

Date: 13 July 2022

Item: Assisted Transport Services Update

This paper will be considered in public

1 Summary

- 1.1 This paper outlines the work carried out to progress the Assisted Transport Services (ATS) strategy since the last update to the Panel on 7 December 2021.
- 1.2 It also provides an update on how ATS continues to adapt to support Londoners with reduced mobility during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, as well as information on research into our customers to better understand their travel (included in the appended slide deck) and an update on the contact centre call waiting times and complaints.

2 Recommendation

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

3 Background

- 3.1 ATS refers to the range of services available to assist people with limited mobility who require additional help getting around. Services available in London include door-to-door transport services such as Dial-a-Ride (DaR) and Taxicard, alongside enablers to using general public transport, such as travel mentoring. ATS are pre-booked. As Turn up and Go assistance does not require pre-booking, it does not come under the ATS umbrella.
- 3.2 The ATS roadmap sets out a series of incremental actions aimed at the following priority areas for improvement:
 - (a) Increasing customers' awareness of the range of ATS available;
 - (b) Simplifying the customer service offering by helping customers to make the right choices about which service to use and ensuring consistency in the information we provide;
 - (c) Harnessing the opportunities created by improvements to the accessibility of general public transport to increase customer independence where possible; and
 - (d) Integration, where possible, of the operating resources available to ATS to make best use of available funding to cater for present and future demand.

- 3.3 The Mayor's Transport Strategy commits TfL to delivering improvements in these areas, based around five key design principles:
- (a) Consistently **safe and reliable** journeys, with a customer focus, including highly trained staff across the whole network;
 - (b) Providing **convenience** through information and support, to improve user confidence in journey planning and independent travelling;
 - (c) Allowing users **flexibility and choice** in their preferred mode, time of travel, booking approach and level of assistance;
 - (d) Providing a seamless and **integrated** multi-modal service, single user platform and personalised account, that incorporate all public transport modes including dedicated assisted transport services; and
 - (e) Utilising the latest technological **innovation** in bookings, payments, service routing, customer care and performance monitoring, to ensure the system is convenient, efficient and provides value for money.

- 3.4 During the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, London's ATS services have adapted to support customers in line with the above principles, and in light of rapidly evolving circumstances. Alongside this work, the momentum for change and improvement within this area of TfL activity has also been maintained. Updates on both these strands of activity are provided below.

4 Supporting ATS customers through the Coronavirus pandemic

Passenger support

- 4.1 Until recently, demand for DaR services has grown slowly but steadily. In mid-October 2021, demand reached 47 per cent of pre-pandemic levels and remained at this level until December 2021.
- 4.2 Since that time, we have seen a small increase in demand. Over the four weeks of Period 2 (1 – 28 May 2022), trip requests were at 52 per cent compared to pre-pandemic volumes on the network. We are still meeting trip requests at a level of 90.9 per cent year to date, against a target of 90 per cent.
- 4.3 This plateauing of journey requests appears to be primarily due to changes in travel patterns, although the reopening of clubs and other destinations seems to have paused as well and some customers have concerns about travelling since the pandemic began.
- 4.4 We have undertaken research that shows that 190 destinations we previously served pre-pandemic have now permanently shut. These destinations are mainly social clubs, which have closed due to lack of volunteers and / or funding.
- 4.5 The increasing demand for DaR services has meant that we have relaxed our one-household per bus rule, in line with Government guidelines around social distancing. We have now returned to utilising our full capacity and allow multiple passengers on a bus when required, in particular when our customers are all going to and from the same destination.

- 4.6 TfL guidelines around face coverings were amended on 13 June 2022. We are now encouraging staff and customers to take appropriate action to keep themselves safe – including using hand sanitiser and wearing a face covering if it helps customers and colleagues to travel and work with confidence.
- 4.7 As with DaR, Taxicard had seen increasing demand, but demand in 2022 is lower than in 2021. Currently demand is at 73 per cent for April – May 2022 compared to 83 per cent of pre-pandemic volumes.
- 4.8 Taxicard performance has generally been good, with over 95 per cent of trips being met within 15 minutes of the scheduled time over the two months ending in May 2022.
- 4.9 ComCab London, the service partner contracted to deliver Taxicard and previously known as City Fleet, currently has as enough drivers to deliver all required journeys and does not foresee issues in the short term. However, ComCab is aware of the high numbers of drivers leaving the trade and is undertaking significant recruitment activities to insulate themselves against any future shortfall.
- 4.10 We expect demand for both services to grow and are forecasting this to reach 85 per cent of pre-Covid demand by the end of 2022/23.

Travel Mentoring Service

- 4.11 Previously, we reported on the new Covid-safe methods of working the Travel Mentoring team was using to assist passengers. With changes in Government guidance, we have been able to return to more face-to-face work.
- 4.12 Individual journey assistance and group activities, such as bus days, have been restarted. The latter is particularly important considering bus days had been suspended, as there was no effective way to undertake these activities safely in person. The number of bus days and group activities continues grow as more organisations open up and return to pre-pandemic ways of working.
- 4.13 We are retaining some of the new methods of working implemented during the pandemic and are offering video or telephone assistance where customers prefer. Although most people prefer the in-person approach, it's important to offer digital alternatives when requested.
- 4.14 Train the trainer sessions have also restarted. These sessions are designed to assist staff at organisations such as clubs and residences to provide advice to their residents and customers on independent travel. Our Travel Mentoring team will meet with staff at these organisations and walk them through all the travel options available to disabled people and those with other mobility impairments. We will also provide coaching on how to assist their customers with their travel needs in a positive, supportive way.

5 DaR call centre waiting times and complaints

Call Waiting Times

- 5.1 At the last meeting we were asked to provide an update on DaR call waiting times and complaints.
- 5.2 The number of calls to the management control centre (MCC) has risen steadily as demand for our services has increased.
- 5.3 MCC call waiting times the last four periods are shown below

Period	Calls Received	Abandoned calls	% Abandoned calls Target: 10%	Average Speed of Answer (sec) Target: 180 secs
P12	29,785	5626	18.90%	449 Sec
P13	29,317	5055	17.20%	470 Sec
P1	28,653	2948	10.30%	271 Sec
P2	30,185	2410	8.00%	194 Sec

- 5.4 To reduce the call abandon rate and average speed of answer, the team has taken steps in the past two periods that have yielded significant results. We continue to see a downward trend in both abandoned call rate and average speed of answer.
- 5.5 Steps taken include:
 - (a) having the maximum staff available at 09:00 on the phones when lines open and call volumes are high. This includes utilising staff from across other areas of the MCC whose workload is quieter first thing in the morning e.g. the correspondence team who manage email enquiries. The reallocation of staff across duties at peak call times has increased availability on the phones by around five per cent; and
 - (b) reinstating regular bookings where customers are reliably requesting repeat trips; since the last covid restrictions were lifted, over 600 regular bookings have been reinstated – this removes the need for a customer to call in which saves the time and reduces the number of calls to the MCC.

DaR Complaints

- 5.6 DaR complaints data is reported quarterly in the regular report to the Panel. These complaints are reported as per 100,000 journeys so that they can be compared to the wider network of mass-transit modes.
- 5.7 To get to these figures this data is converted from our internal metric of complaints per 1,000 trip requests.
- 5.8 Internally we measure complaints using complaints per 1,000 trip requests as our complaints can cover all aspects of the end-to-end journey process from booking a trip to the customer experience on that trip, not just the journey itself.

- 5.9 Our internal scorecard target for complaints is to keep these below one complaint per 1,000 journey requests, our current complaints rate is significantly below this level and equates to less than one complaint per day.

	2021/22			
Period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
DaR complaints per 100,000 journeys	51.31	50.82	74.92	61.94
DAR complaints per 1,000 requests	0.35	0.64	0.56	0.62

- 5.10 The highly individual nature of the DaR service means that, when complaints are converted to the per 100,000 journeys metric, they appear significantly higher when compared to mass-transit modes.
- 5.11 The option to include the complaints per 1,000 trip requests metric in the regular report to the Panel has previously been examined, however, for consistency in reporting it was agreed that DaR complaints should be converted to be comparable to the wider mass transit network.

6 ATS Roadmap updates

- 6.1 Progress along the ATS Roadmap continues to be made and a summary of progress since the update in December 2021 is included at Appendix 1. Further information relating to the key areas of progress are provided below.

One-stop shop booking and scheduling platform

- 6.2 Central to the delivery of the ATS strategy is the introduction of a one-stop shop that will eventually give customers the ability to access the range of ATS services using a single online portal alongside a telephone option. This project was paused during the height of the pandemic, and the invitation to tender was released in October 2020.
- 6.3 Thirteen companies originally submitted bids, and we are now down to the final two contenders. These two contenders have submitted their final bids which are going through the tender evaluation and consensus process before a final decision is made on the successful bidder.

ATS customer research

- 6.4 TfL has received the customer research report and the findings are included in the appended slide deck (Appendix 2: Assisted Transport Services – Customer Research Findings – July 2022)
- 6.5 Headline findings from the research include:
- (a) 61 per cent of customers use Taxicard / Capital Call, 13 per cent use Dial-a-Ride and 18 per cent use all of these services;

- (b) 63 per cent surveyed already use London Buses, 60 per cent use a private car as a passenger and 60 per cent already travel by foot, assisted walking, mobility scooters or wheelchair (two per cent by bike/adapted bike);
 - (c) 50 per cent of those surveyed were open to increasing journeys by public transport or active travel and 32 per cent were open to both these options;
 - (d) Only 10 per cent of the audience had heard of the Travel Mentoring Programme, however, 45 per cent would consider using it; and
 - (e) There is a large opportunity for Travel Mentoring with around 50 per cent of our customers open to increasing the number of journeys they make using public transport or active travel modes.
- 6.6 Using the findings of this research we want to develop an ATS Customer Action Plan to form part of a refreshed ATS Strategy and Roadmap.
- 6.7 Central to this work will be engaging with stakeholders and customers to get their views and ideas on the activities to take forwards.

7 Next Steps

- 7.1 We are starting to work towards a refreshed ATS Roadmap. Over the next six months we will be engaging with stakeholders and customers to get their views on the future of ATS with the aim of developing a refreshed ATS Strategy and Roadmap.
- 7.2 We will bring an update on this work to the next meeting of the Panel, and progress updates will continue to be provided to the Panel every six months. These updates will also continue to be shared with the London Assembly Transport Committee, as has been the practice to date.

List of appendices to this report:

Appendix 1: The journey towards the vision for a world class Assisted Transport Services – July 2022

Appendix 2: Assisted Transport Services - Customer Research Findings – July 2022

List of Background Papers:

Papers submitted to the panel on 7 December 2021, relating to Assisted Transport Services Update

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Appendix 1

The journey towards the vision for a world class Assisted Transport Services (July 2022)

Objective	Improvement Initiative	Detail of initiative	Status – December 2021	Current Status – July 2022	Expected Delivery Date
Create an integrated umbrella identity for ATS	1. Assisted Transport Services (ATS) umbrella identity	Develop a new umbrella identity for ATS to build joint identity across the existing delivery partnerships.	n/a	n/a	
	2. Joint taxi and Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) procurement	TfL/London Councils Joint framework for the procurement of taxi and private hire elements of Taxicard, Dial-a-Ride and Capital Call services. Set up common customer service standards and performance management structures.	n/a	n/a	
	3. Strategy to raise profile of ATS as important customer market for taxi and PHV trade	Work with TfL Taxi and Private Hire (TPH) to encourage the supply of high-quality taxi and PHV drivers for the delivery of ATS journeys across London	Conversations have expanded to include DaR / Taxicard provider. Provider working with knowledge companies and other partners to attract drivers into the trade.	Working with TPH to get details included on the TfL website to direct taxi drivers towards how they can sign-up to do Taxicard work.	Regular forums currently in place.

	4. Relaunch e-learning for taxi and PHV drivers	<p>An e-learning course for taxi and PHV drivers undertaking ATS work has been developed by TfL, modelled on Dial-a-Ride driver training.</p>	<p>This work has now been completed, though TfL will continue to update the course as required.</p>	<p>n/a.</p>	
One stop shop platform for Assisted Transport Services	5. Dial-a-Ride and Capital Call alignment	<p>Dial-a-Ride and Capital Call merged booking centre.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>	
	6. Integrated customer feedback	<p>Integrated customer feedback for Capital Call, Dial-a-Ride and Taxi services.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>	
	7. Use Dial-a-Ride delivery partners to provide delivery of services to suit customer needs	<p>Use taxis and community transport to support Dial-a-Ride services where suitable for customers' needs.</p>	<p>Promotion of the app has begun, though it is too early to be certain, it appears to be successful in attracting drivers. Drivers leaving taxi trade remains a longer term strategic concern.</p>	<p>Drivers leaving the trade and the high average age of drivers remains a concern. Comcab have provided reassurance about their ability to cover journeys, they are now utilising their partner Addison Lee to meet demand.</p>	<p>On-going monitoring</p>

	8. Integrated booking and scheduling system	<p>Develop a one-stop shop integrated booking platform for TfL ATS services, which includes capacity management, scheduling, booking and cancellations.</p>	<p>Invitation to Tender was released in October 2020. TfL has down-selected to the final three bidders, and is currently in negotiation.</p>	<p>The two final bidders are going through the tender evaluation and consensus process before a final decision is made on the successful bidder</p>	<p>Contract award now expected 2022. Go live by June 2023.</p>
	9. Integrate thirdparties with the one stop shop (e.g. hospital providers)	<p>Following pilots and Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT), use lessons learned to further develop the ATS one stop shop platform beyond TfL/London Councils to include NHS funded services, third sector services and new forms of public transport where appropriate.</p>	<p>Patient transport services database has been compiled and shared with appropriate customer contact teams to provide to customers on request.</p>	<p>Lessons learned from DRT trial will be included as part of future ATS work.</p>	<p>Timetable for future stakeholder engagement TBC considering Covid-19 pressures on NHS. Priority will be given to emerging transport issues as and when they arise in the meantime.</p>

Increase awareness of the range of transport options available to customers	10. Integrated customer information and marketing of ATS and public transport options	Increase awareness of the full range of transport options, with integrated customer information about ATS and accessible public transport options.	Accessible transport in London leaflet visuals in process of being updated to better reflect the current, Covid-safe, travel experience.	New Accessible transport in London leaflet has been published: https://content.tfl.gov.uk/accessible-travel-web.pdf Work ongoing with Customer Experience and Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy team to identify best opportunities to promote services and link up with planned campaigns.	Once clarified, further opportunities to promote to be actioned (including with NHS Trusts and borough independent living and reablement services).
	11. Travel mentoring strategy	Create a new strategy to increase usage of the travel mentoring scheme.	Travel mentoring is currently focused on recommencing services, and bringing them back to pre-pandemic levels.	The team continues to focus on recommencing services and bring them back to pre-pandemic levels. This includes recruiting to a vacancy in the team so they can reach pre-pandemic capacities again.	Travel mentoring promotion video in development and due for launch Autumn 2022.

Improve TfL's understanding of the ATS market	12. Personal budgets pilot	Conduct a pilot in two London boroughs to understand customer choices between the different ATS services.	n/a – Recommendation not to proceed.	Action closed – CSOPP agreed not to proceed on the basis of being unable to secure suitable partners to provide meaningful outcomes.	
	13. Demand responsive transport	Research opportunities to harness Demand Responsive Bus (DRB) innovations to contribute to core ATS.	This is complete as outlined in the December 2021 paper to the Panel.	n/a	

	14. Customer data	Conduct data analysis and customer engagement to understand customer choice between ATS and mainstream services.	Analysis completed	Results presented as part of this paper.	To work with stakeholders to agree the next steps and develop a refreshed ATS Strategy and Roadmap to support its delivery. We will update on this at the next meeting.
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