

Public Board Meeting

13.11.24

LONDON
TRAVELWATCH

Business Priority 4: Better Transport Services - Update on Spotlights work

Agenda item: LTW763

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This workstream aims to identify parts of the network that are causing particular problems for passengers, and push for action to make them better for everyone. Public transport is an important part of people's lives, getting them to work, education, appointments, social visits and more. However, as seen through casework, news stories, and external data sources, not everyone is happy with the services they are receiving. Research has shown that factors like reliability, frequency and journey time are all key drivers of people's satisfaction with transport.

As part of this priority, we are creating two "spotlights" highlighting pain points on the transport network. One will be on the National Rail network, while the other will be on TfL services. This is a complement to the bus report, also completed as part of this priority.

We have begun scoping this work, including an initial paper exploring areas of potential focus. This was discussed during an internal workshop, with two areas decided upon as our first pieces of work in this vein (with a view to creating a series of such spotlights in future). These are provisionally:

- **Euston station.** We are already working with industry to address as part of this work. We have been raising concerns about the passenger experience for over a year and following building pressure from the press and public Network Rail have announced a 5-point plan to improve the station. Michael has joined the Euston Oversight Group, which has been set up to help oversee the plan. We have had constructive meetings with the Route Director and attended a "fact-finding mission" with other senior stakeholders in the transport industry, including the Rail Minister.

Short term measures have been identified for implementation by Christmas, before turning to medium and long term solutions. We will continue working with industry to implement the needed changes, both in the immediate future but also in the longer term, particularly with HS2 now confirmed to be terminating at Euston. A further update can be provided at the Board meeting as needed

- **The Central line.** The 5th busiest railway line in the UK and 4th busiest tube line, the Central line has been beset by problems over the past year due to faulty trains and slow replacements. A reduced timetable has been operating since February, with no clear date for a return to normal, and passenger comms from TfL have been limited. We wrote to Andy Lord about the issue, and propose returning focus on the topic to push for more progress and comms, as well as learnings for future.

We also have a potential pipeline of other pinch points for us to start developing in 2025/26, particularly on the theme of contingency measures for vulnerable parts of the network, such as the Bakerloo line.

More details are available below in the:

- Spotlight reports option paper
- Options paper session 24.10.24 – discussion and follow-up

While any feedback from Board is welcome, we are particularly interested in views on:

- If you agree with the summary prioritisation captured in the note of the options paper discussion?
- Have we missed any other obvious parts of the tube/rail/tram network that you think are pain points we should consider?

First spotlight report options paper

This is an options paper for the first of two spotlight reports on poor performance on the tube and rail networks. As defined in Priority 4 (Better transport services), these reports will combine external data sources, passenger surveys and site visits.

This page contains some overarching questions about the reports.

The following pages detail some possible options for the choice of the first report although you may also wish to consider other options.

A) Questions:

1. What is the outcome we are looking for from this report? The answer to this may affect which option we choose. Some of the options below are live and continuing issues, others are likely nearing the end of the worst of their problems. Is there a preference to spotlight what needs to be done to improve current issues or do we want to review how the operator(s) recently resolved issues i.e. provide a lessons learned approach? Or a mixture of both?
2. In turn, what is the suggested structure and length of the report?
3. Is there a deadline for completion of the first report? If not, roughly how much time should be spent preparing it?
4. In some cases, limited passenger survey information is available, especially around specific issues, so we would need to conduct our own surveying. But if we do not have the capacity to do that, are we free to use whatever other intelligence we can find, such as through social media?
5. What evidence are we looking to gain from site visits, except at times of disruption (when we may not be able to be there in any case)?

B) Potential report options:

1) Rail

Location	Context	How we could make a difference for passengers	Why we may not want to report (or not report yet)
Euston rail station	- The station is seen as tired and chaotic and compares badly to other London termini - Serious, repeated overcrowding at Euston, and late announcements of departures cause distress and risk of stampedes. These are clear safety risks for passengers and staff - ORR issued Network Rail with an improvement notice last year, requiring improvements to crowd management, which was closed when ORR were content that NR actions were sufficient - New and existing operators want to run more services into Euston, which will add to the pressure on the station's infrastructure - There are also issues with visual information on smaller screens, which are widely perceived to be worse than the previous single large screen. - NR has now brought in a 5-point plan for improvements - The large screen was switched off on 4 Oct on the orders of the SoS	- Problems at Euston are high profile and recurring e.g. see support to our tweet about the 23 Sept chaos, recent articles in the newspapers - It is unclear what improvements NR have made in recent months especially as details have not been made public - We continue to engage with the key players - Susan's walkaround with NR focussed on comms/info; we met WMT earlier this year; Michael met the NR West Coast Route South director and is part of the Euston Oversight Group; NR have invited us for a station walk on 30 Oct etc so we are credible when calling for action - We know Euston TOCs want things to be better too - Euston's problems have a London and national impact (it's the main station for 4 of the UK's 5 biggest urban centres), so our views are more likely to be reported widely - Asks around better and earlier provision of info, and for passengers to wait closer to their departure platform should be achievable and cost little - Many of the issues also allow for a focus on TfL as Overground passengers are also affected	- Further to our 2 Oct statement about Euston, does this and our planned way forward mean a report may not be needed at this stage as it may largely be a longer version of what we've already said? - Would this option be better timed for the second spotlight report in the New Year when there has been time for further NR improvements to hopefully bed in and we will have new things to say about progress (or lack of progress)?

Location and mode	Context	How we could make a difference for passengers	Why we may not want to report (or not report yet)
Network Rail Wales & Western region (W&W), which includes Paddington to Reading, and is served by Elizabeth line (EL), GWR and Heathrow Express (HEX)	• Since EL services started running from Reading, track use has increased by 17% and the total weight of trains on the route has increased by 38%. The infrastructure has not coped well at times • Last December, damage to overhead cables near Paddington affected all services for several hours. Other issues such as broken and damaged rails and signalling faults have also affected passengers • ORR launched an investigation into W&W, which we responded to • In May 24, ORR found W&W in breach of its license for poor performance. In September, ORR accepted W&W's improvement plan but will still monitor progress including six-monthly assessments • An 18-month NR work programme is addressing asset reliability problems including between Paddington and Airport Junction	• This is a high-profile issue which has gained a lot of media attention, especially the December incident and the poor way that it was handled • Until ORR accepted W&W's improvement plan, they supported our view that NR wasn't doing enough • W&W's new compliance plan makes this a live issue - and it will continue to be as 90% of the plan's interventions won't be completed until 2026 • We engaged with some key players after 7 Dec which gives us more credibility in any public calls for action. • This option allows for a focus on both learning from what went wrong and that much remains to be done to improve performance and passenger confidence • This option also allows for a focus on TOCs and TfL because although this is rail infrastructure, when problems hit the Elizabeth line west of Paddington, they can quickly bleed into the rest of the line and cause major disruption	• Following the December incident, TfL, EL, HEX, GWR and NR have already introduced the Thames Valley Customer Experience Plan for Stranded Trains. It commits to completing the rescue of a stranded train within 90 minutes • NR said (26 Sept) that overall train performance in W&W has been improving on average for around five months • By the end of 2024, NR's plan will implement conducting exercises to improve the response to stranded trains and put a greater focus on punctuality and reliability

Location/mode	Context	How we could make a difference for passengers	Why we may not want to report (or not report yet)
Thameslink (TL) central core (Kentish Town to Blackfriars)	- Data on rail-passenger-numbers-and-crowding-on-weekdays-in-major-cities-in-england-and-wales-2023 showed that TL services had the busiest, 6th busiest and 10th busiest services. All were morning peak services, and all ran through the core from Bedford to Three Bridges - Up to 15 peak trains per hour run through the core, with around 10 at other weekday daytimes - Funnelling services from Kentish Town/Finsbury Park into St Pancras Int'l from the north, and those into Blackfriars from the south, with interaction with other TOCs, creates multiple opportunities for delays	We can highlight how fragile infrastructure can be when running trains so frequently - a single delay can quickly cause serious issues for TL services in and beyond the core. It can even impact other TOCs services who share tracks with TL elsewhere such as Great Northern and Southern.	- For the three busiest trains, TL have either added carriages or added an extra service - Is there a problem beyond some overcrowded trains? We can't really ask for more services (which would likely only add to the congestion) whilst most services are running at their 12-carriage maximum (Sutton-Wimbledon loop trains can only run with 8 carriages) - Is TL merely a victim of its own success?

2) TfL services

For each of the below Tube lines, the only performance data publicly available is for % of services operated and % of kilometres operated. Excess Journey Time and Lost Customer Hours are no longer available 'because the modelling assumes a certain level of passenger demand. Since March 2020 these assumptions have not been accurate due to the much-reduced passenger numbers.

Mode	Context	How we could make a difference for passengers	Why we may not want to report (or not report yet)
Central line	- The 5th busiest railway line in the UK and 4th busiest tube line - Due to about one-third of trains being taken out of service because of the need to fix failing motors, fewer trains have been running since last November - A reduced timetable has been operating since February, with longer gaps between trains causing inconvenience and some passengers unable to board trains. At least one speed restrictions remain from the end of last year - It's unclear how much progress has been made with replacing the motors on these trains - The separate rollout of refurbished trains in the improvement programme is slow (only 2 are expected by the end of 2024) - TfL have been silent on comms to passengers in recent months	- Data for service operated in 2024/25 shows that the Central is the worst performing tube line and is not improving as the year is progressing. - Are TfL even managing to run the reduced timetable? There are often bigger than expected and uneven gaps between trains, whilst cancellations are still occurring such as on the Hainault branch on weekday afternoons. - Updated online and in station comms to passengers about progress (or lack of) has been non-existent in recent months. - We could ask TfL what lessons have been learned i.e. the engineering aspects of the failing motors may (?) have been unseen but comms to customers were slow to begin with (reports in the Standard appeared to spark TfL's comms to into life) and have been patchy ever since. TfL appear to not want to publicise bad news even if it is important to passengers	- We may face the criticism of 'why only speak now?' Our only public comment about this appears to be when we highlighted the introduction of the reduced timetable in February. - TfL are trying to get trains back into service asap, what can we say or do that will speed this up? - By the time we finish the report the service may be improving again - TfL hope to launch a new timetable in December to give improved services (though timescales for improvements have repeatedly slipped). Perhaps this would be a better subject for the second report, as we monitor if/how services are improving?

Mode	Context	How we could make a difference for passengers	Why we may not want to report (or not report yet)
Bakerloo line	- The 14th busiest railway line in the UK and the 7th busiest tube line - The 52-year-old trains are the oldest in regular passenger service in the UK and urgently need replacing TfL say 'there are significant daily challenges to keep the fleet available for service. If not replaced, there would be an increasing risk that an endemic failure could force the withdrawal of the trains from operation'...but TfL require government support to finance new trains	- The lead-in time for new trains means that even if funding is given for new ones in the coming months, the current trains will still be needed until 2030. So, either way, the situation for passengers is only going to get worse for the next few years - This is a high-profile issue e.g. the leader of Brent council (with 10 Bakerloo stations in the borough) recently called for funding for new trains - We can be a strong voice amplifying the calls for new trains, as well as highlight the benefit of the other key (though more long-term) ask - extending the line to Lewisham and beyond, something the Mayor and TfL support strongly	- The percentage service operated so far in 2024/25 is at the network average, so there are no obvious signs of particularly poor service due to the ageing trains - We already know that TfL want to upgrade the fleet when they get funding from government
Piccadilly line	- The 8th busiest railway line in the UK and the 6th busiest Tube line including the key, cheapest link between Heathrow and central London - Only the trains on the Bakerloo line are older in the UK than the almost 50-year-old Piccadilly line trains - New trains will start coming into service from late 2025 but it will take until late 2027 for all the new trains to be operating - Each new train will increase capacity by 10% and there'll be up to 23% more capacity across the line in the peaks, along with other on-board improvements to the customer experience	- Data for service operated in 2024/25 shows that the Piccadilly is the second worst performing tube line - There'll be new trains, but the signalling isn't being upgraded, which means only a slight increase in peak trains from 24 to 27 per hour. We can emphasise that only new trains and signalling improvements can maximise the benefits of investment e.g. as happened on the Victoria line. A signalling upgrade would allow up to 33 Piccadilly trains per hour in the peaks - Looking more immediately, we can also say we'll monitor the phased introduction of the new trains and any negative impacts on passengers whilst old and new trains are running simultaneously, particularly for passengers requiring a wheelchair space	TfL are only phasing the rollout for financial reasons and would prefer it to happen more quickly

Mode	Context	How we could make a difference for passengers	Why we may not want to report (or not report yet)
Trams	• The Tram is a key orbital network in south London, with 20 million journeys in 2022/23 • In early summer there were availability problems due to defects on the trams. Most trams also had to be withdrawn temporarily due to damage to wheels caused by debris on the line • 2023/24 journey times are the highest in 5 years (continuing a trend). TfL recognise that lots of assets are becoming obsolete and that it's affecting reliability • Most of the Tram fleet is ageing (two-thirds of Trams are reaching the end of their 25 years design life) and so they have invited four manufacturers to bid to replace those oldest two-thirds of trams. Subject to receiving DfT funding, the award to the successful bidder is expected in 2026, with new trams in service in the late 2020s • TfL told us on 17 Oct that they're putting in a plan to take the current trams through to 2030 and do all they can to provide a good service, through maintenance, operations and the renewals budget. • There will be a planned closure on part of the network to replace life expired track assets and power cables. • <i>If this option were chosen, we would need to ask TfL for other Trams performance stats as nothing else appears to be publicly available</i>	• Issues have been continuing for intermittently for months. • Even if a plan is put in place to keep the Trams running until the end of their design life (and beyond) whilst the new Trams are being procured and built, will it be possible to maintain existing service levels in that time? We can try and monitor that in the months ahead • In our Spring surveying of users of transport modes for the bus report, satisfaction for the Tram was lower than for any other TfL mode (at 57% it was 10% less than Tube/Overground and 11% less than the bus). But the level of dissatisfaction was also low - only the DLR had a lower level than the Tram • Where the Tram operates, passengers may have a greater reliance as there are fewer alternative options when things go wrong (it's usually just the bus as most local rail lines are orbital) • We will be mystery shopping on the Trams in late October, so we should gain further intelligence about how the service is running and any infrastructure issues • LTW showing strong interest and expressing views about the Tram would highlight that we focus on all parts London including outer London	• The level of Tram complaints was lower in 23/24 than in either 21/22 or 22/23.

Mode	Context	How we could make a difference for passengers	Why we may not want to report (or not report yet)
DLR	• 54 new trains are due to replace the 33 oldest trains in the fleet, some of which are over 30 years old. Shorter trains are already running on the Woolwich branch due to life expired stock • The already delayed rollout of new trains has now been delayed indefinitely as a signalling issue means further analysis and software modifications will need to take place before they can come into service • Separately, speed restrictions are in place for safety reasons on some sections, with trains slowed by 5kmph as problems with the signalling system meant trains were getting close to the maximum speed permitted. This has led to the suspension of the through Stratford to Lewisham via Canary Wharf service and complaints about long waits between trains. • <i>If this option were chosen, we would need to ask TfL for other DLR performance stats as nothing appears to be publicly available</i>	• We can ask why have things gone so badly wrong on so many fronts? There's no sense that services will improve soon • We can ask what the contingency is when more life expired stock means shorter trains elsewhere on the network • In our Spring surveying of users of transport modes for the bus report, there was much less satisfaction for the DLR (61%) than bus (68%), Tube and Overground (both 67%). But no TfL mode (or train) had a lower level of dissatisfaction • DLR journey numbers are down 5% year on year (Q1 24/25 figures) – are the problems starting to affect confidence and therefore passenger numbers? • Suspension of the through Stratford to Lewisham service has added 2 minutes to journey times (though TfL have also increased the peak Stratford to Canary Wharf services). There's been a 2-3 minute journey time increase on services to/from Woolwich • We'll gain further intelligence about how the service is running as we're mystery shopping on the DLR in late Oct. Seeing the impact on passengers at peak times would be particularly useful e.g. running shorter trains may be causing overcrowding, which passengers may think more of an issue than a slightly longer journey time	• What could we say about the technical difficulties? Could they have been foreseen?

Options paper session 24.10.24 – discussion and follow-up

General principles/focus:

1. Focus on the bread-and-butter issue of **getting transport services right**.
2. The importance of showing **relevance** to a significant number of passengers, transport operators, other stakeholders.
3. Is there a realistic chance of us bringing about positive change/making a big enough **impact** for passengers?
4. The more complicated scenarios don't have obvious solutions but are a better **opportunity** for us to focus where we can make a difference, rather than where there may be a simple, obvious answer (that might not be in anyone's gift to fix).
5. Link to **Casework** - are we hearing about the issue from passengers? We can show we are listening – and acting on - people's concerns/complaints. Many complaints aren't about poor performance but about TfL have dealt with it. Elizabeth line is the biggest area for casework.
6. **Information** is a big issue. Passengers are forgiving but still need better network information (e.g. when you're on a bus you don't get tube disruption info).
7. Think of **sequencing** as a whole - what does the choice of the first piece say about what should be the choices for pieces 2 and 3?
8. How do the different pieces of the network connect together? What are the **wider touchpoints**? Focus on importance of interchange e.g. Hatton Cross tube station/bus station is a miserable interchange

Location	Decision			Follow-up work/thoughts Follow-up data/research actions written in blue
	Piece 1	Piece 2	Not taken forward	
Euston rail station		✓.		- What can Euston learn from other stations such as King's Cross – what does it want to be when it grows up? - What will be the next Euston that hits the news? Stratford, Clapham Junction? - What are the % of services into Euston? - Comparative, general piece about London's stations – what's working well, what's not, what the requirements for the best stations? Has LTW done work on this previously?
Network Rail W&W		✓. If NR's plan doesn't deliver as promised		- Stranded trains a less London-y issue. Got very little contact complaining about TfL after stranded trains incident as they handled it well. - Pick up if anything significant happens in future, possibly joint with TF. - Focus would likely be on the interface in infrastructure between TfL/NR as there's an underlying issue of infrastructure that isn't fit for purpose. But first need to see how NR's plan progresses (it's currently too soon to tell).
Thameslink core			✓. unless insight tells us otherwise	- Not much can be done to increase capacity so focus would be on delays/cancellations. Lots of e.g. City Thameslink the most disrupted station with 76% of trains delayed or cancelled. If TL can't run reliably, it causes more overcrowding. - Find insight on social media, appeals, TL passenger satisfaction – is there a problem we can respond to?
Central line	✓.			- Unwillingness of TfL to tell passengers bad news and only prompted to go public when news hit the media. This is good ground for us - Maybe write to Claire Mann first. Depending on the response, we may want to escalate including going public (this option has the most legs on a comms front) - Should we get our views out ahead of it the improved timetable in December? - Make it lessons learned/how TfL saw it through – part operational, part comms - TfL's Board were told that the Central line issues contributed to an overall 3% Tube use reduction - Dig into any available data – is the 'temporary' timetable being met?

Bakerloo line	✓.			• Is the line safe? • The audience for this option would be government, with new trains being the priority rather than the Lewisham extension. We can warn that the Bakerloo line could end up being another Central line situation if nothing is done. • If this could be the next 'Central line', TfL need to get ahead of the curve to prevent 5+ years of decline. What is the contingency plan? We can emphasise that it must more resilient than the Central line one. • Ask TfL if more trains are short running to Queen's Park rather than Stonebridge Park or Harrow & Wealdstone to preserve the stock
Piccadilly line			✓.	• New trains are already on their way albeit without the new signalling to fully maximise the improvements
Trams		✓.		• The outer London angle is a good focus for LTW. In this case, Trams have particular importance on wider placemaking in the Croydon area, which relates to other Mayoral targets such as housing • These issues have been raised locally and by AMs but isn't getting wider attention as it's outer London • This issue is currently less pressing but is unlikely to go away.
DLR			✓.	• Intrinsic link between DLR and City Airport • Given the technical nature of the issues, what could we say or achieve that others haven't said or haven't yet achieved? • Keep an eye on it for possible future review