

Date: 24 May 2023

Item: Initiative to Promote Women in the Bus and Coach Industry

This paper will be considered in public

1 Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides an outline of a new initiative led by TfL's Bus Operations directorate to encourage and support more women into the Bus and Coach industry. In line with similar groups in other transport industries (e.g. Women in Transport, Women in Rail, Women in Maritime etc) it will be known as 'Women in Bus and Coach'.
- 1.2 There are many recruitment and retention challenges facing the bus and coach industry in the UK, including London. TfL is taking positive steps to help overcome these challenges and to eliminate barriers facing women joining and remaining in the industry.
- 1.3 We are focused on delivering our Bus Action Plan and this initiative will help us to achieve a workforce that better represents the passenger community and that can help identify and address barriers to achieving an inclusive bus service.

2 Recommendation

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

3 Background

- 3.1 TfL wants to encourage and support more women to work in the bus industry at every level, from bus drivers and mechanics to engineers and managers. Unlike in UK rail and aviation, there is not a comparable national cross-industry network for supporting and promoting women's participation in road based public transport – i.e. bus and coach.
- 3.2 The current workforce of the bus industry does not reflect the community it serves. Data shows that in 2020/21 only around 16 per cent of bus and coach drivers were female, and across a sample of four London bus operators in 2020, around 10 per cent of the total staff were female. In comparison, more than half of bus passengers in London are female and 71 per cent of working age women in London are employed. Having a workforce that better represents the passenger community can help identify and address barriers to an inclusive bus service.

- 3.3 Building upon our commitments in the Bus Action Plan, including our new Bus Safety Strategy, attracting more women into the bus industry will also help to address the severe workforce shortage, improving the quality of service to customers. It will also ease the pressure on frontline staff, contributing to improved health and wellbeing.
- 3.4 The lack of women working in the industry can be considered a barrier itself, contributing to a perception that it is not a valid career choice for women. We must challenge and change this perception.

4 Women in Bus and Coach

- 4.1 TfL commissioned a scoping study in 2022 to explore the current challenges facing the bus and coach industry, the challenges facing women who work in the industry, the wider benefits of improving the gender balance of the workforce, and best practice in promoting this. The outcome of this research and detailed discussions with women drawn from across the bus and coach industries and wider transport industry was that positive action was not only needed but would be enthusiastically welcomed.
- 4.2 The Bus Operations directorate at TfL are, therefore, establishing a free-to access “Women in Bus and Coach” network to help encourage and support more women to work in the bus industry at every level, focused on making changes from the ground up.
- 4.3 A Steering Group, chaired by Louise Cheeseman, Director of Bus, has been established drawing on high-level expertise from across the bus and coach industries nationally, and we are pleased to have the support of senior figures including our Sponsor, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill.
- 4.4 A Working Group to drive forward the London region branch of the new Women in Bus and Coach network has also been created with representatives from the London bus operators and coach industry.
- 4.5 A soft launch and networking event has been planned for the London region on 28 June 2023, which will be followed by a national launch in the autumn at the annual Coach & Bus UK show in Birmingham.
- 4.6 We would be pleased to report on our progress in taking this initiative forward and delivering positive change for the bus and coach industry at a future meeting.

List of appendices to this report:

Appendix 1: Women in Bus Network: Scoping Study (2022), Apollo Vehicle Safety

List of Background Papers:

None

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