
The driver on the bus....

The Transport Committee's review of bus driving standards in London

October 2005



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The Transport Committee

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The Transport Committee's general terms of reference are to examine and report on transport matters of importance to Greater London and the transport strategies, policies and actions of the Mayor, Transport for London, and the other Functional Bodies where appropriate. In particular, the Transport Committee is also required to examine and report to the Assembly from time to time on the Mayor's Transport Strategy, in particular its implementation and revision.

The terms of reference for the review into bus driving standards were agreed at the Transport Committee's meeting on 21 April 2005.

- To establish the scale and trends of passenger complaints as they relate to bus journeys.
- To identify the main categories of complaints relating to bus driver/passenger interaction.
- To establish the effectiveness of existing bus driver training and other passenger focused initiatives on London's buses.
- To establish the effectiveness of measures to improve passenger experiences on London's buses through driver quality monitoring, mystery traveller surveys etc.
- To establish how TfL and the bus operators are handling passenger complaints and identify good practice in this area.

The majority of the Committee approved this report. John Biggs AM and Murad Qureshi AM voted against the report.

Please contact Danny Myers on either 020 7983 4394 or on e-mail via danny.myers@london.gov.uk if you have any comments on this report the Committee would welcome any feedback. For press queries, please contact Denise Malcolm on 020 7983 4428 or via denise.malcolm@london.gov.uk

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Chairman's Foreword



In 2000/01, London Buses received just over 11,000 complaints. By 2004/05, this number had almost quadrupled. Whilst there has been a significant increase in the number of buses and the number of passengers boarding them over the last five years, the number of complaints has grown disproportionately.

The Transport Committee discovered that almost 80 per cent of all complaints made last year related to the action of the driver. We set out to discover why this was proving to be the single largest source of complaint and what could be done to halt this unwelcome trend.

Getting on a bus now is a very different experience to what it may have been ten years ago. There are different buses, different routes, and different methods of paying. Gone are the conductors, and routemasters to be replaced by the bendy bus, oyster card and cashless operation. The rise in the number of complaints made to London Buses would suggest this new experience has not always been a happy one for the passenger.

We have concluded that a number of factors have contributed to this rise in complaints. We welcome improvements to the complaints procedure and accept that this may have had a role in bringing about the increase in complaints. However, there are other key factors we consider to be at play. For example, the development of a standing culture on the lower decks, the need to communicate more effectively with passengers, and the need to develop and improve the bus driving BTEC. We have developed a raft of recommendations to tackle these specific issues.

The most important suggestion we make however is that London Buses should add driving standards to those aspects of performance that are tied to penalties and rewards. We have seen how Quality Incentive Contracts – a wider issue that the Committee is to consider in 2006 – have been able to improve bus reliability. We wish to see similar improvements to driving standards.

I would like to thank all those passengers who have contacted the Committee throughout this review. I would also like to extend the Committee's gratitude to London Buses and the bus operators who have given so generously of their time in supplying the Committee with invaluable information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Evans', written in a cursive style.

Roger Evans

Chairman, London Assembly Transport Committee

Executive Summary

There is a curious phenomenon taking place on London's buses. It's not just that there are new routes being served by new buses, bendy or otherwise. It's not just that there are more buses, more bus lanes and more services. And it's not just that there are a lot more passengers. In parallel with all this change and progress on London Buses, levels of dissatisfaction have actually increased. Complaints are up and dramatically so – both in absolute and proportional terms.

Scale and Importance of Bus Driving Standards and Passenger Care

Figures provided by London Buses below show that the absolute number of complaints made to London Buses has almost quadrupled since 2001-02 and the number of complaints per passenger kilometre has almost trebled.

Financial Year	Passenger Km (m)	No of Cases	No of cases per Million Passenger Km
2004-2005	6755	43043	6.3
2003-2004	6431	33630	5.2
2002-2003	5734	25139	4.3
2001-2002	5124	11631	2.2

Of these 43,043 complaints, 34,634 were attributed to the behaviour of the driver (which represents 80 per cent of all complaints and 0.002 per cent of all journeys made). Although the figures represent a relatively small number when set against the total number of bus journeys made in London, Age Concern pointed out to the Committee that one single incident, reported or not, can have a significant effect on a more vulnerable passenger's confidence in using the service.

Reasons behind the increase in complaints

The Committee welcomes London Buses' new, simpler and more accessible complaints procedure which probably gives a truer reflection of the level of satisfaction among passengers. However, the Committee would question the view put forward by Peter Hendy, the Head of Surface Transport at Transport for London, that the rise in the level of complaints on London Buses 'is almost entirely due to the steps we have taken to improve access to the complaints process.'

Why are drivers now the primary source of complaint? Can it be simply that now buses are more reliable, that complaints naturally drift toward the performance of the driver or have driving standards actually deteriorated?

There appear to be unexpected side-effects of the expansion of the bus service which brings the performance of the driver into sharper focus. For example, the new designs of newly commissioned buses – limited by design constraints – are preventing easy access to seats and exit points for some passengers, particularly when buses are crowded. Consequently, drivers move away from a stop before a passenger has the chance either to get off the bus or to get seated. Another example is the effect that the more robust enforcement of bus lane use has had on a passenger's experience of using the bus. Buses

are now travelling more quickly as a result but consequently are having to brake more sharply and are therefore putting passengers, particularly those standing, at greater risk.

Improving the passenger's experience

Every wheelchair or buggy carrying user's increased access to bus service results in fewer seats on the lower deck. For every more reliable, quicker bus journey, there is the increased risk of sharper braking. So what can be done?

The Committee is pleased to note that the new articulated bus – the bendy bus – provides better access to seats at entry points. Early indications are that these buses are substantially safer than the Routemaster bus that has been controversially removed from the mainstream network in 2005.

However, the Committee is asking London Buses to consider providing priority seating on all new buses between the two sets of doors on the lower deck of a traditional bus – as many routes already have – in order to make it safer for boarding and alighting passengers.

The Committee has also examined the role of the driver. Peter Hendy put to the Committee that a driver's intervention in potential conflicts between passengers is fairly redundant because often it is already evident to the passenger what may be obstructing or irritating another passenger. The Committee supports the view put by London Buses and the TGWU that a driver should not leave their cab as this puts them at significantly greater risk of injury.

However, there is greater scope for effective communication between driver and passenger. The Committee has therefore proposed that London Buses make greater use of visual aids and PA systems to remind passengers of their responsibilities on a London bus. For example, there should be standard visual and verbal reminders that people should give up their seats to older and vulnerable passengers to become part of the service culture – a "Mind The Gap" for London Buses.

Driver Training

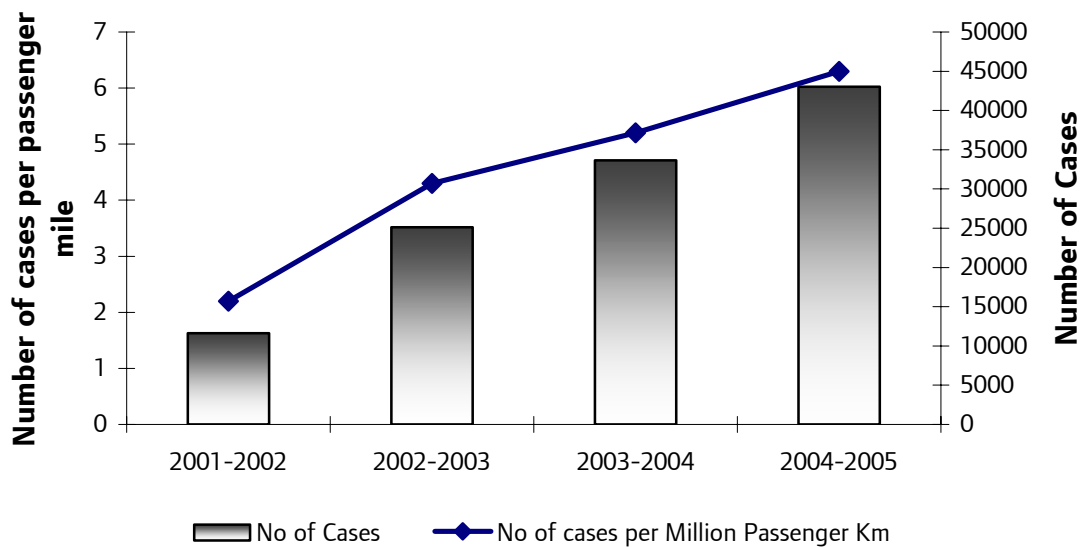
London Buses and bus operators have made clear to us their intention to improve the standard of bus driving in London. Historically, driver turnover was a significant barrier to maintaining standards and the Committee welcomes the reduced annual turnover rates – although still relatively high – and the impact that this has had on the bus service in recent years.

The Committee also welcomes the introduction of a new Bus Driving BTEC qualification accredited and monitored by EdExcel, and is keen that the target set by London Buses that all drivers with more than one year's service receive this training is met by the end of 2005.

However, the Committee has concluded that operators should be financially encouraged to improve standards of driving on their buses. We are therefore proposing that financial penalties and rewards relating to bus driving standards should be built into the contracts issued by London Buses. We have seen how penalty and rewards in relation to reliability have been able to bring about a significant improvement on London's buses – the Committee would like to see the same methods applied to bus driving with the same results.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 London Buses report that there is dramatically increased ridership on their service – almost half a billion more journeys have been made this year than last¹. Bus usage has reached levels not recorded for over forty years, as the service covers more kilometres and more quickly than ever with bus lanes now more vigorously policed. These improvements have been accompanied by apparent increases in levels of customer dissatisfaction.
- 1.2 Figures provided by London Buses below show that the absolute number of complaints made to London Buses has almost quadrupled since 2001-02, and the number of cases complaints passenger kilometre has almost trebled.



Financial Year	Passenger Km (m)	No of Cases	No of cases per Million Passenger Km
2004-2005	6755	43043	6.3
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2002-2003	5734	25139	4.3
2001-2002	5124	11631	2.2

- 1.4 London Buses are keen for this increase to be put into the context of overall performance stressing that ‘for every complaint received during the course of the year, there were around 40,000 journeys made about which no complaints were received’.²
- 1.5 It is not just the level of complaints that is worth recording – it is the source of the dissatisfaction as well. Of these 43,043 complaints in 2004/05, 34,634 were attributed to the behaviour of the driver (which represents 80 per cent of all

¹ TfL Board Papers, May 18, Item 5, paragraph 3.14

² London Buses Submission –see Appendix C

complaints and 0.002 per cent of all journeys made). The Mayor informed the Chair of the Transport Committee that there were 3,459 injury cases on London Buses last year³ (about one injury for every half a million journeys made). Whereas in the past, complaints may have been made about the regularity or the cleanliness of a bus, complaints are increasingly likely to be made about the driver.

Buses & Vulnerable Users

'Buses are the most available and accessible form of transport for older people in many parts of London, and problems with bus services can have serious effects on older people's ability to live an active and independent life.'

Age Concern London, June 2005

- 1.6 The number of complaints and injuries should be considered in proportion to the number of journeys made every day that do not generate complaint. However, this should not diminish the importance of the issue. As Age Concern explained in its oral evidence to the Committee, 'if you are a vulnerable person [you] may be quite psychologically scarred even by one experience - a small number of really bad experiences, accidents or injuries really do undermine people's confidence in the system to quite a large extent.'⁴
- 1.7 For disabled and older users, the biggest source of complaints is the way in which a bus is driven. In particular, the failure of drivers to get close to the kerb is a significant problem for older and disabled passengers. This leads to problems for passengers boarding and alighting the bus, as well as extended delays at the stop.
- 1.8 Evidence submitted to the Committee by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea offers an indication of the extent of the problem for more vulnerable users. Cllr Mrs Frances Taylor pointed out that in 2000, RBKC found that 40 per cent of female road passenger accidents in the borough involving women over 60 were taking place inside buses. This figure has declined to just over 30 per cent in 2002 and 24 per cent in 2004.
- 1.9 Typical of the responses the Committee received from the public is the following.

'Drivers certainly need to improve in the way they handle their buses. They don't give us a chance to sit down before they rush off with a jerk. This is especially difficult and dangerous when one has to climb steps before sitting down.'

It is particularly worrying for those unsteady on their feet [who are standing] when drivers swerve round corners and jerk the bus as they stop....

However, there are drivers who take the comfort and safety of their passengers seriously. I travelled on a 20 bus from Whipps Cross Hospital last week and it was the most comfortable bus journey I had experienced for a long time. I thanked the driver for driving so smoothly. If only there were more like him.'

Mrs A. Lee, Woodford Green

³ [Mayor's Question Time - question number 1226/2005](#)

⁴ [Transcript of Transport Committee meeting, 9 June 2005](#)

This report examines the extensive measures that London Buses have put into place to ensure that there are 'more drivers like him' and seeks to establish what further improvements could be made to ensure that the passengers' experience meets expectations.

2. The Complaints Procedure

- 2.1 London Buses partly attribute the four-fold increase in the number of complaints to the steps we have taken to improve access to the complaints process.⁵ London Buses also points to the use of e-mail and mobile phone as also increasing passengers' propensity to complain.
- 2.2 TfL has taken a number of steps to make the complaints procedure more customer- friendly. A new, centrally-managed local rate telephone number for complaints has replaced the complicated and cumbersome operator-based complaints procedure which was in place prior to 2000. Opening hours for the complaints service have also been extended from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- 2.3 London Buses also now claims to promote its complaints procedure more widely. There are new, clearer notices on buses displaying contact details for London Buses Customer Services. These replace the previous notices and are designed to ensure passengers can easily understand to whom and how they should complain if they have reason to do so. London Buses also provide 'customer service business cards' for operational staff to distribute to passengers as they see fit.
- 2.5 As well as promoting access to the complaints process, London Buses also claim to have improved the way complaints are dealt with. Complaints received by e-mail or letter receives an immediate acknowledgement and a point of contact is assigned to each customer complaint so that they can pursue progress of their complaint with an assigned member of staff. Customers are kept informed with a telephone call, letter or e-mail to inform them of the action taken.
- 2.6 In August 2003, London Buses began centralising the management of complaints. An agreement was reached that determined the level of involvement each of the operators would have in managing complaints.
- 2.7 A 'Code of Practice' was introduced for those bus operators who elected to retain involvement in managing complaints. The Code outlines how complaints should be managed and ensures that no matter which organisation a passenger approaches with an issue, the same high level of service is provided. For example, for those who retain responsibility for the handling of their complaints, London Buses expect a response within 15 days of submitting a complaint from a passenger.
- 2.8 London Buses has been awarded the British Standard CMSAS 86: 2000 (Complaints Management). The Standard must be applied for annually, and in reapplying each year London Buses reviews existing processes and procedures.

The Passenger Experience of the Complaints Procedure

- 2.9 There are inherent difficulties preventing clear communication with customers about what action has been taken in response to their complaint, particularly when that complaint relates to the driver. The London Transport Users Committee (LTUC) highlighted the issue to the Committee.

⁵ London Buses Submission –see Appendix C

- 2.10 When a complaint has been made about a driver, it may not be possible to give the passenger who has complained any information as to the outcome of their complaint. A combination of employment and data protection legislation often means that a passenger is given nothing other than a cursory, vague acknowledgement that their complaint has been looked into and action taken. LTUC is concerned that such responses to a complaint may be 'regarded as evasive' and offer little consolation to the complainant. It is a concern shared by the Committee.
- 2.11 Another problem is that it is sometimes difficult to assess the validity of a complaint. When there is a complaint made against a driver it is often the case that the driver makes a complaint also. The Committee was informed of the lengthy and thorough complaints procedure that is applied by Stagecoach, London General, London Central and Go-Ahead especially when there are two conflicting versions of the same event – a problem that should gradually be ameliorated with the installation of CCTV on all London Buses. The Mayor of London recently informed the Home Affairs Select Committee that 95 per cent of all buses are fitted with CCTV on the top and lower deck. The Mayor estimated that the entire fleet will be fitted with CCTV by the end of the 2005.⁶
- 2.12 The Committee welcomes the reforms to the complaints procedure made by London Buses. The Committee is pleased to find that the procedure has been centralised and simplified and that the data now recorded probably gives a truer reflection of the level of satisfaction on London Buses.
- 2.13 However, the Committee does question the view outlined in written evidence to the Committee by Peter Hendy, the Managing Director of Surface Transport at Transport for London, that the rise in 'the number of complaints being made to London Buses is almost entirely due to the steps we have taken to improve access to the complaints process.'

⁶ Home Affairs Select Committee, Uncorrected Hansard, 13th September 2005, Q79

3. Bus Design & Passenger Expectation

- 3.1 What other factors could be contributing to the dramatic rise in the number of complaints on the buses? Why do so many of the complaints relate to the driver? In addition to the improved access to the complaints process, London Buses also put forward another potential reason for the rise in complaints and the nature of these complaints: the dramatic changes made to the bus service and the efforts to increase reliability have not only helped increase ridership. They have also raised passenger expectations of the service.

Bus design and the impact on drivers and passengers

- 3.2 The lower deck of a modern, recently-designed bus has to adhere to certain criteria. It is mandatory that space be allocated for a passenger who uses a wheelchair; it is also desirable for space to be provided for passengers with pushchairs. The lower deck of the bus must have two doors – to ensure a quicker, smoother boarding and alighting process. The staircase to the upper deck of the bus, for safety reasons, must be straight, rather than spiral, as on routemasters. This takes up extra space. This does not leave a great deal of space for seating on the lower deck.

- 3.3 Consequently, the layout of the modern bus has completely changed. John Cartledge of the London Transport Users Committee elaborates.

*'If you reserve an area within the bus for wheelchair or buggy parking, and wheelchair users or buggy users respond unexpectedly enthusiastically ...so that you get more of them on the bus than there is room to accommodate at one time, you start to get conflicts between them conflicts which the driver is expected to arbitrate in... you are creating tensions that were not there before.'*⁷

- 3.4 The new requirements have resulted in there being fewer seats on the lower deck of buses. Passengers congregate by the exit door, towards the back of the bus, and this means that it is difficult for passengers to find a seat. Hence, it takes longer for a passenger that might not be 'steady on their feet' to find a seat, if they can at all. Because it is now taking longer for passengers to get to a seat, there is now an increased likelihood that they will complain that the driver has accelerated away too soon. In fact, the driver may not have changed their behaviour at all.

- 3.5 Bus lanes are now being more vigorously patrolled than before and so buses are far more likely to have an unobstructed journey. Buses can brake more sharply, accelerate faster and travel at greater speeds. Although this decreases the stop-start nature of many journeys, it also increases the risk of sharper breaking and speedier acceleration.

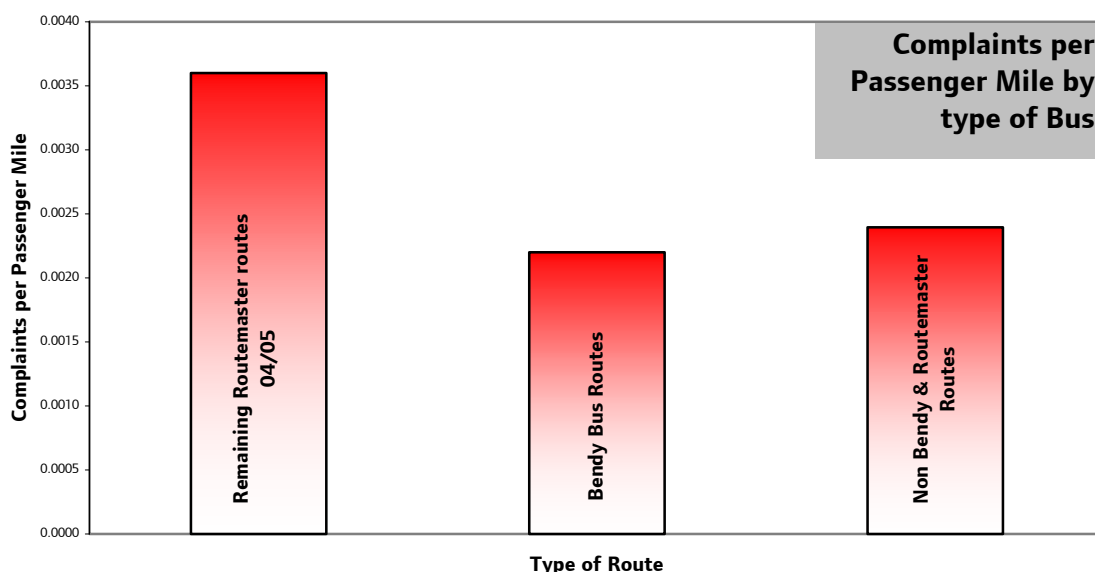
Bus Design: Routemaster & the Bendy Bus

- 3.6 London Buses has introduced a new design to its fleet – the controversial articulated or bendy bus – that attempts to counter at least some of these design problems. The longer single-decker bus has substantially more seats on the lower deck than a double-decker bus. The design also provides quicker access to seats

⁷ [Transcript of Transport Committee meeting, 9 June 2005](#)

with seats located closer to the buses' three boarding points than on a double-decker bus.

Level of Complaint by Bus Design: Routemaster & Bendy Bus



Type of Route	No of Cases	No of Driver Cases	Total no of passenger journeys	Cases as a cent of passenger journeys	per Driver cases as a per cent of passenger journeys
Remaining Routemaster routes 04/05	1153	977	32380072	0.0036	0.0030
Bendy Bus Routes	2713	1972	123057872	0.0022	0.0016
Entire Service	40754	32443	1,700,921,491	0.0024	0.0019

- 3.7 Although controversial, the new bendy bus design is beginning to show tentative signs of bringing about safety improvements. A comparison between the number of injuries sustained on Routemaster and bendy buses between 1st April 2003 and 31st March 2005 shows that 196 incidents had been reported on bendy buses and over the same period 683 incidents had been reported on Routemasters – although over this period more routes operated with routemasters than bendy buses.⁸
- 3.8 The Committee have also been able to establish that the bendy buses generate fractionally fewer complaints per passenger journey than other forms of buses, especially the Routemaster. 0.0023 per cent of all journeys made across the whole service generate a complaint. 83 per cent of these complaints relate to the driver.

⁸ Question response - Geoff Pope – In addition it should be noted that during this time frame a different number of each type of bus has been in operation. The figures have not been 'normalised' to take account of this due to the rolling programme of articulated buses being introduced. Consideration should also be given to the fact that during this 2-year period the numbers of Routemaster buses have been reducing. This will also affect the figures provided.

On the bendy buses, there is a fractional drop to 0.0022 per cent. 73 per cent of which relate to the driver.

3.9 On Routemaster routes complaints occur at a significantly higher rate - 0.0036 per cent - and on routes where the routemaster was phased out during 04/05, the level of complaint was at 0.0034 per cent. On routes where Routemasters had been phased out during the previous year, the level of complaint dropped to 0.0020 per cent. The table and graph above illustrate detail these findings.

3.10 It is perhaps too early and the improvement too marginal to conclude categorically that the introduction of bendy buses represents a genuine step change in increasing safety on buses but the early signs are encouraging nonetheless. Coupled with the removal of the Routemaster it would appear that strategic design decisions are bringing about an improvement in safety.

The Bus Design Forum

3.11 The Bus Design Forum is a group supervised by London Buses with a membership designed to cover the wide variety of passengers that use buses in London. This includes older people, wheelchair users, people with visible and hidden disabilities as well as users without any impairment. Membership has been established through formal contact with representative bodies, such as the RNIB and RNID, as well as research to find individuals who represent groups not covered by current membership. The Committee welcomes the Forum's efforts to include representation for disabled passengers who do not need to use a wheelchair – for example, visually impaired people. The Committee heard some persuasive evidence that the needs of these users can often be overlooked.

3.12 The Forum has been in operation for some time but has recently been restructured and its remit broadened to cover all aspects of surface transport (including taxis for example). The Forum is being used by London Buses as a consultative body through which proposals and designs of buses are discussed. One of TfL London Buses' stated aims is to establish a universal Vehicle Specification that allows for only slight variation depending on the length of a bus. The Forum will be consulted on the ideas that London Buses put forward in the process of establishing this template.

3.13 To date, the Forum has been able to implement a standard blueprint layout for all buses, the development and installation of an extra hand rail on stairs and securing ventilation systems on buses. The Committee welcomes the efforts that have been made by the Forum and particularly welcomes the Forum's ability to effect demonstrable change to the design of London's buses.

3.14 The establishment of a new Vehicle Specification, in which a layout for the downstairs of a bus would be central is also a welcome aim of London Buses. As part of establishing this template, **the Committee would like London Buses to consider whether it is feasible to ensure that priority seating is provided between the two sets of doors on all double decker buses – as many routes already have.** The Committee feels that this would alleviate many of the problems that older or disabled passengers face when boarding a bus.

Passenger Expectations of the Bus Driver

3.15 On a crowded bus at rush hour or after the schools have finished, what can a driver do to improve the experience for the more vulnerable passenger? Age

Concern in their evidence to the Transport Committee, specified their expectations of a bus driver. A driver's responsibility should include 'requesting other passengers to give up their seats if disabled people, older people or people with children need them' and ensuring the use and fitness for use checking of wheelchair ramps.⁹

3.16 Bus drivers should already be checking on a daily basis whether ramps are working and London Buses have placed reminders in drivers' cabs about how to use wheelchair ramps. However, London Buses informed the Committee that it is also a question of experience for both driver and passengers who use a ramp. The more the ramp is used by passengers, the more comfortably and quickly the ramp will eventually be put to use. It is a learning process across the whole network that requires a dramatic shift in the number of wheelchair users who feel comfortable to be able to use the bus and request the ramp. It is a shift being encouraged by London Buses.

3.17 The Committee also explored the driver's role beyond technical issues such as ramp access and sought evidence on the kind of interaction that takes place more regularly between passenger and driver. The Committee was informed that London Buses feel that the driver has a limited impact on passenger behaviour. London Buses do not advise that their operators drivers should leave their cabs— a view supported by the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). The Committee was informed 'most of the serious assaults that occur on bus staff are because they leave the cab.'¹⁰

3.18 It is understandable that both London Buses and the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) are concerned about the level of abuse that drivers receive on the buses. In the first few months of 2005 alone, the TGWU believe in North London there were 'something like 60 assaults and perhaps as many as 250 assaults' of bus drivers across the whole of London. The Committee supports the view that a driver should not leave their cabs unless circumstances are exceptional and certainly not to arbitrate on who sits where.

3.19 London Buses however do take the argument one step further. Peter Hendy informed the Committee that:

*'I think it is fairly unreasonable to expect drivers to intervene in circumstances where the goodwill of the passenger is concerned...it must be obvious to people in many cases that if you get a second buggy on the bus one of them has to be folded up otherwise nobody can get down the corridor. The fact that nobody will do it suggests to me that the driver's intervention in many cases would not be worthwhile.'*¹¹

3.20 Age Concern does not 'see what is unreasonable about, for example, asking the driver reasonably to request people [from the driver's cab] to give up their seat to people who need it more than the person sitting down does.'¹² Neither does the Committee. There are other potential methods though for a better communication between driver and passenger that could be further explored and developed.

⁹ Age Concern's written submission to the Transport Committee, May 2005

¹⁰ [Transcript of Transport Committee meeting, 9 June 2005](#)

¹¹ [Transcript of Transport Committee meeting, 9 June 2005](#)

¹² [Transcript of Transport Committee meeting, 9 June 2005](#)

- 3.21 London Buses has informed the London Assembly that it is encouraging drivers to make requests of passengers, such as folding or moving buggies, in a reasonable and polite tone of voice as part of their BTEC training (see Chapter 4). The hostility that drivers are met with in dealing with specific cases could be avoided if such a reminder became a daily, regular and familiar part of the journey.
- 3.22 Rather than address specific instances of unreasonable behaviour, the Committee supports the suggestion from Age Concern that a generic announcement – with perhaps an agreed text or a pre-recorded message – should be made on crowded buses regularly to remind passengers of their own responsibilities.
- 3.23 The Committee therefore welcomed the development that, in an answer to the Deputy Chair of the Transport Committee, Geoff Pope, the Mayor informed Assembly members that ‘Next Stop’ signs with audio facilities are to be installed on all buses operating on TfL contracted routes as part of the London Buses iBus project. Signs will start to be rolled out from Spring 2007 and should be available on all buses by March 2009.
- 3.24 These audio facilities could be used not only to remind passengers where the bus stops next but of their own responsibilities with regard to other passengers. As an automated service, the facility also has the potential of removing another source of potential contact and conflict with passengers. The introduction of such an audio system on buses could ensure drivers do not have to shout a message. A pre-recorded message reminding passengers of their own responsibilities could become an ordinary experience on any bus journey – a “Mind the Gap” of the London bus.

The Committee recommends that the ‘Next Stop’ audio facilities to be installed on London Buses from 2007 be used to also convey messages to passengers about their responsibilities to other passengers.

4. A Driver's Training

4.1 A driver can be polite and courteous in their face-to-face contact with a passenger but such contact is rare in the time of the oyster card and other pre-pay arrangements. The passenger's single largest expectation of a driver is the drive itself. Does the bus pull up to the kerb? Is the bus driven smoothly? Is there any sharp braking? Did the driver stop at my stop?

4.2 London Buses have in place a number of performance monitoring measures to identify and address instances of bad driving. More fundamentally, since autumn 2003, London Buses, in conjunction with operators and the TGWU, have embarked on rolling out a new BTEC qualification for bus driving. This ambitious programme aims to train all drivers with more than one year's driving experience with London Buses to a BTEC standard by the end of 2005. This chapter explores the impact that these measures have had on bus driving standards.

The decline of the bus driver's status

4.3 However, before such an examination, it is necessary to establish why such measures were needed in the first place. Prior to 2000, the bus industry and particularly bus driving had been blighted for most of the 1990s by high turnover rates and a demoralised, poorly paid workforce.

4.4 Prior to 2000, annual turnover of bus drivers was over 30 per cent. The Committee was informed that at some garages this figure ran to nearly 80 per cent. Such a turnover rate was not sustainable and London Buses embarked upon a concerted effort to reduce turnover to support a wider expansion of the bus service.

4.5 Turnover in the last five years has fallen to below 15 per cent¹³ - a marked, welcome and dramatic improvement. This fall in annual turnover has been attributed to a number of interventions including higher salaries, better travel benefits and the introduction of new fleets that provide better security and air conditioning for drivers.¹⁴

4.6 More crucially, the decline in annual driver turnover has also been partly attributed to the better training opportunities given to drivers. The Committee visited an IT suite in Tottenham that has proved particularly successful in developing drivers' IT skills.

The Bus Driving BTEC qualification

4.7 The five modules of the bus driving BTEC are listed in the box below. On starting operators give drivers initial training but are not given the fuller BTEC training until established as a driver. The lessons of the course are felt to be better absorbed by students once they can relate the teaching back to the on-the-job experience they have already acquired. Those drivers who fail to meet standards are given advice or remedial training.

4.8 The course consists of five units, which are detailed in the box below. It is accredited and monitored by EdExcel, one of the examination boards responsible for managing GCSE and A-levels.

¹³ [Transcript of Transport Committee meeting, 9 June 2005](#)

¹⁴ See Appendix C

Driver Training BTEC Course

The qualification is comprised of the following five units/ learning outcomes:

Introduction to the bus industry

- Describe the bus industry and own company structure
- Explain the benefits of training and qualifications for drivers
- Explain the importance of meeting expectations

Operating the Bus Service

- Describe how to operate London bus 'on-vehicle' systems in accordance with accepted procedures
- Describe the effective operation of a bus service
- Demonstrate maintenance and safety checks that need to be carried out on vehicles

Health, Safety and Security

- Describe the driver role in relation to health and safety
- Describe the appropriate action to be taken in response to accidents and incidents
- Describe the implications of accidents

Driving Skills

- Demonstrate the principles of good driving practice (drivers will be formally assessed by a Driving Standards Agency Approved Assessor)
- Identify risks in relation to bus driving
- Apply appropriate driving techniques in a variety of driving situations

- 4.9 London Buses stressed to the Committee that they, operators and driver representatives are constantly seeking to enhance the course. To illustrate the point London Buses highlighted that a new interactive training DVD had been commissioned and developed which illustrates and instructs on a series of situations that a driver might encounter.
- 4.10 The Committee was informed by Age Concern that the course used a video to train drivers how to deal with disabled and elderly passengers. Age Concern felt that more direct contact with older and disabled passengers would be more appropriate. The Committee was pleased to note a major seminar organised by London Buses in the summer of 2005 on accessibility has produced 'a suite of new materials' for drivers.
- 4.11 The Committee however does feel that there is scope for more direct contact with local users, particularly those older and disabled passengers, to be integrated where feasible into the BTEC training. As the initial roll out of the scheme is targeted for the end of 2005, the scale of the task has probably limited the operators' ability to facilitate such a development.

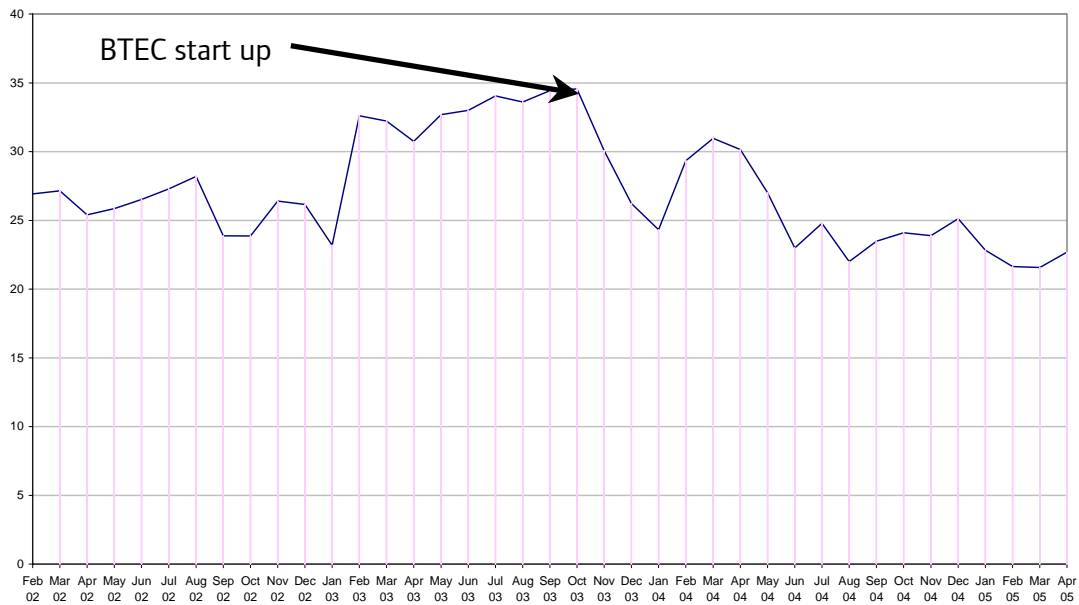
- 4.12 The BTEC training is here to stay and it will evolve. Though the qualification is a generic one, part of the actual training could benefit from local passenger input. The training scheme has provided drivers and operators with a welcome opportunity to develop their skills away from daily pressures of traffic and timetables. The Committee feels that this opportunity could be further harnessed to improve the link between bus drivers, operators and passengers to the benefit of all involved.

The Committee recommends that the input and advice of local transport user groups be integrated into the BTEC training scheme.

Driving Standards

- 4.13 So what impact have all these initiatives actually had on driving standards? Before we can seek to answer the question, we have to know how it is asked and examine the methods by which London Buses and operators actually monitor driving standards.
- 4.14 Between them London Buses and the operators use a number of methods for monitoring driving standards. Operators themselves employ both overt and covert inspectors to track driving standards or in response to a specific complaint from the public. The most widely used monitoring is performed by London Buses and then fed back to the operators and this is done through two methods; firstly, London Buses employ their own 'mystery customer' surveys and secondly, London Buses use Driving Standards Agency inspectors to monitor a whole range of performance variables.
- 4.15 The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) is contracted by TfL to carry out driver quality monitoring (DQM) assessments across the London bus network. Drivers are assessed on a number of skills, not all relating to driving. Drivers are assessed on such driving skills as the smoothness of the arrival and departure from a stop as well as how close to the kerb a bus stops, the comfort when braking, accelerating and cornering and the appropriate speed of a journey as well as the level of customer care. Poor aspects of a driver's performance are also identified including whether a driver uses a mobile phone, smokes or handles cash in motion (an example of a driver assessment form is available on request).
- 4.16 A poor driver performance generates a high score, with greater weighting to unacceptable, serious and dangerous faults. TfL feed these results back to the operators for those drivers whose performance has been flagged up for attention. Operators will then advise, retrain or discipline the driver highlighted. A driver's performance in a DSA assessment, according to the operators the Committee received evidence from, is not linked to a bonus.
- 4.17 So, have standards improved? On 22nd February 2005 TfL's Surface Advisory Panel reported that there was little evidence to suggest a significant difference exists in the standards of driving between groups who have completed their BTEC training and those yet to be trained according to the mystery customer surveys carried out by TfL. However, the more comprehensive DSA tests do suggest that since October 2003, there has been a marginal improvement.

Driving Standard Agency: Driver Performance Score
(Feb 2002-Apr05)



4.18 Judging by the DSA testing driving standards are only now fractionally better than they were between April 2002 and January 2003. The introduction of the BTEC does seem to have brought about an overall improvement in driving standards but the recent improvement was achieved within the context of two sharp declines in performance in early 2003 and 2004.

4.19 London Buses are ‘increasingly taking into account the Driver Quality Monitoring scores and the Mystery Traveller scores, when we are evaluating tenders’.¹⁵ However poor results from these surveys do not lead to financial penalties for operators. Under the current contract regime, the only two performance measures are scores on excess waiting time and keeping to schedule which are used to relate reliability of service.

4.20 There are therefore no incentives for drivers to attain required standards of driving. However, London Buses did stress that there are already plenty of incentives for operators to ensure that passengers receive a smooth and satisfactory ride, for example, keeping insurance premiums low. Such is the incentive, London Buses point out, that many operators are funding their own DQM testing in order to insure against rising premiums.

4.21 The Committee though does feel that there should be more direct incentives to improve driving standards. **The Committee recommends that London Buses add incentives, based on scores obtained from the Driver Quality Monitoring tests, into their contracts with bus operators.**

Rolling out the BTEC

4.22 *The target that London Buses set bus operators was that all drivers who had been employed for more than a year would be BTEC trained by the end of 2005. It is an ambitious target and the Committee is sceptical that it will be reached. The*

¹⁵ [Transcript of Transport Committee meeting, 9 June 2005](#)

Committee was informed that to date 14,000 drivers had been BTEC trained, 11,000 of which remain in the employ of London bus operators.

- 4.23 London has an estimated 21,000 bus drivers. Roughly 3,000 of these drivers are in their first year and so are not eligible for training which leaves 7,000 drivers that need to be trained between now and the end of the year – more than 1,000 a month – as of June 2006. To date, approximately 670 drivers have been trained a month. The Committee appreciates that there has been, as the scheme has been rolled out, an accelerated rate of completion and that this is likely to rise over the remaining six months of the target period. Peter Hendy is aware that there may be a need for greater pressure on bus operators over the coming months.

*'As the autumn draws in and the nights get longer, [we] will look at the relative performance of operators... Some of them will have done better than others and we will be on the phone to the people that have not, and they had better pull their fingers out.'*¹⁶

We will monitor the situation and we will return to the issue at the Transport Committee's meeting in January 2006.

¹⁶ [Transcript of Transport Committee meeting, 9 June 2005](#)

5. Key Findings & Recommendations

- 5.1 The Committee does not support the conclusion that the dramatic rise in the number of complaints on London's Buses over the last four years can be wholly attributed to an improved access to the complaints procedure and a rising expectation of the service from passengers. Too much else has changed on London's Buses for other factors not to have played a part.
- 5.2 This is why the committee looked at the issue of driving standards. We have received conflicting evidence. 80 per cent of all complaints made last year related to the driver and yet in 2004/05 London Buses own testing revealed a marginal improvement in driving standards and the number of injuries on buses has declined. The Committee suggest that this contradiction can be partially explained by the design of the new buses.
- 5.3 The Committee has recommended that London Buses seek to establish whether it is feasible to provide priority seating on all new buses between the two sets of doors on traditional double decker buses. Personal injuries on bendy buses are at a much lower rate than those recorded on Routemasters.
- 5.4 The Committee has also looked at the role of the driver in disputes with and between passengers. The Committee support the assertion from London Buses that drivers should not leave their cabs except in exceptional circumstances and certainly should not do so to arbitrate between individuals. The Committee was also made aware that even when drivers do ask a passenger to give up a seat or fold a buggy they are sometimes met with objections or even an abusive response.
- 5.5 The Committee do feel that communication with passengers could be improved. For a short term solution, the Committee supports the suggestion put by Age Concern London that a generic announcement - for example about giving up seats or moving down the bus - should be made at regular intervals on a crowded bus rather than directed at specific instances through a PA system. The Committee have therefore recommended that a pilot scheme be costed and considered by London Buses for trialling on difficult routes.
- 5.6 In the mid-long term, the Committee was pleased to note that technology is to be installed on buses from 2009 that will allow passengers a visual and audio communication system - similar to those on some London Underground lines. The Committee has recommended that London Buses seek not only to convey information about a passenger's journey via this facility but also to remind passengers of the needs of more vulnerable passengers.
- 5.7 The Committee is recommending that bus contracts issued by London Buses include performance scores based on the Driver Monitor Quality testing carried out independently by the Driving Standard Agency.
- 5.8 The Committee have been particularly impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment that London Buses and in particular operators have implemented the BTEC training scheme for drivers. The Committee does though remain sceptical that all targeted drivers will have been trained by the end of 2005.

- 5.9 The BTEC training would appear to have brought about a marginal improvement in driving standards and partially contributed to the welcome reduction in annual staff turnover rates. The Committee has concluded that the training of drivers should contain an element of input from local users to make drivers aware of particular concerns for passengers.

Appendix A – List of Evidence submitted to the Committee

The Committee would like to thank all those organisations and individuals who took the time to contact the Committee and submit their evidence to the scrutiny.

If you wish to obtain a copy of any of the evidence listed please get touch with Danny Myers either on 020 7983 4394 or via e-mail at danny.myers@london.gov.uk.

Corporate Responses

Age Concern	Quality Line
East Thames Buses	Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
First London East/West	Stagecoach
Go Skills	Tellings Golden Millar
London Borough of Redbridge	Transport and General Workers Union
London Central	Transport for All
London General	Transport for London
London Transport Users Committee	Travel London
London United	

Passenger responses

John D. Beasley	Amy Ericsson
Patricia Webb	Brian Holder
Maureen Smith	Chuido Ojike
E. Collins	Clive Simmonds
Helen E. Noble	David Dadswell
John Lawrence	Eric Thorniley
Ruth A. Clemenson	Eva Chrisostomou
Mary Scheu	Sally Ann Goddall
Gerald P. Owens	Helena Poldervaart
Graham Wernham	Jan Pancheri
R.H. Carr	Jane Lyle
T. Meacock	John Bell
Angela Broome	John Kerridge
Mr & Mrs L Morris	Julie Downes
G.M. Cann	Kathy Shearing
Jean E Soloman	Margaret Prime
R Cook	Molly Porter
A Lee	Myrna Shaw
Shaun Fitzpatrick	Janice Dent
Joseph Rungay	Natalie Cole
Jan Newson	Piers Evans
Robert Rush	Nick Armitage
Paul Twyman	Saira Alloo
Seb Neerman	Simon Doyle
Sue Brazil	Tony Leonard
Lynda Wood	

Appendix B – Analysis of Complaints on London Buses

Top 20 Routes – Absolute Number of Complaints

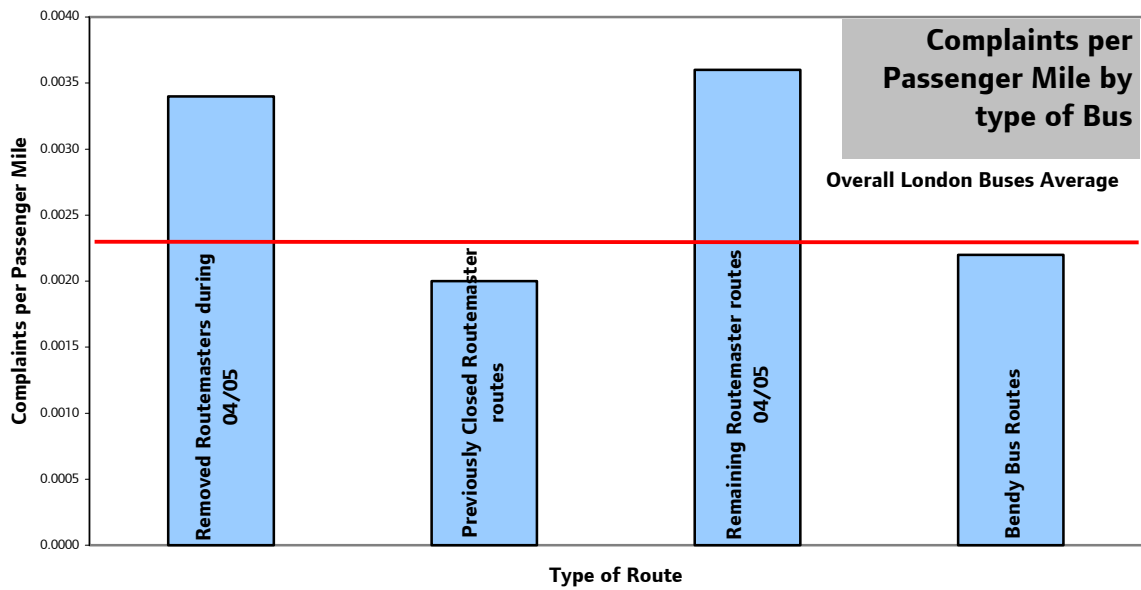
Route	No of Cases	No of Driver Cases	Total no of passenger journeys	Driver cases as a per cent of passenger journeys
73	859	602	15,700,000	0.0038
38	465	406	11,286,933	0.0036
25	410	280	18,500,000	0.0015
24	399	353	11,007,088	0.0032
134	350	308	10,196,458	0.0030
176	349	306	8,418,379	0.0036
19	347	301	7,133,532	0.0042
12	327	238	11,300,000	0.0021
3	322	264	6,241,102	0.0042
82	294	250	7,908,529	0.0032
43	265	220	9,784,142	0.0022
8	262	218	10,227,892	0.0021
149	261	209	14,700,000	0.0014
381	255	185	4,940,221	0.0037
52	251	222	10,943,293	0.0020
137	249	196	7,140,172	0.0027
100	249	215	2,250,730	0.0096
6	240	218	6,695,538	0.0033
C11	236	189	3,246,386	0.0058
159	234	196	5,931,242	0.0033

Top 20 Routes – Relative Number of Complaints by passenger journey

Route	No of Cases	No of Driver Cases	Total no of passenger journeys	Driver cases as a per cent of passenger journeys
143	199	175	2,726,166	0.0064
C11	236	189	3,246,386	0.0058
G1	91	71	1,252,221	0.0057
152	143	96	1,702,096	0.0056
232	119	86	1,544,315	0.0056
393	105	88	1,594,631	0.0055
493	193	134	2,453,861	0.0055
192	114	97	1,799,089	0.0054
167	102	89	1,670,052	0.0053
127	159	101	1,897,832	0.0053
455	64	52	1,013,707	0.0051
46	188	140	2,831,347	0.0049
P13	138	97	1,970,193	0.0049
C3	115	92	1,871,581	0.0049
217	109	96	2,025,889	0.0047
200	204	132	2,842,557	0.0046
42	115	100	2,165,614	0.0046
139	205	180	3,967,820	0.0045
70	200	164	3,738,641	0.0044
3	322	264	6,241,102	0.0042

Complaints per passenger mile - by type of bus

Type of Route	No of Cases	No of Driver Cases	Total no of passenger journeys	Cases as a per cent of passenger journeys	Driver cases as a per cent of passenger journeys
Removed Routemasters During 04/05	3181	2538	92303562	0.0034	0.0027
Previously Closed Routemaster routes	776	640	38312604	0.0020	0.0017
Remaining Routemaster routes 04/05	1153	977	32380072	0.0036	0.0030
Bendy Bus Routes	2713	1972	123057872	0.0022	0.0016
Entire Service	43043	34,634	1,856,359,435	0.0023	0.0019



Appendix C - London Buses Submission

Bus driving standards and the passenger's journey

The experience of travelling by bus is often subject to close scrutiny, notably in the press. This has tended to focus on a minority of journeys which have been unsatisfactory. Inevitably it is easily forgotten that for every poor bus journey, there are many tens of thousands that are completed without incident.

Transport for London has, however, clearly recognised the need to address a wide range of issues relating to frontline staff, as a key requisite to achieving the recent growth and transformation in quality of the bus network.

The Committee will recall that prior to TfL's formation; London's bus industry was becoming increasingly unattractive to its frontline employees. This was manifested in staff shortages, inadequate wages, no or inadequate supervision and minimal training standards. The Mayor's Transport Strategy placed much emphasis on addressing these staff issues, through a range of initiatives.

Since 2000 the following actions have been taken:

- Drivers' wage rates have increased substantially. Other employment conditions have also improved including a shorter average working week and improved travel benefits.
- Many passenger-focussed initiatives have indirectly benefited drivers, including the introduction of newer vehicles (most have air conditioned drivers cabs), more reliable schedules, improved security through on-bus CCTV and the transport policing initiative and the simplified fare structure, including the move towards cashless boarding.
- A joint working group involving representatives of London Buses, the operators and the T&G has delivered a significant increase in the number and quality of staff facilities at bus stands. In parallel, many operators have raised the standards of staff facilities at their garages.
- London Buses has championed improved driver training through the introduction of certified training in the form of a new BTEC qualification.

Over this period the driver shortage has been addressed and the current level of service not operated due to staff reasons is at an all time low (0.17 per cent). At the same time, the required number of drivers has increased from 17,000 in 2001 to 21,500 in 2005, due to the progressive expansion of bus service levels.

TfL is very much aware of the value of feedback, and aims to continually improve passenger access to the complaints process. Comments, suggestions or complaints are useful not only in resolving specific issues that may require action (such as identifying a bus driver who may require further training for example) but also in identifying overall trends. A number of steps have been taken to improve access to the complaints process:

- Introducing a new, local-rate telephone number (0845 300 7000) for London Buses Customer Services Call Centre, introduced in May 2004. Also the opening hours have been extended so that the Call Centre is now open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday.

- Displaying new, clearer notices on buses displaying contact details for London Buses Customer Services. These update the previous notices to ensure passengers can easily understand to whom and how they should complain if they have reason to do so.
- Printing a unique identifier for each bus on these new on-bus notices. This makes it easier for passengers to complain or provide feedback.
- Providing Customer Services 'business cards' with all the relevant contact information. This can be distributed by any operational staff to passengers who wish to make a complaint.

London Buses has also taken steps to improve the experience of making a comment, complaint or suggestion, and from August 2003 began the process of centralising the management of complaints. A Framework Agreement was put in place to determine the level of involvement the operators would have in managing complaints.

This improvement in process and monitoring of complaints means that the rise in the number of complaints being made to London Buses is almost entirely due to the steps we have taken to improve access to the complaints process. In addition, it is likely that statistics supplied by individual operators, for past years are likely to be inconsistent with those supplied in this submission.

I welcome this opportunity to set out the steps taken over the past few years to address the need to achieve higher quality driving standards and customer service. These have been achieved by recognising the crucial role bus drivers play in keeping London moving, and giving them the necessary training and support to make this vital role more rewarding and less stressful to perform.

I would conclude:

- The investment in making the complaints process easier to access can only lead to an increase in the number of complaints that TfL receive. Indeed, this is exactly what the investment was intended to achieve.
- The formation of the office of the Mayor, the London Assembly and the TfL board increased stakeholder liaison which also was always likely to increase the number of complaints that TfL receive.
- Bus drivers perform a very difficult, yet vital public service in very difficult circumstances such as worsening traffic conditions and poor behaviour from some other motorists or members of the public.

I would therefore urge the Transport Committee to take care not to present the bus service in London as a failure when it is a clearly a beacon for London, Londoners, the Mayor and the Assembly.

Peter Hendy

Managing Director – Surface Transport

Scale, Trend and Nature of complaints

1. How many total complaints, year on year since 1998, have been made by passengers regarding their bus journeys?

The success of a passenger journey depends on a number of factors, including; the length of wait, ease of boarding the bus and the manner in which the bus was driven. As part of the process of transforming the bus service, London Buses has made substantial efforts in recent years to encourage more customer communications and to improve the effectiveness with which they are dealt with.

London Buses has made the following improvements to its processes for encouraging passenger communication:

- Introducing a new, local-rate telephone number for London Buses Customer Services Call Centre (0845 300 7000), introduced in May 2004.
- Displaying new, clearer notices on buses displaying contact details for London Buses Customer Services. These update the previous notices to ensure passengers can easily understand to whom and how they should complain if they have reason to do so.
- Printing a unique identifier for each bus on these new on-bus notices. This makes it easier for passengers to complain or provide feedback.
- Providing Customer Services 'business cards' with all the relevant contact information. This can be distributed by any operational staff to passengers who wish to make a complaint.
- Taking on the responsibility for receiving complaints which would previously have been made direct to operators. Passengers found contacting smaller operators, with smaller Customer Services departments more difficult than contacting London Buses, with a larger Customer Services department with longer opening hours.

An objective of making the communication channel easier to access was to increase the number of complaints received and this has happened. In addition, the vastly increased availability of mobile phones and email has had a further significant impact on this trend.

For the purposes of generating this report, the following issues (or 'codes') raised by passengers when complaining about their *bus journey* have been included:

- accident on board the bus
- exterior of the bus being dirty
- interior of the bus being dirty
- graffiti inside bus
- 'etching' inside the bus
- 'etching' on the exterior of the bus
- excess journey time
- fares dispute
- non-arrival of first or last bus
- gaps in service
- issue over information displayed inside bus
- issue over information displayed on exterior of bus
- issue over behaviour of other passenger
- alleged assault by staff

- threatening behaviour by staff
- discriminatory action by staff
- driver refusing a pet
- appearance of staff
- driver using radio/mobile phone
- driver smoking
- poor/dangerous driving
- driver refusing access to wheelchair/pushchair
- failure to collect passengers at stop
- failure to stop
- deviation from route
- accessibility of bus
- lack of seating (or priority seating)
- inability to board bus
- early termination of journey.

Passengers contact London Buses to make comments, suggestions and commendations also. In generating the report we have provided only those contacts that are complaining about an aspect of the *bus journey* as detailed above.

Complaints received from passengers about the bus journey

Financial Year	No of Cases
2004-2005	43043
2003-2004	33630
2002-2003	25139
2001-2002	11631

Figures showing complaints received prior to the financial year 2001/02 are not comparable. Prior to this time, these figures were not as reliable as they are now, primarily since over time systems to record complaints have been further developed. It is likely that some complaints were being 'lost' in that passengers could not find an easy method of contacting us. London Buses is now able to record complaints more reliably, and has also made accessing the complaints process easier.

Complaints received from passengers about the bus journey (continued)

Financial year	No of Cases
2000-2001	4789
1999-2000	3818
1998-1999	3499

To put the figures for 2004/05 into context, it is important to consider that for every complaint received during the course of the year, there were around 40,000 journeys made about which no complaints were received.

a) What is the rate of complaints per passenger mile, year on year since 1998, made regarding their bus journeys?

This uses the same criteria as the report above. When analysing these figures, the factors already outlined that have made the complaints process easier to access, clearly need to be taken into account:

Complaints per million passenger kilometres

Financial Year	Passenger Km (m)	No of Cases	No of cases per Million Passenger Km
2004-2005	6755	43043	6.3
2003-2004	6431	33630	5.2
2002-2003	5734	25139	4.3
2001-2002	5124	11631	2.2

For the reasons given above the following figures are not comparable:

Complaints per million passenger kilometres (continued)

	Passenger Km (m)	No of Cases	No of cases per Million Passenger Km
2000-2001	4709	4789	1.0
1999-2000	4429	3818	0.8
1998-1999	4315	3499	0.8

When considering these figures it is important to bear in mind also that there has been an unprecedented growth in passengers using the bus service. Bus use is up by 11 per cent over the past year (2003/04), and this represents an extra 168 million passenger trips. The number of passengers using buses is at its highest level since 1968. It is clear that there must be external factors affecting the number of complaints made, since if not few passengers would wish to travel by bus, and we would likely not be seeing this level of growth.

2. *What are the nature of the complaints that London Buses/operators have received that relate to the driver? What classifications do the complaints fall under?*

The complaint classification codes which relate to the service offered by the driver are as follows:

- **Alleged physical assault.**
- **Threatening behaviour by staff** This can be foul language used by staff, directed at complainant or on behalf of any customer on bus, a raised hand or fist or a gesture of assault.
- **Attitude/unprofessional/rude behaviour** Impolite, unhelpful or inconsiderate attitude/behaviour. Also includes eating and drinking or reading a book or newspaper when the passengers are on board. Also staff generally using bad language.

- **Appearance** Comments relating to the appearance of staff in relation to their clothing or physical appearance.
- **Listening to radio/walkman/using mobile phone/talking to people whilst driving**
- **Smoking by staff**
- **Poor or dangerous driving** Includes comments about speed, the smoothness of the ride (comments about jerkiness, or being thrown about, braking, cornering, steering and overtaking).
- **Refusing passengers with wheelchairs, pushchairs, walking frames**
- **Race and faith** includes abuse and discriminatory behaviour based on people's ethnic origin, skin colour, language or religion.
- **Age** includes abuse and discriminatory behaviour based on people's age.
- **Disability** includes abuse and discriminatory behaviour based on people's physical and mental ability.
- **Gender** includes abuse and discriminatory behaviour based on being a woman or a man.
- **Sexuality** includes abuse and discriminatory behaviour based on sexual orientation.
- **Physical appearance** includes abuse and discriminatory behaviour based on physical appearance.
- **Staff refusing passengers with pets**

There are a number of other issues over which the driver has little or no control, for example the bus arriving at a bus stop full, or late as a result of traffic conditions.

a) *Could we have a borough breakdown of the number of nature of complaints received that relate to the driver?*

London Buses records which route a passenger was using when they have had cause to complain about the driver, rather than the borough that the passenger was in when the issue occurred.

Most routes in the network serve a number of boroughs, and so analysing the figures by borough would lead to a great deal of 'double counting'. For these reasons, it is not possible to provide a borough breakdown.

b) *Could we have a route-by-route breakdown of the number and nature of complaints submitted to London Buses regarding bus drivers?*

A list of complaints about the 'bus journey' (see response to question 1 for the criteria used to define this), broken down by route for the financial year 2004/05 is attached as Appendix 1.

Given the number of individual 'codes' (see response to question 2 above) that could be used when recording a complaint about a driver, it is not practical to break these complaints down further. Caution should also be taken when dealing with small sample sizes, as would be the case when analysing complaints received at route level. Instead, the total numbers of complaints received about 'the bus journey', compared to the total number received solely about the driver, are listed in Appendix 1.

The number of complaints received by route would be affected by several factors, including most importantly the number of passenger journeys made on each individual service. For this reason, analysis of the number of complaints received and broken down by route is meaningful only if the total number of passengers journeys made on each route is listed also. I have therefore included this information for the breakdown for the year 2004/05. Routes on which many journeys are made will obviously receive a greater number of complaints than routes on which fewer journeys are made.

Bus Driver Training

3. How many bus drivers have taken the TfL approved BTEC for driving and conductors on a bus since its launch in 2003? a) What proportion does this represent of the total number of bus drivers employed on London's buses?

The BTEC training initiative for drivers (and service controllers) was launched in autumn 2002. The BTEC award looks at all aspects of bus driving. The qualification is comprised of the following five units/ learning outcomes:

Introduction to the bus industry

- Describe the bus industry and own company structure
- Explain the benefits of training and qualifications for drivers
- Explain the importance of meeting expectations

Operating the Bus Service

- Describe how to operate London bus 'on-vehicle' systems in accordance with accepted procedures
- Describe the effective operation of a bus service
- Demonstrate maintenance and safety checks that need to be carried out on vehicles

Health, Safety and Security

- Describe the driver role in relation to health and safety
- Describe the appropriate action to be taken in response to accidents and incidents
- Describe the implications of accidents

Driving Skills

- Demonstrate the principles of good driving practice (drivers will be formally assessed by a Driving Standards Agency Approved Assessor)
- Identify risks in relation to bus driving
- Apply appropriate driving techniques in a variety of driving situations

Working With Others

- Explain how customer needs and expectations can be met
- Demonstrate effective communication skills
- Demonstrate effective disability equality awareness
- Describe effective skills for working with others

Drivers who fall below the standard required are given advice or referred for remedial training, as appropriate.

Since Autumn 2002, all operators have had to ensure that any new driver achieves their BTEC award within a year of joining their company. Following some experience of the programme, it was subsequently agreed with the operators that all remaining established drivers must achieve their BTEC by 31 December 2005.

Around 11,000 drivers currently employed in London have successfully completed the BTEC training. Many more are well advanced with their training and the December deadline is on target to be met.

b) How many of these drivers are still employed on London's buses?

A total of around 14,000 have completed the BTEC since its launch in 2002.

4. Do London Buses monitor the take up of the BTEC per bus operator? If so, what is the level of take up across the 27 bus operating companies?

As referred to above, all operators are working towards achieving the target of getting all drivers BTEC qualified by December 2005. London Buses is closely monitoring progress to ensure that this target is met by all operators. Although there are variations, take up at all operators is broadly consistent with the above network-wide figure.

5. Does London Buses monitor the rate of turnover across its 27 operators? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

London Buses does monitor turnover of drivers across its operators. Annual turnover has substantially dropped from over 30 per cent in 2000 to less than 20 per cent in 2004/05 and this number is continuing to reduce. The amount of staff shortages is minimal. For the year 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005, only 0.17 per cent of scheduled mileage was lost due to unavailability of staff. This includes staff absence on the day. Currently no operators have significant shortages of staff.

6. Are bus driving standards adversely affected by high rate of turnover? If so, what can be done to reduce the level of turnover on London Buses?

I have already highlighted (in my covering letter) a range of initiatives that have been put in place as an integral part of the transformation of London's bus service. These reflect the early recognition that, in order to deliver the Mayor's Transport Strategy, the issues being faced by London bus drivers by 2000 had to be comprehensively addressed. One indicator of the success of these initiatives has been the significant reduction in driver turnover highlighted above.

Performance Monitoring

7. How do TfL and bus operating companies independently monitor driving standards?

The standard of driving on the bus network is monitored in the following ways:

Driver Quality Monitoring

The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) is contracted by TfL to carry out driver quality monitoring (DQM) assessments across the London bus network. The aim of the programme is to highlight problem areas from a passenger perspective with the two main assessment criteria being Passenger Consideration and Driving Ability. Over 6,500

assessments are conducted annually. Each assessment is covert and takes approximately fifteen minutes.

A driver is assessed not only on core driving-related skills, such as braking, speed, door operation, but also on other behaviour that impacts on passengers, such as smoking or the playing of a radio.

Each assessment is sent to the operator as a single-page report. TfL maintain a database of all assessments for which the DSA send an update every week. Summary reports and trend analysis are sent to the operators every quarter.

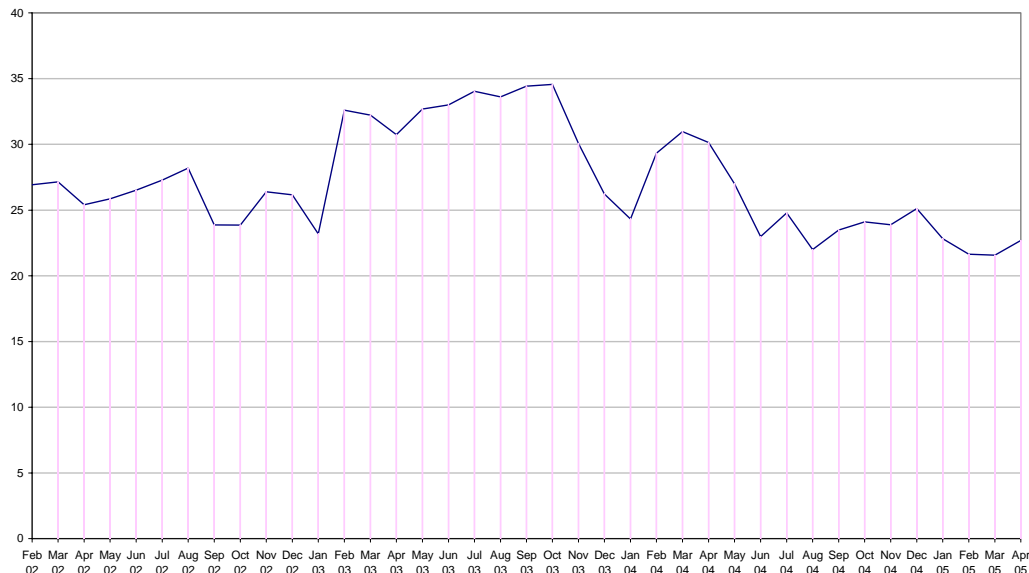
Each aspect of the journey is coded as a 'box type' and then aggregated as follows:

	<u>Aggregate Weighting</u>
BOX 1 FULLY ACCEPTABLE	0 POINTS
BOX 2 ACCEPTABLE WITH SOME DRIVING FAULTS	2 POINTS
BOX 3 UNACCEPTABLE WITH SERIOUS FAULTS	20 POINTS
BOX 4 UNACCEPTABLE WITH DANGEROUS FAULTS	50 POINTS

The recording form is attached as Appendix 2.

By way of an example, an assessment with 21 measures scoring Box 1, 1 measure scoring Box 2 and 1 measure scoring Box 3 would have an overall score of $(22 \times 0) + (1 \times 2) + (1 \times 20) = 22$. A high score therefore reflects a high number of unacceptable results (Box 3s and particularly Box 4s).

The graph below shows the monthly average score since February 2002.



The improvement since October 2003 is the result of a combination of developments, including higher retention levels, improved training through the BTEC, the introduction of schedules that better match the operating conditions, improved pay and conditions and better supervision.

Other Surveys

In addition, mystery traveller and customer satisfaction surveys measure other journey aspects such as the ease of boarding and smoothness of ride.

Direct contact with passengers.

As already detailed, London Buses Customer Services department responds to service suggestions and complaints from passengers every week. The details of all complaints are recorded and actioned (further details below).

Bus Operators Initiatives

Operators are increasingly supplementing London Buses' DQM data by carrying out their own driver quality monitoring surveys, using DSA-trained staff.

Operators also carry out increasingly rigorous analysis of their own incident and insurance claim information. This analysis, together with other information, such as DQM, mystery traveller reports and customer complaints information enables operators to identify any drivers in need of remedial/ refresher training and/ or action through the disciplinary process.

This level of monitoring is almost unique in that most employers of professional drivers undertake no such monitoring of their staff, and manage their professional drivers solely on the basis of claims or accidents.

8. How has London Buses and operating companies acted on this performance monitoring?

The role of London Buses is to ensure operators interpret driving standards in its fullest sense. The monitoring TfL carries out ensures that all operators are provided with sufficient information to address specific problem areas.

With lower levels of turnover and an improved recruitment position, operators are much more able to focus on developing the quality of their driving staff. The performance information described above forms a key part of the process of identifying drivers with training needs and improving performance. The monitoring also allows operators to look for and identify trends in driving standards. London Buses is working with the operators to encourage analysis of the monitoring in this way and ensures that the data is presented to the operators in such a way that such analysis is convenient.

Underpinning this, the BTEC has set a higher and more consistent minimum standard for what is expected from drivers. Increasing emphasis is being placed by London Buses on ensuring that operators have in place suitable processes for sustaining improvements in driving standards at all stages of recruitment, training and on-going garage management support. Linked to this is the work of a group led by London Buses and involving operators and the Transport & General Workers Union, who are looking into the under-representation of women in the bus industry.

London Buses is currently working with the operators to review the standard and consistency of training of the staff within garages who are responsible for the motivation and performance management of drivers. We also play an important role in encouraging and sharing best practice between operators.

London Buses is also participating in a project with First to introduce a bus driving simulator to London.

The aim of the pilot is to evaluate the effectiveness, compared with traditional driver training methods, of a driving simulator for:

- Assessment and training of new recruits;
- Remedial training of existing staff with high collision records;
- On-going re-assessment of existing staff.

Development of the above training objectives and the delivery of the training itself are being undertaken by First. The training needs analysis has taken into account the DQM data for First's garages. First and London Buses are working closely to ensure the robust and fully transparent evaluation of all simulator training. Training on the simulator is expected to commence by September 2005.

Assuming it is successful; the pilot will provide a springboard to encourage the wider expansion of simulators by other London operators.

Handling Complaints

9. What is your current method of dealing with complaints made on London Buses?

I have enclosed with this letter as Appendix 3 'London Buses Complaints Policy', which is available to passengers to download through the TfL website. We are committed to managing complaints through a process which is easy to access, speedy, confidential, informative, simple, fair, effective, monitored and audited.

I have also enclosed as Appendix 4 London Buses 'Management Complaints Process', which outlines the process that is taken when a complaint is received by London Buses Customer Services. This again is available to be downloaded from TfL's website. The complete process is shown, and this includes the steps that would be taken if the passenger is not initially satisfied with the response provided.

London Buses considers it important to assure passengers that their comment, suggestion or complaint has been received and is being actioned. We also consider it important to provide passengers with a point of contact within the organisation (so that they have the opportunity to enquire as to the progress of their complaint if desired), and also a method of escalating the issue if they are not satisfied with the response supplied. London Buses therefore acknowledges all letters and emails that are received, and this acknowledgement provides contact details for a member of staff that the passenger can discuss the complaint with, if necessary.

The complaint is then recorded in order to contribute to management reports and forwarded for investigation and action to the relevant operator or internal TfL department. This enables action to resolve individual issues as well as the identification of trends. The customer is kept informed with a telephone call, letter or email (reflecting the manner in which the customer contacted us originally) to inform them of the action taken as a result of the complaint and provide additional information that may be of interest to them.

London Buses also recognises the need to ensure that passengers who have made a complaint are satisfied with the outcome. We therefore survey passengers who have

contacted London Buses on an annual basis to determine how satisfied they were with the experience. This provides very useful feedback and we plan to increase the frequency with which this surveying is carried out.

10. *How have these methods developed over the last few years?*

A process of continual assessment of procedures is important in ensuring that contacts from passengers are dealt with in the most efficient and appropriate manner. London Buses has been awarded the British Standard CMSAS 86: 2000 (Complaints Management). The Standard must be applied for annually, and in doing so London Buses reviews existing processes and procedures. Staff are closely involved in this process, and the approach assists in ensuring a continuous improvement in the London Buses Complaints Management system. To illustrate, London Buses has developed a system by which complaints, comments or suggestions are designated a particular code. This assists in providing reports for senior management. The list of codes has been expanded over time to reflect the changing issues which passengers complain to us about.

From August 2003, Customer Services began the process of centralising the management of complaints. A Framework Agreement was put in place to determine the level of involvement the operators would have in managing complaints. The operators would choose whether they would manage all of the complaints they received; those only received by letter or email; or alternatively that all complaints would be handled by London Buses Customer Services. A 'Code of Practice' was introduced which those bus operators who elected to retain involvement in managing complaints would use. The Code outlines how complaints should be managed and ensures that no matter which organisation a passenger approaches with an issue, the same high level of service is provided.

As outlined earlier in this response, a number of mechanisms have been put in place to improve passenger access to the complaints process. These include the establishment of a new local-rate telephone number and the delivery of new on-bus notices and Customer Services Business Cards.

Clearly, having made the complaints process more accessible London Buses will receive a greater number of complaints.

11. *To what extent do London Buses and operating companies exchange information on complaints? Is there any compulsion on an operating company to report a complaint they receive to London Buses?*

London Buses produces operator-specific 4-weekly (or period) reports detailing the number of complaints, comments and suggestions that have been received and which relate to that operator. The operators likewise provide London Buses with data showing the number of complaints they have received. We are working closely with the operators to encourage the adoption of London Buses extensive coding system, so that communications received directly by the operators can be fed directly into London Buses Complaints Management computer system. The Framework Agreement I outlined above places an onus on the operators to report to London Buses the complaints they have received. As this system has bedded in, the reporting of all types of complaints will continue to improve. It seems likely also that comments, suggestions and complaints made to London Buses will continue to increase as the roll out of the Framework Agreement continues. This will make accessing the complaints process easier, since for

example London Buses Call Centre is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday. The offices of most operators are open only during usual business hours of 9am – 5pm.

12. *How transparent and accessible is the complaints procedure for bus passengers?*

London Buses considers that the complaints procedure has become far more transparent and accessible, and this is reflected in the fact that a growing number of suggestions, comments and complaints are being processed by the Customer Services department.

London Buses was very recently awarded the British Standard for Customer Services for the third year running, since the Institute determined following its investigation that all aspects of the specification had been met, and that no ‘non-conformities’ had been identified. The Institute noted that London Buses ‘...has put clear and concise escalation procedures in place to ensure the quality and consistency of work’.

I have included with this letter as Appendix 5 a copy of the BSI specification for the Committee’s information.

13. *How many complaints have resulted in a) a formal investigation, b) compensation to the passenger and c) a driver being disciplined?*

a) All complaints and suggestions received by London Buses Customer Services are investigated. The nature of the complaint or suggestion would however dictate the amount of work necessary to resolve the issue. For example, a complaint that a driver had failed to stop at a bus stop could involve the Customer Services Advisor ensuring that sufficient details have been provided to enable the operator to identify the driver concerned, prior to the complaint being forwarded to the operator. A suggestion to re-route an existing service could involve more work with other London Buses departments to determine the feasibility of the suggestion.

b) A table showing the number of passengers who received goodwill gestures or compensation is below. Records are available as far back as January 2003 during the financial year 2002/03. Data showing the number of passengers who received payments prior to January 2003 is not comparable. This information is held in a separate computer system, and does not include goodwill payments made to passengers, since this was not an established practice prior to this time.

Goodwill gestures made to passengers since 2002/03

2002/03 (From Jan ‘03)	222
2003/04	1744
2004/05	2014
2005/06 (Until 9 May 2005)	176

Goodwill payments can be made under a number of circumstances, including as recognition for very delayed journeys. London Buses empowers staff to make goodwill gestures if it is considered that they are appropriate.

c) TfL does not keep records to show the number of drivers who have been disciplined following complaints. However, bus operators will confirm when appropriate disciplinary action has been taken in response to a complaint, and can do so in writing to the passenger who originally lodged the complaint. The details of disciplinary action taken are confidential and for Data Protection reasons cannot be released. However, the

committee should recognise that it would not be in the interest of operating companies to retain bus drivers with poor driving skills. Not only would these affect an operator's good reputation with TfL and others, but this could also represent a financial cost to the operator in terms of increased insurance claims.

Appendix D – Orders and Translations

How To Order

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