

Dear Candidate,

RMT union (London Transport Regions) is calling on all candidates in the London Mayor election on 5 May to declare their support unambiguously for key policies aimed at improving London's public transport services and improving the pay and working conditions of the people who deliver those services.

Background

Over the past 8 years London fares have rocketed - up to a 60% increase from Uxbridge into central London, for example. We are concerned that further severe cuts to funding may increase pressure to raise fares still further. Will you pledge to oppose further cuts, and fight for improve funding?

Staffing is at its lowest level in recent history and Government cuts make it look likely that it will drop further. We are concerned that continuing job cuts will further compromise the safety and security of passengers. TfL staff fulfil crucial operational functions as well as many safety-critical roles such as managing peak flows of passengers and handling emergencies. Adequate staffing is vital not only for an efficient and effective service, but also for a safe one. Will you pledge to improve staffing levels on London transport?

These are some of the particular staffing issues that concern us.

On the tube, DLR and Overground, adequate numbers of staff are needed to identify and respond to emerging crush situations.

Staff are required to tackle fare evasion, too, which has rocketed to £61 million a year.

Visible staff help deter and detect crime, including potential terrorist acts. Staff also reassure passengers during tense periods.

At Leytonstone station, for example, staff levels will be reduced to just two - a 50% reduction at a station where there has already been a worrying terrorist incident.

London Underground determines staffing levels using so-called business need schematics formulae. These criteria do not take proper account of the need for security checks and other operational requirements. Whilst carrying out security checks, staff are not able to attend at customer service positions, leaving areas unstaffed and effectively unmonitored on occasion.

London Underground proposes that all but a few control rooms in the largest stations will be de-staffed. This will mean, especially when important customer-facing duties are attended, that routine CCTV monitoring will be impaired. The serious implications are obvious - for example when there are high volumes of passengers or when major events are taking place.

Other related Issues

TfL is under heavy pressure to extract as much value as possible from its holdings in land and housing, with no apparent consideration of Londoners' broader needs for truly affordable housing. TfL should not turn into a property developer!

London's population is growing. It is projected to rise to about 10 million by 2030 and 11 million by 2050. However, only a relatively small proportion of our fellow Londoners enjoy the luxury of being able to walk or cycle to work. The vast majority of new and existing Londoners will have no option but that of relying on public transport.

The pace of the growth in the number of journeys on the tube is fast rising, From a growth of 8.7 million in 2010-11 to an expected 11.7 million this year, an increase of 26% in only five years. The docklands light railway has seen an even faster rate of growth in usage, up from some 6.3 million journeys five years ago to an expected 9.6 million this year—an increase of 52%.

In only four years, the number of passengers served by TfL has increased by almost 0.5 billion a year. The busiest day ever on the tube was 4 December 2015, when almost 5 million passengers travelled on TfL trains.

As transport workers, RMT union members want to see a London Mayor who:

- Supports a municipally owned and run local bus services;
- Supports a fully integrated national railway service under public ownership;
- Supports the reversal of TfL's mass closure programme of ticket offices.
- Supports the existing regulations whereby private hire vehicles may pick up passengers only when pre-booked. (These regulations provide passengers with important safety protection against unregulated drivers who have not undergone extensive checks on criminal and medical records; nor have had to pass a formal taxi driving assessment).
- Opposes the systematic destruction of bus services.
- Opposes the privatisation of London Underground.
- Opposes Über circumventing, where it does, the law governing the taxi and minicab industry.
- Opposes any reduction in air-pollution controls and supports increased investment by TfL in improving "green" transport solutions.

Will you support these points?

Summary

Between 2010-11 to 2014-15, TfL income from the Department for Transport fell by more than a third. In the coming years, Government grants will amount to little more than 20% of TfL's annual budget.

The transport systems of major competitor cities in Europe receive a considerably higher percentage of their funding from central Government sources. In Paris, for example, transport gets more than 40% of its funding from a Government transport tax.

TfL has been significantly affected by Government cuts, with a 34% cut in funding overall grant support in 2016-17.

Policies favouring the privatisation and commercialisation of public transport are leading to a situation where safe, reliable and inexpensive travel for the public is becoming a thing of the past. RMT would like to see an end to the current “neo-liberal” approach of our pro-business government. We would like to see efficient public transport publicly funded and managed and run in the interests of the travelling public.

Do you support this view?

If you agree to and support these views/points raised, we may be able to invite you to discuss them further with our members at our Regional council meetings.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Glen Hart
RMT Union Political Officer (LTRC)