

Date: 28 November 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 update to the former Customer Service and Operational Performance Panel on 10 July 2024. This includes the updated Roadmap for review.

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 reduced mobility who require additional help getting around. Services available in London include door-to-door transport services, such as Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard, alongside enablers to using other 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 with the available funding. It does this 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 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, which incorporates 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.

4 **ATS Customer support**

- 4.1 Dial-a-Ride continues to meet customer demand with 92.1 per cent of requested trips fulfilled between 21 July and 17 August 2024 (Period 5) against the target of 90 per cent.
- 4.2 Since the beginning of April 2024, on average 92.2 per cent of requested trips have been delivered against a target of 90 per cent.
- 4.3 Year to date (up until the end of Period 5), year on year, trip requests have reduced by nine per cent when compared to financial year 2023/24.
- 4.4 There has been a 50 per cent decline in regular bookings compared to pre-coronavirus pandemic levels, due to the closure of over 200 locations previously served; the locations include evening entertainment and volunteer led activity centres.
- 4.5 In part, the drop in the number of bookings can also be attributed to the change in how the new booking system records trips; customers travelling together from the same address to the same destination now count as one trip where previously these were counted separately.
- 4.6 Demand for Taxicard trips has remained relatively consistent, showing a two per cent increase in the year to date, when compared to 2023/24.
- 4.7 Taxicard performance has been good this year: since April 2024, an average of 95.2 per cent of bookings were met within 15 minutes of the required time of arrival against a target of 95 per cent.
- 4.8 We operate Capital Call, a subsidised taxi service operating in 10 boroughs. This service is closed to new members. The Capital Call service experienced an overall decline in demand of 17.9 per cent in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23. This trend continues across 2024/25. The recent cyber incident means data for 2024/25 is temporarily unavailable.

Booking and scheduling platform

- 4.9 Central to the delivery of the ATS strategy has been the new booking and scheduling system, which went live to customers on 20 November 2023. We recognise that the introduction of the one-stop shop booking system has not always gone smoothly, but we are working hard with our suppliers to overcome challenges and significant benefits are now being realised by our customers and colleagues.

- 4.10 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 for colleagues as improvements and updates to the new system are rolled out.
- 4.11 The new system offers Dial-a-Ride 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 voiceovers and adaptive font size.
- 4.12 The app is proving popular for booking trips, with over 20 per cent of trip bookings being made consistently through the app against a predicted 10 per cent usage.
- 4.13 Introduction of the new booking system initially led to higher call waiting times due to a combination of increased customer enquiries and colleagues continuing to build their knowledge of the system post-training.
- 4.14 The average speed of answering calls in Period 5 was 87 seconds with a call abandon rate of 4.9 per cent against targets of 300 seconds for speed of answering and a five per cent abandon rate for calls.
- 4.15 We regularly issue communications to customers regarding updates and improvements to the booking system. At the end of May 2024 we sent out our latest version of "In Touch", a biannual magazine to members on the Dial-a-Ride service. The most recent issue focused on bringing together all of the information about the new booking and scheduling system into one place.
- 4.16 Customer feedback is important to ensure we continually improve our services. We use various mediums to capture feedback, including the annual customer satisfaction survey. Our next annual customer satisfaction survey is already underway for 2024/25, with results expected in spring 2025.

Travel Mentoring Service

- 4.17 The Travel Mentoring team support our most vulnerable customers by hosting individual journey mentoring, classroom workshops, and bus days. We are currently focusing on special education needs (SEN) 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.
- 4.18 Our Travel Mentors deliver numerous bus days, alongside the Safer Transport Police, local council staff, bus operators, charity organisations and our revenue inspectors. Attendees benefit from the safety messages and support provided 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.
- 4.19 We have secured a working partnership with train operators Govia and South Western Railway. This enables them to support customers with travel training on these services where they wish to make an interchange on to our network, removing potential travel barriers between us and other operators' services.

This is being undertaken as a three-month trial to determine levels of success.

- 4.20 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 customers prefer the in-person approach, it is important to offer digital alternatives when requested.
- 4.21 Over 2,400 interventions have been undertaken since April 2024, a 45 per cent increase during the same period last year. The interventions included 34 bus days involving 1,614 attendees. The increase is due to hosting classroom workshops and group visits.
- 4.22 Initial investigation into using volunteers to support the Travel Mentoring service has identified that there are significant barriers around training and safeguarding that would need to be overcome.
- 4.23 We work in partnership with the NHS and receive a significant number of referrals from occupational therapists. We are working with several NHS trusts to understand how to further develop this service with joint funding.

5 ATS Roadmap

- 5.1 We will continue to review the ATS strategy and service offering to identify areas where we can make improvements for our customers, while delivering the service efficiently. We will continue to provide updates when appropriate to the Panel as we develop the medium- to longer-term actions within the Roadmap.
- 5.2 The updated ATS Roadmap is provided in Appendix 1.

List of appendices to this report:

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

List of Background Papers:

None

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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 Services for older and disabled Londoners. |
| Vision: | World-leading Assisted Transport service provision by 2032. |
| TfL Values: | Caring, Open and Adaptable. |
| Objectives: | <ol style="list-style-type: none">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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Safe and reliable: customer focused, highly trained staff.○ Integrated: multi-model 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. |

The Assisted Transport Strategy (ATS) 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.

| ATS Objective | ATS Roadmap Categories | Details of initiative | Timescales Short / Medium / Long-term | Estimated financial cost Low / Medium / High | Status – October2024 |
|--|----------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| 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 | Introduction of a new paper form is progressing with this new form to align with the electronic form once introduced. An equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken and we aim to introduce the new paper form early in 2025. |
| | 2. Booking and scheduling | Simplifying the booking process through the introduction of a new booking and scheduling system. Once introduced, undertake further work to maximise the opportunities the new system offers e.g., facilitating interchanges between the accessible wider public transport network and ATS services so customers can travel further independently. | Medium | High | 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 Objective | ATS Roadmap Categories | Details of initiative | Timescales Short / Medium / Long-term | Estimated financial cost Low / Medium / High | Status – October2024 |
|---------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| | 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 | We continue to explore this long-term aim which requires 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. Online tools such as an online booking form and computer portal are planned, with timescales being discussed with the supplier. |
| | 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 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 |

| ATS Objective | ATS Roadmap Categories | Details of initiative | Timescales Short / Medium / Long-term | Estimated financial cost Low / Medium / High | Status – October2024 |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| | | | | | <p>team to share best practice and increase cross-modal learning.</p> <p>We are undertaking a review of training needs across all ATS services delivered directly by TfL with the aim of improving the training offer and consistency. Project plan to be developed after the new system has been embedded and current process have been optimised.</p> |
| 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 | |
| | 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 | 8. Communication and stakeholder engagement | Development of a communication plan including public forum and disability group engagement to share | Short - Medium | Low | We have committed to publishing In Touch twice a year to provide our customers with Dial-a-Ride service |

| ATS Objective | ATS Roadmap Categories | Details of initiative | Timescales Short / Medium / Long-term | Estimated financial cost Low / Medium / High | Status – October2024 |
|---------------|--|---|--|---|--|
| customers | | strategy initiatives, service improvements and gather feedback to feed into planned ATS roadmap initiatives. | | | updates. We are undertaking a review our stakeholder engagement to ensure we have clear channels and plans in place. |
| | 9. Customer training and upskilling | Support for customers to develop skills and confidence 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 have delivered a step-by-step online digital guide which takes customers through how to use the new booking app. We are exploring other avenues to share this information and support customers with using the new app. Travel Mentoring: Our Travel Mentoring teams are continuing to support people in travelling 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 has been developed in conjunction with internal teams and will be regularly reviewed and updates as further system improvements are rolled out. |

| ATS Objective | ATS Roadmap Categories | Details of initiative | Timescales Short / Medium / Long-term | Estimated financial cost Low / Medium / High | Status – October 2024 |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Optimise capacity and make best use of available funding | 11. Travel Mentoring | Increasing awareness of Travel Mentoring, reviewing how it is offered and delivered to maximise benefits for customers and reach the maximum number of people who need this support. | Medium - Long | Medium | 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. |
| | 12. Making the best use of available funding | Reviewing processes to improve resource use e.g., removing duplicative processes between ATS, 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 undertaking work alongside London Councils which aims to harmonise Taxicard so there is a consistent offering and eligibility criteria across London. |
| | 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. |