

# Customer Services and Operational Performance Panel



**Date:** 7 December 2021

**Item:** Customer Safety and Security Update

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## This paper will be considered in public

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 The paper provides an overview of the key elements of our work to improve the safety of women and girls while travelling in the Capital. Separate to this there is a summary report on the pattern and trends in customers personal safety and security which can be found in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The murders of Nicole Smallman, Bibaa Henry, Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa by strangers in public spaces in London have shocked us all, sparked anger and ignited fears over women's safety in the UK. It has understandably intensified the public focus on violence against women and girls and what is being done by authorities to end it.
- 1.3 Violence against women, whether it occurs directly within, or outside an organisation, is a serious, prevalent, and preventable issue. It can take many forms. As customers, women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual offences and harassment while travelling in London by public transport, in taxi and private hire vehicles, walking and cycling. Intersectionality further increases vulnerability and fear of crime.
- 1.4 The safety and security of our customers and staff is our top priority. Concerted action with our transport policing partners to tackle sexual offences on our public transport networks (Project Guardian) and in taxi and private hire (Operation Safer Travel at Night) has been underway for many years and significant progress has been made. Our network is generally very safe for our staff and customers but there is still much to do.
- 1.5 With our police partners, we have reviewed our plans and activities and have identified a number of areas which are particularly important for improving the safety of women and girls. The programme of activity builds on the measures we have in place to ensure the safety and security of all our staff and customers. This includes a clean, well maintained and managed transport environment, good lighting, CCTV, passenger alarms and help points, crime prevention advice and the presence of capable guardians i.e. visible, trained and engaged frontline transport staff and police.

## **2 Recommendation**

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

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 It is widely recognised that violence against women and girls is prevalent across society but significantly underreported. Even when incidents are reported to the police, the sexual nature of incidents (explicit comments and gestures, harassing behaviour) is not always recorded. For these reasons, the true scale and nature of violence against women and girls both travelling in London (on public transport, in taxi and private hire vehicles, walking, cycling) is unknown.
- 3.2 Police data for the first six months of 2021/22, show there were 743 sexual offences reported on TfL's public transport networks. This is almost a quarter lower than in 2019/20 (245 fewer reported incidents) which in part reflects the lower level of passenger journeys due to the pandemic. The most common type of sexual offence is sexual assault (non-consensual touching). These figures do not include sexually motivated crimes such as obscene comments or gestures. These crimes are not covered by sexual offence legislation and commonly reported as public order within police violent crime figures. The British Transport Police now extracts and reports on other sexually motivated crimes such as public order offences. We are now working with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Roads and Transport Policing Command to do the same. As covered by the BBC recently, the figures show that in London, there were 313 reports between April and October compared with 194 reports over the same period in 2019 – a 61 per cent increase.
- 3.3 Provisional analysis of taxi and private hire journey-related sexual offences by drivers against fare paying passengers in 2020 shows that there were around 150 reported incidents. This is around 40 per cent lower than the level of offences reported in 2019 which reflects the reduction in passenger journeys during the pandemic. In 2019, there were 236 taxi and private hire journey-related sexual offences by drivers against fare paying passengers. Twenty-seven of these were allegations of rape; 209 were sexual assault (non-consensual touching). The 2020 data is due to be published later this year, after verification is complete.
- 3.4 Our partnership working with the police continues to be an integral part of our activity to improve the safety of women and girls on public transport and in taxi and private hire vehicles. In addition to this, we are working closely with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the Night Czar to coordinate activity and deliver on the Mayor's pledge to make London one of the safest cities in the world for women and girls. We are strengthening our stakeholder engagement with women's safety organisations to better understand and respond to the issues facing women and girls as they travel in the Capital.
- 3.5 London Travel Watch (LTW) has undertaken research that provides us with additional and helpful insight on the personal safety of London public transport users. The watchdog has called on transport providers and the Police need to make it easier to report incidents which threaten transport users' personal security as well as building trust in the reporting process. London Travel Watch called on the Mayor of London to build on his Women's Night Safety Charter with

a new strategy for night-time safety that includes the transport network. We, with our police partners, are delivering on the recommendations for us to improve confidence to report incidents and empower people to act; commit to public education campaigns; improve guidance for bystanders; and make better use of technology such as reporting apps and CCTV and video footage.

#### **4 Action to tackle violence against women and girls and improve confidence to travel**

- 4.1 Our women's safety programme is focussed on tackling the issues that disproportionately impact women and girls – sexual offences and harassment and improving their confidence to travel. Our programme covers policy, environment/infrastructure measures, communications, training and legislation. This work will have wider benefits for all our customers and staff. It complements other activity we have underway such as the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, tackling hate crime and work-related violence and aggression and improving customer care.
- 4.2 We work closely with the police and the night-time industry to get people home safely at night. We recognise that the reopening of the Night Tube on Central and Victoria lines on 27 November 2021 and the planned reopening of the Overground on 17 December 2021 is an important step in helping women feel safer as they travel in the Capital. We are working to reopen the other lines as quickly as we can in 2022.
- 4.3 On 27 October 2021, we launched a new multi-media communications campaign to tackle sexual harassment, developed in partnership with the Rail Delivery Group, our transport policing partners, academics and experts in the field of women's safety and sexual violence. The campaign takes a united, national approach to define exactly what behaviours are unacceptable, emphasise our zero-tolerance approach and encourage those experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment to report incidents to the police. There was excellent media coverage of the campaign launch with broad public and political support.
- 4.4 Sexual harassment training is being rolled out to all our frontline customer service staff and enforcement officers to help them respond to reports, support customers and each other and challenge behaviour. The training begins this month starting with TfL's enforcement Officers. Sexual harassment will also form part of the enhanced diversity and inclusion training being rolled out to all 25,000 bus drivers, beginning in April 2022. It is also covered in the new Safeguarding, Equality and Regulatory Information and assessment for private hire vehicle drivers, setting and communicating clear standards of behaviour.
- 4.5 Our Project Guardian school sessions are an essential part of our activity to tackle sexual harassment on public transport and help promote the campaign's messages. These sessions, run by the London Transport Museum's Safety and Citizenship Team, aim to reach over 6,000 boys and girls every year to raise awareness of the issue, our zero-tolerance approach and encourage reporting. We have delivered 55 sessions, to a total of 3,278 students, so far this academic year (1 September to 15 November 2021).

- 4.6 We are in the process of becoming accredited with 'White Ribbon', a charity that is working to end male violence against women by engaging with men and boys to make a stand against violence. Male allies across our organisation are signing up to get involved. This will help to demonstrate to our customers and our staff how seriously we take this issue and what we are doing to tackle it.
- 4.7 We are rolling out signage across the public transport network (on vehicle, stations and bus stops) to give customers advice on what to do in an emergency and how to report crime. This is important for customer safety and crime prevention as well as customer reassurance. The rollout of bus notices will be complete by the end of the year and is already in place at stations. We continue to rollout signage/notices in a phased approach, coordinated with other changes, to minimise costs.
- 4.8 We are also exploring how we can work with the advertising industry to promote more positive representations of women and girls and challenge harmful stereotypes. Media images and representations of women in urban public space play a key role in making cities feel safer and more gender inclusive. Sexist advertising can make the city feel like an alienating and hostile environment, especially if someone has recently experienced street harassment. TfL already has a robust policy in place that includes standards relating to sexual nature of adverts; distasteful, indecent or obscene imagery or language, for example. This goes over and above standards set by the Advertising Standards Agency but we think there is more that we can do.
- 4.9 Work is also underway to progress these key medium- and long-term actions:
- (a) enhance help points as part of the London Underground modernisation programme;
  - (b) run an innovation challenge so technology innovators can help us develop solutions for improving the safety of women and girls;
  - (c) consider core safety and security standards for TfL stations so they are safe havens for customers and members of the public;
  - (d) support the provision of safe spaces for women and girls;
  - (e) rollout of CCTV on London Underground trains (Central and Piccadilly lines);
  - (f) advocate for legislation change that would give us and our policing partners appropriate powers to deal with sexual harassment of women and girls on transport premises and vehicles. Specifically, we suggest byelaw making powers for the London bus network and new legislation to criminalise sexual where it is currently a grey area under existing legislation.
  - (g) consider measures for taxi and private hire vehicles including signage about how to make a complaint to TfL, improvements to driver photo identification and licence checkers and CCTV in vehicles; and
  - (h) work together with the Greater London Authority, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), London Councils, London borough authorities and other stakeholders to tackle street

harassment and the barriers to women and girls walking and cycling more (i.e. more inclusive planning, design and management of public space, infrastructure improvements).

4.10 In addition to the above customer-focussed activities, we have work underway to tackle all forms of violence and improve the support for staff.

**List of appendices to this report:**

Appendix 1: Customer Safety and Security Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Summary Report (November 2021)

**List of Background Papers:**

None

Contact Officer: Siwan Hayward, Director of Compliance, Policing, Operations and Security

Email: [siwan.hayward@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:siwan.hayward@tfl.gov.uk)