London Assembly Transport Committee

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Dear Mr Jardine,

LONDON ASSEMBLY INVESTIGATION INTO BUS SERVICES IN LONDON – LONDON COUNCILS' RESPONSE

London Councils is committed to fighting for resources for London and getting the best possible deal for London's 33 councils. Part think-tank, part lobbying organisation, and part service provider, London Councils formulates policies, organises campaigns and runs a range of services all designed to make life better for Londoners.

Our submission "**An A-Z of recommendations to improve bus services in London**" to the London Assembly investigation has been developed following consultation with London boroughs. It seeks to answer the four questions of this investigation by outlining the key issues of concern for London boroughs and making recommendations as to how these issues could be addressed. In particular, our submission focuses on:

- Overcrowding
- Better Engagement
- More Transparency and Consultation
- Corridor/Area-based Approach
- Adapting to Changing Demand
- Strategic Bus Reviews
- Better Links to Local Plans
- Orbital and Express Routes
- Depots and Garages
- Fairer Fares

Hopefully the outcomes of this investigation will acknowledge the excellent service that is currently offered to Londoners but also take stock of the areas for improvement required now and in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Catherine West

Chair of the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee

An A-Z of Recommendations to Improve Bus Services in London

Our Submission to the London Assembly Investigation

Introduction

1. London Councils and London boroughs recognise the world class bus service that is currently provided by Transport for London (TfL). Buses are by far the most used mode of public transport in London and provide a comprehensive service that supports the economic and social fabric of London. Buses are also the most easily adaptable form of public transport, which makes them very important for London boroughs, in particular with regards to their planning function.

2. In 2012, London Councils commissioned JMP to undertake research on London's bus network. The main objective was to identify, understand and record issues that the London boroughs had regarding the bus networking in their areas. For this study, JMP conducted a series of workshops and interactive discussions with officer representatives from London boroughs, both individually and within sub-regional groups.

3. Since receiving that report, London Councils has tested the findings with borough officers and our submission to the London Assembly investigation into bus services is based on the feedback we received. It outlines the key issues of concern for London boroughs and makes some recommendations as to how these issues could be addressed.

Question 1: What are the most crowded bus routes in London? What will be the most crowded bus routes in future?

Overcrowding

4. The London Assembly should consider two aspects when assessing crowding levels in bus routes:

5. On one hand, crowding levels refer to the number of passengers using certain lines or bus services. In these cases, TfL should be able to provide detailed information on both current crowding levels, using BODS (Bus passenger Origin and Destination Survey) data, as well as projections on future overcrowding levels. These are usually based on population growth patterns across London.

6. On the other hand, we should also understand crowding levels in relation to the number of bus lines that go along a certain route or corridor. As discussed below, this is an issue

of key concern for London boroughs. There is a perception that TfL's largely radial bus network has led to overlapping routes, especially outside of peak hours, and the creation of 'mini-Oxford Streets' in some urban centres and high streets.

7. While we would generally expect a positive correlation between the two aspects when assessing bus crowding levels, boroughs are concerned that some streets may be served by more buses than is warranted by demand with consequent adverse congestion, environmental impacts and street competition with other transport modes, such as cycling. This is often the case for some high streets as well as corridors in central London, such as Bishopsgate, the Bank junction, Bloomsbury Way/Theobalds Road junction or Kilburn High Road.

8. In order to improve mutual understanding, boroughs would very much like to have sight of any available data, not just by route number but also by roads/area in London. At the moment boroughs are able to access some data on reliability and journey times via the TfL website, but it is difficult to obtain data on bus patronage vs. capacity.

9. As both planning and highway authorities (for most roads buses use), boroughs are in a position to secure private resources through s106/CIL, or install bus priority to help deal with these issues. Without a regular liaison and up-to-date data, boroughs tend to rely on general anecdotes, and the public complaints that get directed to them rather than TfL, to base their view of required network improvements which can lead to tension with London Buses or at worst securing funds from developers for sub-optimal improvements. Boroughs have a key role to play in ensuring the network is fit for purpose and can structurally deal with increases in capacity (e.g. increased frequency or physically longer buses that require longer stops) so early involvement and reliable data are key.

10. **Recommendations:**

    a. TfL should provide detailed information on current bus crowding levels as well as projections on future passenger overcrowding across the bus network.

    b. London Councils would welcome an assessment of the levels of overlapping between different bus routes ('over-bussing') and how these influence traffic congestion.

    c. This information should be made available to boroughs so that informed discussions on necessary improvements to the network can be taken forward not only by TfL but the boroughs themselves (e.g. through the s106/CIL).

Question 2: How does TfL plan, review, redesign and implement changes to bus services to meet changing demand? Are there any issues with its approach?

Better Engagement

11. The JMP research showed different levels of engagement between TfL and London boroughs. At the higher levels of policy formulation (e.g. Mayor's Transport Strategy), liaison between TfL and boroughs seems to take place due to the need to provide context to the development of Local Implementation Plans (LIPs) and funding processes. Boroughs have also built up effective relationships at operational levels with the local London Buses' Infrastructure Controllers and Bus Route Managers, but lack that relationship with the TfL bus planning managers.

12. Liaison at the middle management level needs to improve, largely at the network planning and route consultation level. Difficulties in adapting the bus routes to changing circumstances and a perceived lack of transparency in decision making have been highlighted by boroughs at this level of engagement.

13. Until 2011, TfL used to have stakeholder liaison managers who would co-ordinate bus requests, as well as requests from other areas, and find out about the aspirations of the councils (on behalf of residents and businesses) in respect to the future development of the bus network. Unfortunately, these positions were lost as a result of TfL's internal restructuring (Project Horizon) designed to take further cost out of TfL non-operational areas. The former London Bus Priority Network (LBPN) approach of joint working to deliver an agreed programme of bus priority measures was also considered effective, by borough officers, at bringing the agendas of boroughs and TfL together.

14. While London boroughs understand that TfL might not have the capacity to manage the LBPN again, or have additional staff for borough liaison, it should explore how to replicate its successes within existing borough engagement structures. The functioning of the current structures at sub-regional level does not seem to fulfil the level of borough/TfL liaison that is required.

15. Finally, both the JMP research and the KPMG report (Independent strategic review of the provision of bus services in London, commissioned by the Mayor of London in 2009) highlighted the need to continue with the network development and consultation seminars that TfL used to organise in the past, along with intelligence sharing sessions. These seminars provided an overview of TfL and its priorities as well as an opportunity for cross-stakeholder engagement.

16. **Recommendations:**

    d. TfL should explore how improved liaison can be brought to the multi-modal sub-regional structures (North, West, East, Central and South).

    e. TfL should give a greater role to boroughs, in particular at middle management level, in the analysis and decision making process.

    f. Existing examples of good TfL/borough relationship should be used as a template for developing improved methods of liaison.

    g. TfL should continue the network development and consultation seminars that had been organised in the past and include intelligence sharing sessions to help improve communication.

More Transparency and Consultation

17. Boroughs do not seem to be sufficiently engaged in the consultation process. There seems to be a lack of detailed information and evidence provided to boroughs to enable informed consultation. For example, no actual or predicted usage data is supplied to support the reasoning behind the changes and little explanation is given of the cost benefit assessments implicit in the guidelines for bus service planning.

18. Boroughs have a key role in the management of socio-economic development and spatial planning within which the bus network forms a key facilitating role. Socio-economic indicators are a useful aid to network/route planning and should be reflected in assessments of network and route capability as determinants of the ability of the bus network to meet its wider objectives. The current consultation process does not seem to allow for this role to be integrated in a meaningful way.

19. The perception of boroughs is that the current consultation process for route changes is focused solely on the (often very minor) changes proposed. TfL has often argued that they undertake a long thorough analysis before the actual consultation. However, the results of this analysis do not seem to be communicated properly to boroughs. The formal consultation often focuses on route by route planning and micro-level changes to the existing network, and misses the opportunities that an integrated approach to route plan-

ning across a network or in a corridor would bring. The limited nature of the consultations is seen as leading to unintended consequences in terms of the management of kerb space and 'over-bussing' on certain sections of key corridors.

20. Also, the current bus network planning process seems to focus on existing users, which means that opportunities to encourage non-users to make bus journeys can be missed. The bus planning guidelines focus on meeting current passenger demand rather than seeking to tap into new markets.

21. **Recommendations:**

    h. TfL should consider boroughs as a discrete set of stakeholders in route planning consultations.

    i. TfL should put in place a methodology for sharing and interpreting data used in bus route planning to improve mutual understanding and allow boroughs to take an informed view on requests for change. This process should be well-evidenced, robust and transparent for all stakeholders.

    j. TfL should develop a more integrated approach to route planning that considers a full range of movement issues and local factors.

Corridor/Area-based Approach

22. As stated above, boroughs are of the general view that the current largely radial network and the 'route-by-route' planning process leads to bus overlapping on certain routes ('mini-Oxford Streets'). While TfL often argues that the bus network is "under constant review", the boroughs' impression is that services are only reviewed when the contracts are due for renewal. On these occasions, boroughs are informed that the 'contract review' includes a strategic approach and assessment of the wider bus network, but the strategic angle is not always evident in the review process. The questions in the bus consultations usually refer to on-going issues or concerns on the route (reliability, overcrowding etc.), with the assumption that the actual routing, as well as origin and destination will be retained. There is little opportunity to question the desirability of the route itself.

23. According to boroughs, the current approach has many shortfalls including the lack of any real holistic planning for an area and the difficulties to make substantive required changes that complement each other. The consequences of such changes do not seem to be thoroughly assessed. For example, where a route has demonstrated a need for more capacity, TfL change the buses from single to double decker without fully exploring some of the implications such as overlooking issues, road space and bus stop suitability.

24. Boroughs have long advocated for area-based bus planning. They would like to see a shift towards a more strategic corridor approach which combines effective route planning and better consideration of the local socio-economic picture.

25. The current bus planning approach seems to lack integration with planning for other modes, including the switch to walking and cycling. Bus provision (bus lanes, bus stops and frequency) is sometimes a barrier on some routes. This has become apparent in the plans for a Cycling Grid in Central London being developed as a result of the Mayors' Cycling Vision. Similarly, boroughs may want to address safety issues, including safe crossing points, speed limits, and provision for cyclists, but proposals for improvements are sometimes difficult to reconcile with other demands on the network, including buses.

26. A corridor/area-based approach should therefore cover all travel options, with the aim of understanding travel demand in a catchment area. It would take into account TfL bus planning guidelines, TfL and boroughs' transport policies, borough intelligence on land-use planning and socio-economic factors for the corridor/area under review, including the views of their local transport users' groups.

27. The Wembley Bus Strategy could be considered as an example of an area-based approach. Using external consultants to prepare the report, the process involved officers in London borough of Brent and TfL's (bus) Network Development (ND) team. A similar approach was successfully tried in Park Royal industrial area in North West London. However, these practices do not seem to have been embedded in TfL's bus planning practices and certainly do not consider other travel options. The strategic bus review currently being undertaken by the London Borough of Enfield could also serve as a model for future corridor/area-based reviews.

28. A strategic corridor/area-based approach would also be more consistent with the [Mayor's vision and direction for London's streets and roads](#) (Roads Task Force report, July 2013) to create world-class places and efficient and effective transport networks. This approach could potentially lead to more coherent urban development, strengthening the functions of high streets and town centres and linking these at a sub-regional level. Such an approach would also help to coordinate public realm upgrades and ease competition for kerb space (e.g. bus stops and street furniture). As regards bus stands, some boroughs are concerned over the frequency of bus stops and siting availability. Whilst acknowledging the work TfL is doing through its bus stop accessibility programme, better consideration of the environmental and amenity issues is also needed, particularly in residential or local shopping areas.

29. In July 2013, London Councils published ["Streets Ahead? – Putting high streets at the heart of economic growth"](#) which highlights the need for co-designing integrated local transport systems and, where appropriate, devolving some functions to boroughs. The report includes the following two recommendations for TfL:

    - Boroughs need greater power to harmonise transport controls, for example over parking management and enforcement, bus stops and routes on TfL roads to ensure the best balance between smoothing traffic flow and keeping vitality in shopping parades.

    - The impact of upgrades on high street businesses should be limited, by TfL, through better consultation with boroughs and local businesses.

30. The JMP research included a review of the "*Guidelines for Planning Bus Services*" issued by TfL in August 2012. These guidelines brought greater clarity to boroughs, however, they can be interpreted as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to bus planning. While the guidelines provide pan-London clarity, they are sometimes seen by boroughs as a barrier to the development of local solutions. The guidelines appear limited in scope and would benefit from:

    - greater clarity on how the five network requirements (frequent, reliable, simple, comprehensive and cost-effective) interact with one another

    - greater detail on the assessment of non-financial benefits of changes to the bus network

    - the recognition of non-TfL specific policy areas such as land use planning and economic activity and a mechanism for assessing what value a bus network change would bring to these areas.

31. Arguably, for the most part, TfL delivers a good service against the five network requirements and most bus passengers are well served compared to anywhere else in the UK. Although the route network has been relatively static in recent years there has in the past been significant expansion of services to eliminate most network gaps, increase frequencies and shorten long routes to improve reliability. However, a deficiency of the Bus Service Planning Guidelines is that they are solely concerned with bus operational matters and, as pointed out above, do not consider wider external factors. Even though London Buses has long been a part of TfL, the perception of the boroughs is that a silo mentality persists and bus planning still appears to take place in a vacuum from wider strategic considerations. Oxford Street shows that where sufficient political pressure is brought to bear and bus planners are obliged to take account of external factors (air quality, environmental amenity, congestion etc.) the bus network can be altered to meet wider objectives.

32. Recommendations:

    k. Where conflicts exists, TfL should consider developing a series of corridor or area-based transport reviews covering, not only buses, but all travel options, with the aim of understanding travel demand in a catchment or growth area. This process would take into account TfL bus planning guidelines, TfL and boroughs' transport policies and borough intelligence on land-use planning, socio-economic factors and demographic data for the corridor/area under review.

    l. TfL should explore how the bus service planning guidelines could be tempered to produce outcomes more reflective of local or sub-regional circumstances. 'External' factors need to be properly and transparently assessed and weighted as part of the planning process. In addition to the existing operational criteria, the bus planning service guidelines should include additional criteria covering issues such as air quality, environmental impact, impact on traffic congestion, and synergy with rail services and other transport modes (walking and cycling).

    m. In line with London Councils' report on high streets, TfL should assess the current bus provision at high streets and develop integrated transport solutions that support high streets potential to derive local economic development.

Adapting to Changing Demand

33. London is a dynamic city - new schools are being built, NHS services are being reconfigured, new employment, housing or industrial sites are established - and all these have a bearing on bus demand.

34. Buses are the most easily adaptable form of public transport, which makes them very important for London boroughs, in particular with regards to their land use planning function. Currently the perception is that changes to bus routes are not implemented at the required pace or with the required input and engagement with borough officers. For example, most developments (newly located services, businesses or housing) are phased, but public transport is needed from day one. Boroughs find it difficult to attract developers without good bus links being in existence.

35. Better strategic planning would help with early identification of demand from growth areas and other new developments. This would also avoid requests for bus service contributions in relation to new developments coming as a surprise to boroughs.

36. In response to this issue, TfL representatives have often highlighted the need for increased operational costs caused by route changes to be met out of additional income. It was suggested by some boroughs that planning obligations e.g. secured through section 106 funding could be used to facilitate low risk changes to the network.

37. There is concern among London boroughs that transport accessibility is not being factored in sufficiently through the NHS reconfiguration process. In North London, the Barnet, Enfield, and Haringey Clinical Strategy Transport Workstream are a sub-regional transport working group looking at hospital reconfiguration. In their local area, the current proposals to centralise Accident and Emergency (A&E) and consultant led maternity and children's services into two hospitals, Barnet General and North Middlesex University Hospital would result in large numbers of patients, their families and carers travelling much further across boroughs in directions and along routes most poorly served by the infrastructure of roads and public transport. The group is currently mapping transport accessibility on a ward basis and feeding this information in to TfL's public transport provision modelling.

38. With regard to schools, some boroughs are facing a significant increasing demand for school places and therefore are starting to deliver new schools to meet Mayoral objectives. How-

ever, current bus planning processes seem inflexible in terms of supporting the transport needs of these developments.

39. London Councils are of the opinion that, for significant developments or major changes in public services configuration, a route planning exercise should be conducted by TfL in partnership with boroughs and relevant service providers at the planning stage. This exercise would support faster implementation of a suitable network when developments/changes are committed.

40. Recommendations:

n. Early engagement between borough land use planning teams and TfL's bus service planners should be established in order to shape the bus network in response to planning policy and/or changes to specific services.

o. In conjunction with boroughs and relevant service providers, TfL should consider undertaking specific area-based route planning exercises when significant developments or major changes in services configurations (e.g. NHS re-configuration, schools) take place. This would result in an improved route structure that responds to local needs.

p. TfL should explore how the transport accessibility exercise undertaken in North London can be replicated across London.

Question 3: How are the Mayor and TfL meeting the growth in demand for bus travel without any expansion of the bus network?

Strategic Bus Reviews

41. The challenges from growth in demand for bus travel arise from high projections for both population and economic growth. London's population grew by more than one million people between the censuses in 2001 and 2011 and is projected to increase again to nine million by 2021, and almost 10 million by 2031. This scale of growth will exercise great pressure on the bus network.

42. The vital contribution the bus network makes to support economic development and regeneration in London is seen by boroughs as a fundamental basis for network and route planning. As highlighted in the Mayor's Transport 2020 vision, there is a need for a long term strategy to support growth in London. Major transport infrastructure projects are taking place now and in the future (Crossrail, Crossrail 2, Thameslink...), and the bus network should be integral to this long term strategy.

43. Currently, it appears that growth in demand is being met by incremental, route-by-route changes, primarily via:

- seeking funding to cover additional route mileage from third parties

- increasing service frequency

- increasing bus route capacity through changes from single to double decker buses

- seeking better efficiency in bus running and routes.

44. TfL seems to be coping with growth for the moment but given the requirement for a zero increase in bus mileage, the pressure in bus demand will be much higher in the future. TfL, in conjunction with boroughs, will have to develop more innovative and holistic schemes that enable the bus network to adapt to fluctuating demands from different areas and complement other transport modes (rail, walking, cycling...). For example, TfL could explore opportunities for shifting capacity between routes where there is perhaps a route with less

demand at a certain time of day. Also, many London bus routes are quite long and may be overcrowded at just one part of the route only. Shorter routes would enable a variable frequency to be introduced, but this should be accompanied by the introduction of transferable ticketing (see section on ticketing policy below).

45. Recommendations:

q. In conjunction with boroughs, TfL should consider developing more innovative and holistic schemes to make the bus network more flexible to changes in demand.

r. TfL should undertake a review or a series of reviews of bus utilisation to ensure that vehicles are deployed where and when extra capacity is required and to reduce over-bussing in other areas, particularly those where increased priority is required for cyclists and pedestrians.

Question 4: What, if any, other actions could the Mayor and TfL take to improve the planning and provision of bus services now and in the future to meet demand more effectively?

46. Some of the options for improving the planning and provision of bus services have already been mentioned in our responses to Questions 1-3.

47. It is essential that a multi-modal approach is taken by the Mayor, TfL and boroughs. There has been a significant increase in cycling and walking in recent years and this growth is expected to continue. In order to provide safe and environmentally friendly conditions for these vulnerable road users the limited road space will need to be prioritised for different users. Motor vehicles, including buses, may have to be reduced in number or restricted from certain streets at certain times. For example, Central London is served by a dense bus network with relatively short walking distances between parallel routes and there may be opportunities to rationalise the number of routes and streets served as part of an overall strategy to provide better conditions for all road users.

48. In addition, there may be a rationale for greater direct involvement from the boroughs (and potentially other stakeholders such as businesses and groups such as NHS, particularly given looming reorganisations) in bus service commissioning.

49. Other actions that TfL could consider to meet demand more effectively are described below.

Better Links to Local Plans

50. The need to use the bus network as a tool to support the economic development and regeneration of London now and in the future is seen by boroughs as a fundamental basis for network and route planning. London boroughs are planning for population and employment growth through their Local Plans (LPs), giving a clear guide on the pattern of development and the expectations placed on the bus network to serve it. For example, in some industrial states, bus provision is quite limited which impacts on the ability of poorer communities to access jobs.

51. The consensus view offered by boroughs is that the bus network should be seen as a catalyst for new development and job creation. The recent approach by TfL to planning of the bus network post-Crossrail, which involved detailed discussions of the strategic impact on the bus network of Crossrail, was highlighted as a good step forward and a model for future collaboration. The only drawback in this process is the timeframe of this planning exercise. TfL will not review the bus service provision until at least two years prior to operation of Crossrail services, yet Boroughs have funding available to deliver wider station enhancements well in advance of this and are often having to deliver measures "blind" of what buses may wish to do in future with services around these stations.

52. There needs to be far more regular and joined up work between the boroughs and TfL to seek betterment to existing bus provision as well as more regular future planning of the network. TfL Buses should actively seek to engage with boroughs when these start preparing their Local Implementation Plans (LIPs). TfL Buses could then build their aspirations into these plans which map out local aspirations and schemes over a three year period. This process would also help TfL to better acknowledge the benefits of the schemes delivered by boroughs in terms of reduced bus journey times and/or improved operation through junction enhancements, better road safety etc. These benefits should be accounted for in the bus planning processes and documented as case examples.

53. **Recommendation:**

    s. TfL and boroughs should explore better linkages between local partnerships and bus planning to cater for current and future needs. The preparation of the Local Implementation Plans is an opportunity to strengthen these links.

    t. TfL, in conjunction with boroughs, should strengthen the link between improving bus access to business and industrial estates and the ability for lower income employees to access jobs and / or training.

Orbital and Express Routes

54. The 2008 Mayor's manifesto promised to introduce more limited stop services and orbital routes in outer London. The X26 service is often mentioned as the only truly orbital express bus service, but there seems to be no desire to replicate this model elsewhere.

55. London boroughs see a need for orbital type services rather than the strict focus on a radial layout which further concentrates traffic in central London. Boroughs are of the opinion that there are an excess number of buses along certain roads and this could potentially be addressed in the future through reducing the frequency of some services and introducing express routes/orbital routes.

56. TfL's current appraisal system within the bus service planning guidelines, which assesses the value for money of investments in new bus services, may, in certain circumstances, produce unfavourable results for orbital routes, where passenger numbers may be lower but the value of interchange and access to local centres may be high. This suggests that an analysis framework that considers matters on a geographical area basis and reflects the different types of journey that radial routes would encourage would be appropriate and allow a more flexible / lower cost response to be developed.

57. While the concept of express running may cause some confusion to the travelling public, there will be circumstances that suggest limited stop express services to be appropriate. Express services could be a differentiated product, providing users with a type and quality of service that could be priced differently. For example, the X26 route could have a premium fare (as the old 726 used to) to differentiate it as an express orbital airport service and deter short hop usage which congests it. There is scope for more such services.

58. Also, given that rail services are often overcrowded and require long term investment before this situation can be addressed, TfL should consider introducing bus services serving a similar rail route. For example, in North West London, new (possibly limited stop) services could benefit by use of key routes such as the M4 or A40.

59. Boroughs would appreciate clarity on how TfL models trips when building a business case for express or orbital services. It is not clear whether the model assumes that an express or orbital service would simply extract patronage from the standard service or whether it takes into account potential new users and trips generated by the new service.

60. Recommendations:

    u. In order to cope with greater demand in the future, TfL should explore options for orbital and express routes. Express services, for example, have the potential to be a differentiated product, providing users with a type and quality of service that could be priced differently.

    v. Boroughs would appreciate clarity on how TfL models trips when building a business case for express or orbital services.

Depots and Garages

61. Boroughs have concerns about TfL Buses approach of allowing operators to source their own depots. Once established with a depot serving a portfolio of key routes in a given locale, an operator effectively has a dominant local position. Given the pressure for space in London, it is unlikely that any new entrant will be able to secure tenure of a suitable site in as favourable a location that allows them to compete as tenders are issued.

62. If TfL directly owned and leased a constellation of such depots and sought to tender all bus routes serving out of them at the same time, this would provide a level playing field across all such operators. Whilst there are clearly risks associated with owning your own asset it would at least be wise to see these clearly assessed in a transparent way and contrasted with the possible savings. The London Borough of Hounslow has expressed their interested in piloting such an approach to bus infrastructure ownership in their authority and have actively supported TfL in locating potential sites; however there seems to be little appetite for such endeavours amongst TfL Buses.

63. Also, the impact of buses on local residents who live close to garages or on routes used for 'dead running' (out of service) is also an issue of concern raised by some boroughs.

64. Recommendations:

    w. TfL should assess the impact of their approach towards the location of depots and the implications it may have in tendering processes and on the neighbouring communities.

    x. TfL should assess the feasibility of piloting the approach to bus infrastructure ownership suggested by Hounslow.

Fairer Fares

65. Given the role of boroughs in economic development and the social welfare of residents, a number of boroughs highlighted ticketing policy as a concern. The principle issue relates to the ability of lower income groups to purchase Oyster cards, bus passes or Travelcards and the penalty thus imposed for interchange by cash fare. For example, one can travel from an outer borough town centre to central London for £1.40 which could take at least an hour, but a short journey in the borough involving two buses costs £2.80 on Oyster, more with cash.

66. This lack of 'through' tickets for using more than one bus or change from bus to tube seems unfair and does not encourage multi-modality. Free transfer between bus services is only allowed for passengers with travel cards or bus passes. Passengers without pre-paid cards or those using a pay-as-you-go Oyster card have to pay again if boarding another bus. The limitations of the current fares and ticketing system significantly hinder innovative route structures. Boroughs would welcome consideration of a fares system which allows free transfers within a particular time (at least one hour) of a ticket purchase. Such policy would encourage multi-modality, in particular for workers on low incomes who are already experiencing financial difficulties associated with travel costs.

67. The consultation published by TfL, on 19 August 2013, proposing to introduce cashless bus services in 2014, provide an opportunity for TfL look at this again i.e. Oyster Cards could cap fares both by time and by number of journeys made.

68. Recommendations:

y.   The future development of TfL's ticketing policy should be more inclusive and equitable and include consideration of a system that allows free transfers within a certain time period (at least one hour) of a ticket purchase, to ensure that passengers are not disadvantaged for journeys that cannot be made by direct bus.

z.   TfL should review fare ticketing as part of its consultation on cashless bus services.

Summary

69. London Councils welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the London Assembly Transport Committee investigation into bus services in London. Hopefully the outcomes of this investigation will acknowledge the excellent service that is currently offered to Londoners but also take stock of the areas for improvement required now and in the future.

70. Our recommendations aim to help make the bus network more responsive to current and future demand, encouraging more travel by this mode. Primarily, they recognise the need for smarter and more effective working relationships between TfL and boroughs. Through area-based/corridor approaches, the bus network has the potential to fulfil its role not only as part of the transport network but also as a catalyst for economic development, social cohesion and enhancement of the public realm. More integration between buses and other transport modes and innovative schemes that enable London to meet its growing demand will need to be put in place if London is to continue having a world-class bus service in the future.

Annex A – An A-Z of Recommendations to Improve Bus Services in London

Overcrowding

a. TfL should provide detailed information on current bus crowding levels as well as projections on future passenger overcrowding across the bus network.

b. London Councils would welcome an assessment of the levels of overlapping between different bus routes ('over-bussing') and how these influence traffic congestion.

c. This information should be made available to boroughs so that informed discussions on necessary improvements to the network can be taken forward not only by TfL but the boroughs themselves (e.g. through the s106/CIL).

Better Engagement

d. TfL should explore how improved liaison can be brought to the multi-modal sub-regional structures (North, West, East, Central and South).

e. TfL should give a greater role to boroughs, in particular at middle management level, in the analysis and decision making process.

f. Existing examples of good TfL/borough relationship should be used as a template for developing improved methods of liaison.

g. TfL should continue the network development and consultation seminars that had been organised in the past and include intelligence sharing sessions to help improve communication.

More Transparency and Consultation

h. TfL should consider boroughs as a discrete set of stakeholders in route planning consultations.

i. TfL should put in place a methodology for sharing and interpreting data used in bus route planning to improve mutual understanding and allow boroughs to take an informed view on requests for change. This process should be well-evidenced, robust and transparent for all stakeholders.

j. TfL should develop a more integrated approach to route planning that considers a full range of movement issues and local factors.

Corridor/Area-based Approach

k. Where conflicts exists, TfL should consider developing a series of corridor or area-based transport reviews covering all travel options, with the aim of understanding travel demand in a catchment or growth area. This process would take into account TfL bus planning guidelines, TfL and boroughs' transport policies and borough intelligence on land-use planning, socio-economic factors and demographic data for the corridor/area under review.

l. TfL should explore how the bus service planning guidelines could be tempered to produce outcomes more reflective of local or sub-regional circumstances. 'External' factors need to be properly and transparently assessed and weighted as part of the planning process. In addition to the existing operational criteria, the bus planning service guidelines should include additional criteria covering issues such as air quality, environmental impact, impact on traffic congestion, and synergy with rail services and other transport modes (walking and cycling).

m. In line with London Councils' report on high streets, TfL should assess the current bus provision at high streets and develop integrated transport solutions that support high streets potential to derive local economic development.

Adapting to Changing Demand

n. Early engagement between borough land use planning teams and TfL's bus service planners should be established in order to shape the bus network in response to planning policy and/or changes to specific services.

o. In conjunction with boroughs and relevant service providers, TfL should consider undertaking specific area-based route planning exercises when significant developments or major changes in services configurations (e.g. NHS re-configuration, schools) take place. This would result in an improved route structure that responds to local needs.

p. TfL should explore how the transport accessibility exercise undertaken in North London can be replicated across London.

Strategic Bus Reviews

q. In conjunction with boroughs, TfL should consider developing more innovative and holistic schemes to make the bus network more flexible to changes in demand.

r. TfL should undertake a review or a series of reviews of bus utilisation to ensure that vehicles are deployed where and when extra capacity is required and to reduce over-bussing in other areas, particularly those where increased priority is required for cyclists and pedestrians.

Better Links to Local Plans

s. TfL and boroughs should explore better linkages between local partnerships and bus planning to cater for current and future needs. The preparation of the Local Implementation Plans is an opportunity to strengthen these links.

t. TfL, in conjunction with boroughs, should strengthen the link between improving bus access to business and industrial estates and the ability for lower income employees to access jobs and/or training

Orbital and Express Routes

u. In order to cope with greater demand in the future, TfL should explore options for orbital and express routes. Express services, for example, have the potential to be a differentiated product, providing users with a type and quality of service that could be priced differently.

v. Boroughs would appreciate clarity on how TfL models trips when building a business case for express or orbital services.

Depots and Garages

w. TfL should assess the impact of their approach towards the location of depots and the implications it may have in tendering processes and on the neighbouring communities.

x. TfL should assess the feasibility of piloting the approach to bus infrastructure ownership suggested by Hounslow.

Fairer Fares

y. The future development of TfL's ticketing policy should be more inclusive and equitable and include consideration of a system that allows free transfers within a certain time period (at least one hour) of a ticket purchase, to ensure that passengers are not disadvantaged for journeys that cannot be made by direct bus.

z. TfL should review fare ticketing as part of its consultation on cashless bus services.