

MAYOR OF LONDON

Abigail Wood
Age UK London

Caroline Stickland
Transport for All

By email

Our ref:

Date: 08 February 2023

Dear Abi and Caroline,

Thank you for sharing Age UK London and Transport for All's report *Dial-a-Ride: From Door to More* with me last year. I understand that TfL wrote to you both in August 2022 and responded to the 12 recommendations in the report.

I would like to assure you that the Mayor is committed to making London's transport network more inclusive and equitable. Dial-a-Ride (DaR) is a vital service for many Londoners and I am pleased that TfL's most recent survey found that customer satisfaction amongst DaR users currently stands at 93 per cent. Of course, the service can always be improved and TfL and I are committed to ensuring that DaR users have the best service possible available to them.

Despite the continuing budgetary challenges facing TfL, I'm pleased to report that funding has been identified in 2023/24 to deliver a number of improvements to the DaR service. These are set out in detail below.

Recruitment of staff

At the end of October 2022 demand for DaR services reached 58 per cent, the highest it has been compared to pre-pandemic levels. TfL is expecting demand to continue to grow and is forecasting to reach 60% to 65% per cent of pre-pandemic demand by the end of 2022/23. In response, TfL has already recruited 4 new drivers with another 8 being recruited and due to start in May 2023. This will enable DaR to ensure service levels remain above targets, as they are today.

Longer operating hours

I understand that a few DaR members have been left frustrated as they have been unable to use the service to travel later in the evening. During the pandemic and until recently, trip volumes have been too low to justify maintaining the later hours service, due to expense and the impact it would have on delivery of the service at busier times. TfL has informed me that pre-pandemic trips after 22:00 accounted for about 1% of all DaR journeys, and trips after 23.00 comprised less than 0.2% of journey requests.

However, with demand increasing, TfL is planning to restore the operating hours from 07:00-22:00 to 07:00-0:00 as was the case pre-pandemic. Because drivers need to be back in their depots able to clock out at midnight, this would mean DaR will advise members that they would be able to

MAYOR OF LONDON

book a journey up until 23:00. TfL hopes that customers will be able to benefit from the extended operating hours from April, and will notify you when it is confirmed. Taxicard is available to customers for trips outside DaR's operating hours.

Accessible news and communications

TfL is looking to issue its *In Touch* magazine more frequently. Although information on the DaR service is available on the TfL website, TfL understands that many members prefer, or require, receiving information through printed material, and other accessible formats such as braille and audio. TfL does use *In Touch* to provide service updates, alongside messaging it places on our booking line. In addition to providing updates, TfL knows that *In Touch* provides a sense of community for DaR members. You may be aware that the magazine used to be published quarterly before the pandemic. TfL plans to issue at least 2 editions per year from 2023/24 onwards.

Raise Dial-a-Ride awareness

TfL agrees that it is important to increase its outreach channels to ensure Londoners who might benefit from assisted transport are aware of the services on offer. DaR will be increasing its engagement with clubs, activity centres and healthcare providers to ensure they are able to provide customers and patients with information on accessing DaR. TfL is also looking at the feasibility and cost of adding DaR's phone number and website onto the DaR buses to further raise awareness of the service. TfL will keep you updated on its plans.

New, simpler booking system

I am aware that a high number of DaR complaints relate to the booking system. In response TfL is planning to introduce a new, simpler system in late 2023 which will improve the efficiency of DaR's booking and scheduling processes. This will lead to customers spending less time on the phone whilst making a booking, and better routing of passenger journeys, meaning less time on the bus and more journeys offered.

In 2024 TfL will introduce a self-service function to enable customers to book, amend and cancel trips at their convenience.

TfL recognises that the new booking system will not be available immediately and has therefore recruited 7 new members of staff to assist customers in taking bookings and to help reduce any lengthy wait times. I'm pleased to say DaR has been achieving its targets for calls answered and call waiting times since the new colleagues have joined.

I hope this reassures you of our commitment to improving DaR and ensuring that it effectively meets the needs of its customers.

Yours sincerely,



Seb Dance

Deputy Mayor for Transport

CC: Caroline Pidgeon AM