

European Commission consultation on the “Future of Transport” Submission from Transport for London

1. Introduction

Transport for London (TfL) is the integrated statutory body responsible for London’s transport system. It came into existence in July 2000 as a result of the Greater London Authority Act 1999. It is a functional body of the Greater London Authority and reports to the Mayor of London. TfL’s role is to implement the Mayor’s Transport Strategy and to manage the transport operations for which the Mayor is responsible. The Act merged 14 predecessor entities into a single organisation able to take a holistic view of London’s transport needs.

TfL manages London’s buses, trams, Underground services (the Tube), the Docklands Light Railway, river services, licenses London’s black cabs and mini cabs, is responsible for London’s major highways including all of London’s 6,000 traffic signals, and promotes cycling and walking initiatives. In November 2007, TfL became responsible for the new London Overground suburban train services which operate on the north London rail network. TfL also provides funding (circa £161m 2008/09) to London’s 33 borough councils for local transport schemes.

TfL welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Commission’s debate on the “Future of Transport”. TfL would be pleased to expand on the ideas in this paper and participate in a wider dialogue with the Commission as it prepares for the Communication in the summer and next year’s White Paper.

2. Context

A European strategy for transport must take into account the importance of cities: not only do most journeys begin and / or end in cities, most EU citizens live in cities and most economic activity takes place in cities. Urban transport is one of the key factors making cities vibrant, dynamic environments; they are vital nodes in wider transport journeys. Nothing else can connect people and businesses in the same way as urban transport.

London has a population of seven and a half million people. Every weekday there are more than 27 million journeys on all transport modes in the city. Over half of all rail journeys in the UK begin or end in London. TfL’s passengers expect high frequency, good value services and are used to combining several modes of transport, often for very short distances in the same trip: for example the average journey distance on a London bus is 3.7km. Every year the Tube carries more than a billion passengers; the bus system almost two billion; and there are an increasing number of cyclists.

3. Cities’ role in economic development

Cities, as the Green Paper ‘Towards a new culture for urban mobility’ points out, are powerhouses of Europe’s economy. For centuries people have lived together for mutual benefit. Improved transport to towns and cities allows accessibility to a wider volume of goods, services, and labour. The expansion of a catchment area facilitates a higher level of activity; it allows

concentrations of industries and services, whether in bigger companies or clusters, to take advantage of economies of scale. Economies of scale reduce costs and lead to higher productivity i.e. they boost economic growth.

Many of Europe's big cities demonstrate these productivity increases when businesses cluster together. London is no exception, having the highest productivity in the UK. In London, the Docklands development based around Canary Wharf is an example. It was facilitated by the Jubilee Line Extension and the Docklands Light Railway. Without these transport links, economic development and regeneration would have been impossible. This economic argument for agglomeration successfully made the case for the Crossrail scheme, a high capacity east-west rail line which will increase London's rail-based passenger transport capacity by 10% when it opens in 2017.

4.1 Future challenges for urban transport

Some of the challenges facing London are common to many of Europe's cities: saturation on public transport networks; crowded pavements; poor air quality; road traffic congestion; and competition for limited road space. This puts tremendous pressure on city environments.

4.2 The growth of cities

If London continues to grow at its present rate, by 2025 it will have added a population the size of Amsterdam. This will inevitably lead to a significant increase in the demand for travel of every sort, and if this challenge is not met, economic growth and the quality of life for Londoners will be affected. This requires a clear strategy underpinned by sustainability principles. Sustainable urban transport plans are an important tool in developing such a strategy. In London the existence of such a plan has been important in shaping transport and wider strategies. It has also been crucial in securing long-term funding to deliver public transport capacity increases and real improvements for walking and cycling. It is this strategic, integrated approach that has enabled London to achieve a 5% shift from the private car to public transport, walking and cycling since 2000.

Although TfL does not believe that sustainable urban transport plans should be mandatory for every city, the Commission should encourage their development and offer guidance on the key elements to be considered, drawing on best practice from across the EU. A key part of this should be a close link with land use planning. TfL is currently preparing a revision of the Mayor's Transport Strategy alongside a major review of the spatial development strategy (the London Plan) and a new Economic Development Strategy, as a suite of policies set out by the new Mayor of London. Work on these three strategies is taking place simultaneously. Draft versions will be published for consultation at around the same time to allow a considered debate on the wider issues facing cities like London.

4.3 Transport for all

Urban transport must be accessible to everyone, especially those people with reduced mobility. Great progress has been made in opening up public transport; all of London's buses are low-floor with ramps, for example. Whilst

problems remain with adapting fixed infrastructure built many years ago like metro systems, most cities are like London increasing the number of step-free stations.

On the wider point of transport for all, public transport provides access to essential services like education, health and employment and is a catalyst for attracting economic regeneration to deprived areas. The Commission's future transport strategy must ensure that a joined-up approach to tackling these issues is adopted.

4.4 Environment and climate change

Cities have a key role to play in reaching the EU's ambitious CO₂ reduction targets. In London the previous Mayor set a target of a 60% reduction in total CO₂ emissions from 1990 levels by 2025. The new Mayor has reaffirmed it. London is committed to working with other cities around the world to combat climate change. Initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors, facilitated by the Commission, are to be welcomed. London's participation is a signal of its commitment.

TfL itself has a range of initiatives to reduce emissions, such as new technologies like hybrid buses which are 30% more energy efficient. However, TfL realises that public transport has to do more and that society needs to move as quickly as possible to electric vehicles, something that London's new Mayor is especially keen on. TfL believes that the development of a charging infrastructure based on common EU standards is essential if electric vehicles are to be widely adopted. There is an important role for the Commission in this field, not least through the use of EU funding to support the demonstration and roll-out of electric vehicles in cities. London is keen to participate in such initiatives.

4.5 Modal shift

Modal shift remains a key challenge for urban mobility, not only for sustainability reasons but also to tackle the congestion and the demand for limited road space. Meeting the growth in the number of journeys will require more demand management and the use of market-based instruments to bring supply and demand into balance. It also requires policies of persuasion – "Smarter Travel" – encouraging people to walk and cycle, for their own health and the benefit of the city. London's 5% modal shift from private car to public and sustainable transport since 2000 has been achieved through a mix of policies; there is no single solution.

The use of market based-instruments – the Congestion Charge and Low Emission Zone – are just two of the mobility measures that London has adopted. Other cities have adopted schemes with similar aims. The common characteristic of these schemes is that they have been designed by the cities to tackle challenges in a way which meets their specific circumstances. There is not a standard market-based instrument solution for every city.

The Central London Congestion Charge has been successful in reducing the number of vehicles that enter the charging zone – a reduction of 21%

maintained since the scheme started in 2003. However, what works well in London might not necessarily work elsewhere. The success of the London scheme is a consequence of several factors: relatively simple technology, a well-developed public transport system and devolved government within the centralised British political system, to name just a few.

Given that cities will want to develop schemes which best meet their own unique challenges, this will most likely involve differences with other schemes, posing potential problems for vehicles moving between them. Whilst TfL would not support the harmonisation of schemes, it believes that cities should follow certain common principles such as using EURO emission standards when setting key criteria. Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) can play a useful role with satellite navigation systems programmed with information on different zones. A robust system of cross-border enforcement is an important factor in citizens' acceptance of market-based instruments.

The challenge for every city is maintaining – or growing – public and sustainable transport's modal share over longer periods. This can be achieved if public transport continually adapts to changing mobility needs and offers a viable alternative to private cars; if it is fully integrated with land use planning; and if it harnesses new technology to improve radically the journey experience. In London for example travel information via TfL's Journey Planner can be sent directly to mobile phones, email accounts, websites, blogs or iGoogle.

4.6 Freight

TfL recognises the importance of freight in a holistic approach to urban mobility. TfL has been working closely with the freight industry on a range of initiatives including a comprehensive freight strategy. A recent initiative is a benchmarking system which allows freight operators to compare their performance and costs anonymously and instantly online with those of other operators in terms of fuel use, carbon dioxide emissions, collisions and fines and charges. The aim is that it will help operators improve their performance over time against these criteria. There are many other examples of best practice across the EU which the Commission is uniquely placed to promote.

4.7 Improving the journey experience

Public transport is about passengers; meeting their increasing expectations and radically improving their journey experience. This is one of TfL's priorities. In London passengers are less concerned about the mechanics of delivering urban mobility but focused on punctuality, reliability and the general appearance of vehicles and facilities. Equally they want an integrated service, one that is able to meet their changing mobility patterns. This means orbital routes in addition to traditional radial routes into city centres. TfL is beginning to address this with a suburban orbital rail service, London Overground, and in integrating services with the development of outer London centres. It also means 24-hour services.

Passengers want mobility that can be accessed using the same ticket, such as the Oyster card in London which has six million regular users. They also

want integrated travel planning such as TfL's Journey Planner (see 4.5) which includes walking and cycling options.

Improving the journey experience and investing in new technology requires major investment. TfL recognises the important role of the European Investment Bank in such finance, particularly during the current period of economic uncertainty.

5. Conclusion

The future European transport strategy has to be fully integrated with strategies for combating climate change and promoting growth and jobs. It must take greater account of the role of cities. Many of the challenges facing Europe in the field of transport and elsewhere cannot be addressed without action by city and regional authorities. The Commission has begun to acknowledge that cities need to be treated differently, in particular in its Green Paper on urban mobility and the expected Action Plan. TfL looks forward to seeing the latter finally adopted.

Cities also need to be more closely involved in the development of EU policy and legislation on subjects such as air quality, vehicle emissions, passenger rights and road safety. Up to now, cities have only been on the margins of these questions, even though they have profound implications for urban areas. Involving cities does not mean widening the scope of existing legislation, as often this will not work in an urban context. Rather it means developing new approaches and new solutions which are flexible enough to cope with the great diversity of European cities, and the lives of the people who live and work in them.

Looking to the future, TfL believes that Europe's future transport strategy should involve measures to:

- Move as quickly as possible to clean and electric vehicles and tackle environmental issues
- Encourage the management of demand by a range of policy tools including market-based instruments tailored to particular circumstances and by persuasion ("Smarter Travel") to incentivise a change in behaviour whilst respecting personal mobility choices
- Promote transport for all, particularly for those people with reduced mobility
- Take account of how technology will affect the way citizens live, work and use their leisure time and how public transport authorities can use it to revolutionise the delivery of ticketing and travel information
- Provide a better quality of life in terms of a dramatically improved journey experience, built environment, air quality, noise and health impacts
- Ensure safety and security in terms of the fear of crime, road safety and public transport safety
- Facilitate the funding of major infrastructure investments to enable sustainable transport to supply demand.

The urban dimension of the Commission's strategy should act as an enabler, to help cities achieve modal shift to sustainable modes and to help cities innovate. Although Europe's cities have individual challenges, they have much in common and much to learn from each other. In looking to the future, it is on this that TfL believes the Commission's 'Future of Transport' strategy must concentrate - promoting world class best practice and innovation in Europe's transport policy.

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