Customer Service and Operational Performance Panel

Date: **5 December 2023**

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 12 July 2023. This includes the updated Roadmap for review.

1.2   It also provides an update on how ATS continues to adapt to support Londoners with reduced mobility in the post pandemic world.

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 vison 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 us 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   London's ATS services continue to adapt and support customers in line with the above principles, and updates on this work are provided below.

4   ATS Passenger support

4.1   The service continues to grow and the demand this year for the period (April 2023-October 2023) was 15 per cent higher than the same period last year.

4.2   On 21 August 2023, DaR reinstated its pre-coronavirus pandemic service hours and now operates until midnight, customer can book rides between 7am to 11pm.

4.3   Between April and October 2023, we met trip requests at a level of 89.3 per cent, against a target of 90 per cent. The level of successful trip requests has been below our target due to factors such onboarding of the new booking and scheduling system and associate training and testing.

4.4   In response to the increased demand, since April 2023, we have trained eight drivers and have also recently started a driver recruitment campaign to recruit an additional 16 drivers.

4.5   We have also recruited four new Duty managers and four new Service delivery managers to support reservations and booking within the Main Control centre.

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 The new Multi Occupancy Accessible Transport (MOAT 3) suppliers started providing services from 1 October 2023. They will provide services for an initial period of five years with an option of extending the contract for another two years. The new contract increases the MOAT 3 provider capacity by 21 additional shifts per week.

4.8 In conjunction with London Councils, we have also concluded the Early Market Engagement activity for the procurement for the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Services Framework for the delivery for the Taxicard services from September 2024.

4.9 Demand for Taxicard trips has remained relatively consistent, showing only a slight 1.3 per cent increase between April and September 2023 compared to the same period in the previous year.

4.10 Taxicard performance has been good during April to September 2023, with an average of 96.41 per cent of bookings met within 15 minutes of the required time of arrival.

4.11 Capital call service experienced an overall increase of 3.97 per cent in demand from April to September 2023 compared to corresponding period last year.

Booking and scheduling platform

4.12 Central to the delivery of the ATS Strategy is the introduction of a one-stop shop booking system, and in support of this we have launched a new booking and scheduling system. This went live in the back office on the 13 November 2023, and to customers on 20 November 2023. The system is expected to bring significant benefits to customers and colleagues.

4.13 The new app-based Dial-a-Ride booking system, offers members and caregivers access to an additional channel to the existing telephone booking system at the main control centre.

4.14 DaR members and caregivers will be able to use an app or web portal to book, monitor and cancel journeys. Members will also be able to customise their app with accessibility features to meet their specific needs, such as options to assist those with impaired vision with voice overs and adaptive font size.

4.15 The new technology will enable greater operational optimisation, through better allocation of resources. The new software will optimise scheduling and route planning to improve quality of service and customer satisfaction. Given the dynamic optimisation tools, there will be greater opportunity to deliver on the day booking and accommodate last minute requests.

4.16   The new system launched three months prior to the previously programmed deadline of January 2024.

4.17   Since August 2023, we have been working with Via Technologies to formulate a transition plan. As part of this plan, we instigated a 'Train the trainer' programme involving 20 trainers who have trained 160 drivers, 62 control centre and passenger services staff.

4.18   Customers will be notified using various communication channels including posters, leaflets, reference guides on our website and recorded messages on our phone lines when members call the contact centre. In addition, our drivers will also be able to verbally communicate information to our customers. (Example of customer communication- posters and leaflets included)

4.19   Annual customer satisfaction surveys and direct and indirect feedback from customers will be reviewed to evaluate the benefit of the system.

Travel Mentoring Service

4.20   The Travel Mentoring team is continuing to undertake face-to-face work. 1,735 interventions have been undertaken this year which is 6.5 per cent higher than same period last year. The interventions have included 33 bus days involving 1,238 attendees.

4.21   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 now restarted.

4.22   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.

4.23   In support of our ambitions to increase provision of the travel mentoring service we restructured the team in September 2023. The reorganisation will not only support expansion of the service but will also enable us to develop a Travel mentoring strategy.

5 ATS Roadmap updates

5.1 At the last meeting we shared the ATS Strategy and Roadmap, and we have been establishing methods of works and programme in support of the roadmap.

5.2 Appendix 1 includes and the updated 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.

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 Part of this will be ensuring the new booking and scheduling system is optimised to deliver the best possible customer experience and operational efficiencies as possible.

6.3 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.

6.4 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

Appendix 2: Copy of slide deck: Dial a Ride: Booking and Scheduling System via Technologies

List of Background Papers:

Papers submitted to the Customer Service and Operational Panel on 12 July 2023, 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 2023
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	A working group comprising of representatives from all parts of the Dial-a-Ride service is reviewing the current membership forms. The new form will be available from April 2024, it will also be included in the new booking system portal.
	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.	Short- Medium	High	The new booking and scheduling system launched on 13 November 2023 will provide customers additional channels to book, manage, and cancel bookings. Additional features to simplify membership and booking processes will be introduced next year.
	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	The new booking and scheduling system launched on 13 November.2023 The TfL Dial-a-ride website has been updated to include user guides and customer information. In addition, alternative formats such videos guide with BSL and Voice overs shared to support customers. Online tools such as an online booking form and computer portal will be introduced next year.
	5. Staff training and upskilling	Review of current training scope and opportunities to integrate our training and improve our customer service offering.	Medium	Medium	A new 'Train the Trainer' programme to support staff training and onboarding new system has been implemented over the last few months. We have agreed processes to enable the Dial-a-Ride training team to work more closely with TFL Operations training team to share best practice and increase cross modal learning.
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 after the new system has been embedded and current process have been optimised.

	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 after the new system has been embedded and current process have been optimised.
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	A Communication steering group with experts from Accessibility and insights, Marketing and customer behaviour, customer information and design and partnership, Local community partnerships etc has been set to up to formulate an integrated communication plan for the new booking system.
	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	Dial a ride: We are investigating opportunities to organise digital training session for the new booking and scheduling system. Travel Mentoring: our travel mentoring teams are continuing to support people on traveling confidently on our network.
	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	A communication plan to share updates about upcoming changes is being developed in conjunction with internal teams.
	11. Travel	Increasing awareness of travel	Medium - Long	Medium	The travel mentoring team

	mentoring	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.			was restructured in September 2023. We are currently developing a Travel mentoring strategy which will assist us in maximising support and increasing awareness of the service.
Optimise capacity and make best use of available funding	12. Making the best use of available funding	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.	Medium – Long	Low - Medium	As part of onboarding the new system, we have been reviewing and optimising several internal processes. We are also reviewing current usage data for the Taxicard harmonisation project.
	13. Optimising capacity	Our data and research findings will look to open up new avenues to explore in this area.	Medium – Long	TBC once research is completed	Project plan to be developed once findings from the data and research workstream are established.

Appendix 2: Copy of slide deck: Dial a Ride: Booking and Scheduling System via Technologies

Slide 2: Information on how the new system supports strategic priorities (MTS and ATS)

ATS Strategy

Build on MTS and Bus Strategic Priorities

Purpose	Deliver reliable and convenient Assisted Transport Services 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
	• Application and joining • Simplifying the booking process • Improvements to website and online tools • Review of current training scope to improve our customer service offering.		- Engagement with disability group engagement to share strategy initiatives, service improvements Improving awareness of the range of ATS options and introducing targeted messaging to support different customer needs.	- Reviewing processes to improve resource - Data collection and use of technology

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

Slide 3: Slides outlining reasons for migrating to new system

Case for change

- *Contract expiry and Existing pain points*

    - *Existing contract terminating in December 2023*
    - *Renew existing operational capability*

- *ATS roadmap*
    - *ATS Roadmap outlines a vision to "improve the overall accessibility of the transport network in London" with the specific aims of increasing spontaneous and independent travel.*

- *Recovery from pandemic*
    - *Service growth and optimisation*

New system is capable of:

- Trip booking
- Trip scheduling
- Customer account registration & maintenance
- Fleet management
- Driver rostering
- Dispatch and real-time information
- Operational reporting
- Business intelligence
- Optimising capacity of available resources
- Improving customer experience (Online self-service and dynamic scheduling)

Slide 4: Slides outlining impact on customer proposition, technology, process and operations and associated programme

What will change?

Programme:

January- April 23:
Prepare plan and analyse, Design and construct

May- November 23:
Implement and train

November 23:
Phase 1 Go live

_2024: Q1_
Phase 2

Customer proposition:

–Phone/email/fax are the only ways of booking, amending and cancelling trips.

–Cancellations are time consuming as they need to be made over the phone.

–30-minute window given for pick-up/drop off; limited customer notifications in advance of arrival time. No means of customer/driver communication

–Customer proposition c.10% booking requests refused

–Confusing for customers to understand and discern between range of possible travel options

Technology:

No dynamic trip scheduling (e.g., if there are on-the-day cancellations) – manual intervention required.

No real time info (e.g., for traffic delays, breakdowns, etc.)

Process:

Manual intervention required to find available trips if first time request is unsuccessful

Manual override needed to amend schedules

Operational

No optimisation of vehicle allocation.

Customer proposition:

–More convenience/flexibility for customers . Less resource pressure on staff

–Lower on-the-door cancellation rate.

–More reliable and convenient service. Users can better plan their time & journeys. Increased confidence in service – users know when their vehicle will arrive.

–More reliable service.

–More successful first-time booking requests.

–No cost increase to meet total trip demand.

–Increased choice and clarity for users

Technology:

More efficient scheduling so more trips can be delivered within existing resources

Process:

Bookings are less resource intensive.

Operational

Reduced overall cost of providing ATS services

Slide 5: Slide noting Via technologies expertise in delivering fully integrated solutions for public mobility
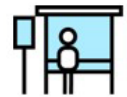
Slide 6: Slide noting Via technologies expertise in improving paratransit operations in Europe

Slide 7: Slide noting Via technologies mock up for mobile app and online portal
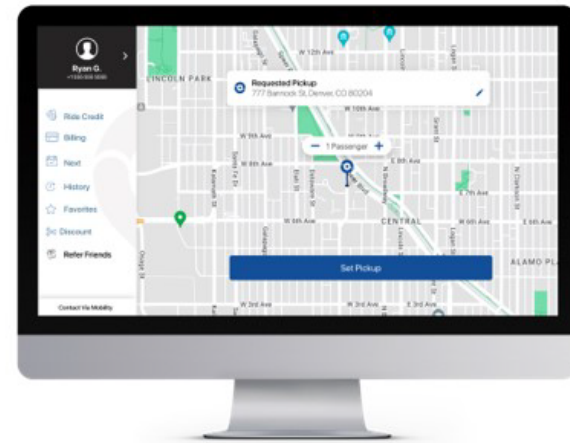
Slide 8: Slide noting Via technologies mock-up of booking process