

Date: 10 July 2024

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 5 December 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 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 The ATS Strategy focuses on delivering the best outcomes for our customers while being financially sustainable 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 our 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.
- 3.3 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 We continue to keep the ATS Strategy and Roadmap under review in light of ongoing changes to our operating context and customer demand patterns.

4 ATS Customer Support

- 4.1 ATS continues to grow and the demand for 2023/24 was 7.8 per cent higher than the previous year.
- 4.2 In 2023/24, we met trip requests at a level of 89.2 per cent, against a target of 90 per cent. The level of successful trip requests has been below our target due to factors such as onboarding of the new booking and scheduling system and associated training and testing. Performance continues to improve and, as of 15 June 2024, we are meeting 92 per cent of trip requests.
- 4.3 In response to the increased demand, in 2023/24 we trained 16 DaR drivers and have also recently planned a driver recruitment campaign to launch in summer 2024.
- 4.4 We continue encouraging colleagues 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.
- 4.5 The new Multi Occupancy Accessible Transport (MOAT) suppliers started providing services from 1 October 2023. Our MOAT partners are all community transport operators based in London boroughs. From day one, the new contract increased capacity by 21 shifts per week and in April 2024 we increased the number of shifts by a further seven to meet increased demand in West Central London.
- 4.6 We continue to review demand across London and have the ability within the current contract to make further modest shift increases if there are areas of consistently higher demand.
- 4.7 Demand for Taxicard trips has remained relatively consistent, showing a 3.4 per cent increase across 2023/24 compared to 2022/23.
- 4.8 Taxicard performance was good during 2023/24, with an average of 96.59 per cent of bookings met within 15 minutes of the required time of arrival.

- 4.9 TfL operates Capital Call, a subsidised taxi service operating in 10 boroughs, which is now closed to new members. Capital Call experienced an overall decline in demand of 6.1 per cent between April – October 2023. The transition to the new booking and scheduling system has meant that statistics after October 2023 are temporarily unavailable, this data is expected to be available in summer 2024 and once available we will share this latest information.

Booking and Scheduling Platform

- 4.10 Central to the delivery of the ATS Strategy is the new booking and scheduling system which went live to customers on 20 November 2023. We recognise that the introduction of a one-stop shop booking system has not always gone smoothly, however, we are working hard with our suppliers to overcome the issues and significant benefits are now being delivered to customers and colleagues.
- 4.11 Since the launch of the system, we have successfully delivered a transition plan to train colleagues on the new system and its functionality through a ‘train the trainer’ model. We continue to utilise this model to deliver training as improvements and updates to the new system are rolled out.
- 4.12 The new system offers DaR members and caregivers the ability to book over the phone or online using an app or web portal and to monitor and cancel journeys. Members are also 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.
- 4.13 The app is proving popular for booking trips, with 22 per cent of trip bookings being made through the app compared with a predicted 10 per cent.
- 4.14 Introduction of the new booking system initially led to higher call waiting times due to a combination of increased customer enquiries alongside our colleagues continuing to build their knowledge of the system post training.
- 4.15 Our target is to answer 90 per cent of all calls, and to answer them within 300 seconds (five minutes) The average speed of answer for calls in Period 9 of 2023/24 (12 November to 9 December 2023), directly after the new booking system was introduced, was 717 seconds (12 minutes) and the call abandon rate was 28.2 per cent. By December 2023 we reduced this to 188 seconds (three minutes) and 7.6 per cent respectively through increasing staff numbers and continued training.
- 4.16 By March 2024 the average speed of answer was 52 seconds (one minute) and the call abandon rate had been reduced to 2.8 per cent.
- 4.17 The new technology is already delivering benefits such as the improved allocation of resources and there has been an improvement of eight per cent in trips delivered per shift (January to March 2024).
- 4.18 We continue our communications to customers regarding updates and improvements to the booking system and at the end of June 2024 sent out our latest edition of In-Touch, a biannual magazine to update DAR members on the service. This edition focused on bringing together all the information

about the new booking and scheduling system into one place.

- 4.19 Annual customer satisfaction surveys and direct and indirect feedback from customers will be reviewed to evaluate the benefit of the system. Our next annual customer satisfaction survey is planned for the autumn.

Travel Mentoring Service

- 4.20 The Travel Mentoring team is continuing to undertake face-to-face work. 2,349 interventions have been undertaken between 1 November 2023 and 1 April 2024 which is 131 per cent higher than same period last year. The interventions included 27 bus days (which build confidence and knowledge in children using the bus network ahead of moving to secondary school) involving 1,283 attendees. The largest proportion of the increase is attributed to classroom workshops and group visits.
- 4.21 Individual journey mentoring, classroom workshops, and bus days have been increased. The team are focusing on special educational needs schools to reach the young people in those boroughs that do have access to the bus days. Travel Mentors exclusively work with individuals with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 4.22 We are retaining some of the new ways of working implemented during the coronavirus pandemic and are offering video or telephone assistance where customers prefer. Although most people prefer the in-person approach, it is 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, looking to encourage and support growth going forward.
- 4.24 Our Travel Mentors deliver numerous bus days, alongside the Safer Transport Police, council staff, bus operators, charity organisations and our Revenue inspectors. Attendees benefit from the safety messages and support provided in order to become independent travellers. Currently, work is being undertaken to refresh and standardise our bus days programme to provide a consistent approach to delivering these sessions across London.
- 4.25 We have also seen a big increase in the number of NHS services enquiring about the service. Occupational therapists are particularly referring many of their clients directly to the service.

5 ATS Roadmap Updates

- 5.1 At the meeting of the Panel on 5 December 2023 we shared the ATS Strategy and Roadmap, and we have been establishing methods of work and a programme in support of the roadmap; these are set out in Appendix 1.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 We have started work on the items identified in the refreshed ATS Roadmap.
- 6.2 Given our current financial position, the initial focus has been on those projects that are already funded, such as booking and scheduling.

6.3 We will bring an update on this work to a future meeting of the Panel along with our regular six-month progress updates.

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:

Paper submitted to the Customer Service and Operational Panel on 5 December 2023, relating to Assisted Transport Services Update.

Contact Officer: Nick Owen, Director of Buses
Email: Nick.Owen1@tfl.gov.uk

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

Overview of the Assisted Transport Strategy

Purpose: Deliver a reliable and convenient Assisted Transport Service for older and disabled Londoners.

Vision: World-leading Assisted Transport provision by 2032.

Underpinned by the TfL values of caring, open, and 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.

All underpinned by the Mayor's Transport Strategy principles of:

- Safe and reliable: customer focused, highly trained staff.
- Integrated: multi-modal and seamless, single user platform, personalised account.
- Convenience: information and support to build confidence in independent travelling and journey planning.
- Flexibility and choice: between modes, times of travel, ways of booking, level of assistance.
- Innovative: using innovation in bookings, payments, service routing, customer, and performance monitoring.

Assisted Transport Strategy Roadmap

- 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. Estimated financial costs are indicated as low / medium / high.

ATS Objective: Improve and integrate the end-to-end customer experience

ATS Roadmap Category: 1. Application and joining

- Details of initiative: 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.

- Timescales: Short – Medium.
- Estimated financial cost: Medium.
- Status – June 2024: A review of the current application form has been undertaken; next steps are to undertake an EQIA. Timescales for implementation of the form as part of the new booking system are to be finalised.

ATS Roadmap Category: 2. Booking and scheduling

- Details of initiative: 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.
- Timescales: Medium.
- Estimated financial cost: High.
- Status – June 2024: The new booking and scheduling system launched on 13 November 2023 providing customers with additional channels to book, manage, and cancel bookings. Additional features to simplify membership and booking processes are planned to be introduced over the coming year, timescales being discussed with the supplier.

ATS Roadmap Category: 3. One-stop shop

- Details of initiative: Integrating third parties with our booking and scheduling system to create a single point of contact for customers to book journeys across London.
- Timescales: Long.
- Estimated financial cost: Medium.
- Status – June 2024: A long-term aim as this will require working with multiple agencies across London to explore the feasibility and likelihood of achievability.

ATS Roadmap Category: 4. Online tools

- Details of initiative: Improvements to our website and online tools such as journey planning to make accessing information easier and clarify our service options.
- Timescales: Short – Long.
- Estimated financial cost: Medium.

- Status – June 2024: 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. Online tools such as an online booking form and computer portal are planned- timescales are being discussed with the supplier.

ATS Roadmap Category: 5. Staff training and upskilling

- Details of initiative: Review of current training scope and opportunities to integrate our training and improve our customer service offering.
- Timescales: Medium.
- Estimated financial cost: Medium.
- Status – June 2024: A new ‘Train the Trainer’ programme to support staff training and onboarding new system has been and continues to be utilised to support the roll out of system improvements and upgrades. 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.

ATS Objective: Improve TfL’s understanding of the Assisted Transport market

ATS Roadmap Category: 6. Best practice and benchmarking

- Details of initiative: 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.
- Timescales: Short – Medium.
- Estimated financial cost: Low – Medium.
- Status – June 2024: Project plan to be developed after the new system has been embedded and current process have been optimised.

ATS Roadmap Category: 7. Data and research

- Details of initiative: 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
- Timescales: Medium.
- Estimated financial cost: Low – Medium.
- Status – June 2024: Project plan to be developed after the new system has been embedded and current process have been optimised.

ATS Objective: Increase awareness of the choices available to customers

ATS Roadmap Category: 8. Communication and stakeholder engagement

- Details of initiative: 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.
- Timescales: Short – Medium.
- Estimated financial cost: Low.
- Status – June 2024: 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 up to formulate an integrated communication plan for the new booking system. In Touch magazine has just been launched to bring all information for customers on the new booking system into one place.

ATS Roadmap Category: 9. Customer training and upskilling

- Details of initiative: 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.
- Timescales: Medium – Long.
- Estimated financial cost: Medium.
- Status – June 2024: Dial-a-Ride: We have delivered a step-by -step online digital guide which takes customers through how to use the new booking app. Travel Mentoring: our travel mentoring teams are continuing to support people on traveling confidently on our network.

ATS Roadmap Category: 10. Marketing and promotion

- Details of initiative: Improving awareness of the range of ATS options and introducing targeted messaging to support different customer needs.
- Timescales: Short – Medium.
- Estimated financial cost: Low – Medium.
- Status – June 2024: A communication plan to share updates about upcoming changes has been developed in conjunction with internal teams and will be regularly reviewed and updates as further system improvements are rolled out.

ATS Roadmap Category: 11. Travel Mentoring

- Details of initiative: 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.

- Timescales: Medium – Long.
- Estimated financial cost: Medium.
- Status – June 2024: The travel mentoring team 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.

ATS Objective: Optimise capacity and make best use of available funding

ATS Roadmap Category: 12. Making the best use of available funding

- Details of initiative: 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.
- Timescales: Medium – Long.
- Estimated financial cost: Low – Medium.
- Status – June 2024: 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 and agreeing the work scope and timescales to jointly deliver this work with London Councils.

ATS Roadmap Category: 13. Optimising capacity

- Details of initiative: Our data and research findings will look to open up new avenues to explore in this area.
- Timescales: Medium – Long.
- Estimated financial cost: TBC once research is completed.
- Status – June 2024: Project plan to be developed once findings from the data and research workstream are established.