London Assembly: Call for evidence: Bus services Deadline 31st January 2017.

General questions

1. Is London's bus network fit for purpose?

It is far and away the best in the country but improvements could be made to facilitate interchange with other public transport modes or other buses. The reverse has recently happened at Archway and is threatened at Vauxhall and Highbury Corner. In some areas there are insufficient bus stops and being stuck in traffic for several minutes, yards from a stop while two trains go by, is frustrating. More generally, there has been a gradual movement of bus stops away from junctions to facilitate journeys in private vehicles to the detriment of bus users with poor mobility.

Many Opportunity Areas are not well connected and TfL is often slow to catch up with changing requirements.

2. How does the bus system compare in inner and outer London?

Inner London: There is generally a choice of routes so that if information is provided on Countdown delays can be avoided. In outer London, we are dependent on there being no cancellations but reliability is better than it was 30 years ago. Outer London's bus services do not connect well enough areas of living, entertainment, sport, leisure, health facilities, retail, libraries, etc.

3. What different challenges do the inner and outer networks face? Designing the bus network

There are countless irregular visitors to central and inner London who rely on past knowledge of routes for whom major changes are a problem. New developments require changes which are slow to be implemented – local authorities should be more proactive in securing funding via s.106 agreements. Planning frameworks for Opportunity Areas should reflect the changes to the bus network needed. Connections with rail and tube stations are critical to travel in outer London.

4. How well do TfL currently plan bus routes?

This is difficult to answer, because there is no published document setting out the criteria by which routes are planned and how a balance is drawn between conflicting desires. We think the Assembly should insist on this being provided and kept up to date.

As noted above we feel TfL is slow to respond to new developments, but it needs to focus more on dealing with disruption to services and less on changing routes. The impact of Night Tube on buses must be reviewed and changes made where necessary.

5. Does TfL take account of the London Plan and housing developments when planning bus routes? Could they improve the way they make these decisions? Yes, but local authorities need to be more proactive as set out in (3) above.

6. What bus priority measures has TfL already introduced and how successful are they? There has been a dearth of new measures in recent years and some have been undermined by schemes to improve access for cyclists and pedestrians. Contra flow bus lanes are highly effective, e.g. Pentonville Road, Piccadilly; priority signals (e.g. Angel southbound) and bus gates. Other bus lanes require enforcement, too often they are negated by parked cars or drivers who cannot quite keep to their own lane. Bus priority signals are also highly effective, and self enforcing.

7. What impact could the introduction and development of the hopper ticket have on the design of London's bus network? It should have no effect on the route, but facilities for interchange should be reviewed.. Paying twice is not the only drawback to changing buses. Older people and those with disabilities do not pay but are seriously inconvenienced by having to change and wheelchair users add to dwell times which affects all users.

8. Does TfL plan new bus services to stimulate demand or just to respond to existing demand?

Just to respond. There is nothing wrong with this. As London grows demand should be stimulated and it is necessary and sufficient to discourage car use. However, regular disruption from construction work suppresses demand, and more needs to be done to counter this.

9. What tools does TfL have to monitor and forecast demand? Alternative models and approaches. There is plenty of data about absolute numbers but it is only by experiencing a particular journey that the causes of delay/frustration that lead people away from bus use become apparent. There should be more use made of user experience, e.g. passenger surveys.

10. What other approaches to network design should T/L be considering? As appropriate, please make reference to these or others:

- orbital routes•
- through routes•
- bus rapid transit systems•
- shuttles and hubs•

Many orbital journeys are unnecessarily difficult, e.g. the old 347A route from Uxbridge to Hemel Hempstead. People are forced to travel via zone 1 when a direct bus route would be as quick and remove pressure on overcrowded rail routes. Similarly, through routes will attract people, if they can be run reliably. There needs to be adequate means of limiting congestion, either with new CGZs or some other form of road pricing. It is possible to work on a bus, but not if you have to change. Shuttle services rarely see well filled buses – even in central London very few Red Arrow routes stood the test of time and quite rightly only two survive.

11. Is it a good idea for T/L to consider different types of network for different areas of London? How could this work in practice? There may well be scope for the introduction of intermediate modes (between bus and tube), particularly if the City in the East is to be effective and sustainable.

12. How successful have existing express routes been, such as X26 and 607? The X26 is a valuable orbital route. The 607 seems to be more successful at peak periods when a longer walk occasioned by having fewer stops still gives a net saving in time.

Making changes to the network

13. What can we learn from others cities about successful/unsuccessful bus network redesign? Nottingham, York and Oxford have made significant improvements to their buses but they are so different to London I am not sure how relevant they are.

14. What are the challenges associated with this kind of large-scale change to the bus system? Getting the information to regular but infrequent visitors. There is over-reliance on technology and an assumption that everyone goes around with a "smart" portable telephone. They are easy to use to track buses that run, but inadequate when bus routes are being curtailed, as was happening at the time of writing with all Holloway Road routes. There was no explanation on bus stops around Bank for the lack of 43 buses beyond the alteration of the disc displaying the number to a blue background and the legend "nights only", and no indication of their revised starting point.

15. Could T/L improve the way it consults the public on proposed changes to bus routes? You can always improve. How? The economic appraisal of bus routes needs to be far more transparent, it is not good enough to dismiss consultee's ideas without explanation. Some users have expressed surprise to be consulted by e-mail about a change that does not affect them, because it relates to a different section of a route to that which they use. Others are caught out by changes such as re-routing the 9 away from Piccadilly Circus because they are very occasional users of the 9.

Safety: General questions

1. What should T/L's priorities be for delivering a safe bus network? All contracts should place greater incentive on safety than on meeting journey time targets. In particular, the full length of the bus should pull right up to the kerb and right up to the stop when there is a queue of buses.

2. Are you aware of any particular accident blackspots? Not recently. Use of diversionary routes not normally home to buses has resulted in more accidents. The solution is not to abandon these routes but to ensure they are designed and signed appropriately.

3. What are the particular safety concerns for:

- Passengers on buses• Behaviour of other passengers, in the absence of a conductor; lack of accessible seats in the lower saloon
- Other road users

We welcome the recent judgement asserting the greater rights of a wheelchair user over someone with a foldable buggie. We believe the notices on London's Buses are clearer than that in use in the test case.

There is some evidence that in the absence of conductors bus passengers are less considerate than tube passengers, because it is easier to use a portable telephone on a bus. This particularly applies in making room for others to board or alight.

4. How are operators and drivers incentivised to prioritise safety? Should be through the award of contracts.

5. Should operators face contractual financial penalties for poor safety records? Yes, or loss of contracts.

6. Are drivers provided with adequate 'driving skills' training? Don't know

7. How effective is this training (which is delivered by individual operators)?

8. Should there be a 'London standard' for driving skills training (which would likely result in TfL managing the training)? It is one way of potentially raising standards.

9. How are incidents managed by TfL and by the operators? What kind of support is available to those involved in bus collisions and incidents?

Technology

10. Has TfL taken advantage of new technologies to make buses safer?

11. What other technology advances should TfL consider piloting? Infrastructure and design

12. Are there any problems caused by bus and cycling infrastructure sharing road space (particularly kerb side) and how could these be resolved? Yes. I would prefer to see cycle routes on parallel roads not used by buses, but cyclists will not use routes that involve a significant lengthening of their journey time.

13. Would expanding 20mph zones be a good way of reducing collisions? It would reduce their severity, not their number.

14. Would further investment in bus priority measures like bus lanes be a good way of reducing bus collisions? Yes, but there are more pressing reasons for bus lanes. Narrow lanes can add to danger for cyclists.