

**Board**

**Date: 8 November 2016**

**Item: Bus Driver Training**

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**This paper will be considered in public**

## **1 Executive Summary**

<b>Decision required</b>	To note the paper, which provides information on a programme of bus driver training being rolled out across London and highlights the emerging themes from participants.
<b>Sponsoring Director</b>	Contact Officer: Leon Daniels, Managing Director Surface Transport Number: 020 3054 0180 Email: <a href="mailto:LeonDaniels@tfl.gov.uk">LeonDaniels@tfl.gov.uk</a>
<b>Summary</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TfL's bus services are provided by private sector operators, contracted by TfL, and are the most used form of public transport in London. The private bus companies employ 25,000 drivers to deliver 700 bus route services across London. Quarterly customer satisfaction levels are high and customer complaints low.</li><li>• During 2014, bus customer complaints were analysed to generate a number of key customer 'gain points' (listed in Appendix 1). In 2015, we developed a customer training programme "Hello London", specifically for bus drivers and performance scheduling staff, focusing on the 'gain points' and other research, and also encompassing safety, driving technique and common TfL policies and service standards.</li><li>• The Hello London approach has been to harness innovative situation drama with reflective facilitation to explore the emotional and behavioural response of drivers and customers in a safe learning environment.</li><li>• So far all 1,700 support staff and more than 5,000 drivers have attended the two-day course, which has a 92 per cent rating by attendees as 'excellent / very good'. A positive shift in customer service attitudes addressing the pain points has also been observed.</li><li>• To date there have been more than 500 suggestions for improvement from drivers relating to improvements for customers and improvements for their role as a bus driver, where many feel unsupported and undervalued.</li><li>• Activities are underway to support delivery of improved customer service. These include a driver incentive scheme for particularly good service, a trial of drivers wearing name badges, a new driver City &amp; Guilds qualification with a focus on customer experience/service importance, a campaign to encourage TfL staff to thank and commend drivers for good service and addressing the need for improved driver toilet facilities. We have also launched campaigns to educate customers and to make drivers feel valued. We are also working with all the private bus operators to embed Hello London training into their business as usual operations.</li></ul>	

- We will continue to monitor our existing metrics to check on the positive impact of the Hello London programme. We expect to see higher quarterly customer satisfaction survey scores, reduced complaints and positive shifts in driver attitude.
- The course will run until spring 2018 and feedback from attendees will be incorporated in our bus service development plans. Development of a Hello London course for TfL bus operational staff (at bus stations and in response vehicles) is currently underway and is to be rolled out in 2016/17.

## **2 Recommendation**

### **2.1 The Board is asked to note this paper.**

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 TfL's bus services are provided by private sector operators, contracted by TfL to provide services on a performance output basis. Drivers, service controllers and scheduling staff are employed by the bus companies. In common with our approach to railways fare revenue, demand risk, customer service standards, branding, bus route planning and service specification are our responsibility. In addition we specify minimum standards for bus vehicles, such as passenger capacity, seating and door configuration and, in the main except for New Routemaster buses, the vehicles are owned or leased by the operators.
- 3.2 Buses are the most used form of public transport in London, attracting 2.4 billion passenger journeys last year.
- 3.3 The private bus companies employ 25,000 drivers to deliver 700 bus route services across London. Quarterly customer satisfaction levels are high, currently at 85, and customer complaints low at 3.02 per 100,000 journeys as of quarter two of 2016/17.
- 3.4 During 2014, and learning from a similar exercise in London Underground as part of the 'Fit for the Future' stations programme, bus customer complaints were analysed to generate a number of key customer 'gain points'.
- 3.5 These showed a significant proportion of customer issues related to driver behaviour and management of the service, such as not letting customers off in between stops and/or not stopping at stops, lack of real-time information from drivers, issues with the management of buggies and wheelchair space allocation on bus and driving behaviour. These 'gain points' are listed in Appendix 1.
- 3.6 While drivers need to complete 35 hours of professional development training to maintain their Certificate of Professional Competence over five years, organised by their employing bus companies, there has never been a comprehensive customer service training programme recognising the common issues across the London bus service and reflecting TfL's approach to customer service.
- 3.7 In 2015, we developed a customer training programme "Hello London", specifically for bus drivers and performance scheduling staff, focusing on the 'gain points' from the complaints data and other research, and also encompassing safety, driving technique and common TfL policies and service standards.

- 3.8 All 25,000 drivers will attend the two-day Hello London course and more than 2,000 garage support employees will attend a consolidated version.

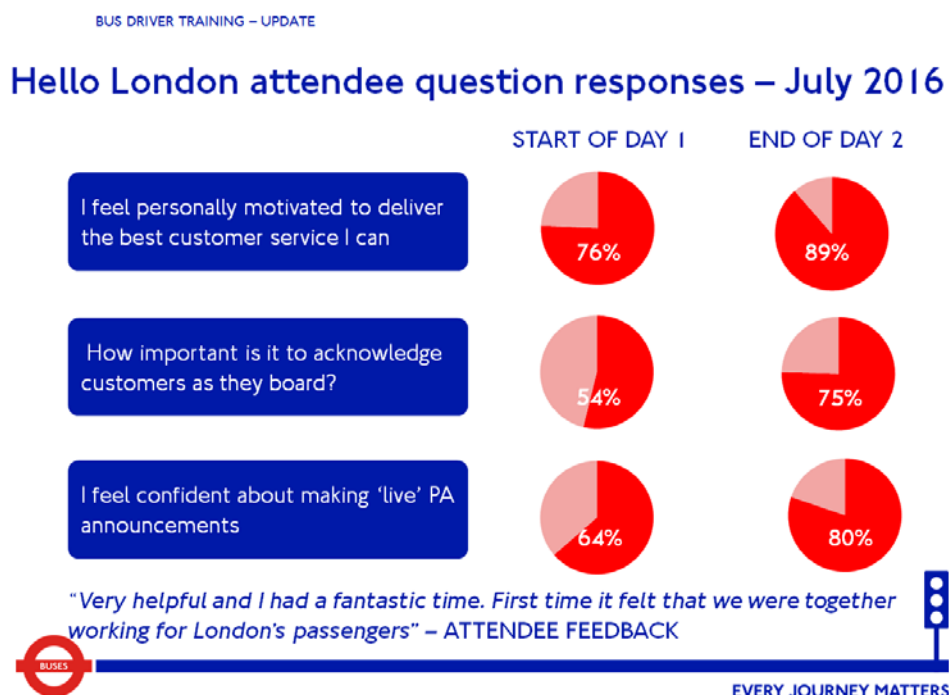
## 4 Training Approach

- 4.1 Building on the training approach used in London Underground as part of the 'Fit for the Future' programme, the Hello London approach has been to harness innovative situation drama with reflective facilitation. Following a competitive process, the training contract was awarded to specialist supplier Steps Drama. The budget for the training, delivered over two years, is £6.5m.
- 4.2 The training uses a structured approach and places attendees in mixed facilitation groups, watching actors tease out typical situations found on buses. This allows facilitators to explore the emotional and behavioural response of drivers and customers in a safe learning environment.
- 4.3 This is complemented by videos of customers and drivers to stimulate honest discussion and reflection, both of the needs and aspirations of customers and also of drivers who often feel under-appreciated or challenged by the competing demands of customer service, road and driving conditions and performance such as meeting their route schedule.
- 4.4 This is also the first time drivers from the different operating companies across London have come together to share common experiences.

## 5 Emerging Themes

- 5.1 So far all 1,700 support staff and more than 5,000 drivers have attended the two-day course. Responses from drivers, support staff and bus companies have been excellent with 92 per cent rating the quality of the course as 'excellent/very good'.
- 5.2 A positive shift in customer service attitudes addressing the pain points has been observed during the course, as shown in Figure 1 below:

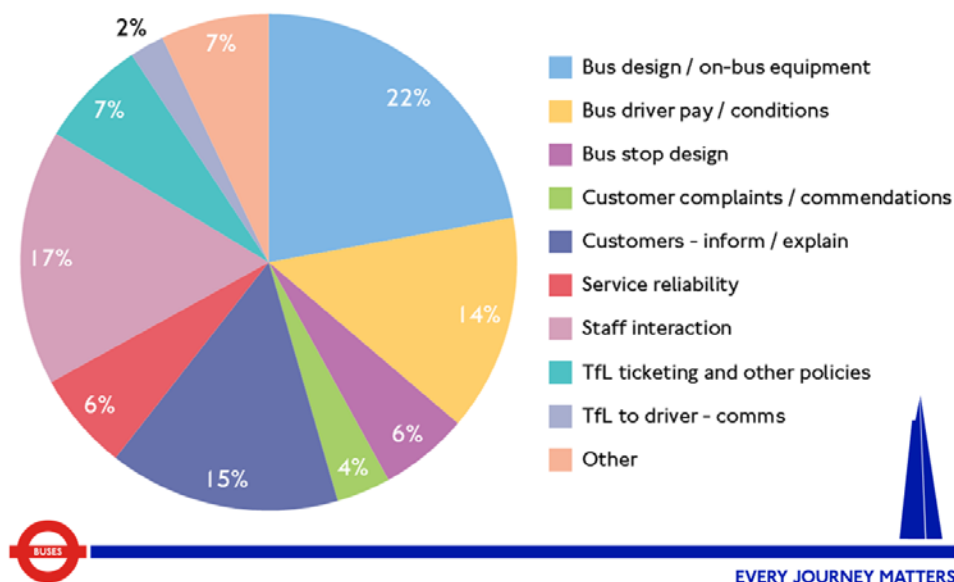
Figure 1



- 5.3 The main emerging theme from drivers is they feel unsupported by their managers and TfL, and undervalued by customers. When asked to vote on what percentage of customers agreed that buses have friendly and helpful staff, the scores from the drivers were more negative than customers' actual perception, reflecting the prevalent theme of drivers feeling unappreciated by customers.
- 5.4 To date there have been more than 500 suggestions for improvement from drivers. They fall into two groupings: improvements for customers; and improvements for their role as a bus driver. The top five suggestions centre on bus design/on-bus equipment (22 per cent); staff interaction (17 per cent); customer education (15 per cent); bus driver pay and conditions (14 per cent); and TfL ticketing and other policies (seven per cent), and are shown in figure 2.

**Figure 2**

### Hello London attendee customer service suggestions



## 6 Addressing These Themes

- 6.1 Further activities are underway to support delivery of improved customer service. One is a driver incentive scheme whereby drivers can receive £25 for particularly good service. This will be rolled out in autumn of this year. Other initiatives include a trial of drivers wearing name badges, a new driver City & Guilds qualification which has been revamped to focus on customer experience/service importance, a campaign to encourage TfL staff to thank and commend drivers for good service and addressing the need for improved driver toilet facilities.
- 6.2 Previous research with London bus drivers has already highlighted a feeling that TfL should do more to educate customers to make their job less stressful. This has led to TfL's current campaigns using Mr Men and Little Miss posters which ask passengers to "Please move down inside", "Please have you ticket ready" and "Buggy users, please make space for wheelchair users".
- 6.3 A separate poster and radio campaign has been developed to ensure bus drivers feel valued, both by TfL and customers, in their role. The aim is to humanise drivers so they are respected and not blamed or abused when things

go wrong. The marketing posters show the first name of actual drivers followed by the words “does more than just drive a bus” (shown in figure 3 below).

**Figure 3: Bus Advertisement Example**



- 6.4 We are also working with all the private bus operators to create individual engagement programmes for them to help embed Hello London training into their business as usual operations.

## 7 Measuring Improved Customer Experience

- 7.1 We will continue to monitor our existing metrics to check on the positive impact of the Hello London programme. We expect to see higher quarterly customer satisfaction survey scores for ‘driver interaction with customers’ and ‘information during delays’ over the life of the training programme and beyond. For ‘bus not stopping’, we are looking for the current proportion of all complaints (20 per cent) to reduce. For customer information, we expect to see the percentage of drivers making announcements as required increasing from the current score of 51 per cent. The latter will be measured through customer satisfaction surveys and customer complaints.
- 7.2 We will also look for positive shifts in driver attitude among those that have been through the training course. Positive improvement will be measured against baseline scores derived from a survey of 500 drivers, based at different garages, ahead of the start of the training programme. We are looking to see improvement against all attitudinal areas.

## 8 Next Steps

- 8.1 The course will run until spring 2018, supported by the additional activities outlined above. Feedback from attendees will continue to be collated and incorporated in our bus service development plans.
- 8.2 Development of a Hello London course for TfL bus operational staff (at bus stations and in response vehicles) is currently underway and is to be rolled out in 2016/17.

### List of appendices to this report:

Appendix 1: Customer Gain Points

### List of Background Papers:

None

BUS DRIVER TRAINING – UPDATE

Context: gain points

