

WANDSWORTH COUNCIL MOBILITY FORUM – 21 May 2015: 6-8pm

MINUTES

ATTENDEES
Faryal Velmi – Director of Transport for All (CHAIR)
Manuel Button – Wandsworth Community Transport
Richard Kempton – South West Trains
Andy Harrowell – Southern Railway
Hannah Davies – London Councils (Freedom Pass)
Kate Moucher – London Councils (Taxicard)
Alan McDonald - Computer Cab / CityFleet.
Kerry Lee – Regional Manager of Dial-a-Ride
Peter Fletcher – TfL Senior Communications Manager
Faith Martin – Transport for London
Flora Walker – London Transport Museum
Jane Greatholder – Wandsworth Council, School Travel Co-ordinator
John Slaughter – Wandsworth Council, Mobility Forum Convenor
Norma White - Palantypist
Michelle Albury
Esther Bentil
Ian Beaton
Fitzroy Beckford – TFA/TGDEE
Philippa Brooks – Wandsworth Carers' Centre
Jacqui Bowers
Ray Carberry
Tom Cox – Wandsworth Elderly Persons Forum
Angela Gayton
Laurence Gayton
Barbara Madeloff
Rida Nicholson - WAA
John Parfitt - WAA
Sejal Patel - Wandsworth Access Association

Sue Pitt
Edward Slyfield
David Smith – Connor Court Residents’ Association
Jim South – WAA
Tumaris Sylvester - HAIL

APOLOGIES

Councillors Grimston, McDermott, Salier, & Stokes
Richard Tracey – London Assembly Member
Rosemary Welchman
Sam Russell - LOROL
William Foxtton
Joyce Mamode – TfL Dial-a-Ride
Sarah Varnham - TfL
Maria Oshodi
Eleanor Thain – Disability Information Manager
Mary Prior – St George’s Hospital

1. YOUTH TRAVEL AMBASSADORS - Flora Walker, London Transport Museum

Following complaints at an earlier Forum concerning the intimidation experienced by some mobility impaired people when travelling with boisterous school children, Flora explained their “Youth Travel Ambassadors” project they are developing with school children, and in particular at Burntwood school in this borough. A group of children at the school have formed a team to recommend practical ways of improving their colleagues’ travel behaviour, and they are inviting mobility impaired volunteers from the Forum to share their experiences and get involved with their work. It is planned to present this work to a future Forum. Michelle would be interested in participating in this.

ACTION - Flora

2. RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIRS IN TAXIS & DIAL-A-RIDE VEHICLES – Kate Mouncher and Hannah Davies, London Councils, and Alan McDonald - Computer Cab / CityFleet

This item was prompted by a letter from London Councils to potential electric wheelchair users to remind them of the way wheelchairs have to be secured. There has not been a change of policy. If wheelchairs cannot fit into the required position, facing to the rear, then the taxi driver is not legally allowed to take them. Consequently some users are unable to use the Taxicard service, although they are automatically eligible for TfL's Dial-a-Ride service. However, access to Dial-a-Ride is restricted by the need to book in advance and on the availability of vehicles. It was claimed that this is further restricting customers' mobility, removing choice, and that situations arise when they can book a trip one way, and then cannot get a return trip.

ACTION - AM to clarify size limits of wheelchairs using taxis, as there is no standard to refer to.

The alternative of TfL's travel mentoring service was suggested, to provide assistance to use public transport. Another suggestion was that it would be fairer if people were given personal travel budgets to spend on the most suitable form of transport appropriate to their needs. A new larger form of taxi (the Metro Cab) is under development which should be better suited to wheelchairs.

TfL are planning to consult users of taxis and private hire vehicles about driver training later this year. KM confirmed she would also like to engage with users on ideas to improve services.

3. DIAL-A-RIDE UPDATE – Kerry Lee, TfL

Dial-a-Ride met their targets in the last year, and currently has a freeze on recruiting new drivers. All drivers are undertaking a refresher course on manual handling, including securing wheelchairs in buses.

FREEDOM PASS – Kerry Lee, TfL

The renewal of Freedom Passes earlier this year was discussed, along with the restrictions on use before 09.30 on national rail services. Freedom Passes can also be used on local bus services elsewhere in England. The scheme is administered by London Councils. A request was made for blind people to be contacted by a means other than a letter.

4. STREET FURNITURE ISSUES – Richard Holmes, Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

RH introduced their campaign, “Who put that there?”, against footway clutter, such as A-boards, tables and chairs outside pubs and restaurants, cars parked on the footway, bicycles laying on the ground and low tree branches. The route to Wandsworth Town Station was highlighted as typical of the problems experienced by blind pedestrians. The report aims to promote good practice and to encourage Councils to sign up to this, to become good examples to other authorities. TfL’s policy of zero-tolerance of A-boards was cited as an example of good practice. Wandsworth Council was also cited as being very helpful.

5. MAKING STREETS ACCESSIBLE – Faith Martin, TfL

FM described draft pedestrian design guidance, responding in part to the issues raised above by the RNIB report. The guidance concerns the needs of not only blind pedestrians but of all sorts of pedestrians, and also the locations of crossings and types of crossing required. 95% of TfL’s signalised crossings are “accessible”, with tactile paving, rotating cones and audible signals where appropriate. Non-signalised crossings are also being examined. Street designs are only developed after careful assessment of the nature of the area and its needs.

6. TFL ISSUES – Peter Fletcher

The following updates were given:-

- TfL’s new publication “Your Accessible Transport Network – May 2015 Update”, providing information on the latest facilities for the mobility impaired.

- TfL's consultation on new night bus services to support their Night Tube proposals: in Wandsworth only route 319 is affected, which would become a 24 hour service.
- TfL are investigating how to improve accessibility difficulties at the eastbound bus stop for Tooting Bec Station, on Trinity Road.
- The competition on buses between wheelchair users, buggies and other passengers. TfL are adopting a two-pronged approach aimed at the design of buggies and further training of bus drivers to give priority to wheelchairs. See also item 8 below.
- TfL's priorities in making Tube Stations fully accessible, and the recent announcement by TfL of a £76m Partnership Fund to undertake joint projects with development partners.
- Complaints about bus drivers pulling away before infirm passengers have taken a seat will be addressed by further bus driver training.
- The next Sub-Mobility Forum will be on 4th June 2015 at the Victoria Plaza Hotel.

7. RAIL UPDATE: SOUTHERN RAILWAY - Andy Harrowell

Southern Railway and South West Trains are participating in a 6 month trial at 36 national rail stations of a "turn-up-and-go" service for mobility impaired passengers, whereby they no longer need to book travel 24 hours ahead. Two stations in this borough are involved – Clapham Junction and Balham. Others close by include Waterloo, Victoria, Wimbledon, Streatham Common, Streatham Hill and Mitcham Eastfields.

It was explained that the parent company of Southern (Go-Ahead) had won the new Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) franchise, which would bring together Southern, Gatwick Express, Thameslink (ex-First Capital Connect) and Great Northern into one large franchise. This would allow timetables to be rationalised.

Southern are undertaking innovative work on installing hearing loops to cover a much wider area of stations and shelters than

previously. They are also undertaking team briefings on disability issues and interviewing disabled passengers to get feedback on their experiences.

Other issues raised included the problem of Southern trains skipping stops to catch up on their schedules after delays, the planned provision of new handrails at Wandsworth Common station in the coming year, and a request for more “changing places” toilets.

SOUTH WEST TRAINS (SWT) – Richard Kempton

SWT are involved in a project with the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) to develop a new training package of disability awareness training for staff. They are also developing awareness training on vulnerable people using their network.

There was a complaint about the use of “local” trains on long journeys to Bournemouth, which have inadequate leg room and on which it is difficult to manoeuvre wheel chairs between seats to access toilets. RK said it is not possible to warn passengers in advance of which type of coaches will form a train.

There was also a complaint from a blind person about the absence of announcements for London-bound trains at Barnes Station, and on trains from here to Waterloo.

ACTION – RK to investigate

Another complaint concerned the stepping distances between train and platform at Clapham Junction and Putney, and the difficulty of finding staff for assistance.

8. PAN-LONDON MOBILITY FORUM UPDATE – Faryal Velmi, Transport for All (TfA)

Over 20 boroughs were represented. The Forum heard from Douglas Pauly, from Leeds, who took First Bus to court after being left behind by a bus because the bus driver would not ask

for a pushchair on the bus to be moved to allow Mr Paully's wheelchair to be accommodated in the designated area. Also attending was Lord Holmes, a disability commissioner and member of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, who helps on disability issues.

There was also a report on the rolling out of manual boarding ramps on the Tube for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. TfA want to see more national rail stations providing "turn-up-and-go" services, beyond the 36 being trialled at present.

9. SHOPMOBILITY UPDATE – Manuel Button, Wandsworth Community Transport

Shopmobility has been operating successfully now for eight or nine months at the new Sainsbury store in Wandsworth.

10 ISSUES RAISED BY THE COUNCIL'S PASSENGER TRANSPORT LIAISON GROUP (PTLG)

See hand-out circulated at the meeting: copies available from John Slaughter. There has been particular discussion about overcrowding on trains (eg at Wandsworth Town) and buses.

11. OUTSTANDING ISSUES / MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING

The issue of cyclists and pedestrian conflict in Priory Lane remains outstanding, and is a particular issue for the blind. Also outstanding is a response from St George's Hospital to the TfA report on hospital transport.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 19th November 2015, later changed to **Thursday 3rd December 2015, at 2pm.**