

16. I have been assured that a lift will be available for passenger use between the Docklands Light Railway platform and the ticket office/entrance at Stratford Station when the line is opened.

17. Board Minute 346 (i) of the meeting held on 12 December 1985 pointed out that the duties in relation to the needs of disabled passengers set out in the London Regional Transport Act 1984 would not apply to the western extension of the Docklands Light Railway. Nevertheless, the proposed design of the extension provides for 800mm walkways in the running tunnels which would enable passengers - including wheelchair users - to be evacuated from trains in an emergency and that a lift will be provided between the street and DLR at Bank. The Unit for Disabled Passengers has also asked for consideration to be given to a fully-accessible interchange with the Circle/District Line.

BUSES

18. The scheduled Mobility Bus services introduced in the Newham and Waltham Forest areas in October 1984 and the Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington areas last November have been reviewed and adjusted where necessary to meet the needs of more disabled passengers. After a slow start, which reflects the difficulty of establishing where potential users live and obtaining their confidence in the reliability of the services, total weekly loadings have reached over 300 passengers on the two buses - including up to 100 passengers who used the lift or clearly needed the "helping hand" of the attendant on the bus. A fourth bus has been converted - at LRT's expense - to give a full back up in each area, cover the additional scheduled journeys and enable more private hire work to be undertaken.

19. London Buses have now sought LRT reimbursement for the net annual cost of £80,000 attributed to the operation of these existing services. The current 5-Year Corporate Plan provides for both capital and revenue expenditure for the conversion of 17 more buses for Mobility Bus services in each Bus District (plus 3 spares). The Unit for Disabled Passengers is having detailed discussions with Borough Council Officers, Dial-a-Rides and other sources in Southwark and adjacent areas to establish services there from next Spring. I believe it is particularly important to establish the relative roles and cost-effectiveness of Mobility Bus, Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard services in suburban areas.

20. Alder Valley North introduced an hourly "Careline" service between Heathrow, Victoria, Waterloo, King's Cross, Euston and Paddington, which uses similar wheelchair-accessible full-size buses, at the end of June. Because of the delayed introduction and inadequate publicity the service has so far been poorly patronised, and the operator is now seeking support from the Department of Transport, British Rail, LRT and others for the service to continue.

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As more severely disabled passengers, including those in wheelchairs, cannot use the Underground, Airbus or any other public transport service to and from Heathrow or across central London, withdrawal of "Careline" would put additional pressure on LRT to provide such a facility.

#### Modifications to other buses

21. The 260 Leyland Olympian double-deckers with split-steps and other features to help disabled passengers are now in service in sufficient quantities for a survey to be undertaken - at LRT expense - of passengers' reactions to the new features. This has shown considerable passenger support and enthusiasm for the new features, and the cost of retrospectively fitting some or all of the features to existing buses is being obtained prior to a recommendation to the Main Board.

22. As many of the buses proposed for use on tendered services, especially mini- and midi-buses with high floors which are now being increasingly used, are less accessible than standard buses, the Unit for Disabled Passengers has produced a list of desirable features to help disabled passengers, which is now included in the tender documents. The Unit is also taking every opportunity to encourage manufacturers and operators to adopt such features as adequate larger-diameter non-slip handrails in contrasting colours which can produce significant benefits for many passengers at little additional cost.

#### Bus stations, shelters and stops

23. London Buses Ltd has been asked to incorporate audible information for visually handicapped passengers as part of the current experiments to improve passenger information at bus stops, but have said they cannot fund the estimated cost of £20,000 for a trial installation.

As the GLAD survey (paragraph 5) confirmed, the availability of shelters with seats at bus stops is essential for many elderly and disabled passengers, who cannot stand for long periods at unprotected sites. I now understand that London Buses Ltd have slowed down their 1986/7 programme of seat installation in bus shelters from a planned 7,500 to about 1,500, and cannot fund any in 1987/8. This will be a serious set-back to the estimated 290,000 Londoners who experienced difficulty in using buses, 71 per cent of whom find "waiting for the bus to come" a problem and 11 per cent of whom could not do it without help.

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Costs given to  
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DIAL-A-RIDE SERVICES

Background

- 24. The Government announced on 9 October 1985 that Dial-a-Ride services for disabled people in London were to be funded through London Regional Transport, and stated that "While schemes will continue to be run under local management, funding through LRT will bring to bear LRT's professional resources and expertise to help make the provision of Dial-a-Ride services more efficient and cost-effective". The cost of maintaining services at the level at which they were operating in March 1986 was estimated at around £5m a year.
- 25. Dial-a-Ride schemes provide a pre-booked door-to-door service, mainly using lift-equipped special minibuses, for disabled people who cannot use public transport. By September 1985 the whole of Greater London was covered by 29 separate schemes based upon borough boundaries (one scheme covers 3 boroughs and two cover 2 boroughs). Total membership of the scheme is now 40,000 - out of a "registered disabled" population of over 200,000 - the 100 vehicles carry 31,000 passengers per month. All the schemes have voluntary Management Committees.

Costs and funding in 1986/87

- 26. A preliminary assessment indicated that expenditure would rise to £5.3 million in 1986/7 unless firm action was taken. LRT therefore decided to reduce central administrative costs by discontinuing the grant to the Federation of London Dial-a-Rides (FOLDAR) and absorbing most of its functions and the former GLC administration of the schemes in a small Dial-a-Ride section in the Unit for Disabled Passengers.

The resultant budget for 1986/87 is:

|                              |              |
|------------------------------|--------------|
|                              | <u>£000</u>  |
| Direct grants to 29 schemes  | 4,281        |
| Vehicle leasing/purchase     | 350          |
| Radio rental/computer trials | 35           |
| Central administration       | 137          |
| Central contingency          | 197          |
|                              | <u>5,000</u> |

Measures to improve efficiency

- 27. The strict cash limit and the need to cut grants, combined with the fears among Management Committees that LRT's efforts to improve the cost-effectiveness of the services will conflict with "democratic control by local users", requires a careful approach if real progress is to be made in improving the efficiency of the services. I believe that the Unit will make significant progress by providing Management Committees that it can provide a wide range of practical help and work with them to improve the services within the financial resources available.

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28. The Unit has started to compare each individual aspect of the services in turn, ranging from membership, eligibility, fares and conditions of employment, to areas such as booking systems and vehicle designs and maintenance. At the same time the progress of the services is being closely monitored so that their results can be compared and steps taken to help them to increase passenger trips within the resources available. The issue of comparative statistics to each service has already resulted in three of the poorest performers seeking LRT assistance and advice on how to use their resources more effectively.

### LONDON TAXICARD SCHEME

#### Background

29. The Taxicard Scheme enables eligible disabled Londoners to make journeys in taxis operating for six major radio-taxi circuits in London. Journeys cost £1 to the Taxicard holder up to a limit of £6 on the taximeter. The balance of up to £5 (plus extras for evening and weekend travel) and an administration charge is met from a subsidy from the Boroughs concerned. Members of the scheme may make journeys costing more than £6, but have to pay the full excess themselves.
30. The London Co-ordinating Committee of London Boroughs, decided on 18 December 1985, to support the Scheme financially and to ask LRT to undertake its administration from 1 April 1986 for a period of two years. From 1 October 1986 all 33 London Boroughs will participate in the scheme. Current membership is 35,000, the total number of trips is over 60,000 per month, and the annual cost to the Boroughs is over £5 million per annum.

#### Administration by LRT

31. The issue and the replacement of Taxicards and the maintenance of membership records is undertaken by the Commercial Office. The Unit for Disabled Passengers undertakes general management of the Scheme, financial control, liaison with Borough Councils, The Post Office and Taxi Companies and deals with any complaints. Monthly invoices from the Taxi Companies and Post Office are checked and payment authorised.
32. A legal agreement between all the parties provides for a quarterly payment from each participating Borough and an annual reconciliation of invoices and payments so that the full cost of the Scheme, including all LRT's administrative expenditure, is met by the Borough Councils. The estimated cost for 1986/87 is £5.2 million including LRT costs of £74,000.

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Each Borough's payment is based on a proportion of this cost calculated on the number of Borough residents who were in the Scheme at the end of 1985. The new Taxicards, with photographs, indicate the Borough of residence. This will enable details of resident holders to be updated so that the proportions can be adjusted for 1987/8.

#### Review of the Scheme

33. The Unit for Disabled Passengers has carried out a review of the Scheme on behalf of the participating Boroughs. In particular, it has examined eligibility criteria; the "premium fare" to encourage taxi drivers to accept bookings; the inclusion of two further radio-taxi circuits; the procedures for checking taxi company invoices; and methods of controlling the total cost of the Scheme. In each case, the item under review has been reported with recommendations to the London Advisory Panel on Transport Schemes for the Mobility Handicapped which represent the interests of the Boroughs so far as the London Taxicard Scheme is concerned. It is expected that some Boroughs will decide to limit growth of the scheme in their areas during 1987/8.

#### LONG TERM

34. LRT now has three main special services for disabled passengers: mobility buses, Dial-a-Rides and Taxicards. I am most anxious that we continue to provide and improve services for disabled people in London and co-ordinate more with local authorities, the ambulance service and voluntary organisations. At the same time I want it to be clearly seen that we are a transport authority and not a social service. Our main objective should be to provide a good and efficient service for passengers with disabilities with the principle of value for money. The funding of these services comes from LRT, government and the boroughs and our view should be that we will be prepared to run services for any group of disabled passengers for any authority who wishes to provide the funding. In this respect we should consider setting up a company that has clear identity and objectives in this direction.
35. This would not remove from London Buses, London Underground and other subsidiaries and tendered services the general principles of taking into consideration the needs of disabled passengers in the provision of their services and when it comes to making new investments it would largely remove from them the responsibility of running specific services. I would appreciate the Board's view on this concept and whether it merits further investigation as regards the principles as well as legal implications.

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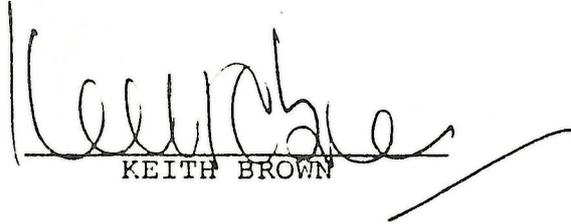
RECOMMENDATIONS

36. In view of the progress and current situation set out above, I recommend that the Board should approve the following:

- (a) The Director of Planning, in conjunction with the Unit for Disabled Passengers, to evaluate the relative value of alternative means of meeting the transport needs of disabled people and produce recommendations for a long-term strategy for London (Paragraph 3);
- (b) That while the Main Board accepts that the Underground business should not be expected to fund from its own resources the creation of a possible core network of fully accessible Underground stations, London Underground Ltd should - in conjunction with the Unit for Disabled Passengers - proceed with more detailed and fully-costed investigations into such a network so that specific proposals can be considered by the Main Board and submitted to the Department of Transport for special funding (Paragraphs 9-11);
- (c) London Underground should advise the Board when his report on wheelchair access to Heathrow will be available (Paragraph 12), and confirm that the cost of induction loops at booking office windows is now included in the UTS scheme (Paragraph 14);
- (d) From April 1987 funding of existing and new Mobility Bus services should be transferred to LRT, and that the services should be expanded within the financial limits set in the 1986 Corporate Plan. To ensure maximum value for money, consideration should be given to whether the existing and new services should be put out to tender (Paragraphs 18/19);
- (e) Consideration of the possible retrospective fitting of split-steps and other features to existing buses should await the availability of estimates (Paragraph 21);
- (f) The Unit for Disabled Passengers should continue to make every effort to persuade manufacturers and operators to incorporate cost-effective features in buses to help mobility handicapped passengers (Paragraph 22);
- (g) London Buses Ltd should incorporate audible information in their current experiments to improve passenger information at bus stops (Paragraph 23);

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- (h) The Unit for Disabled Passengers to continue to monitor the results of the local Dial-a-Ride services and the London Taxicard Scheme, and wherever possible take initiatives to ensure that the resources are utilised as cost-effectively as possible (Paragraphs 24-33);
- (i) I should submit further Progress Reports to the Main Board at appropriate intervals.



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KEITH BROWN