

Date: 14 September 2021

Item: Bus Driver Welfare

This paper will be considered in public

1 Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on workstreams in progress to improve bus driver welfare including the provision of toilets and bus driver welfare facilities (mess rooms).
- 1.2 Providing good bus driver facilities aligns with the Mayor's Transport Strategy by ensuring that the bus network is operationally efficient and reliable and therefore meets customer expectations (A Good Public Transport Experience: R2, Public transport reliability and performance). It is a commitment the Mayor reiterated in his recent election Manifesto. Fundamentally it is a basic human right that drivers should have access to toilets and welfare facilities to carry out their crucial role. Providing good quality facilities also helps support bus driver retention. We are committed to ensuring this is addressed.
- 1.3 The coronavirus pandemic has impacted the availability and capacity of existing driver welfare facilities. We have rapidly responded to address this by providing temporary toilets and expediting plans to provide more mess room capacity to allow social distancing.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Panel is asked to note the paper.**

3 Background

Bus driver toilets

- 3.1 Bus driver toilets are an integral part of running an efficient and safe bus network. Providing these facilities is as important as other bus infrastructure such as bus stops, shelters and stations. If we are unable to provide toilets we may, in some circumstances need to consider making changes to the bus network to ensure drivers have access to a toilet.
- 3.2 Routes are classified as either Priority 1, 2 or 3, depending on their current level of toilet provision, and the below table outlines the route prioritisation as agreed with all key stakeholders including Unite, the bus drivers' union recognised by the bus operators.

Table 1: Priority Classification

Priority	Description
1	Routes without any staff facilities at either terminus.
2	Routes that have limited access and run beyond the opening hours of the available facilities.
3	Routes with a round trip greater than 150 minutes with a toilet provision only at one end.
New	Sites where a route is being extended or introduced that do not have existing facilities.

Bus driver mess room relief facilities

- 3.3 Bus driver relief facilities are typically mess rooms, or quiet areas, where drivers can take a scheduled break. Relief facilities are provided in several different ways, predominantly though (a) and (b) below:
- (a) by bus operating companies, normally at bus garages;
 - (b) by bus operating companies through local informal agreements with businesses; and
 - (c) by TfL at key locations normally at bus stations, or large bus stands, where a significant number of routes terminate, and land is available.
- 3.4 There are 58 relief facilities that we provide for bus drivers across the network. We ensure these facilities are well maintained and renewed on a regular basis. However, many are now becoming life expired, or require capacity improvements, and action is required. We have therefore developed a prioritised forward programme of renewals, including capacity improvements, for locations where relief facilities are currently provided. We also ensure opportunities to provide new facilities are maximised through third party development obligations.
- 3.5 Following discussion with Unite and bus operators, we have updated our tender documents for bus contracts to be clearer on the minimum level of driver facilities to be provided.

4 Progress and Forward Programme

Bus driver toilets

4.1 Since 2018, there has been a step change in the delivery of bus driver toilets. A total of 61 bus routes have had new toilets installed. Fifty of these are on priority routes and a further 11 have been provided to support service changes. This is an unprecedented improvement – at the previous delivery rate it would have taken nine years to achieve. A list of the sites and routes is included in Appendix 1.

4.2 However, there is more to do, in terms of both the size of the facilities (number of actual toilets and sinks) and their condition. In 2021/22 we have the following activity planned to improve the provision of bus driver toilets:

- (a) 10 targeted toilet renewals to address condition issues at busy locations; and
- (b) three new toilets built and commissioned to support planned service changes or provide toilet access on priority routes.

We are developing a pipeline of further improvements and refurbishments for future years (see 4.4 below).

Bus driver mess room relief facilities

4.3 In 2020/21 we significantly improved the provision of bus driver mess rooms, including capacity improvements, to support bus drivers during the coronavirus pandemic, this included:

- (a) a total of 39 bus driver mess rooms were improved either by reconfiguration of the existing facility to better improve social distancing, or through providing new cabins to increase the available capacity. See Appendix 2 for a full list of sites;
- (b) targeted renewals of bus driver mess rooms to address condition issues were completed at five locations: and
- (c) completion of feasibility work for 10 bus driver mess rooms projects.

TfL Future Investment and delivery

4.4 We have developed a longer-term prioritised plan to improve bus driver mess rooms and toilets. The locations have been prioritised based on known defects, condition and required capacity, including more provision for female drivers. A total of 43 locations are included on the programme at present. Our focus is on making sure that feasibility work is completed for these locations, which will allow us to make informed decisions about the forward programme. In addition to the feasibility work completed to date, we aim to complete a further 28 feasibilities this financial year. Delivery of these projects will require planning consents, building regulations approval and, in some instances, lease negotiations. However, where we identify opportunities for delivery work to be expedited, we will seek to maximise these. See Appendix 3 for examples of recent feasibility work.

4.5 While the focus of our investment is on existing assets we are currently carrying out planning work to identify locations where new infrastructure could be provided to improve bus driver mess room availability. We are drafting a strategic business case to review the investment options for this workstream.

5 Ongoing Work

5.1 We will continue to engage with bus drivers, operators and Unite to ensure that as bus routes change, they are all assigned the correct priority within the programme and that new toilet facilities are delivered on the highest priority routes.

5.2 We will continue to identify opportunities for developers to provide facilities for bus drivers as part of Section 106 contributions (planning obligations) and other negotiated agreements.

5.3 We will continue to identify driver relief facilities in need of renewal and progress projects to ensure facilities meet the needs of drivers.

List of appendices to this report:

Appendix 1: List of bus routes with a toilet installed since 2018

Appendix 2: List of bus driver mess room improvements in 2020/21

Appendix 3: Examples of feasibility projects

List of Background Papers:

None.

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