

Date: 24 February 2022

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 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 Good progress has been made in recent years, particularly to provide toilet access on bus routes, however the importance of continuing to improve driver welfare is a key priority and plans are being developed to meet this objective.

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 since 2018

- 4.1 Since 2018, there has been a step change in the delivery of bus driver toilets. A total of 62 bus routes have had new toilets installed. Fifty of these are on priority routes and a further 12 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 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; and
 - (b) targeted renewals of bus driver mess rooms to address condition issues were completed at five locations.

5 Current Programme

- 5.1 Progress since 2018 has been significant but we recognise the importance of continued investment in bus driver welfare. We plan to build on the good work of previous years to further improve the provision of bus driver welfare with a focus on making sure our assets are in good condition, are fit for purpose and have the capacity required to meet demand of all users (including female drivers).
- 5.2 We have developed a long-term prioritised plan to support these objectives. The locations have been prioritised based on known defects, condition and required capacity.
- 5.3 In 2021/22 we have:
- (a) completed the procurement for eight targeted toilet renewals to address condition issues at busy locations. We are in the process of finalising the appointment of the contractor and will commence the first builds in March 2022. A list of these sites is included in Appendix 3.
 - (b) completed the design and planning work to install four new toilets on our network. Two of these (route 33 and route 440) have been built and are in operation. We plan to complete the build on two further routes before the end of March 2022;
 - (c) completed 20 feasibilities for bus driver welfare improvements. We plan to have completed a total of 28 feasibilities by the end of March 2022 allowing us to make informed decisions on investment priorities and plan the delivery to achieve best value for money; and
 - (d) following on from our feasibility work, identified four quick win locations. One of these, at Peckham bus station, has been delivered providing space for an additional 24 bus drivers. The remaining three sites are due to be completed before the end of March 2022. Further details of these projects are included in Appendix 4.

Future Investment and delivery

- 5.4 Our priority this financial year is to complete the feasibility work that will allow us to make informed decisions about the forward programme and confirm the delivery plan. Delivery of these projects will require planning consents, building

regulations approval and, in some instances, lease negotiations. However, where we identify opportunities for work to be expedited, we will seek to maximise these.

5.5 While the focus of our investment is on existing assets, we are also carrying out planning work to identify locations where new infrastructure could be provided to improve bus driver mess room availability. We have drafted a strategic business case to set out the case for this investment and, subject to budgets, plan to deliver a new mess room for bus driver use as a trial. Once this is delivered, we will review the case for other opportunities and the required investment.

5.6 All work is however subject to achieving clearer financial certainty.

6 Ongoing Activity

6.1 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.

6.2 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.

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

6.4 We have received the TfL commissioned independent report into Remote Sign On. There are a series of recommendations which we are discussing and working through with Unite the union and the bus operators and we expect to publish the report alongside the next steps in the spring. The bus operators have voluntarily agreed to pause any further roll out of remote sign on whilst these discussions continue.

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: Targeted toilet renewals

Appendix 4: Driver welfare projects planned for 2021/22

List of Background Papers:

None.

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