
Draft Business Plan 2025/26

Agenda item: LTW766

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Introduction

As is normal at this time, the London Assembly Transport Committee has asked us to present our proposed work programme for the next business year, which we are due to do on 10th December. Our intention is to adopt broadly the same document structure as the one we used for the draft business plan last time and which the Committee endorsed (a copy of which is provided in this Board's meeting pack).

This paper sets out the elements we propose to include in the draft business plan sections covering year-to-date achievements, proposed priorities for 2025/26 and budget for the coming year. It seeks to reflect the steer from the September Board discussion, feedback from our recent team awayday and, where they have happened, from the follow-up conversations with members since then.

In considering the shape of the plan, there are two challenges to address. First, we must be more realistic about what we can deliver. This year's plan under-estimated the level of resource for business-as-usual activity (for example, the campaign and advocacy team responded to some 30 substantive consultations in 2024/25). The resulting over-optimism about our capacity to do proactive work was compounded in some cases by the length of time then taken to agree the content to be delivered. Second, for each priority and for the organisation as a whole, there is more work to do on in-year success factors. Initial Board member views would be welcome, but realistically the proposal which goes to the Transport Committee will need to highlight this aspect as work in progress.

There is a tight timescale in which to finalise the draft business plan in the light of next week's Board meeting: this is set out at the end of this paper. Once the Committee gives its approval, the London TravelWatch team will prepare a more detailed work plan and budget for the Board to approve in time for the start of the business year next April.

Year-to-date achievements to include in draft business plan

By the time we submit our proposal to the Committee, we will be able to report the following:

- Publication of our report on buses, highlighting five areas of recommendation to improve the attractiveness of bus services and calling on TfL to set out in detail by next summer how it plans to take these recommendations forward;
- Commitment by Network Rail and the Secretary of State to a five-point action plan to improve the customer experience at London Euston, following our statement about the problems of over-crowding at the station;
- The outcome of our personal security summit being hosted jointly with TfL on 22nd November, highlighting the need for operators to continue addressing the issues highlighted in our recent reports on this topic;
- Key statistics on our year-to date handling of London TravelWatch appeals (last year's draft business plan covered the period to 31st October) and a summary of the actions completed to improve our processes and customer survey;
- Our support for the work of the London Assembly on transport – the submission to the Transport Committee's inquiry into accessibility, our participation in the Transport Committee and Budget and Performance Committee's reviews of the Mayor's Transport Strategy and TfL's budget respectively;
- Completion of the fieldwork for our digital exclusion mystery shopping on the public transport network, prior to analysis by our research agency and publication planned for December;
- Our ongoing engagement with transport service providers on a range of issues which have arisen during the period, such as TfL's handling of the impact on customers of the September cyber attack;
- Our intention before the end of the business year to commission research into value for money, with a focus on those on lower incomes; to survey Londoners on their priorities for transport; and to hold workshops with relevant stakeholders on connectivity of the public transport network and on TfL's approach to increasing the levels of trust in which it is held by Londoners.

Suggested priorities and deliverables for 2025/26

Following the Board discussion in September and team awayday in November, we propose taking the following approach for our business plan priorities for next year:

- The priorities in the current plan remain the right ones for London TravelWatch and set our agenda for the next three years, subject to review during the annual business planning process;
- Between them, our priorities aim to hold service providers to account in making London's public transport services more attractive to use and so contribute to wider goals, such as improved quality of life and tackling climate change;
- Next year's business plan needs to be more realistic in terms of what we can achieve in-year, when balancing the resources available for new proactive work in each area and the ability to respond to key transport developments on the one hand, with those needed to service business-as-usual activity on the other;
- Among other things, that means retaining seven of our current priority themes and seeing the eighth one (improved London TravelWatch insight) as integral, rather than separate, to all the others. We will work on the basis that we will carry out no more than 2-3 significant pieces of new research in total in the year;
- For each priority, we will identify what success might look like in-year, set in the context of the higher-level outcomes we are looking to influence for the better over the medium term through our activity.

Priority 1: More seamless journeys

We are currently doing further work to identify the most significant issues regarding connectivity to and from the public transport system by other modes, such as walking and wheeling. This in turn will help us establish where activity by London TravelWatch can best add value in 2025/26, whether through commissioning new research or through engagement with transport service providers. Potential themes might be the approach to connecting major new housing developments, looking at the particular issues regarding public transport connectivity in outer London, or improving the quality of interchange at specific public transport hubs.

In-year success: TBC

Medium-term outcome: Better first/last mile travel experience (eg TfL PTAL scores).

Priority 2: More accessible transport

By March 2025, we will review the latest update on progress with TfL's *Equity in Motion* programme, together with any recommendations from the recent London Assembly Transport Committee inquiry into accessibility and inclusion, to identify where we can best add value in 2025/26. This will sit alongside our current engagement with the rail industry on its proposals for Welcome Points and what happens next after its accessibility audit of rail stations.

In-year success: TBC

Medium-term outcome: Higher levels of disabled passenger satisfaction (eg TfL survey score, TfL tracker on extra trip time for disabled passengers, ORR Passenger Assist survey scores).

Priority 3: Greater TfL ambition in building trust

We plan to build on the productive engagement we have had so far this year with TfL about the level of ambition it has to improve the perception among the travelling public that TfL cares for its customers. We are currently doing more work on this topic which should help us identify what we do next in 2025/26. This could involve taking an element of TfL's customer strategy (one of five internal strategy priorities in its business plan) and ensuring that it is working for Londoners.

In-year success: TBC

Medium-term outcome: Higher levels of Londoner trust in TfL (eg TfL customer care survey scores).

Priority 4: Better transport services

We will follow up and promote adoption of the recommendations in our 2024 bus report, for example, through engagement with TfL, and we will engage where necessary with the Government's plans for national rail reform where they have particular significance for London.

We are considering activity in 2025/26 which highlights the need for contingency measures on those parts of the public transport network in London where service quality is at risk pending major renewal or replacement investment (eg the Bakerloo line). In addition, a report setting out what a more strategic approach to fares in London might look like (building on comments to the Transport Committee inquiry

into the Mayor's Transport Strategy) could be one of our pieces of new research for 2025/26.

In-year success: TBC

Medium-term outcome: Higher levels of passenger satisfaction with services (eg TfL quarterly satisfaction scores, Transport Focus Rail User Survey scores, TfL service performance statistics, National Rail performance statistics).

Priority 5: Further action on inclusion

During 2025/26, we will monitor and promote progress against the recommendations in our reports on personal security and digital exclusion from the last couple of years as part of our regular engagement with service providers. Through this, we will draw attention to any individual significant weaknesses of approach and review the case for a more concerted programme of activity for the following business year.

We are also considering commissioning new research in what would become our third report on personal security. We believe that a particular focus on how transport service providers are dealing with hate crime linked to race, ethnicity and faith would be topical. Alternatively, new research into meeting the transport needs of an ageing population would be highly relevant to the inclusion agenda, given London's demography, although this could be something to defer to the following year.

In-year success: TBC

Medium-term outcome: Improved public sentiment (eg relevant metrics from TfL *Equity in Motion* programme, future London TravelWatch survey scores).

Priority 6: Closer working with the Transport Committee

We will continue our regular engagement with political leads and officers in support of the Committee's work, as well as submitting evidence to and taking part in Committee inquiries where we can add value. We will plan on the basis of resourcing one significant piece of research during the business year in support of the Transport Committee's work. We will also support, where asked and where relevant, the wider scrutiny work of the London Assembly, for example, in contributing to the Budget and Performance Committee's annual review of the GLA Group budget as it relates to TfL.

In-year success: TBC

Medium-term outcome: Higher Assembly Member satisfaction with London TravelWatch (eg future London TravelWatch stakeholder survey scores)

Priority 7: Improved casework operations

For 2024/25, we are considering further options to improve our processes for handling appeals from the travelling public, building on the positive changes we have made this year. We will continue to draw from our casework and, where possible, from transport industry complaints data, to identify areas of service provision where operators need to raise their game. We will also engage where necessary with the Government's plans for a rail-focused Passenger Standards Authority where they have particular significance for the future handling of appeals.

In-year success: TBC

Medium-term outcome: Higher public satisfaction with appeal outcomes (eg London TravelWatch customer satisfaction scores, favourable/neutral appeal outcomes as % of closed cases, average value of compensation secured per appeal).

London TravelWatch budget for 2025/26

The proposed business plan for next year is based on a headline budget in which we receive the same level of grant as that agreed for 2024/25 (£1.182 million) plus provision for the as-yet unknown impact of the annual GLA pay award for London TravelWatch staff. We will also propose that any year-end underspend in 2024/25 (we anticipate there will be some) should be used at least in part to build up our financial reserve. This approach is consistent with what was agreed last year.

Next steps and questions to Board members

We understand that the Transport Committee secretariat needs to have our proposed business plan by Monday 25th November to send ahead of the meeting on 10th December.

Our plan is to convert the content of this paper, incorporating the views from next week's Board meeting, into a draft document to go out to members on Monday 18th for comments by Wednesday that week, ahead of finalising and then submitting the document to the Committee.

Board member views would be particularly welcome on the following points:

- the proposed change from the current eight business plan priorities to seven next year is a tweak on the outcome of the September Board discussion. Are members content with that approach?

- at this point in the year, it is difficult to be more specific about some of the deliverables under each priority, but are the suggestions broadly right? Given our need for realism in what we commit to, what if anything should we scale down, push back or remove entirely?
- under the priority on inclusion, do Board members have a view whether next year we should carry out the suggested research into hate crime or into the transport needs of an ageing population?