**SOCIAL DISTANCING OPTIONS**

**ANNEX D: TRANSPORT**

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**CURRENT MEASURE:**

- Since 23 March, demand has sharply declined as a result of wider stay-at-home advice. While travel to work is legitimate if working from home is not possible, very few people are using public transport. Physical social distancing is not currently enforced on the transport network.
- As of 12 April, passenger numbers are down by 97% on rail and 89% on buses. Measures to date have focused on maintaining excess capacity in the transport system (despite absence of demand) in order to serve key workers.
- Trains are running around half the normal weekday timetable, with costs held by the government, and grants have been used to maintain 40-50% normal capacity in bus routes, despite lack of passengers.

**Part 1: MEASURE PROPOSED**

1. **Increase public transport service levels back to c85% combined with extensive demand management and passenger controls to maintain social distancing.** Research is ongoing into the assumptions (including the 2m rule for public transport) but **application of PHE guidance will require the introduction of measures to restrict passenger numbers to circa 20% of pre-COVID passenger capacity levels on any one form of transport.** An increase in service levels would therefore need to be coupled with significant changes in normal practice and behaviour. **These measures also depend on cooperation from transport workers**.
2. Reinstate services to c85% of normal capacity, with full services unlikely due to continuing staff absences. An approx. 4-week lead time will be required before services can be reinstated. **In parallel** maintain presumption of home working, introduce passenger flow control and safety measures, and look to shift demand to other forms of transport. In the first instance this would likely mean:
    a. Amending the messaging, in particular in London, to ensure that while there is a presumption for home working where possible, it is clear that workers can use transport to travel under the conditions below.
    b. Introduce measures to support social distancing: platform markings, manage flow through the station, manage queues into stations, and ensuring safe workplaces for transport workers e.g. plastic dividers for staff
    c. Minimise social contact: go cashless, remove need to use exit buttons, establish regular deep cleaning and provision of hand sanitizers
    d. Continued home isolation policies, so that individuals exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms in last 7/ 14 days banned from using public transport (unless testing negative)
    e. Work with business to manage commuting demand (London 2012 approach), including staggered start times, blended office/home working

f. Use guidance to encourage shift to other forms of transport such as cycling, coaches and cars.

3. In order to ensure social distancing, capacity on public transport will be reduced. It is estimated buses will only be able to hold a fraction of their seated capacity (c25-30 against a normal capacity of c130). Tube carriages will only be able to hold 15-20 people – compared to c.125 normally. Even running a full national rail service will only provide around a quarter of normal capacity. There may therefore need to be controls, including the need for police resources, to prevent crowding at the entrance to stations and at bus stops. This would be a particular issue at major London commuter terminals, many of which already have controls on entrance to the tube in normal operation.
4. These measures would also require significant further financial support to transport operators, beyond that already provided, as operators would be operating a high service level despite very few passenger numbers (with restrictions on passenger numbers limiting the financial viability of transport operators in the medium-term).
5. **Additional further measures to public transport settings** could be applied in order to manage demand, reassure passengers and help limit the spread of Covid-19. These could include:
    a. Require passengers to use face coverings (providing facemasks would be preferable - other countries have done this - but potentially not feasible given limits on supply)
    b. Restrict access to public transport based on employment (critical worker) or vulnerability (ie only individuals from low risk households can use)
    c. Use track and trace systems to monitor interactions
    d. Provide mass screening (e.g. of temperature) prior to travel
    e. Provide certification of permission to travel (e.g. demonstrating no known contact with a COVID-19 case)
    f. Provide incentives to commuters to travel outside of rush hour (e.g. make it free)
    g. Further measures to promote alternative transport, including temporary cycle lanes, easing restrictions on commuting by car (free up land for car parks), provision of private coach and taxi services.

**Alternative approach to reduce economic burden/restrictions** is to apply less stringent distancing for public transport:

- Reducing social distancing requirements on public transport. Even a reduction of the distance required to 1.5m (as is the case in Germany) would substantially increase transport capacity.
- Choosing not to actively limit the number of passengers travelling (i.e. relying on guidance/alternative transport provision to reduce passenger numbers, rather than actively preventing public from boarding public transport). However this approach could see transport networks significantly exceeding existing safe capacity at peak times (c5x) and risk spread of Covid-19. This could also result in a potential crisis in confidence in public transport.

**Part 2: BENEFITS OF THESE MEASURES**

- Ensures near-full transport coverage, including harder-to-reach areas and those travelling outside of peak times.
- Increased capacity for travel while maintaining social distancing means more people are safely able to access school and work in the event that stay-at-home measures are relaxed. In London, 30-40% of people use public transport to get to work and around 10-15% outside London.
- Maximum passenger numbers would still be only a quarter of pre-COVID levels – reinforcing the need for people to have new working patterns.
- Additional measures (e.g. facecoverings for travellers, mass screening at departure points) could help reduce risk of transmission in some cases and provide further confidence to public that transport networks are safe.
- This also strengthens other safer places workstreams: if transport is seen as safe then the public have more confidence that they can safely access other safer places (e.g. work, schools or public/recreational spaces).

**Part 3: RISKS OF THESE MEASURES**

- Scaling-up transport network ahead of demand increasing would incur significant further costs for government (awaiting estimated figures - likely gross cost of running TfL alone with no revenue around £0.5bn per month)
- Ability to control passenger flow or restrict passenger numbers is unproven. Assessment of the number of people who can be let in is challenging and depending on demand queues to enter stations could be unmanageable e.g. at Victoria Station this can be 8k per hour and peak entry to the tube network is 400-450k per hour. Many suburban train stations also have limited controls. May cause additional risks of C-19 spread if restrictions on passenger numbers result in large crowds at station gates or bus stops.
- Active restriction of passenger numbers once stay-at-home guidance relaxed would increase the financial burden in the longer-term, as transport networks would be running close-to-full services, with only 20% of normal passenger numbers in some cases.
- Restriction of passenger numbers would also place a constraint on a number of local economies, in particular London, where 30-45% of people use public transport to travel to work (outside London in the cities it's c10-15%).
- Provision of alternative transport (e.g. coaches) will incur costs, while encouraging more use of private transport (e.g. cars) could be difficult to roll back and may undermine public transport systems in the longer-term
- Scaling-up of transport systems might be seen by public as a return to normal and an end to WFH presumption – when in fact capacity in transport network would remain very low.
- Unions can be expected to resist the scaling-up of transport services, particularly if there is a lack of PPE for drivers and public-facing staff. Significant public attention has been paid to the 26 bus drivers in London who have died from Covid-19 since the start of the outbreak.
- Access to proper facemasks is likely to be inadequate to provide all travellers with protection. Unclear to what extent "face coverings" would provide protection against Covid-

19 (and potential to provide false reassurance). Mass demand for PPE could impact on supply to frontline workers.

- Mass screening would be difficult to roll out (particularly on bus networks), and the level of benefit provided is unclear (won't pick up all cases).
- Availability of drivers and key staff is not certain. Although the current proposal for scaled-up services would only see 85% of services restored, there would still be significant risk of cancellations and disruption as a result of staff absence.
- Ensuring consistency across local authorities and DAs could be difficult, as they may choose to take different approaches/prioritisation in areas of their responsibility (may also make join-up of cross-border bus services difficult).

**Part 4: POTENTIAL MITIGATION TO ADDRESS THE RISKS**

- Could segment users by health or age, e.g. recommending vulnerable not to travel, or only travel at off-peak times.
- Restrict usage to those providing greatest health and economic benefit (e.g. no public travel for social events)
- Possible digital solutions to reduce passenger flow into transport hubs at peak times - e.g. requirement for online pre-purchase of tickets (would need to be explored)
- Stronger emphasis on private rather than public travel (e.g. free up space for/incentivise use of bicycles and cars). This could, in turn, create a congestion risk on some roads.
- Regular deep-cleaning of transport, make hand-sanitizer available at all entry points and ban cash-based transactions in order to reduce opportunities for Covid-19 spread.
- Mass testing for transport staff to maintain staffing levels
- Use of volunteers/recruitment to help management demand at key hubs

**Part 5: IMPLICATIONS OF TRACK & TRACE FOR THESE MEASURES**

- "Certification to travel": When certification is developed, decision required on whether to allow people on public transport who are not immune/do not comply with track/trace test requests or use the app.
- The length of journey time and the number of people in relatively close proximity on public transport means that this could become a key area of demand for tracing services - if someone tests positive, then all people they sat near on their commutes for the previous week would need to be traced.