

SCHEDULED SERVICE PLANNING GUIDELINES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This note sets out the service planning objectives and criteria adopted by London River Services Limited (LRS) in discharging Transport for London's (TfL) statutory duties for the provision of river services (Section 156 (3) of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 and also its fiduciary duties).

1.2 LRS's objectives are to:

- provide a comprehensive network of high quality river boat services (river bus and river tours) to meet London's river travel needs, having regard to efficiency, economy and safety of operation
- maximise passenger benefits and usage within the funds available
- support multi-modal travel facilities
- develop and improve the infrastructure and information services which support the river network.

1.3 LRS is committed to a process of continuous review and improvement of the riverboat network. This process aims to ensure that LRS:

- meets TfL's statutory duties and objectives
- allocates its resources on a consistent basis across the network of river services in line with demand
- considers requests for new or amended services on an equitable and consistent basis.

1.4 In the following sections, planning objectives and criteria are set out in more detail in two categories; transport and economic. The transport criteria set out the general objectives against which service options will be developed and judged. These options will then be evaluated to maximise passenger benefits, in line with the economic criteria and framework.

2. TRANSPORT CRITERIA AND OBJECTIVES

2.1) The London river boat network should be market led in reflecting passengers' needs and priorities and should be responsive to changes in local demand or operating conditions, for example to major infrastructure, property developments or changes in leisure and tourist facilities.

2.2) Hence, revisions to the network will be sought both to take account of changes in local patterns and levels of demand and, as opportunities for innovations arise. Evaluation will be undertaken to ensure value for money for passengers and LRS.

- 2.3) From a passenger's point of view, it is important that the river boat service network should be planned to be:
- a) comprehensive: providing service to available piers and recognising the needs of local people and visitors (including the elderly and people with disabilities)
 - b) frequent: with adequate capacity for seasonal and daily peaks
 - c) simple: easy for passengers to understand and flexible enough to adapt to specific demand patterns
 - d) reliable: aiming to provide even service intervals when frequencies are high and operating to time when they are low.
- 2.4) In practice, it is often necessary to trade these objectives against each other and also against the economic objectives. However, each of the objectives needs to be addressed in service design. Further details are given below.

3) THE COMPREHENSIVE NETWORK

Transport Objective

- 3.1) To provide a comprehensive network of services to serve leisure and tourist, residential and employment markets and serve other special venues which stimulate and cater for significant passenger demand.

Criterion

- 3.2) Services should aim to provide links to areas with known demand and to other transport modes where practicable.

4) THE FREQUENT NETWORK

Transport Objective

- 4.1) To minimise waiting times so that as far as possible (and recognising the nature of demand and travel patterns), passengers can arrive at piers and be confident of as brief a wait as possible.

Criteria

- 4.2) On all routes to aim for clock face and memorable departure times wherever practicable.
- 4.3) To provide sufficient capacity so that passengers can normally board the first boat and get a seat
- 4.4) Where a number of routes share combinations of piers, to encourage timetables which provide even intervals wherever possible.

5) THE SIMPLE NETWORK

Transport Objective

- 5.1) To aid passenger understanding and marketing of the network, the structure of individual services should be as simple as possible and common standards generally applied across the network. However, it is recognised that service patterns need to be flexible to meet specific demand patterns.

Criteria

- 5.2) Routes should generally run between the same piers at all times. Winter and other off peak schedules should be set in the light of this objective.

6) THE RELIABLE NETWORK

Transport Objective

- 6.1) To develop schedules which deliver the planned service on almost all occasions achieving as a minimum the targets in the licences and any passenger amenity or performance standards as published from time to time.

Criteria

- 6.2) Services should be designed to be reliable in operation, maintaining and improving on the minimum standards of reliability defined in the licences
- 6.3) The timing of services should take realistic account of prevalent river conditions and the need for reliable operation balanced by demand and efficient use of resources
- 6.4) Journey times, standing times at piers and riverboat service supervision arrangements must be set to enable punctuality and reliability standards to be met.

7) OTHER TRANSPORT FACTORS

- 7.1) In addition to the transport objectives set out in the previous paragraphs, LRS will have regard to features of river services which develop the demand for transport on the river. These are set out below with an outline of the issues that would be expected to be brought to LRS's attention when licences were being sought or requests for variations to licences were considered.

Criteria

- 7.2) Safety

LRS' commitment to safety overarches its transport and economic criteria. Thus the introduction of vessels which exceed minimum safety standards will be encouraged. In addition, proposals should deal with the management of passengers during the voyage, when leaving and joining the boat and while using piers and associated facilities.

In accordance with the provisions of the respective LRS Licences, operators shall comply with all requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency including but not limited to the construction, operation (including the requirement for safety announcements) and staffing levels of vessels used in operating the services and the qualifications of the crew. In addition the operator shall comply with all requirements of the Health and Safety Executive, Port Health Authority and the Port of London Authority.

Commensurate with its duties under the GLA Act 1999, LRS will monitor all safety and security standards.

7.3) Amenities

As part of its desire to improve the nature of travel by river, LRS wishes to encourage improved amenities on boats and at piers. Proposals to upgrade existing amenities and to introduce new amenities particularly in conjunction with accessibility proposals (see para 7.5) will be of particular interest.

7.4) Customer Care

The nature of staffing, customer care and other services oriented towards the passenger will be a matter where LRS seeks to ensure that the requirements of any passenger standards agreed as part of the licence arrangements are improved upon and that there is a programme of continual improvement in customer care.

7.5) Accessibility

Although River and Inland Waterway are not highlighted in the Equality Act 2010, LRS is keen to ensure that access for all members of the population is delivered. LRS would therefore require the highest degree of accessibility as is practicable and this will be an issue that will be of particular concern when new licences or licence extensions are considered..

7.6) Information

Whilst LRS will produce overall information on the nature of the river services network, it will be a matter for individual operators to promote their own services with due regard for LRS activity in this area.

Proposals that develop the range and availability of information concerning services will be of particular interest.

7.7) Fares and Ticketing

TfL (through LRS) will be required to determine the level of fares in accordance with its statutory duties under the GLA Act 1999. LRS will determine fares having due regard for:

- operators' proposals
- the existing level of fares for comparable services
- the nature of the service and the associated amenities and customer service aspects being offered
- the sustainability of the services, facilities and amenities
- the effects on other operators

The processes and procedures to enact TfL's exercise of its duties will be described in the licences. However, LRS will be keen to discuss with operators how ticketing initiatives can be developed and how ticketing arrangements both between operators and with other modes of transport are developed.

8) ECONOMIC CRITERIA

Introduction

8.1) Economic criteria are necessary to appraise possible changes in order to establish whether they will result in an overall improvement to the riverboat service network. Across the network as a whole, the aim is to provide the best value to passengers by appropriate resource allocation and good service design.

8.2) Objective

The rationale of the economic criteria is therefore to provide a mechanism whereby resource deployment can be adjusted to maximise passenger benefits across the network while addressing the transport objectives and criteria described above.

The Economic Criteria

8.3) The economic criteria are derived from a simplified social benefit /cost framework which takes account of:

- an understanding that demand varies in time, location and market share
- the need to improve value for money measured against passenger usage, the deployment of existing services and the introduction of new services.

8.4) Any proposed change should be considered against:

- the extent to which it provides benefits/disbenefits in both the short and longer term
- the extent to which service proposals impact on the long term sustainability of the network.

9) EVALUATING SERVICE CHANGES

Introduction

- 9.1) All changes are evaluated by LRS in accordance with the social benefit/cost framework outlined in sections 8.3 and 8.4 above including proposals for new routes, extensions or variations to existing licences, proposals for new piers or amendments to the operation of services or times at piers.

New Licences

- 9.2) LRS will be required to determine timetables in accordance with its statutory duties under the GLA Act 1999. Any proposal to seek a new licence either from operator application or prompted by LRS tender, will take account of:
- the normal planning and economic criteria, the operational impact of the change and the economic impact of the change. Particular consideration will be given to the impact on sustainability of the network with regard to the balance between developing new passenger services and abstracting revenue from existing services.

9.3) Length of Licences

New licences would normally be awarded for a period of up to 5 years depending on the service proposed. LRS is keen to encourage experiments in terms of both services and facilities within the licensing regime and would be mindful of the possibility that such services might be of a temporary nature.

Equally, services that serve new developments may be introduced with particular time horizons based on the availability of funding from developers.

The economic circumstances may determine whether a period of longer than 5 years is appropriate for a particular licence application.

LRS is keen that there is healthy and sustainable competition for services on the river as it believes that this gives the best benefits to passengers. LRS believes that competition will develop the market, but in developing its competition policy, LRS will have due regard to the need to provide a return on capital investment and the effects on the sustainability of the network and individual operators.

9.4) Licence Extensions

LRS is mindful when it considers applications for licences of the investments in vessels, amenities, customer care quality and safety and would have due regard to these factors when considering whether to extend licences beyond the current date for completion of the licence.

10) OTHER FACTORS

The transport and economic criteria set out above will determine whether a particular service or variation to service is likely to be approved by LRS. However, such approval will be mindful of the implications for available infrastructure, navigation requirements and the requirements of other agencies who have statutory duties with regard to the river. (It will be incumbent on any applicant for a new licence or variation to an existing licence to have ensured that there will be no objections from the statutory bodies concerned).

When considering applications for scheduled services LRS will also take account of the appropriateness of the pier slots requested for charter work so that it can make best use of available resources.

Previous performance in compliance with terms of existing licences will also be a factor that will be taken into account when changes are considered. Thus in accordance with the terms of individual licences, LRS must reserve the right not to issue licences.