London Olympics 2012: transport

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Between 27 July and 12 August London hosted the Summer Games of the XXX Olympiad and between 29 August and 9 September it hosted the XIV Paralympic Summer Games.

Before the event there was a great deal of concern about the ability of London's transport network to cope with the higher than expected passenger levels associated with the Games and to deliver athletes, officials and spectators to and from events around the capital in a timely and efficient manner.

In the event, the Games passed off without a transport hitch and figures indicate that over the whole period of London 2012 over 100 million journeys were made on the Tube; 11 million on the DLR; 10.5 million on London Overground; the Barclays Cycle Hire scheme saw a million hires; buses travelled 40 million km; and there was an average ten per cent reduction in traffic on the Olympic Route Network during peak hours.

This note gives an overview of the transport planning for the Games and summarises the performance of the London transport network during the Games period. An overview of how transport is managed and funded in London can be found in HC Library Research Paper RP 08/36 while information on some of the major transport schemes in London can be found on the TfL website. Information on other aspects of the London Olympics can be found on the Sports topical page of the Parliament website.

Contents

1 The Bid, 2003-05 2

2 Planning and preparation, 2006-12 4

3 Delivery, July-September 2012 8

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1 The Bid, 2003-05

On 15 May 2003, the then Secretary of State or Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell, announced to Parliament that the Labour Government intended to support a bid by the British Olympic Association (BOA) for London to host the 2012 summer Olympic and Paralympic Games.[1] The Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats both supported this decision.[2]

In anticipation of this, the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee published a report on a London bid for the 2012 Olympics in January 2003. The report concluded that the Government needed to provide clarity on transport issues including:

- required capital projects;
- required investment levels to improve public transport services;
- cost and associated risks of escalation;
- risks of non-delivery and contingency plans/fund;
- strategy for the management of the London transport network during the Games; and
- any apportionment of these costs, or elements of them, to the Olympic balance sheet.[3]

The Government issued its response to the Committee in June 2003, stating that it was satisfied that a 'robust' transport system would be in place in time for the Games.[4]

In February 2004, London 2012 submitted its applicant questionnaire response to the IOC. This document set out in detail the transport plans for London's Olympic bid, detailed the transport challenges facing the city and London 2012's plans to overcome them. It stated:

> Transport planners are already modelling all Games-time loads, deploying the expertise gathered from such huge mass participation events as the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002, to ensure world-class transport in 2012. An Olympic Transport Authority will be created specifically to oversee the entire Games transport system and guarantee its efficient and effective delivery and operation.
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> Already it is clear that volumes during the Games period will be 20 per cent lower than average due to the drop-off associated with the summer holiday period. In addition Olympic passenger flow will often be in the opposite direction to commuter use, further easing demand on the system. Because of the impressive scale of London's existing transport infrastructure, extra demand from the Games is expected to be no more than five per cent of normal London weekday travel.
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> Additional measures will be introduced to manage this demand and ensure it is seamlessly absorbed throughout the network without any decline in journey time or service quality. Among the specific and targeted initiatives which will be introduced are:

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1 the London bid is referred to throughout as 'London 2012'; HC Deb 15 May 2003, c477

2 ibid., cc478&482

3 Culture, Media and Sport Committee, *A London Olympic Bid for 2012* (third report of session 2002-03), HC 268, 21 January 2004, p6

4 *Government response to 'A London Olympic Bid for 2012'*, Cm 5867, June 2003, p6

- an express rail service along the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) line between Stratford and central London;
- an extended tube service for late night events;
- the introduction of a series of Park & Ride schemes at key locations around the M25 London orbital motorway;
- and an integrated ticketing system, combining venue and transport access in one ticket, working in tandem with a public awareness campaign to ensure full use of all transport alternatives.

Measures to ensure safe, secure and efficient transport for the Olympic Family will also be introduced. Among them will be:

- the introduction of Olympic arrival channels at Heathrow airport;
- dedicated Olympic lanes for vehicles carrying the Olympic Family;
- and the deployment of latest technology to ensure priority for Olympic Family vehicles. [5]

London was selected as an official candidate city on 18 May 2004, along with Moscow, New York, Paris and Madrid. At the same time, the IOC published its evaluation report of the original nine applicant cities that had been prepared in March 2004. For its transport 'concept', London was awarded a minimum grade of 4.8 (out of a maximum 10) and a maximum grade of 6.7. This put it behind Paris, Leipzig and Madrid. The IOC was concerned that much of the public transport network (particularly the rail and Underground) were 'obsolete'.[6] The Minister was asked in the House of Lords, subsequent to the publication of the IOC's report, what the Government was intending to do to address the 'obsolete' public transport system. The Minister responded:

> The International Olympic Committee recognised that London already has one of the world's most extensive rail and underground networks. Considerable investment in London's transport infrastructure will bring significant improvements by 2012. Over £17 billion of public money has been allocated to improve transport in London between now and 2012, including £1 billion each year until 2010 which is being invested to improve London Underground and deliver better services and greater capacity. By 2012, the proposed Olympic Park in Stratford will be served by 10 railway lines, including the new high-speed Channel Tunnel Rail link into St Pancras.[7]

The full bid documents were prepared and sent to the IOC in November 2004. Theme 14 of the *London Candidate File* for the 2012 Olympic bid provided more details of the proposed transportation system that would be in place for the Games. Under the headline 'convenient and connected', theme 14 gave four key transport commitments, including:

- eighty per cent of athletes within 20 minutes of their events;
- the best-connected airport in the world;
- ten railway lines carrying 240,000 people every hour to the Olympic Park (with central London seven minutes away via the Olympic Javelin shuttle); and

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5 *London 2012 Questionnaire Response*, 17 February 2004, theme VI
6 *Report by the IOC candidature acceptance working group to the IOC executive board,* 12 March 2004, p30
7 HL Deb 27 May 2004, c161WA

- 240km of dedicated Olympic lanes.[8]

This included a commitment to bring forward legislation to create an Olympic Transport Authority (OTA), as the body tasked with the responsibility for transport within the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA). The OTA would "oversee the programme management of related infrastructure projects and be responsible for the delivery of real-time integrated coordination and control of transport during the Games".[9]

Along with the candidate file, the then Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling, submitted a guarantee on the key transport aspects required for the Games. The letter set out the statutory authorisations, including planning, that had been obtained by November 2004 or would be pursued by the relevant body; the bodies legally responsible for delivery of said projects; the construction timelines; and the form and nature of financing.[10] The letter also gave a guarantee about the planned and additional projected fleet and rolling stock for the Games, controlled by the Department for Transport.[11]

The IOC visited London from 16 to 19 February 2005 to evaluate its bid.[12] The IOC's evaluation report of London and the other candidate cities was based upon the candidate files and the visits. The report concluded as follows:

> During the bid process, substantial London rail transport infrastructure investments have been clearly confirmed, guaranteed and accelerated. Provided that this proposed programme of public transport improvements is fully delivered on schedule before 2012 and the extensive Olympic Route Network is implemented, the Commission believes that London would be capable of coping with Games-time traffic and that Olympic and Paralympic transport requirements would be met.[13]

After London 2012 launched its bid for the Olympics concern were repeatedly expressed about whether London's transport system would be able to cope.[14]

On 6 July 2005, the President of the IOC, Jacques Rogge, announced that London had been chosen as the host city for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Following the announcement several press reports indicated that the victory came 'in spite of' the transport issues facing London.[15]

2 Planning and preparation, 2006-12

In March 2006 the House of Commons Transport Committee published a substantive report on the transport aspects of the 2012 Games. It congratulated the Government and London 2012 for winning the Games and offered an overview of the importance of the transport network to a successful Games:

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8 *London Candidate File*, 15 November 2004, theme 14

9 ibid.

10 Letter from Alistair Darling to Jacques Rogge, 15 November 2004

11 ibid.

12 the IOC visited Madrid between 3 and 6 February; New York between 21 and 24 February; Paris between 9 and 12 March; and Moscow between 14 and 17 March

13 *Report of the IOC Evaulation Commission for the Games of the XXX Olympiad in 2012*, 6 June 2005, p63+

14 see, e.g.: "Blair goes for Olympic glory", *The Independent*, 16 January 2004; "Travelling the Zil lane to Stratford in super-slow time", *The Times*, 21 May 2004; "London welcome party fears Olympic bid could go down the Tube", *The Sunday Times*, 6 February 2005; and: "How ready is London for the Olympics?...", *The Guardian*, 12 February 2005

> Winning the right to host the London 2012 Olympic Games was a great achievement for London and the British Olympic Association. The Olympic Games and Paralympic Games are the largest sporting events in the world. The entire public funding package for the Olympics, including transport, is £2.375 billion; the whole operating cost of the Games, again including transport, is £1.5 billion. £692 million will be spent on the Olympic transport budget, including capital costs; and transport operating costs are expected to be £150 million. 16,000 athletes and team officials, and almost 10,000,000 ticketed spectators, are expected to attend the Games. The Paralympic Games involves the estimated participation of 150 countries, 4,500 athletes, and 3,000 officials and members of staff.
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> Excellent transport will be a key factor in running successful Olympic and Paralympic Games. A proposed Olympic Transport Plan has been drawn up and published by Interim Olympic Transport. The emphasis now is on developing the Plan; and its efficient and effective implementation. Construction and enhancement work on a grand scale is planned to ensure that the transport system in place in London by 2012 is able to cope with the considerable challenge of transporting competitors, officials and visitors to the Games safely and efficiently. The overall scale of construction for the Games will be unparalleled in London in recent times. Several of the key transport links were planned prior to London winning the Olympic bid. If poorly managed, these have the potential for causing considerable disruption in the capital, particularly the East End.[16]

The Committee identified a number of potential problems, such as traffic impacts; the capacity of the Javelin service; a lack of integrated ticketing; access for disabled people and legacy. On the final issue of legacy the Committee stated:

> Looking further ahead, the Olympic and Paralympic Games offers a unique opportunity to invest wisely in the transport legacy of London and other Olympic locations around the UK. The systems and enhancements put in place for 2012 must, wherever possible, be capable of being sustained beyond that date so that maximum value for money is achieved and the transport infrastructure available to the local populations is enhanced.[17]

The Government responded to the Committee's report in June 2006.[18] The Committee followed up with a further, short, report in February 2007.[19]

The *London Olympics Bill* (HC Bill 45 of 2005-06) was introduced in the House of Commons on 14 July 2005 and published on 15 July.[20] The *London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Act 2006* was granted Royal Assent on 30 March 2006. The Act provided for the establishment of an **Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA)**.[21] The ODA was required to prepare and keep under review **an Olympic Transport Plan (OTP)**. The OTP set out the transport plans for the Games. The Act required the OTP to address a number of matters

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15 see, e.g.: "140 mph trains will take fans to heart of action", *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 2005; "A winner on paper but now the race to deliver begins", *The Guardian*, 7 July 2005; and: "In truth, London should have lost", *The Independent*, 7 July 2005

16 Transport Committee, *Going for Gold* (third report of session 2005-06), HC 588, 16 March 2006

17 ibid.

18 *Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2005–06* (tenth special report of 2005-06), HC 1152, 5 June 2006

19 Transport Committee, *Transport for the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Games: the draft Transport Plan* (third report of session 2006-07), HC 199, 20 February 2007

20 for more information on the Bill, see: HC Library Research Paper RP 05/55

21 John Armitt chaired the ODA (former Chief Executive of Network Rail) and Sir Roy McNulty was Deputy Chair (former Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority); for more information on the ODA, visit London 2012

including, for example, the construction of transport facilities, transport arrangements to and from events, the Olympic Route Network, road closures and restrictions and guidance on implementation of the plan. The **Olympic Route Network (ORN)** consisted of roads within England used for travel to and from events venues and accommodation. The maximum fine for illegal use of the ORN was set at £5,000. The ODA had powers to co-ordinate the delivery of the transport needs of the Games. The Mayor of London was obliged to have regard to the OTP and to consult the ODA in updating his transport strategy.

London 2012 published a draft of the Olympic Transport Plan (OTP) for consultation on 30 October 2006.[22] The ODA appeared before the Transport Committee in January 2007 when they were asked about the draft Transport Plan. In its report, the Committee stated that it

> …had expected the draft Transport Plan to signify a great leap forward in the planning and organisation of the transport projects so crucial to the Games, and we had certainly expected to be reassured with regard to most of the concerns identified in our original report. Although work has been done in the interim period, **we are concerned to see that the plans for delivery across most of the modes remain vague, and the ODA is not exhibiting any sense of urgency about producing more detailed plans.**[23]

The Committee raised particular concerns about contingency planning, delivery timetables, reliability of modelling assumptions, waterways, park and ride and the Olympic Legacy. The ODA published a press notice accompanying its response to the Committee which specified where the £17 billion transport budget would be spent. It included projects such as: capacity increases on the Jubilee Line; new DLR rolling stock; DLR extensions; improving station access at Stratford; other station upgrades; completing the London Overground project in East London; fully accessible buses and more accessible Tube stations.[24]

In October 2007 the ODA published the first edition of the Full Transport Plan.[25] In a short summary of the strategy, it stated:

> The transport strategy for the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games has evolved over the past three years in response to the requirements of the IOC, the different International (sports) Federations, LOCOG and the key objectives developed by it, the ODA and their forerunners. Each of the following strands of the transport strategy has been adopted in order to meet one or more of the ODA's key objectives…:
>
> - to aim to achieve 100 per cent of ticketed spectator travel to competition venues by public transport, walking or cycling;
> - to ensure that the athletes are the top priority;
> - to keep London and the UK moving during the Games;
> - to ensure that the Games are accessible from all parts of the UK;
> - to leave a lasting, positive legacy; and
> - to achieve maximum value for money. [26]

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22 summary available on the London 2012 website

23 op cit., *Transport for the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Games: the draft Transport Plan*, para 3 [emphasis in original]

24 London 2012 press notice, "Olympic transport plans on track", 19 February 2007

25 London 2012, *Full Transport Plan*, October 2007, para 1.20; executive summary available on the London 2012 website

And on the 'transport challenge' it stated:

> Although the Games present London and the UK with significant transport challenges, London and the UK has an excellent base upon which to build its transport strategy. London's public transport system caters for around 12 million public transport trips each day and large events are regularly held in London. The existing National Rail, Underground and Docklands Light Railway networks provide a comprehensive network of rail services and substantial capacity. The Olympic Park will be particularly well served by rail with 12 different services operating into the area during the Games. Across London the well-developed network of Transport for London bus routes provides additional public transport provision. During the Games some bus services will be enhanced to meet demand. For venues outside London the ODA is reviewing public transport provision and is working with its delivery partners to implement enhancements as necessary.
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> During the bid phase the likely total demand for transport during the Games and the capacity that could be made available to accommodate it was analysed. This included both Games demand and background travel demand by commuters and other travellers. This analysis work is still ongoing and is being continually refined as more detailed information regarding the Games becomes available. The work carried out to date provides confidence that the proposed transport arrangements will accommodate the demands of the Games, while continuing to provide for other users of the UK's transport systems.[27]

In May 2008 the IOC visited London to assess the city's progress in preparing for the 2012 games. In a press notice, it stated that the Commission was "greatly impressed" by the speed of progress since the IOC's last visit.[28] However, subsequent press comment stated that IOC officials still had concerns about the transport system.[29] In December 2009 the ODA published a second draft of the Transport Plan for consultation; the key objectives and the transport challenge remain unchanged.[30]

One of the areas that caused the most concern before the Games was the Olympic Route Network (ORN) and the proposed 'VIP' lanes or 'Games lanes' for athletes and officials.[31] Games lanes were in effect temporary priority routes to enable athletes and officials to get to the Games swiftly. They would only be implemented when and where required and would be strictly enforced.[32] The ORN was designated by the *Olympic Route Network Designation Order 2009* (SI 2009/1573), which came into force in July 2009. This followed a consultation by the Department for Transport.[33]

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26 ibid., para 4.3

27 ibid., paras 4.22-4.23

28 IOC press notice, "London builds up for spectacular games", 22 May 2008

29 see, e.g.: "IOC awards high mark despite lingering fears over transport system", *The Times*, 23 May 2008

30 London 2012, *Transport Plan for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Second edition consultation draft*, December 2009; in two parts: chapters 1-6 & 7-18; a separate accessible transport strategy was published in May 2008

31 see, e.g.: "Olympic express routes 'will cause traffic chaos'", *London Evening Standard*, 11 February 2009

32 ibid., paras 5.28-5.75

33 DfT, *Designation of the Olympic Route Network*, 11 December 2008; maps of the ORN in London and elsewhere are available via this link

3 Delivery, July-September 2012

Between 27 July and 12 August London hosted the Summer Games of the XXX Olympiad and between 29 August and 9 September it hosted the XIV Paralympic Summer Games. London 2012 saw competition in 26 sports across 34 venues by 10,500 athletes from 204 countries. A total workforce of around 200,000 people, including more than 6,000 staff, 70,000 volunteers and 100,000 contractors, were involved in the Games.[34]

In a September 2012 paper on the performance, funding and legacy of the Games, Transport for London (TfL) stated that almost £6.5 billion was invested in transport improvements around the Olympic Park and across London. All were delivered "well before the Games began". It also stated that London 2012 saw record attendance at events. During the Olympic Games, there were 7.4 million ticketed spectators (6.25 million in London), including 2.8 million spectators at Olympic Park venues alone. The Paralympic Games effectively sold out for the first time in their history, with 2.7 million ticket sales, including 100,000 non-event tickets. Record numbers of spectators also viewed the road events across London and the South East, with a total of 1.8 million estimated to have attended.[35]

During London 2012 London's public transport delivered the following:

- 62 million journeys were made on **London Underground** – up 35 per cent on normal levels. Tuesday, 7 August was the busiest day in the Tube's history, with 4.57 million passengers, while Sunday 5 August saw 78 per cent more passengers than a normal Sunday in 2011. The Paralympic Games saw a total of 39 million Tube journeys, up 18 per cent on the same period in 2011. London Underground ran 98 per cent of scheduled kilometres during the Olympic Games and 99 per cent through the Paralympic Games. There was a 27 per cent reduction in the impact of service disruption during the Olympic Games, as measured by Lost Customer Hours;

- The **Docklands Light Railway (DLR)** saw almost 6.9 million journeys over the Olympic Games – up by over 100 per cent on normal levels – and 4 million journeys during the Paralympic Games. Over 500,000 journeys on a single day were made for the first time on Friday 3 August. During both the Olympic and Paralympic Games, reliability on the DLR was 99 per cent;

- **London Overground** saw around 6.4 million journeys during the Olympic Games – up 26 per cent on normal 2012 levels and up 54 per cent on 2011 levels. The Paralympic Games also saw an increase in passenger numbers on London Overground, with 4.1 million journeys in total, up 17 per cent on normal 2012 levels and up 41 per cent on 2011 levels; During both the Olympic and Paralympic Games, reliability on London Overground was 98 per cent;

- **London Buses** carried 92 million passenger trips across the 17 days of the Olympic Games and 69 million during the Paralympic Games. Buses ran 23.2 million km during the Olympic Games, around 600,000 km more than 2011 (reflecting the increased frequencies on certain routes), and 98 per cent of schedule. During the Paralympic Games, 16.4 million km were operated, around 300,000 km more than 2011, and 97.8% of schedule; and

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[34] *London 2012 Facts* [accessed 8 November 2012]

[35] TfL, *London 2012 Games Transport – Performance, Funding and Legacy*, 20 September 2012, p3

- **London's river services** were busy over the Games, with the main river bus operator seeing a 44 per cent increase in passengers during the Olympic Games compared with 2011.[36]

Regarding **traffic and the Olympic Route Network (ORN)**:

- Traffic flows in central and inner London were down by 16.3 per cent in the AM peak and 9.4 per cent in the PM peak on normal levels during the Olympic Games, and down by 10.4 per cent in the AM peak and 2.3 per cent in the PM peak during the Paralympic Games. Serious and severe disruption was also down, by 20 per cent during the Games;

- Owing to the Games Family (i.e. officials and athletes) using public transport much more than expected, Games Family vehicle flows were typically 30-40 per cent below LOCOG's pre-Games predictions. As a result, TfL was able to actively manage the ORN using roadside variable-messaging signs, with around 60 per cent of Games lanes remaining open to general traffic during the Olympic Games and around 70 per cent during the Paralympic Games; and

- In total, 25,700 Warning Notices and 6,500 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued for ORN contraventions, and 4,700 Warning Notices and 400 PCNs for Paralympic Route Network (PRN) contraventions.[37]

On **walking and cycling**:

- TfL provided a network of new cycling and walking routes, especially in East London; 15,000 free cycle parking spaces at competition venues; a further 1,500 free cycle parking spaces in central London for commuters; and free cycle maintenance at venues for spectators;

- At sites across London, the number of pedestrians counted was seven per cent higher during the Olympic Games, and 18 per cent higher during the Paralympic Games, compared with the same period in 2011;

- Measurements on bridges over the Thames during the Olympic Games indicated 20 per cent more cyclists and 22 per cent more people on foot, compared with the previous fortnight. In Central London the figures showed 29 per cent more cyclists, and in East London 62 per cent more cyclists and 158 per cent more pedestrians, indicating large increases in the areas most affected by the Games; and

- Barclays Cycle Hire had 642,000 hires over the Olympic Games, 44 per cent more than the first two weeks of July, and a further 442,000 hires over the Paralympic Games. Over the whole of July, Barclays Cycle Hire saw more than 1 million hires for the first time, while the highest ever daily total of 47,000 hires was achieved on 26 July.[38]

TfL considers the £6.5 billion investment in London transport to be the main transport legacy of the Games, but some of the other lessons learned were:

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[36] ibid., pp4-5
[37] ibid., p6
[38] ibid., p7

- **Better operation of the public transport and road networks** – TfL will investigate future use of the maintenance plans and procedures put in place before the Games, such as the Tube's Emergency Response Unit (ERU); and lessons learned from operating extensive Active Traffic Management across London will feed directly into the Mayor's Roads Task force on developing a long term vision for London's road network;

- **A more accessible transport system** – TfL's preparations for the Games will leave a legacy of more accessible transport across London, such as an increase in step-free access, audio/visual information displays, hearing aid induction loops, wide-aisle gates, tactile paving and additional help points;

- **Volunteering** – TfL is investigating how Travel Ambassadors or a similar programme can be sustained in the future to enhance customer service for events or during business as usual;

- **Freight and logistics** – TfL aims to build on the success of the Games using the partnerships established through the Freight Forum. Specific tools such as the Freight Journey Planner could also be maintained to support freight and other road users, and to help prioritise kerbside access during peak periods for buses and cyclists;

- **More cycling** – TfL will continue to improve infrastructure, including further expansion of Barclays Cycle Hire, the construction of additional Barclays Cycle Superhighways, the implementation of a junction review programme, and continuing support for cycle training.

- **Travel demand management and communication** – TfL intends to learn the lessons from the Get Ahead of the Games campaign, to see how communication and relatively modest changes in behaviour could help make the most of the available capacity on transport networks. It also wants to build on and maintain greater and more effective use of digital and social media channels (particularly Twitter) for the provision of real-time travel information and advice.[39]

Politicians and commentators have praised London's transport during the Games.[40] Hugh Sumner, Director of Transport for the ODA, put the success down to an integrated approach to transport delivery. He said: "By anyone's measure we delivered".[41]

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[39] ibid., pp13-15; the London Assembly Transport Committee is looking into the transport legacy of the Games
[40] see, e.g.: "London 2012: Olympics success hailed by politicians", *The Guardian*, 13 August 2012
[41] "A triumph of collaboration", *Transport Times*, October 2012