



TRANSPORT NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

February 2020

LONDONASSEMBLY

TRANSPORT COMMITTEE



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The Transport Committee holds the Mayor and Transport for London to account for their work delivering the capital's transport network. The committee examines all aspects of the transport network and presses for improvements on behalf of Londoners.

CONTACT

Daniel Tattersall, Policy Advisor
daniel.tattersall@london.gov.uk
Tel: 020 8039 1328

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INTRODUCTION

London is constantly evolving, and the way that people move around the city is evolving as well. The city's population is growing, and people's work, leisure and retail patterns are changing. Enabling active travel and public transport use is key if essential Mayoral ambitions to reduce emissions and improve health are to be met. Yet we already know that public transport isn't always providing the best service for Londoners. In a public survey, the London Assembly's Transport Committee found that over half of people think public transport in London is too crowded, four in ten people find it too hot or humid, and nearly a quarter think it is too expensive.¹ Furthermore, as work patterns have become more irregular, with increased numbers of people working from home and working outside of the usual nine-to-five hours, many passengers are finding that season ticket options no longer reflect their needs and don't provide savings for frequent travel.²

The Transport Committee wanted to find out what would improve people's experiences of moving around the capital, how people's movement patterns around the city will change in the future and what should be prioritised in the city's transport infrastructure to respond to this, and understand how these changes could be delivered.

Through two hearings and a call for evidence we engaged with individual Londoners and a broad range of stakeholders including transport consumer groups, taxi companies and drivers' unions, charities, delivery companies, infrastructure providers, and London borough councils.

The five key findings presented in this piece are drawn out of this public engagement and represent the issues that we heard about repeatedly from different perspectives and often with a variety of solutions proposed.

KEY FINDING

More certainty over electric vehicle charging infrastructure is required to aid the switch away from petrol and diesel vehicles, but at the same time every effort should be made to provide viable transport alternatives in order to reduce the total number of vehicles on London's roads.

Electric vehicles have a role to play in the future of London's transport, and the number of electric vehicles on London's roads continues to rise. However, concerns over electric vehicles in the responses to our call for evidence echoed those expressed previously by the London Assembly's Environment Committee.³

Firstly, although they are a preferable alternative to petrol or diesel vehicles, electric vehicles still have negative impacts on health. They still present the same physical danger to road users as other cars. Although they have no exhaust emissions, there continues to be an impact on air quality through the emission of particulate matter from road, tyre and brake wear and from the energy that they consume, much of

which is not renewable.^{4,5} Electric vehicles also take up the same amount of space as other vehicles and therefore do nothing to ease congestion.⁶ The Mayor's Transport Strategy recognises that a purely car-based approach to transport, even if electric, will not address London's current and future transport constraints.

Secondly, there is concern that electric vehicle charging infrastructure is not keeping pace with the rise in electric vehicle numbers for both personal and commercial use, and a lack of certainty over future infrastructure provision could hinder the switch from petrol and diesel to electric vehicles.⁷ As of November 2019, there were 4,360 charging points in London, of

which 323 were rapid charging points.^{8,9} This is within the boundaries of the number of chargers required by London, as projected by the Mayor's London Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Delivery Plan. However, the range of expected current demand is very broad ("between 230 to 700 rapid chargers and 3,400 to 8,000 residential slow to fast chargers"). Projected demand for 2025 is similarly broad (between 1,400 to 4,100 rapid and 20,000 to 48,000 residential slow to fast chargers), and the plan itself notes that a more accurate understanding of how many more chargers are required needs to be gained.¹⁰ If electric vehicle use is to be seamless for owners, attention also needs to be paid to the harmonisation of the numerous different

charging networks in London, which currently require different apps, subscriptions to separate membership schemes and can incur different costs.¹¹ It is also essential for pedestrians that this growth in charging points does not negatively impact pavement space or safety, and the placement of the required chargers will need to be carefully planned.¹²

The uncertainty over charger provision is being felt particularly keenly by companies – such as taxi and delivery companies – that would like to make the switch to electric fleets. In addition to certainty over future

provision, these types of companies require more clarity over how booking mechanisms would work, so that complex delivery patterns, for example, can be configured around guaranteed recharging points.^{13,14}

The Mayor's London Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Delivery Plan recognises that Mayoral powers to mandate infrastructure development in this area are limited. The plan states that charger points would largely be delivered by the private sector.¹⁵ TfL noted in its response to the Committee's call for evidence that for London to deliver on its

significant potential to provide electric vehicle infrastructure, support from Government will also be required.¹⁶

RECOMMENDATION

The Mayor and TfL should continue to lobby Government for more clarity over Government support for electric vehicle infrastructure in London, work to support harmonisation of charging networks in London, and demonstrate to the Transport Committee by 5 March 2020 how this will fit alongside an overall plan to reduce the number of vehicles on London's roads.

KEY FINDING

A metro-style devolved suburban rail service continues to be a high priority for Londoners.

The Transport Committee has previously highlighted the numerous issues experienced by passengers on London's franchised train network. Overcrowding, a lack of reliability, expensive fares, and infrequent and irregular services have all led to a decline in passenger satisfaction.¹⁷

The London Assembly, the Mayor and TfL have long agreed that the devolution of these suburban rail franchises to TfL could be the solution.^{18,19} As the Committee has previously highlighted, rail devolution to create a metro-style service has the potential to bring significant benefits to Londoners through bigger and more regular

trains, better run services, safer and more accessible stations, mayoral control of fares and better integration with the rest of the London transport system.²⁰

Throughout our investigation we heard how important this issue continues to be to Londoners. A wide range of respondents, including a rail passenger advocacy group,²¹ a thinktank,²² a London borough council²³ and rail infrastructure and service providers^{24,25} all told us that they expect a devolved suburban metro system to be a part of London's future transport system. Given that the Conservative Government committed in its 2019 manifesto to end the

current complicated franchising model,²⁶ it is imperative that the Mayor and TfL continue to lobby the Department for Transport for devolution of suburban services from Southeastern, South Western Railway, Great Northern and Southern franchises. The Williams Rail Review – a 'root and branch' review of Britain's railways established to assess whether the rail system is delivering for passengers' and taxpayers' interests²⁷ – has considered issues of franchising and devolution. The review was due to be published in Autumn 2019, and the Mayor and TfL should lobby the Government to publish this urgently.

RECOMMENDATION

The Mayor and TfL should continue to lobby the Department for Transport for devolution of suburban services from Southeastern, South Western Railway, Great Northern and Southern franchises, to lobby for the results of the Williams Rail Review to be published, and provide an update to the London Assembly Transport Committee by 5 March 2020 on recent progress in this area.

KEY FINDING

Careful consideration will need to be given to the regulation of e-scooters and other micro-mobility schemes if the benefits are to outweigh the costs.

Micro-mobility refers to light vehicles used for transportation, often with a motor, such as e-scooters, dockless e-bikes, and electric skateboards. In the responses to our call for evidence, views were split over the extent to which micro-mobility could help provide the solution to London's current and future travel constraints. Whilst some said that micro-mobility had the potential to revolutionise the way we move around the city,²⁸ others claimed that the role of micro-mobility is overstated.²⁹

What many respondents were agreed on, however, is the need to ensure that regulations better manage current shared micro-mobility schemes – specifically, dockless bikes – and that regulation needs to be worked out properly ahead of any new dockless transport modes, such

as e-scooters, being introduced.^{30,31,32}

Although e-scooters are currently illegal in the UK, London's roads have already witnessed an e-scooter fatality.³³ Rules will need to determine the maximum speed of e-scooters and whether they are permitted on roads or pavements. It is essential that a situation similar to that of Paris is avoided, where e-scooters were permitted with relatively little regulation and policymakers are now retrofitting legislation after two deaths, numerous injuries and increasing public opposition to the vehicles on pavements.³⁴ In its report *Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy*, the Department for Transport promised a review of micro-mobility vehicles.³⁵ The Mayor and TfL should lobby the Government to carry out this review

urgently, so that local policymakers can start planning for strong and consistent regulation in London.

A previous Transport Committee investigation into the issues and opportunities presented by dockless bikes highlighted the need for TfL to work with key stakeholders and London boroughs to ensure sensible and harmonised regulation that keeps pace with technological advances.³⁶ Currently, London boroughs are individually responsible for the regulation of dockless bikes. This has resulted in different rules between boroughs and a lack of consistency for bike scheme providers and the people that use them. Assembly Members have also expressed concerns over the potential introduction of e-scooters and questioned the Mayor

over what regulation will be implemented prior to their introduction, if it goes ahead.^{37,38,39} Similarly to dockless bikes, there are issues around the management of e-scooters and other dockless vehicles, and users will require adequate parking space provision and incentives to leave these vehicles in places that do not obstruct pedestrians or roads.^{40,41} Vehicles left on the pavement can have particularly negative consequences for older people and people with disabilities, such as the visually impaired.⁴²

London Councils is attempting to gain delegated authority from all London boroughs to write a London-wide byelaw for the regulation of dockless bikes, which would also capture other dockless vehicles and dockless hire schemes (such as e-scooters) in the event that they become legalised.⁴³ This should help to ensure harmonised regulation across the city, so that there is consistency between boroughs.^{44,45} TfL are supporting this process, and it is vital that the Mayor and TfL continue to work with

London Councils and London's boroughs on the draft byelaw to ensure that it delivers for Londoners, should the delegated authority be granted.

If the regulatory issues can be worked out, those who view micro-mobility positively claim that it has the potential to provide a clean, convenient and efficient transport alternative, and may bring particular benefits in first and last mile journeys, connecting public transport to journey start and end points.

RECOMMENDATION

The Mayor and TfL should lobby the Government to carry out a review of micro-mobility vehicles urgently, so that local policymakers can start planning for strong and consistent regulation in London. The Transport Committee should receive an update on this by 5 March 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

The Mayor and TfL should continue to work with London Councils and London's boroughs on a draft byelaw for the regulation of dockless bikes and other dockless vehicles to ensure that the byelaw delivers for Londoners, with specific regard to adequate parking space provision and avoiding pedestrian and road obstruction. The Transport Committee should receive an update on ongoing work in this area by 5 March 2020.

KEY FINDING

A wide range of public transport and active travel solutions are required to improve orbital transport in outer London.

Orbital journeys have a start and end point outside of central London. London's public transport and active travel (walking and cycling) infrastructure is currently weighted in favour of radial travel – journeys that start or end in the centre of the city.^{46,47} As a result, whilst the majority of radial journeys are made by rail and London Underground, orbital journeys are primarily made in cars.⁴⁸

The Committee heard about a range of issues in outer London, including a largely radial train network, slow bus services, and poor active travel opportunities.^{49,50,51,52} Respondents expressed support for two projects

which are being considered by the Mayor and TfL: the West London Orbital, which would open up a section of railway to the West of the city and be operated as part of the London Overground,^{53,54,55,56} and a roll-out of Bus Rapid Transit routes – buses with more segregated lanes and fewer stops than standard buses, to enable them to cover greater distances in a shorter amount of time.⁵⁷ Following a consultation, TfL have stated in their latest business plan that bus provision is due to be increased in outer London, with the network in outer London set to grow by 5 million kilometres over the next 5 years.^{58,59} The Committee would like to see more detail on

how this figure has been arrived at, specifically in terms of how many new bus routes are being created, how many extra services are being added to existing routes, and the geographical distribution of these routes and services around London.

Respondents also emphasised the importance of improving active travel infrastructure such as bike lanes and pavements, and the environment to make walking and cycling safer and more pleasant in outer London.⁶⁰ This is a key point given that the Mayor's Transport Strategy identifies, that 80 per cent of the car journeys taken in outer London could be switched to active travel.⁶¹

RECOMMENDATION

The Mayor and TfL should provide an update to the London Assembly Transport Committee by 5 March 2020 that details what changes have been made to orbital transport in outer London since the Mayor's 2018 Transport Strategy was published and, with particular reference to the 5 million kilometres increase in the outer London bus network, express bus services and active travel, detail what projects are currently in the pipeline and explain how these delivered and planned projects will improve orbital transport.

KEY FINDING

The changing nature of freight in London will need to be carefully managed if the impact on Londoners is to be minimised.

The nature of freight in London is changing. As consumers' retail patterns have shifted, the growth of online shopping has resulted in more vans on the road.⁶² This has negative implications for pollution, congestion and road safety. London also needs to respond to the challenge of delivering large infrastructure projects – such as Crossrail and the Old Oak and Park Royal development, which require the transportation of significant amounts of materials and equipment – whilst minimising impact on Londoners.^{63,64}

Many who engaged with the Committee highlighted the importance of responding to the changing nature of freight, and

proposed a number of solutions including freight consolidation (where deliveries are combined at strategic locations to reduce the number of shipments required to reach final destinations),^{65,66} developing the use of London's waterways to transport freight,⁶⁷ using cargo bikes for emission-free delivery,^{68,69} and increasing capacity for rail connections on key freight routes to strategic locations such as ports.⁷⁰

The Transport Committee wrote to the Mayor ahead of the publication of the Mayor and TfL's Freight and Servicing Action Plan, to explain the Committee's view that the efficiency of freight in London needed to be improved so as

to minimise the impact on Londoners.⁷¹ The Mayor's comprehensive Action Plan is a positive step, and the Committee will monitor its implementation with interest to assess whether it delivers on an issue which is clearly still of great importance to Londoners.

RECOMMENDATION

The Mayor and TfL should provide an update to the London Assembly Transport Committee by 5 March 2020 detailing the progress that has been made in the first year since the publication of the Freight and Servicing Action Plan and outlining key actions which are to be prioritised over the following year. The update should explain how these delivered and planned projects will minimise the impact of freight on Londoners.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that much is changing in the way that people and freight move around London, and the transport system will have to adapt quickly if it is to continue serving the needs of Londoners. London's citizens and businesses require clarity and certainty over how the Mayor and TfL will respond to technological innovations and changing work, leisure and retail patterns. They also require a system that continues to offer value for money – for example, the current ticketing structure provides little savings incentives for people who work irregular hours or work patterns.⁷² It is also clear that there is no single solution or quick-fix, and that keeping London moving whilst also reducing emissions and improving health will require a range of investments and regulation.

The Committee is aware that delivering the range of infrastructure required to respond to London's transport challenge will require resource. This is especially pertinent given that TfL no longer receives central government funding. The Committee echoes the Assembly's Budget and Performance Committee in encouraging TfL to explore a wide range of revenue raising measures to ensure that London has the transport system it deserves now, and in the future.

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