

Date: 6 December 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 13 July 2022. This includes the refreshed ATS Strategy and Roadmap for review.
- 1.2 It also provides an update on how ATS continues to adapt to support Londoners with reduced mobility during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

2 Recommendation

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

3 Background

- 3.1 ATS refers to the range of pre-booked 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. As Turn up and Go services do not require pre-booking they do not come under the ATS umbrella.
- 3.2 A review of the current ATS strategy and roadmap has led to a refresh of priority areas for improvement, considering changes to our operating context and customer demand patterns since the start of the pandemic.
- 3.3 The broad principles of the original strategy and roadmap remain the same, with our vision to provide world-leading ATS.
- 3.4 The ATS Strategy now has an increased focus on delivering the best outcomes for our customers with the available funding through a series of incremental actions aimed at the following priority areas for improvement:
 - (a) Improving and integrating the end-to-end customer experience;
 - (b) Improving TfL's understanding of the Assisted Transport market;
 - (c) Increasing awareness of the choices available to customers; and
 - (d) Optimising capacity and making the best use of available funding.

- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 During the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, London's ATS services have adapted to support customers in line with the above principles, updates on this work 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, by the end of October 2022 demand reached 58 per cent, the highest it has been compared to pre-pandemic levels.
- 4.2 Across the year, since 1 April 2022 until end of October 2022, the average demand has been 53 per cent compared to pre-pandemic levels.
- 4.3 We are meeting trip requests at a level of 89.2 per cent year to date (up until end of October 2022), against a target of 90 per cent, the level of successful trip requests has been slightly below target due to increasing demand.
- 4.4 In response to the increased demand, we are recruiting eight new drivers who start training on 21 November 2022.
- 4.5 We have also submitted a request to undertake additional recruitment in the new year for a further eight drivers and are awaiting a response on this from the recruitment sign-off process.
- 4.6 We continue encouraging staff and customers to take appropriate action to keep themselves safe – including using hand sanitiser and wearing a face covering if that helps customers to travel with confidence.
- 4.7 As with DaR, Taxicard had seen increasing demand, however demand in 2022 is lower than in 2019 and in 2021. Currently demand is at 69 per cent for April – September 2022 compared to the same period in 2019 and 79 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.
- 4.8 Taxicard performance has generally been good, with over 95 per cent of trips being met within 15 minutes of the scheduled time since April 2022.

- 4.9 ComCab London, the service partner contracted to deliver Taxicard and previously known as City Fleet, currently has 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 At the start of the year we were expecting demand for both services to grow and were forecasting to reach 85 per cent of pre-pandemic demand by the end of 2022/23. Now it looks more likely that demand for DaR and Taxicard will continue to grow at slower levels than initially predicted.

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 (build confidence and knowledge in using the bus network ahead of children moving to secondary school), 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 to 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 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 ATS Roadmap updates

- 5.1 At the last meeting we committed to undertaking a refresh of the current ATS Strategy and Roadmap in light of changes in our operating context and customer demand since the pandemic began.
- 5.2 Appendix 1 includes the refreshed ATS Strategy and Roadmap for review.
- 5.3 A steering group is being established to drive this work forwards across TfL and will be supported by a working group to manage project delivery.

One-stop shop booking and scheduling platform

- 5.4 Central to the delivery of the ATS Strategy is the introduction of a one-stop shop. This will eventually give customers the ability to access the range of ATS services using a single online portal alongside a telephone option.
- 5.5 This project was paused during the height of the pandemic, and the invitation to tender was released in October 2020.

- 5.6 We have now had the final bids; a supplier has been selected and the final contract is to be signed in November 2022.
- 5.7 Once the contract is signed work will commence to establish a transition plan and associated timescales for moving from the current to the new system.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 Over the next six months, we will start work on the list of projects identified in the refreshed ATS Roadmap.
- 6.2 Given TfL's current financial position, the initial focus will be on those projects that have been identified as deliverable at low cost and within the shorter-term.
- 6.3 We will bring an update on this work to the next meeting of the Panel and progress updates will continue to be provided 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 – December 2022

List of Background Papers:

Papers submitted to the Customer Service and Operational Panel on 13 July 2022, relating to Assisted Transport Services Update.

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Appendix 1 The journey towards the vision for world class Assisted Transport Services – (December 2022)

Overview of the Assisted Transport Strategy

Purpose	Deliver reliable and convenient Assisted Transport service for older and disabled Londoners			
Vision	World-leading Assisted Transport service provision by 2032			
TfL Values	Caring	Open	Adaptable	
Objectives	1. Improve and integrate the end to end customer experience	2. Improve TfL's understanding of the Assisted Transport market	3. Increase awareness of the choices available to customers	4. Optimise capacity and make best use of available funding

Underpinned by the:

MTS Principles	Safe and reliable	Integrated	Convenience	Flexibility and choice	Innovative
	Customer focused, highly trained staff	Multi model and seamless, single user platform, personalised account	Information and support to build confidence in independent travelling and journey planning	Between modes, times of travel, ways of booking, level of assistance	Using innovation in bookings, payments, service routing, customer and performance monitoring

The Assisted Transport Strategy Roadmap

Key: = open actions, = closed actions

As each initiative is developed the roadmap will be updated with specific timescales for delivery. The current short / medium / long-term estimates are indicative until further research and project planning is undertaken. Where known specific timescales are included.

ATS Objective	ATS Roadmap Categories	Details of initiative	Timescales Short / Medium / Long-term	Estimated financial cost Low / Medium / High	Status – December 2022
Improve and integrate the end-to-end customer experience	1. Application and joining	Simplifying the application process and eligibility criteria to reduce barriers to customers applying. Looking at options for third parties to be able to refer customers who may benefit from our services.	Short - Medium	Medium	Project plan to be developed and aligned with implementation of new booking system.
	2. Booking and scheduling	Simplifying the booking process through the introduction of a new booking and scheduling system. Once introduced to undertake further work to maximise the opportunities the new system offers to e.g., facilitating interchanges between the accessible wider public transport network and ATS services so customers can travel further independently.	Medium	High	November 2022 – contract award Post contract award detailed timescales for implementation to be worked up.
	3. One-stop shop	Integrating third parties with our booking and scheduling system to create a single point of contact for customers to book journeys across London.	Long	Medium	A long-term aim as this will require working with multiple agencies across London to explore the feasibility and likelihood of achievability.

	4. Online tools	Improvements to our website and online tools such as journey planning to make accessing information easier and clarify our service options.	Short - Long	Medium	Project plan to be developed and work to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to leverage new opportunities as technologies improve.
	5. Staff training and upskilling	Review of current training scope and opportunities to integrate our training and improve our customer service offering.	Medium	Medium	Project plan to be developed and aligned with implementation of new booking system.
Improve TfL's understanding of the Assisted Transport market	6. Best practice and benchmarking	Benchmarking with other Assisted Transport providers and across other ambassador / support services to understand where we can make further improvements or changes to our offering to benefit customers.	Short - Medium	Low - Medium	Project plan to be developed and underway by mid-2023.
	7. Data and research	Analysis of journey patterns across Assisted Transport modes to inform future planning, overlaying customer research to improve understanding of customer ambitions and needs from ATS.	Medium	Low - Medium	Project plan to be developed and underway by mid-2023.

Increase awareness of the choices available to customers	8. Communication and stakeholder engagement	Development of a communication plan including public forum and disability group engagement to share strategy initiatives, service improvements and gather feedback to feed into planned ATS roadmap initiatives.	Short - Medium	Low	Project plan to be developed and underway by mid-2023.
	9. Customer training and upskilling	Support for customers to develop skills and confident in using other modes alongside ATS where appropriate and to improve their understanding of wider network accessibility improvements.	Medium – Long	Medium	Project plan to be developed by mid-2023.
	10. Marketing and promotion	Improving awareness of the range of ATS options and introducing targeted messaging to support different customer needs.	Short – Medium	Low – Medium	Project plan to be developed and underway by mid-2023.
	11. Travel mentoring	Increasing awareness of travel mentoring, reviewing how travel mentoring is offered and delivered to maximise benefits for customers and reach the maximum number of people who need this support.	Medium - Long	Medium	Project plan to be developed and underway by mid-2023.

<p>Optimise capacity and make best use of available funding</p>	<p>12. Making the best use of available funding</p>	<p>Reviewing processes to improve resource use e.g., removing duplicative processes between AT, identifying process improvements to maximise customer benefits. Currently underway is the Taxicard harmonisation project which looks to ensure equability and harmonisation of the scheme offering across London.</p>	<p>Medium – Long</p>	<p>Low - Medium</p>	<p>Some initiatives already underway with a full project plan to be developed and underway by mid-2023.</p>
	<p>13. Optimising capacity</p>	<p>Our data and research findings will look to open up new avenues to explore in this area.</p>	<p>Medium – Long</p>	<p>TBC once research is completed</p>	<p>Project plan to be developed once findings from the data and research workstream are established.</p>