

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

SURFACE TRANSPORT PANEL

**SUBJECT: RIVER THAMES IMPROVEMENTS**

**DATE: 3 MARCH 2010**

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**1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on TfL's river passenger activity in support of the Mayor's River Passenger Services Concordat Working Group and comments on the recent Policy Exchange report entitled 'At a Rate of Knots'.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 TfL owns and operates eight passenger piers on the Thames between Millbank and Greenwich. It licenses the passenger services which operate from its piers. TfL also has a duty to operate the Woolwich Ferry. The ferry service is operated by Serco Ltd under contract to TfL.
- 2.2 Other piers used by passenger services are either privately owned or owned by other public bodies. The Port of London Authority (PLA) is responsible for navigational safety on the Thames.
- 2.3 Under TfL's ownership and operational regime, the number of passengers using its piers has increased from 1.6 million in 2000/01 to 3.9 million in 2008/09, an increase of 144 per cent and it set to exceed four million in 2009/10. Of the four million, 0.8 million are commuters using Thames Clippers' peak hour service.
- 2.4 River journey times are comparable with tube and rail in inner London. Cross river journey times are generally quicker than by other modes. The curving nature of the river and the availability of parallel rail routes make it difficult for the river to compete on journey time on long journeys to the east of London. River journey times to the west are constrained by the need to operate a reduced speed where the river is shallower and is used for recreation.
- 2.5 In cities such as Sydney and Vancouver, waterborne transport is successful as journey times across harbours are quicker than by land based modes which travel around the edge. On rivers with parallel rail routes, the development of transport services is more challenging. Niche markets can be developed where the river has a journey time advantage e.g. Bankside to Millbank. The 18 minute journey time is much quicker than by other modes.

**3 RIVER ISSUES AND AN AGREED WAY FORWARD**

- 3.1 Two reports in 2006 and 2007 identified the need for clear leadership, a clear strategic plan for development of the market, and better coordination and co-

operation between the various stakeholders in the market.<sup>1</sup>

- 3.2 The River Passenger Services Concordat, announced by the Mayor in April 2009, is a response to this need and is an agreement to work together to address a range of strategic issues that need to be resolved in order to grow London's river passenger services to their full potential. The Concordat Group is made up of the GLA, the London Development Agency (LDA), the PLA, TfL, boat operators, pier owners and other stakeholders.
- 3.3 The objective of the Concordat is to provide a shared approach to managing and developing safe and economically sustainable passenger services on the Thames that meet the needs of Londoners and visitors.
- 3.4 The centrepiece of the Concordat is the Rivers Action Plan, which sets out the issues that need to be tackled, and provides clear accountabilities and timelines for resolving these issues in an economically sustainable fashion.

## **4 RIVERS ACTION PLAN**

### **Olympic Services**

- 4.1 This workstream ensures the coordination and promotion of river services for the 2012 Games. The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) has confirmed a contribution of £500,000 towards the cost of providing a roof on Greenwich pier pontoon and an extension to Tower pier. Outline timetables have now been drawn up to serve mainly Greenwich Park and North Greenwich Arena during the Games.

### **Pier Provision**

- 4.2 This workstream takes forward the recommendations of a Pier Plan, agreed by the Concordat working group, to extend key piers in central London and to build new piers east and west of the central area. TfL is progressing the plans to extend Tower pier in time for the 2012 Games. A toolkit of low cost extension options and plans to extend other key central London piers is being developed.

### **Service Quality**

- 4.3 This workstream undertakes to review levels of service, provide best practice examples and guidelines, review minimum boat standards and identify improvements to pier facilities. Boat Amenity Standards have been reviewed and will be implemented through service licences. The provision of real-time, rather than timetable time, information about Thames Clippers services on the TfL website is expected by the end of February 2010.

### **Ticket Integration**

- 4.4 TfL will seek to ensure that Oyster Pay As You Go ticketing is extended to participating boat operators and ensure river services are integrated within TfL's future ticketing plans. Oyster Pay As You Go has been accepted on Thames Clippers since November 2009. Other operators are being given the opportunity to accept Oyster on similar terms.

<sup>1</sup> 'Future of Passenger River Services' Transport for London, August 2007; and 'River Thames: International Best Practice Study', KPMG for the London Development Agency, November 2006.

### **Pier signage**

- 4.5 This workstream will improve signage to piers and ensure integration with Legible London, the walking way-finding system. New signs have been installed at Waterloo and Charing Cross, and some additional signage is being installed through Legible London and the Cycle Hire Scheme. An illuminated pier banner has been ordered for installation at either Blackfriars or Bankside by May. A business case is being developed to implement a number of signage improvements.

### **Passenger Information**

- 4.6 Passenger Information will establish clear, simple identities that distinguish between transport and leisure services with the aim of encouraging non-users. A design is currently being developed for approval by the Concordat working group.

### **Environment**

- 4.7 This workstream will identify options to mitigate the negative impacts of river transport, focusing on cost effective collaborative solutions where possible. Thames Clippers have transferred to Ultra Low Sulphur Fuel and an improvement of emissions from Woolwich ferries is under investigation by the operator, Serco.

### **Management reporting**

- 4.8 This will provide a common matrix for measuring passenger traffic on the Thames and provide data on passenger numbers and customer markets.

### **Boat yard space**

- 4.9 This initiative seeks to secure additional boat yard space and ensure there are sufficient facilities to support the growing boat operating industry.

### **Skills**

- 4.10 This workstream will identify skill shortages and then define actions to ensure a shortage of qualified personnel does not restrict the growth of services.

## **5 'At a Rate of Knots'**

- 5.1 Policy Exchange has recently issued a report entitled 'At a Rate of Knots'. Its recommendations are summarised in 5.2.

- 5.2 *TfL must take leadership and ownership of river services. TfL should also be responsible for air traffic control-style management to minimise delays and give priority to different services. The report also states that ticket integration with Travelcard and Oyster should be introduced and that all strategic central London piers should be managed and ideally owned by TfL. Key piers should be upgraded and extended at a cost of £15-30 million and new piers should be developed as residential and commercial development occurs. Signage to and from key piers should be improved. There should be more strategic planning of river services. The river service should be designed to be as accessible as possible and where necessary the service should be subsidised. The speed limit should be reviewed and emissions standards of new boats should rise over time.*
- 5.3 At the launch on 6 January, the Mayor welcomed the recommendations in the Policy Exchange report as a useful addition to the debate on how the service should develop in the future. However, he stated that most of the report's recommendations were already being implemented via the River Service Concordat.
- 5.4 The Mayor went on to list the recent progress made to improve river services, including the launch of Oyster Pay As You Go on river services in November, the River Concordat Group led by Kulveer Ranger, supported by Richard Tracey AM, upgrades to Tower and Greenwich piers and the influencing of pier owners to upgrade their piers.
- 5.5 The Mayor considered that the 12 million passengers per annum target was achievable and committed to work towards it. However, he also made it clear that he thought that there was no short term solution to high carbon diesel boats and further thought needed to be given to how river boats can be made more environmental friendly.
- 5.6 The report recommends a level of capital and operating expenditure which is not provided for within the current TfL Business Plan.

## **6 RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 The Panel is asked to NOTE the report.

## **7 CONTACT**

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