



ASLEF Submission to London Assembly's Transport Committee Inquiry into Tube Upgrades and Performance

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 18,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems. ASLEF have over 2200 members working on London Underground
2. Firstly ASLEF would like to state our opposition to the Mayor's Mansion House Speech in which he derided the skill and training necessary to be a London Underground driver. In his speech he explained that "virtually anybody in this room could acquire the qualifications needed to man an Underground train." This speech undermines the safety critical role drivers have and demonstrated political posturing rather than a desire for a safer and more efficient tube.
3. Unfortunately this comment was simply a reflection of the attitude towards safety under the current TfL leadership. Since training for new entrant drivers was reduced from 22 weeks to 12 there has been a rise in SPADs as highlighted by London Underground. This clearly shows that deskilling the role of a tube driver and reducing training has a negative effect on safety.
4. ASLEF feels that the Mayor's comments were inflammatory, politically driven and highly unconstructive in terms of both safety and industrial relations. ASLEF feel that the Mayor should have a stronger dialogue with the Unions in order that they are able to give him clearer insight into the roles they play in providing services. This may stop this confusion from happening again and ensure a stronger dialogue and better relations going forward.

5. There are several examples where London Underground have done nothing to help industrial relations by unilaterally enforcing changes. New rules and procedures have often been imposed simply because 'consultation' has been conducted and exhausted rather than with any agreement with staff representatives, for example on OEP items and OSN101.
6. In addition, many standards are not being complied with. For example with train preparation and 24 hour service days. Also Senior Operating Officials appear to have an ability to 'waive' an already established rule for service reasons.
7. These actions create an atmosphere of mistrust and have a negative effect on the staff's relationship with the company.
8. The Union is extremely concerned about what the Operational Strategy Discussion paper (that was leaked last year) discusses in relation to driverless trains. ASLEF believes the introduction of driverless trains will lead to a dramatic reduction in safety. An example of this would be the incident in February this year in which a child fell between a tube train and the platform. The train-borne safety devices in place showed the platform was clear and it was safe for the tube train to depart. But the driver, on a final visual safety check saw a small hand reaching up from the track. The train remained in position and a young life was saved. A similar recent incident on the mainline again showed that computers are unable to survey the whole situation and may miss things that a human would see. A woman attempting to retrieve her mobile phone battery on the track had not been noticed by the monitors and therefore would have been missed by a computer alone. Once again, having a driver saved a life.
9. ASLEF therefore insists the all new rolling stock has a separate drivers cab and creating stock without them should be removed from the Deep Tube Programme . Drivers must be allowed to focus on driving the trains rather

than their job changing to a more customer-facing role. ASLEF will oppose any deskilling of the driver grade.

10. Our members have identified several areas on the Jubilee line that demonstrate problems with relying on Automatic Train Operation (ATO).
11. ATO Ops can lead to incremental differences in where trains end up stopping, within the parameters of the stopping mark. This in turn can lead to CCTV picture interference as the train is placed at the extremes of the Track to Train Link (TTL) box. This therefore requires either self-dispatch or assisted dispatch.
12. Currently, where the TTL is off set from the stopping mark (Euston City North, Leicester Square North), drivers can adjust where they stop the train in order to accommodate these inconsistencies. In ATO Ops, this will not be possible. ASLEF therefore suggest that the Platform Train Interface (PTI) Group log the areas where this occurs and forward that to London Underground for consideration.
13. Drivers have also had CCTV problems at West Hampstead where having reversed via the sidings, the driver receives no in-cab pictures on arriving in the platform until they press the door open buttons. After this they get pictures as normal.
14. ASLEF have concerns over the braking, especially under wet condition under ATO. Memebtrs have reported that under shoots are as common as over shoots, as Transmission Based Train Control (TBTC) braking is somewhat haphazard.
15. On the Northern Line despite many requests to clear them, there are many dirty signs which make them difficult to read. These must be cleaned and can significantly increase safety for a relatively small price.

16. There have also been issues with Vehicle On-Board Computers (VOBC). A train that one of our members was on suffered a complete loss of one VOBC during one of its runs, with no Emergency Brake. The extremely shrill sound that followed was far too loud. This scenario is not covered during the training and it is not in the course booklet. The Train Operator Display (TOD) indications showed a complete loss of the VOBC icon without even a halo.
17. Members have also expressed concerns over the change of destination tone. This is quite quiet and can be missed. With the lack of Direction Indicators at all junctions, this could lead to drivers not realising that they have been re-routed onto another branch, until such time as they end up in a platform that they were not expecting to be in. This is not helped by the relatively small script on the TOD. This is a major safety issue.
18. The ATO can also cause other issues in regards to safety. Recently, on a northbound service, due to a point's failure, the service began to "degrade". This led to the train being sped up, but not by faster acceleration, but by shorter dwelling times imposed by the TOD. The TOD gave six second dwell times before going into the "count up" mode. This resulted in the driver being forced into rushing his platform duties (PTI) and therefore trapping passengers in the doors.
19. Despite the equipment having been in place for two years, drivers are still having issues with the new Metropolitan Line rolling stock. Almost 2 years after introduction of S stock, TfL are still 'unable' to resolve problems even though equipment is brand new.
20. ASLEF were proud to be part of a successfully delivered Olympic Games and hope that many lessons can be learnt from the experience. Timetables during Olympics & Paralympics delivered much better performance due to additional running time. It is therefore unfortunate that there are no plans to continue with this good model. The union feels this should be examined again.

21. ASLEF strongly opposes many of the suggestions found within the Operational Strategy Discussion paper that was leaked last year. The strategy looks to reduce operational costs by up to 20%. Attempting to do this during a time of such large scale upgrades and when passenger numbers are increasing is completely illogical and counterproductive. The strategy will see 1,500 jobs lost. This is a cut of 15% of staff.
22. The report suggests closing the vast majority of ticket offices with only 30 at major stations remaining open. This will have a dramatic effect on safety at stations and will deter many vulnerable people from traveling.
23. ASLEF is concerned that “Project Horizon” will undermine many of the achievements made in regard to equalities within TfL. “Project Horizon will deliver a major change to how TfL operates as an organisation... The project aims to protect frontline services, deliver capital programmes and save at least 20 per cent in the cost of delivering its support services. Most of this saving will come through a reduction in staff numbers working in non-frontline roles.”
24. TfL’s own equalities assessment on the impact of Project Horizon finds that, “women, BAME and disabled people are proportionately more likely to be in more junior grades that are impacted by the proposed changes to structures.” In short, this means that cuts to staffing will hit minorities, women and the disabled who work for TfL hardest.
25. It is wrong that plans to increase accessibility to the tube for disabled people are also being scrapped. After the success of the Paralympic games in demonstrating the achievements of disabled people, it is simply wrong to stop work that gives disabled Londoners access to public transport. Something that should be a right for all people.
26. Of 45 stations that former mayor Ken Livingstone promised would be step-free by 2013, work on 22 is to be deferred, while another two will only see partial improvements.

27. TfL have said “In order to have the money to continue with line upgrades, which will result in a 30 per cent capacity increase for all Londoners, some projects unfortunately could not proceed. The total budget for the six schemes that have been stopped was £92m and this funding is simply not available.” Here is a concrete example of where cuts are disproportionately effecting disabled people and those who are often more vulnerable. It’s a disgrace that of the 270 stations served by London Underground, only 65 offer step-free access from the platform to street level.
28. Recently a document on TfL’s website showed investment in step-free access plunging from £47 million to zero in just four years. The “step-free access” section shows that investment in 2009-10 was about £47 million, before falling to about £33 million in 2010-11, about £28 million in 2011-12 and about £23 million this year, but will plunge to zero for the next three years. Even in 2016-17, there will only be about £4 million investment in step-free access and less than £10 million in 2017-18.
29. Cutting funding for the Tube is counterproductive. London as the economic engine room of the UK needs its residents to be able to travel around the city quickly, reliably and safely. If this does not happen, the costs financially and socially can be huge. It is worth remembering figures quoted by Credo Group for Invensys Rail which showed that every £1 invested in rail by the government generates an additional £1.30 from the private sector – in other words investment in transport has a stronger multiplier effect than other sectors of the economy.
30. ASLEF strongly opposes the testing of driverless trains on the Jubilee line. Indeed union members in in the grade of Test Train Operators and Duty Team Leaders will be refusing to work or test any trains involved in the testing of driverless trains from 29th September 2012 until further notice.
31. ASLEF would also draw the committee’s attention to the changing composition of the TFL board which has seen a reduction in both women’s

and employee representation. Our representative Tony West has left following 12 years of service and the remaining trade union representative is to stand down at the end of the year. Two female representatives have also stood down. These members have been replaced by four white men which does not reflect well on the diversity of the Board's composition.

32. ASLEF call upon TfL and the Mayor to have a more frequent dialogue with the trade unions and also to look at the long term picture in regard to cuts.

Transport boosts the economy and therefore, cuts to London's transport infrastructure will lead to cuts in economic recovery. Perhaps of even greater concern however is the cuts to safety that may arise from such changes, particularly the speculated introduction of driverless trains.