Operator 5:** The Kings Road is a classic.
327. **Male Speaker:** (Overspeaking)
328. **Operator 5:** Yes, plane trees.
329. **Operator 6:** In central London, the Kings Road is a classic. Two years ago, we had a very serious incident involved a 91 [bus] that had its roof taken off because of the trunk of a tree and its proximity to the road. One of the problems or frustrations, I suppose, that we have as a company is that they often get marked with a sign that says, "Please be aware", and we advise our drivers to be aware, but if you are driving along a roadway, there is an expectation that the route has been approved for a double-decker vehicle and you should be able to get a double-decker vehicle to drive along it.
330. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** (Overspeaking) will not inspect that structure.
331. **Operator 6:** We can --
332. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** See that, yes.

333. **Operator 6:** In the extreme cases, of course, you would say, “Of course you could see that there was an obstacle there that you would hit”, but sometimes it is not so obvious. We are putting perhaps a bit of pressure on drivers to allow for that. One of the things that we ought to be doing is ensuring that at least the roadway that a bus will drive along is sufficiently away from an obstacle to avoid that.
334. **Caroline Russell AM:** One of the other things that came up around the wing mirrors getting whacked off was that they were saying that it can be hard if TfL has allowed lots of parking very close to the bus stops and they have to go in at a much steeper angle. Then there is going to be more overhanging of the pavement and presumably, also, you have more danger and risk of hitting pedestrians on the head.
335. Do you think it would be helpful to get TfL to have standards about how close it allows parking to bus stops so that the bus drivers can go in at a shallower angle and be less likely to overhang the pavement?
336. **Operator 6:** Our preference would be, in an ideal world --
337. **Operator 2:** Cars in London?
338. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes, no cars. I am totally with you on that.
339. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Yes.
340. **Operator 6:** -- actually, for no laybys and that we should just have platforms, in effect, that buses drive up to. There are lots of examples of what used to be called - and I am sure they probably still are - ‘bus borders’ where you drive up to it and you do not have to pull in on an angle for the --
341. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** The bendy buses (Overspeaking)
342. **Caroline Russell AM:** The traffic just waits behind you?
343. **Operator 6:** Indeed.
344. **Operator 6:** The consequence of that with congestion is that it would probably deteriorate. But for a lot of what TfL does, however, it is not in control of the whole road space and the parking restrictions will be probably the responsibility of a borough, in most instances, rather than TfL.
345. **Caroline Russell AM:** As it is on a red route, it would be TfL and so I am just --
346. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Yes.
347. **Operator 6:** On red routes - and I am not sure if this is true - you could argue that you are probably more likely to see bus borders and fewer laybys.

348. **Operator 5:** And less close parking to stops anyway.
349. **Operator 2:** The interesting thing is almost this dichotomy between what damage that mirror can do and genuinely why we are going for bigger mirrors, which have more than one purpose or will have more than one view on them. It is to reduce blind spots --
350. **Operator 5:** Yes, for cyclists.
351. **Operator 2:** -- because, if we cannot reduce the blind spots, then we are driving blind, literally, and we cannot see all of the risks that are coming up either our insides or our off-sides. In some respects, we are going the other way from fitting cheaper, smaller mirrors. We are fitting larger mirrors to eradicate the blind spots.
352. **Caroline Russell AM:** You also have the risk of hitting pedestrians (Overspeaking)
353. **Operator 2:** Absolutely. If you can give us better access into bus stops, it would help.
354. **Caroline Russell AM:** That would help with that risk? Yes.
355. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** OK. David, you are next. Thank you.
356. **David Kurten AM:** Yes, fine. Sticking on the theme of safety with roads and thinking about the routes that you operate, are there any particular stretches of road that you think are less safe than others?
357. **Operator 3:** Yes, absolutely. Can I bang the drum about hail-and-ride? We operate all of the hail-and-ride routes in ██████ which is probably the epicentre of hail-and-ride, which ██████ Council loves. You can have this presentation that we did for ██████ Council, but you can see there the sort of thing. We were trying to use ramps between parked cars and the result is that people fall over. This is the sort of tight road that we are on.
358. One of the other problems is that when you have a two-way road, the bus has nowhere to go to get two buses past each other or a car for a matter. In some ways, bus stops provide a refuge for pulling in for cars because there are so many cars now, particularly at night.
359. Hail-and-ride just does not have a place in a modern transport network for disability, for safety, for ease of use, for casual users, for timing. It is a complete anachronism.
360. **Male Speaker:** I quite like it.
361. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Yes.
362. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** My wife caught the bus yesterday because it was hail-and-ride. She would have missed it if she had had to go to a bus stop.

363. **Operator 3:** That is the point. You do not really know what time it is going to come because it is in a zone where it could come at any time.
364. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** I thought they were phasing out a few years ago.
365. **Operator 3:** [REDACTED] [Council] wants to put more in.
366. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Some were phased out.
367. **Operator 3:** Yes.
368. **Operator 2:** A lot were taken out.
369. **Operator 3:** Yes. TfL is very much about not having hail-and-ride, but it wants to work with the borough councils. That would be something you could put some pressure on about. I have been trying for some years. It is funny that when you talk to user groups and you explain that you would know exactly what time the bus was going to come and where it was going to be, they say, "That would be better because at the moment I have to go out for ten minutes in the cold because I do not really know when it is going to come". Then you get people who stand at their front door and expect the bus driver to know.
370. The other thing from a safety point of view is not so much the people waiting at the side of the road because you might stop, literally, every 100 yards and you have a much larger bus - when we started this hail-and-ride, it was what we called a 'bread van', which was 7.3 metres with one door; then they had two doors and now they have ramps - but also when they ring the bell and the driver is driving and does not know where they want to stop. Does the driver do an emergency stop, pull up safely or pull in and inadvertently take out a cyclist? That is the reality. Some of these roads are quite wide as well. They are not just very narrow roads.
371. **Operator 5:** Speaking perhaps more generically for the other part of the network, we specifically identified an issue with Oxford Street, where we have had a number of high-profile accidents, including a fatality. We have produced a video for our own staff on Oxford Street in particular, but it is also applicable to any very busy shopping centre because people act very irrationally. We even have these people who walk out into the road and do not look and have their headphones on. Foreign tourists in particular on Oxford Street are a major issue and cyclists, I have to say. There is a lot said about how bus drivers need to be educated more about cyclists; there is a huge amount of education that needs to be done the other way because cyclists put themselves in danger and do not realise it. That is something we have specifically picked up because we have a disproportionately large number of central London trunk routes and so it is something specific from that.
372. **Operator 7:** The issue with the single-deck routes that I operate around east and southeast London, because they tend to be off the main roads and go around the side roads and as the vehicles have got larger with technology and we have added ramps to them and this sort of thing, is the manoeuvrability of those vehicles around

some of those roads. With the parking, with the speed restrictions that are on the road anyway with the speed humps and things like that, there are some routes that are becoming very difficult to operate, with the difficulty then that you reduce the safety of them as well. Some of the vehicle types we are really struggling to operate --

373. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Why are you using bigger vehicles, then? It is probably a stupid question.
374. **Operator 7:** TfL specifies --
375. **Operator 5:** TfL specifies, yes.
376. **Operator 7:** -- the vehicle type, capacity and length within the contract.
377. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Do you flag these issues, though, and say, "484 or whatever route, it is just not working anymore"?
378. **Operator 2:** Before it is approved, there will be a route test that TfL and we will do but, as [REDACTED] has indicated, we all have these routes. In fairness to TfL, when it is about 95% of London's population living within 400 metres of a bus stop, you have to go into some places where buses are quite difficult. [REDACTED] picture there is fairly common in that when you have two buses facing each other, it is difficult enough, but if the refuse collection is happening that day, you will be stuck behind that for almost all the journey. If there is parking on both sides of the road, that has to change because they open the doors and away we go.
379. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** They have just rerouted the 108 all down back streets. It is ridiculous. It is absolutely mad.
380. **Operator 2:** Yes, and it makes it less reliable.
381. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Yes, totally.
382. **Operator 2:** That is one of my routes.
383. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Is it?
384. **Caroline Russell AM:** Parking is an issue just in terms of space on roads?
385. **Operator 2:** Yes.
386. **Operator 5:** It is (Overspeaking) problem in modern society. People have two or three cars and they park everywhere, do they not?
387. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** (Overspeaking), yes.

388. **Caroline Russell AM:** Maybe with the Ultra Low Emission Zone, people will start getting rid of them.
389. **Operator 5:** Yes, possibly.
390. **Caroline Russell AM:** Buses will be more efficient.
391. **Operator 2:** Interestingly, vans are more of an issue because they are slightly wider. Whereas you might have got through, people park work vans and you just cannot get through.
392. **Male Speaker:** A very good point.
393. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** David?
394. **David Kurten AM:** I was just thinking about specific areas. Those are great general things that we need to think about, but you mentioned Oxford Street as a whole long street. Do any of you know any specific collision hotspots that really need to be looked at in terms of improving safety?
395. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** The whole of central London.
396. **Operator 2:** That is too wide a question. Generally, what all of us will be doing is mapping. Every time we have an incident, we map it, whether it is on Google Maps or on our own different versions of that, which will tell us. We have a risk assessment for every route that we have to do as part of the contract.
397. Weirdly, sometimes the bit that is most difficult to drive is not where the incident happens. Generally, it is when you are changing lanes and roundabouts are an issue because you have conflict.
398. We will build up a picture of that as the route develops and traffic conditions change. Just on my routes, we could probably sit down for two days and go through everything. Where is that hazard? Is there a school there? Is there a business that has a lot of employees coming at a certain time? What will change traffic flows, etc?
399. **David Kurten AM:** OK. Finally on safety, do you think that the new cycling infrastructure and Cycle Superhighways have had any impact on safety or passengers' ability to access buses and bus stops?
400. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Floating bus stops?
401. **David Kurten AM:** Yes, floating bus stops is a thing, too.
402. **Operator 6:** Stratford (Overspeaking)
403. **David Kurten AM:** Pedestrians have to cross a cycle lane to get to a bus stop. Yes, that is --



404. **Operator 2:** I am sure all of you guys have been to Palestra.
405. **Caroline Russell AM:** Yes.
406. **David Kurten AM:** Yes.
407. **Operator 2:** Even that one is an accident waiting to happen. You come out of Southwark Tube Station and you do not know which way to look because there are cyclists going both ways on that bit.
408. **Operator 6:** That is if you know. If you are new to the area and you come across that, it is something that is quite complex.
409. **David Kurten AM:** We have had some Cycle Superhighways that have been built already but there are going to be some more built, especially Cycle Superhighway 11 going up to Swiss Cottage. What would you like to see with that?
410. **Operator 1:** It not being built, I would say, and if it is built, make it retractable.
411. **Operator 5:** Retractable, yes.
412. **Operator 1:** Fixed infrastructure on a Cycle Superhighway is a waste of time because it is a peak issue. It is like the Tour de France between 7.30am and 9.30am. The rest of the time it is generally empty and we are wasting road space. Make it retractable.
413. **David Kurten AM:** Can you explain what you mean by 'retractable'?
414. **Operator 1:** It either sinks into the ground or becomes another part of the road we can use. My solution to Blackfriars is that you make that a peak direction flow, whichever way you want, north or south, and the rest of the time a bus then can use it because Blackfriars Road is stationary.
415. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** That is very good.
416. **David Kurten AM:** Yes, that is a very (Overspeaking) idea.
417. **Caroline Russell AM:** The problem is that at Blackfriars, though, as someone who does ride a bike to City Hall every day, I grit my teeth as I go over the pothole that I know is coming up ahead of me when I know there is a bus behind me. I usually have to try now to slow down so that I am not by the pothole when the bus goes past me. Actually, having the people on bikes physically separate from the buses --
418. **Operator 2:** Is a good thing.
419. **Caroline Russell AM:** -- is a useful and a helpful thing. With what is happening with air pollution, we are trying to get more people to ditch their cars and not be polluting the air in the first place and, actually, we need to have more people using their bikes.

In that case, if there is more people on bikes on the road, do you think that your drivers are happier to have them in a separate space where they are protected or to for them to be mixing with bus drivers?

420. **Operator 1:** I am sure that the drivers are happier for them to be in their own space because the worst thing that we face is travelling at the speed of a bike in a bus lane that is shared, I would say. That must be so frustrating for the drivers.
421. **Operator 5:** Yes. A lot of cyclists do not use the Cycle Superhighways, do they?
422. **Operator 3:** No. If it was compulsory to use them, then that would be different.
423. **Caroline Russell AM:** Most people would if they were continuous and there.
424. **Operator 3:** Yes, but a lot of it is about how they cannot go fast enough on the Cycle Superhighways --
425. **Operator 5:** They are too professional for that.
426. **Operator 6:** It probably comes down to the fact --
427. **Caroline Russell AM:** There are an awful lot of ordinary people like me who ride a bike just to get to work or to get somewhere and who are very grateful to be protected.
428. **Operator 5:** We understand that, obviously, walking and cycling has a huge future and is part of London's strategic plan for transport and TfL factors it into future plans. We know that. All we are arguing is that it is a disproportionate use of a very constrained road space and the real losers are the bus passengers, who do not have a very big voice for whatever reason. The cyclists do and are very vociferous and do very well for themselves, but hundreds of thousands of bus passengers are the unspoken majority and have been really badly disadvantaged by what is going on. Now they are walking and they will not get back on the buses.
429. **Operator 1:** That is why patronage is falling.
430. **Operator 5:** They will not get back on them.
431. **Caroline Russell AM:** They are also using Uber.
432. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Our congestion report you may not have looked at, but with some of the things in that, we were talking about deliveries, about private hire and looking at not just how we have lost infrastructure - and this Mayor has a vision for walking and cycling as well - but how we can get those vehicles off the road and how we can tackle people using their private cars around central London when they really do not need to. That is --
433. **Caroline Russell AM:** It is ridiculous.

434. **Operator 5:** Yes, but it is the journey time, is it not? At the moment, it takes so long when you get on a bus that, if you have an alternative, which is to walk, you will. The big gamble is whether they will ever come back again. The evidence at the moment is that they will not.
435. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** One of the routes I use I can walk more quickly than the bus.
436. **Operator 5:** Yes.
437. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** If I am really late, I will walk because it is quicker than waiting (Overspeaking)
438. **Operator 7:** If we are going to reverse the decline in bus patronage that has come about over the past three years - and that cannot be coincidental to the amount of disruption that is taking place on the network - we have to make the buses quicker.
439. **Operator 5:** Quicker, yes.
440. **Operator 7:** We have to spend them up so that the passenger gets a good end-to-end journey time.
441. **Operator 2:** A bus needs to be going as fast as a cyclist is going.
442. **Operator 7:** It is not about taking space off the cyclists. Our argument is you need to give buses the space they need to carry the people we do. People tend to forget that buses carry more public transport users than any other mode in London.
443. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Eighty-nine is the usual capacity of a bus, is it not? If you had 89 cyclists on the road, how much road space would that take up compared to a bus? That is what people forget.
444. **Operator 2:** A bus is generally 10 to 11 metres long and would have 80 to 90 people on. That same space would accommodate 12 cyclists. It would also only accommodate three cars, generally with one person in. We are the most efficient user of space, if you give it to us.
445. **Caroline Russell AM:** We should get TfL prioritising according to efficiency.
446. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Let us look at incidents and reporting. Keith, you will do the next couple of sections.
447. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** We are running a bit late on time. It is a really interesting session, though. I want to try to rattle through this bit.
448. What do you think of the processes in place for handling reporting incidents? Do you think the process of logging into CentreComm should be improved?

449. **Operator 2:** The problem with CentreComm is a capacity issue, the capacity of the network to take the volume of calls that is needed. We have all experienced this, at the time you need CentreComm is when there are huge levels of disruption over the network. That is when the reliability of the communication channels is at its worst. When bus drivers need to get hold of CentreComm and when there are big problems on the road, due to the amount of airflow traffic, it is the hardest time. I know TfL is looking at a replacement for the radio system. That is one of the priorities it should have.
450. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Do you have processes in place for learning from incidents and sharing knowledge within your companies? Do you share across industry as well?
451. **Operator 1:** We do via TfL when it needs reporting systems and so we all get feedback on everybody's needs.
452. **Operator 5:** And the Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System (CIRAS).
453. **Operator 1:** We also do through the safety bus operators' forum as well.
454. **Operator 7:** From my perspective, that is an area we could get better at. We could get better at learning lessons from each other's incidents. Safety should not be a competitive advantage. Yes, it happens now but it does not happen enough or to the level we need certainly with the increase in the number of incidents taking place.
455. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** How do you encourage your drivers to report near-misses?
456. **Operator 1:** Very difficult. It is hard enough to get them to report (Overspeaking). We do have a good level of reporting, but going to near-miss is a utopian view, in reality.
457. **Operator 6:** I would love to get more drivers to tell us about the collision they avoided. With the best will in the world you will not get them to tell you that. You might get them to tell you about a slip that did not result in an injury on our premises. We get more of that. In terms of going out on the road we get some feedback about features but it is very limited.
458. **Operator 3:** We have trialled an awful lot of kit on vehicles such as cycle detection. There is almost too much going on as you are going around the streets of London with pedestrians and the whole dynamic of it that it is almost going off all the time. All of them are near-misses.
459. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Have you thought of fitting those things they have on lorries now where they say, "Vehicle turning left", or, "Vehicle turning right", so that if there is a cyclist on the inside they know what is about to happen to them?

460. **Operator 3:** There is a danger that people get used to hearing that noise. The other thing we have trialled is a helicopter view that looks down on the bus and the people around. We still have a bus with it but what we found is they have a reversing camera, closed-circuit television (CCTV) and are looking in the mirrors and it is just too much to look at that as well. It is useful in close manoeuvring but not really in the street. It is very accurate.
461. **Caroline Russell AM:** There was some research recently that was looking into lorry drivers and all their different technological kit. The conclusion was that the very best was direct vision, being able to see clearly with your mirrors and having decent vision out of your cab so you could see what was around you because you react more quickly to that than reacting to CCTV relay.
462. **Operator 6:** What is different with a bus to a lorry is that what you can see around your bus, with the windows on either side, is a lot more than you could ever see out of a lorry. Some of those features on lorries may not be as effective or as necessary on a bus.
463. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** One of the issues that more than one driver raised around reporting, especially reporting near-misses, was if they report the near-miss, you look at the CCTV, analyse that and often find they have done something that is not right during the course of the bus journey not related to the incident and they get into trouble for that. They might have looked down at their phone or answered the radio when they should not have done. The reason they do not tend to report near-misses is because --
464. **Operator 5:** They are at fault. They have done something else wrong.
465. **Operator 4:** We introduced Route Champions to try to take that pressure away and so that a driver can talk to another driver about an incident. They collect that data anonymously so that it can be passed back to us. That is one way of trying to get around that.
466. **Operator 5:** It is the only way, really.
467. **Operator 4:** We would not overlook someone using their phone, absolutely.
468. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Absolutely. It is six points on your licence now, is it?
469. **Operator 5:** A bus driver can be dismissed immediately for gross misconduct for using a phone.
470. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** I have a picture of a driver using a phone. Have you received any reports from CIRAS? What changes have you made as a result of those reports?

471. **Operator 1:** We have had very few. Some of them are very local. Out of the handful we have had, we have had two or three that have been very local and should have been resolved at a depot level. We have had one generic one about fatigue and drivers' hours. In an overall sense not much that would change the way we do our business.
472. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Do you promote CIRAS?
473. **Operator 2:** You have to remember CIRAS is designed to be a safety net, a catch-all. The driver is expected to have gone through the company's own internal processes of reporting the problem. Only if those have failed to resolve it should they get to CIRAS. Our experience is we have had four reports now. Two of them had not been raised through the company's procedures at all. Something is confusing the drivers.
474. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Some of the drivers think it is just a confidential reporting process. They are saying, "It does not work". When CIRAS report it to you, they have (Overspeaking)
475. **Male Speaker:** No, we certainly do not who it is. That should not be a concern. In some ways it is quite frustrating because you want to go back to ask (Overspeaking)
476. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Can I develop that point very quickly? As you say, the real process is they report the incident to you through the company. If that fails they then go to CIRAS. If it comes back to you then surely you must know --
477. **Operator 2:** It is not just if they have exhausted the process. If they do not feel comfortable reporting it through our process we have a whistleblowing policy as well. We have normal report, whistleblowing and now we have CIRAS. I do not mind which channel they go through. It is anonymous with CIRAS.
478. **Operator 6:** One of the frustrations is some of that anonymity makes our responses less useful. We knew about garage but we did not know about the specifics so we ended up doing a very generic drivers' hours type of response. If we had known the specific pattern we were supposed to be resolving we could have gone back and said, "That is a problem", or, "That is not an issue for these reason". It can be a bit frustrating getting those very general anonymous --
479. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Is there any way you could make it easier for drivers to report health and safety concerns?
480. **Operator 6:** In terms of opportunities, today any driver who wants to raise something at least semi-anonymously, or something where they do not want to raise their head above the parapet, would go through their trade union. We would meet and address those issues. If we did not we would fall foul of all sorts of issues dealing with that relationship we have with our trade union. There is a very rigorous way of people reporting it today. CIRAS is a good safety net but there is something that works.

481. **Caroline Russell AM:** In terms of learning from incidents, what kind of contact do you have with victims and with victims' families, both with families of people who are killed and with people who are very seriously injured and who may be in hospital for months? How do you learn through your contact with victims? What kind of contact do you have on an ongoing basis with victims of crashes? For instance, do you know the names of all the people who have been killed or seriously injured by each of your companies? Are you in contact with those?
482. **Operator 2:** That is a really difficult one from a purely commercial point of view. As well as bus companies we have also turned into insurance companies. Most of us are self-insured up to a limit and generally that lower limit is about £250,000 for some of the companies that will go up to £1 million. In effect we are insuring ourselves. Over that limit we are also then insured by insurance companies who are insurers for those really big losses.
483. If it is a serious incident with a number of fatalities or catastrophic injuries that ensure you are having to support them for the rest of their life generally you are going into that area of insurance that is insured by other people. They are very nervous about liability. What you have to do is establish liability as quickly as you can in order to decide whether you are defending it or whether you are trying to mitigate your insurance exposure.
484. **Caroline Russell AM:** That is a real tension, is it not? Having heard from Sarah Hope [Victim Support Consultant, TfL, and Founder, Sarah Hope Line and Elizabeth's Legacy of Hope], knowing people who have been severely injured and also seeing Thames Water dealing with customers who have been victims of the catastrophic flood just before Christmas - and, again, this insurance issue is an issue with that as well - it clearly makes it very difficult to have a human relationship.
485. **Operator 2:** Absolutely, yes. The challenge is that if you even send a bunch of flowers, they then get legal advice. You are on dodgy ground because you are trying to influence that (Overspeaking)
486. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** The things you would want to do as human beings you cannot.
487. **Operator 2:** Absolutely. It can sometimes be misconstrued and used against you.
488. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Surely you must instruct your drivers not to accept liability?
489. **Caroline Russell AM:** It goes beyond the moment when the driver is there, Keith. This is about the aftermath. The bus companies get a pretty bad name for not being very human to the families of the people who are killed and injured. It seems if that relationship could be built - particularly with someone who has been seriously injured where one might be able to learn from the incident afterwards - and there was some way of enabling some kind of human interaction that that might be helpful all around.

490. **Operator 6:** It seriously could be helpful. In terms of Sarah Hope that was an injury to her, her daughter and her mother was killed. It involved one of our buses. You have hit the nail on the head in terms of that tension. We have a commercial interest in terms of our insurers but absolutely, every time we hit somebody there is a person involved. I met Sarah probably five years after the incident. To hear the harrowing experience she and her family had was devastating. What I have learnt from it is that I would love to deal with the humans that we interact with in that way. It is an appalling state to be in that we cannot do more but we do have that tension.
491. We have been involved in doing things, as John said, that we should not be doing; sending flowers and trying to meet people we have hit. Sometimes it has gone quite well. We have held back on that more recently because we were criticised by one person for trying to get in contact to find out who they were. You get criticised for that and for not being in contact at all. For that reason the TfL Sarah Hope Line was a useful and interesting thing to introduce. I do not think it is a panacea and I do not think it necessarily avoids that insurance issue that there is a risk that we may suffer commercially and therefore TfL suffers because of the cost of running busses.
492. **Caroline Russell AM:** Is there anything that could be done to separate out that insurance and liability issue?
493. **Operator 1:** It is very difficult.
494. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** The Croydon tram crash TfL has gone in.
495. **Operator 2:** It has accepted liability fairly publicly.
496. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** It had to. It has gone in and done stuff for the families; the Mayor has rung them. I thought, "Wow, that is very unusual".
497. **Operator 2:** That is an interesting case. Almost the parallel to that is Merlin which runs Alton Towers. Alton Towers was the one with the incident where the person lost their legs. The chief executive officer (CEO), almost the day after the incident happened, apologised and accepted liability. The repercussions almost come two to three years down the track after that when you end up in court. You become a little bit cynical about accident claims companies and third party solicitors who want to take the skin off your back. Everything you did to try to make it better --
498. **Caroline Russell AM:** Is then thrown against you.
499. **Operator 2:** "You were just trying to get out of paying any money."
500. **Caroline Russell AM:** The tension of insurance is something that needs to be looked.
501. **Operator 9:** It is also fair to say that when there is a serious incident sometimes it is impossible for us, as bus operators, to find out who was injured and to get any update. Hospitals will not always give us that information. Sometimes they will and



sometimes they will not. It is case by case. You have insurers on one hand asking you what the situation is with the injured party, you want to know because we are all humans, and you have the bus driver who is asking how the person they were in an accident with is. It is a very, very difficult situation.

502. **Operator 5:** What TfL has done, laudable though it is, is that it now has police officers handing out calling cards to people. I am keeping away from buses. This could be an incident on the Tube. Somebody may jump under a train. The police turn up and are handing out cards to people that may be traumatised by this. There is a whole industry there. If they go and ring up a solicitor, before you know it, "Take three months off work with post-traumatic stress disorder, you are in the money". It is all done for very innocent reasons and for very laudable reasons but at the end of the day, unfortunately the way the system works, somebody has to make some money out of it.
503. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Just a point there about traumatisation, we heard one of the bus drivers say that different companies have different policies on trauma. He gave the example of where there were two buses and one bus runs someone over. He saw it, was traumatised by it and was given X number of days off to recover and so on. The driver involved in the incident worked for another bus company and within a day or so he was back driving a bus. Do you have any policies around (Overspeaking)
504. **Operator 1:** We all have our own policies, I am sure, as individual employers.
505. **Operator 5:** Each and every case is dealt with on its own merits.
506. **Operator 8:** From our perspective it was really dependent on the driver. It is driver-led. I do not think many of us would throw the driver back out on the road after there has been a fatality on the previous day. You would talk to them. People are different. Some people say, "Yes, that is not a problem". Others say, "No, we have one that has been off for six months".
507. **Operator 7:** In general it is better to encourage the drivers to get back to work as soon as they can, otherwise once they get past a certain point it becomes very, very long-term that is not good for their state of mind.
508. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** The final section we have is looking at incentives. Does TfL put unrealistic pressure on operators to meet time targets?
509. **Operator 1:** In all honesty, it is not TfL putting pressure on the operators. It is the financial mechanisms under which we are rewarded that drive behaviour.
510. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Would safety bonuses help shift the focus away from the time targets?
511. **Operator 1:** I personally do not think you should incentivise safety financially. You end up with perverse consequences. You end up with people not reporting things.

We were talking about encouraging people to report things. The perverse impact of incentivising financially would be that companies would be less inclined to want to know all the near-misses.

512. At the end of the day TfL does have the ultimate sanction against any bus company that has a poor safety record. It does not have to award it any more tenders. That is its choice at the end of the day. It has the right to do that under the contracting regime. That acts as an incentive to us to ensure we are as safe as possible because without that we do not have a business.
513. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** You have quality incentive contracts. You get a bonus through that. Is that critical for the profits you make as companies.
514. **Operator 7:** Yes, absolutely.
515. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** There is that incentive there to meet the time targets, to do the mileage or whatever because that is how you are going to make profits.
516. **Operator 7:** Yes.
517. **Operator 8:** We must not forget it is a measure of service to the customers and that is why it is there. Whilst it is easy to poo-poo it and say, "We will get rid of this and take the time pressure off", it is probable that the quality of service currently enjoyed by the travelling public would reduce, as it is reducing now due to congestion.
518. **Operator 1:** A few of us have been in the business for a very long time. The quality was horrible prior to that mechanism coming in for many reasons. There has been a lot of investment from both TfL and the operating companies. It has produced a better service.
519. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Do you think it should be slightly adjusted?
520. **Operator 1:** There is a debate now about whether or not the current way of doing it has passed its sell-by date.
521. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Yes, particularly the current conditions.
522. **Operator 1:** You can have a good service to the public, as measured by TfL's measures, in a situation where you are losing bus passengers because the services are not attractive to them. All you have done is slow the schedules down to the point where you can hit these targets but they are not very attractive to people because they can walk faster. What you want to look at is incentivising the overall journey time. That means involving the people who control the road network a lot more as well because we cannot do that on our own.
523. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Are there any other points anyone wanted to raise with us?

524. **Operator 1:** Technology was raised at the previous Committee, if I could make a pitch for the one thing that would fundamentally change the bus driver's life, which is automatic emergency braking. Not automatic emergency braking in the context of braking as a last resort when you slam on the anchors and the bus stands on its nose, but proximity braking that prevents you having that close attention. It is pretty much available in all other vehicle markets. It is very late coming to buses. Buses are a very small market place and so it is quite difficult for the manufacturers to do these things unilaterally. TfL is trying to do it through its Bus Safety Standard. For me, it cannot come quick enough. We try to promote a defensive driving strategy of keeping a three-second gap between you and the bus in front. This system would automate that. That would take it out of the driver's hands. They do not have to worry about alarms and all the rest of it. In theory the bus does it itself.
525. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** You want it to be a regulation because otherwise it would cost you too much to do it and the other guys (Overspeaking)
526. **Operator 1:** As an individual company there is no way we could pressurise any single manufacturer or pay for it to be done on our vehicles alone. Even for the size of John's company, it would be seriously difficult. It is mandated by TfL and therefore pressurising the marketplace is very different.
527. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** You would not be looking into retrofitting of that?
528. **Operator 1:** Retrofitting would be the real prize. I have spoken to a Japanese company about doing that. That would be the absolute panacea for me. If we introduce it on new vehicles it is going to take us - however many years - ten or 12 years. If you can retrofit something, outstanding.
529. **Operator 5:** I would say that anything to support that, anything that stops the near-side proximity incidents with cyclists, such as a rear camera facing forward that automatically alerts the driver or, better still, brakes the bus, any life saved through that method would be --
530. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** It would need to be a TfL standard so that it has to apply to every company. Otherwise, it might not be (Overspeaking)
531. **Operator 1:** It is in their Bus Safety Standard but, as I said, it is a pitch from me to move the industry on. Before I retire it will not happen, I am sure but, as a legacy for the future, it would be outstanding.
532. **Operator 6:** One area we have not talked about so much is passengers. Without wanting to keep the debate going too long there is something about educating passengers and balancing out the customer service we provide for them - and that TfL demands through things like Hello London - and what we expect passengers to do in terms of using handrails. We recently had almost an epidemic of people falling downstairs in trying to get to the bottom of that. There were a number of reasons.

533. **Keith Prince AM (Deputy Chairman):** Quite (Overspeaking), actually!
534. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** Keith, come on.
535. **Caroline Russell AM:** Keith, I thought you had got through the whole meeting without a dad joke!
536. **Operator 6:** That would be something where we want to encourage people who have ability needs or otherwise and for the seats to be made available by people who are able to give them the seats, and for people to take the initial seats rather than walking down.
537. I do not know if this came out from the drivers but they are under a lot of pressure to make assessments of the needs of passengers. People sometimes look more spritely than they are. When they walk past seats that are designated for people who could benefit from being close to the entrances and choose not to take them, and the driver heads off, there is an expectation it is safe to do so. That sort of education would be really helpful.
538. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** This came up at a question-and-answer session I had with a group of residents three weeks ago, about luggage space being taken up by *Metro* newspaper stands. My understanding that is done by you as individual operators. There were a lot of concerns that people are then using that space and putting their luggage in the wheelchair space. One lady talked about where an argument broke out on the buses.
539. **Operator 2:** (Overspeaking) TfL did a fairly intensive survey. It came back very supportive of the process. The reality of someone putting their luggage in that space is that generally, from a security point of view, most people keep it with them.
540. **Florence Eshalomi AM:** There was a small suitcase and loads of shopping (Overspeaking)
541. **Operator 2:** We have had positive feedback. I was coming in on a bus that goes past my office - run by someone else whom I will not mention - but there were complaints to the driver, "Where is my newspaper?"
542. **Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair):** If there is anything else you think of afterwards, particularly if it is a safety thing - as we have just heard from [REDACTED] about the braking - and you think, "I should have mentioned that", drop us an email via Georgie [Wells] in our team so that we can have that in.
543. Thank you for your time this morning. We really appreciate it. The whole discussion we are having is really helpful. We will be putting forward some suggestions to TfL on this whole area. Thank you so much for your time.