

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: May 13 th 2009	Meeting Name: Scrutiny Sub Committee B
Report title:		Bus Services in Southwark - Public Response Report	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:			

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Potential for regeneration in Camberwell	Southwark Town Hall Peckham Road SE5 8UB	Scrutiny Team
Council Assembly – April 8 th 2009 – Agenda papers	Southwark Town Hall Peckham Road SE5 8UB	Lesley John 020 7525 7228
Motion Submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.9 (3) – New Bus Route for Dulwich	Southwark Town Hall Peckham Road SE5 8UB	Lesley John 020 7525 7228

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Shelley Burke, Head of Overview and Scrutiny	
Report Author	Cheryl Powell, Scrutiny Project Manager	
Version	V1	
Dated	29 th April 2009	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
Executive Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team		

RECOMMENDATION

That the report be noted.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The committee at its last meeting noted that TfL had a draft business plan due for publication and in consequence, this would be a good time to look at aspects of the bus services and the borough's transport needs.

As part of the review's terms of reference, Members will be investigating

- Short routes and how they can be extended;
- Poorly served areas (i.e. route 42 bus and the possibility of its extension into Village, E Dulwich College and S Camberwell wards);
- (Difficult) Orbital Journeys;
- Links with rail and underground routes; and
- Possibility of learning from the Vauxhall Interchange

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Throughout this stage of the Committee's work, members of the public as well as Elected Members submitted their views and perspectives on a range of bus services in operation within the Borough.

The London Borough of Southwark was asked to submit a response to Transport for London's 2010-2011 Bus Service Spring Review Programme. The routes reviewed by TfL and mentioned by members of the public and Elected Members are noted as routes 78, 343 and 484. The submissions from members of the public are as follows

Routes C10, 47, 188¹

The ward councillors for Riverside, Rotherhithe and Surrey Docks would like to convey to TfL a number of points on the C10, 47 and 188 routes so we'd be grateful if you could include them in the borough's response to the stakeholder consultation on this tranche. I think the bottom line on all of these routes is that the population all along them, including in Lewisham and Greenwich, has increased rapidly over the last 3-4 years so capacity is already an issue in peak hours. Also, with the nature of employment in London being so varied, many more people are starting work early. Currently before 7am the service frequency on all these routes is poor. We would ideally like to see an increased frequency on all these routes in peak time, as well as before 7am. We would also like to see TfL take into account future development in planning route capacity and frequency, rather than reacting to developments. For example, a quick look at the Mayor's housing targets for London boroughs and Southwark's planning documents should be enough to realise that our three wards will need more buses up front over the next five years. The increased population is also an issue for the night bus versions of these services.

¹ Part of the TfL 2010-2011 Bus Service Review Programme

Route P5

P5 bus route through my ward is very unreliable and people want more at peak times

Route 12

To go to the heart of the matter, the fundamental problem with the bus services is that each individual bus is on its own putative timetable. The result of this is most of the operational problems that people complain about. If I talk about route 12 it is only because I am most familiar with it. I know that nearly all routes have the same problem. Traffic conditions mean that buses catch up with each other. It is not unusual for five 12's to go up Barry Road in less than five minutes. After a suitable break all five buses come down the road together because they are all trying to catch up with their timetable. The theory of individual timetables is of course that the bus will be in a certain place when the driver's shift finishes. This frequently doesn't happen and so the journeys have to be shortened, giving rise to another of the commonest complaints. At a time when many driver's shifts are finishing it is possible e.g. to stand at the Town Hall stop while three or four 12s are only going as far as Peckham. Occasionally the opposite is true and a particular bus will be on a go-slow because the driver is early and sits for several minutes at each bus stop regardless of whether anyone wants to get on or off – another source of extreme frustration. Recently there have been recorded messages telling passengers that the bus is being held at this stop to even out the running. A few days ago this happened on a bus during the morning rush hour and the driver very quickly moved on rather than be lynched by the passengers on their way to work! This arrangement gives rise then to three of the commonest complaints i.e. bunching followed by a long delay, short journeys and dawdling. Shifts just have to be more flexible – perhaps shorter but with more scope for alteration according to circumstances.

Route P12

Two complaints about this service really - one is the frequency, particularly around school drop off and collection times as the bus serves the very popular St Francis Cabrini Primary School and many local parents prefer to take the bus than to drive, but find the P12 service unreliable and overcrowded. The second complaint is speeding on Ivydale Road -something we have taken up repeatedly with TfL but with no success. I hope that the proposed pinch points for Ivydale Road will resolve this.

Route 42

A proposed re routing to pass Dulwich Hospital and terminate at Sainsbury. Dog Kennel Hill has been sitting with TfL for some time. Sainsbury's has the empty bus stand for the 42 which needs a proper place to terminate with facilities.

The sub-committee should take evidence from Barbara Selby and/or Village ward Councillors about the efforts to get the route 42 bus extended further into Village, East Dulwich and South Camberwell wards. The generally poor bus services in Village and College wards should also be addressed.

Residents in the centre of Nunhead (around Evelina Road) would like to have links from the centre to New Cross in the east and to Dulwich Hospital in the west. It is particularly noted that now Dulwich Hospital is the centre for so many health services the hospital really needs better transport links.

Extending the 42 bus service to East Dulwich Sainsburys

The 42 – very infrequent and often crowded – need to increase frequency both weekdays and weekends.

Route 78²

The 78 route is extremely important as one of only two routes serving the central shopping area (Evelina Road) of Nunhead. It is also highly valued by residents living in the Dundas Road area as it is the only bus coming into that residential area. There are a very large number of elderly and disabled people living in that area as there are a number of sheltered housing units as well as social rented housing purpose built for disabled people. There would be an enormous outcry if the route ceased to serve these residential streets. That said there are significant problems with the route. A particular problem for Nunhead residents is that vehicles are frequently turned around at Peckham Rye and therefore Nunhead residents do not receive the full advertised service frequency - this is clearly picked up in the % kms operated performance stats. The route also suffers from chronic overcrowding in the core section of the route which makes it difficult for residents trying to come home to Nunhead when they are often unable to board the first bus in peak hours. This could be alleviated by providing additional capacity either on the 78 or an alternative route in the core area serving Peckham, Bermondsey and the City. I also note that the vehicles used on this route are very old and are not the greatest capacity single deckers. I would like to see more modern buses on the route and the use of the slightly longer single deckers would also help reduce the overcrowding. There has been a suggestion from some residents that 78 could be extended to New Cross (i.e. continuing up St Mary's Rd, turning right on Queens Rd then down to New Cross). Residents have complained that none of the services through Nunhead provides a quick link up to Queens Rd or New Cross where they can access high frequency rail services and Sainsbury's at New Cross. That said I would not support this proposal if it meant that the 78 ceased to serve the St Mary's Road / Dundas Road area.

The number 78 used to run from Dulwich Plough to Shoreditch but for some years now has run from Nunhead and has been changed to a single decker because of passing under a low bridge – at least that is the explanation given. This service is chronically overcrowded most of the time including in the middle of the morning and afternoon. Sometimes it is like a Japanese train - almost requiring someone on the pavement to push the passengers in. We have made this a campaign issue in Focuses – the route runs along Grange Road – in response to complaints as well as my own experience and the frequency has in theory been increased, although no-one I have spoken to has noticed any difference. If they can't put double deckers on the route, the only answer is to increase the frequency. After about 6 in the evening you have to be prepared to wait 20 minutes and be thankful if it is any fewer.

Admittedly the fact that it goes over Tower Bridge sometimes creates difficulties resulting on occasions a large proportion of the buses being in the same part of the route. This is about the only issue in the ward which in my experience comes anywhere near housing issues. Many people in the newer housing work in the City and this is their obvious route to work.

Route 171

The current 171 bus route could make a short diversion so that it travels north along Southampton Way OR Peckham Hill Street. If the former route is chosen, it could follow the 343 route as far as Wells Way, but then turn left down Albany Rd and right onto the Walworth Road, re-joining its old route. This way we would finally have a

² As footnote 1

means of public transport direct into Central London (the 343, 63 and 363 do not go direct into Central London, the 363 terminates at Elephant & Castle). The number 12 bus would continue to get people from Peckham to Camberwell Green and the Elephant, so there are already other routes covering this short deviation to the existing route. Another option would be for the 171 to go down Peckham Hill Street and turn left along St George's Way (flanking the south side of Burgess Park). It could then re-join the Walworth Rd in the same way (via Wells Way and Albany Rd). It is incredible that no buses currently service St George's Way which is a very long street and has a high density of population. It would pass the bottom of Chandler Way and still be of huge benefit to all our members. This seems like a minimal change that would make a maximum difference to many people's lives.

Route 343³

This bus provides a vital link - this time for people living in the south of Nunhead. That said residents do complain that the buses frequently speed down Ivydale Road and when these double decker hit the speed bumps it is extremely noisy. On one occasion a 343 crashed into a parked car and residents fear that someone will be hurt. I hope that the proposed pinch points for Ivydale Road will resolve this.

I get a fair few complaints about this service, in terms of timetabling and the bunching of services, poor adherence to safety issues on the part of drivers who seem to think it acceptable to drive at break-neck speeds and a lack of understanding on the part of TfL as to when to timetable services to meet the busiest periods. There seems a surplus of 343s at quiet times and wholly insufficient services at peak hours.

Route 434

Access to Sainsbury's on Dog Kennel Hill is a long walk from bus stops on the hill into the shop if people have mobility problems. I have proposed that the 434 which goes from Camberwell and down to Goose Green and is a small bus goes into Sainsbury's so that more people can get into the store from the top of the hill. Presently only the P13 is using the bus stop provided by the store and this bus does not cover the top of the hill from Camberwell.

Route 484⁴

Nunhead residents have repeatedly asked for this route to actually go into Dog Kennel Hill East Dulwich and use the new bus stand.

General Comments

Another major problem is the culture of drivers. For about 70% of them, I would say, their main aspiration is to avoid a confrontation with anyone at all costs. The only exception generally is with people who are trying to avoid paying when in extremis they will switch the engine off and basically let the other passengers deal with the offender. One or two recent examples will illustrate. Recently on a 78 there were for a short period 7 prams on board. Three were in the space allocated for them or wheelchairs, three were blocking the aisle and one was blocking the door – a situation which was drastically unsatisfactory and indeed dangerous. The last 4 should not have been allowed on. People were climbing over seats to get off. Throughout the driver just gazed straight in front of him as if nothing was happening.

³ As footnote 1

⁴ As footnote 1

Often far too many prams are let on presumably because the drivers don't want a confrontation with the parent pushing the pram. Interestingly, in my experience female drivers are more strict with mothers and prams! Again recently late at night a young couple got on a 12 and immediately plonked their feet on the seats in front of them and started swigging wine from a screw top bottle, passing it between them. This was quite close to the driver who could not have failed to see what was going on. Any moment I expected him to say 'Please take your feet off the seats and put the alcohol away.' A hope which turned out to be vain. On another occasion on a packed bus an older couple were drinking while standing right next to the driver and the front door. They were pouring beer from a large bottle into a plastic cup. The woman was so drunk she could hardly stand up. Once again the driver looked steadfastly in front of him. Do drivers get any guidelines on letting obviously and seriously drunk people on their bus? There are some heroic drivers who do try to control anti-social or dangerous behaviour on their bus but they are few and far between. The tactic of switching the engine off is almost always successful and is only available to the driver. The majority however behave as if their job is to drive a vehicle round a fixed route as if it were empty and have, if possible, nothing to do with those intruders – the passengers. I could say a lot more on this topic but that should suffice.

A constant source of frustration is diversions. Often the first you know about it is when the bus actually turns off its usual route. There is no indication of where the diversion is going to go, how long it will be and no consistency about whether the bus is going to stop during the diversion and how often. Some drivers get very shirty when asked these very understandable questions by passengers – as if they ought to know. Some buses now have this new announcement system which will suddenly say: "This bus is on diversion. Please listen for further announcements." On no occasion have I ever heard any further announcement despite the fact that on many buses now there is a microphone enabling the driver to talk to the passengers without turning round and shouting. Most drivers seem to have a pathological aversion to using it and it obviously hasn't formed part of their training. All drivers should be trained in the use of the microphone – both when to use it and how. On the rare occasions when they do, they sound like prison camp guards e.g. "This bus is now only going to Trafalgar Square. Get off if you want Oxford Circus" Recently I was on a 149 to Liverpool Street and after the stop before the station the driver suddenly turned left and didn't stop again for at least 10 minutes. When he did I had no idea where I was – presumably somewhere in the middle of Hackney. He obviously thought everyone knew there were road works outside the station. This happens in Southwark too. The other day I was on a bus which took one of the frequent diversions around Rye Lane – OK for me because I'm used to it but very confusing for several of the other passengers. Again the driver showed no concern about them.