Capital Call Service Changes

Response to issues raised
October 2015
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1 Introduction

This report sets out the main issues raised during the consultation for the proposed closure of the Capital Call service and our response to these issues.

These issues and responses are grouped in relation to the consultation responses and themes and presented by chapter accordingly.

Background

There are currently two TfL subsidised taxi and minicab assisted transport services for Londoners who are unable to use public transport for their journey due to mobility impairment. These are Taxicard and Capital Call. A user must already be a registered member of Taxicard to be eligible for Capital Call; therefore Capital Call users can use either or both services. TfL’s Dial-a-Ride service is also available, is free to the user and all members of Taxicard are eligible. Other services are operated by the boroughs and NHS across London providing a range of statutory and non-statutory transport services.

Capital Call is only available in 10 boroughs. These are the London boroughs of Bexley, Ealing, Enfield, Haringey, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton and Southwark. Historically these boroughs had fewer taxis in available that operated on the Taxicard service. Therefore Taxicard could not achieve the minimum availability standards that the service required. For this reason we introduced Capital Call in 2003.

Our proposal

We are proposing that the Capital Call service, which supplements Taxicard in some boroughs, would cease to operate and merge into Taxicard.

Since 2003 Taxicard availability has improved dramatically. Primarily funded by TfL, and available across all London Boroughs, there is now no shortage of Taxicard vehicles. Taxicard successfully booked 95.4 per cent of trips in the 10 boroughs that Capital Call operates in, and an increasing number of Taxicard trips are being made in a minicab rather than taxi.

Capital Call now duplicates the Taxicard service in the 10 boroughs that it operates. It also has a relatively small membership (only 1,400 active members compared to over 10,000 on Taxicard and 5,500 on Dial a Ride). The funding saved by the cessation of Capital Call can be redirected to other transport services ensuring a fairer provision across London.

Following a request from the London Assembly, we are now considering the future of Capital Call in relation to a wider review of assisted transport services. This review, referred to as the Social Needs Transport Review, will look at how assisted transport services operate with the purpose of ensuring they are sustainable and equal across London.
2 TfL responses to the main issues raised

2.1 Financial implications

It is more expensive to use Taxicard for some journeys
Taxicard was introduced to allow people to take travel locally at a subsidised rate. This means users have the opportunity to carry out their personal business including shopping, and visiting their friends and family. When Taxicard was first introduced there was a shortage of black taxis in 10 boroughs, meaning some members found it difficult to book a journey. Capital Call was introduced to fill the gap.

Since Capital Call was introduced the service has evolved as members have been using it for much longer trips. This is not what the service was originally designed or intended for. As Capital Call is only available in 10 boroughs, it unfairly favours a small number of London residents over others.

Respondents highlighted that where Capital Call operated in outer London boroughs trip distances were likely to be longer, and therefore Taxicard was not suitable. Taxicard now allows ‘double swiping’ in the most of the boroughs that Capital Call operates in. This means that although the service is designed for short trips, people can make longer local journeys.

The consultation also brought the issue about journey lengths to our attention. We are now aware that there is a desire for us to investigate the trip length availability on the free to use Dial a Ride service, and look at equitable alternatives for longer trips. This will form part of a much wider review of all TfL funded assisted transport services.

Capital Call gives me control over a personal travel budget
Capital Call members are provided with a cash budget, while Taxicard members work to a trip budget. This means members of both services have control over a form of budget. Capital Call members in the 10 London boroughs also benefit from having both allowances so are able to use both services. The Social Needs Transport Review will look into how we can make sure TfL funded assisted transport services are simplified and easy for members to use.

Capital Call members could pay more, or receive a reduced budget to keep the service open
Some respondents offered to pay more, or receive a reduced budget in order to keep the service open. However these comments were in a minority and we cannot confirm this view is shared by all members.

We have suspended entry to the service for new members, and the SNT Review will look at a range of issues connected with TfL funded assisted transport services
including how effective they are. We need to ensure that across London there is fair and equal access to TfL funded assisted transport services. Currently those who live within the 10 boroughs Capital Call operates in, get both a Capital Call allowance and a Taxicard allowance. This means a small number of people have differing amounts of subsidy compared to others. We maintain that this not equitable. However we will not make a final decision until a thorough review of all TfL’s funded assisted transport services is complete.

2.2 Accessibility and travel

I find black cabs difficult to use
Some respondents expressed concerns that they found black taxis more difficult to use. Taxicard is increasingly being operated by mini-cabs as well as black taxis. Last year (2014-15) 18% of journeys booked in the 10 boroughs were by minicab. If Taxicard members have specific disabilities that make it difficult to use black cabs they can be considered for minicab only provision.

Changes to Capital Call would make it harder for me to travel
We want people in every borough to be able to travel easily, and experience no difference in levels of service. The consultation highlighted how complicated the issue of TfL funded assisted transport services is. The aim of the Social Needs Transport Review is to make it easier for people to travel.

Until the review is complete we will retain the Capital Call service. We have suspended entry for new members, but existing members will continue to get the same level of service. Ultimately we want to ensure that people can travel easily, and that TfL funded assisted transport services operate equally and efficiently across the whole of London.

2.3 Other TfL funded assisted transport services

I do not find Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride as reliable as Capital Call
All TfL funded assisted transport services should be safe, efficient and reliable. Historically in some boroughs Taxicard was unable to provide enough vehicles, this is why we introduced Capital Call. However over the last few years Taxicard availability in the 10 boroughs has improved and now exceeds the performance standards that initiated the original need for Capital Call. Many more minicabs and black taxis are available to provide the service. Last year Taxicard successfully booked over 90 per cent of trips in the 10 boroughs that Capital Call operates in. Equally Dial-a-ride consistently achieved bookings for 90 per cent of trips, and customer satisfaction survey shows that 90 per cent of customers were satisfied that their vehicle arrived on time.
The Social Needs Transport Review will look at how we can continue to evaluate and improve existing services.

**I do not believe that I am eligible for Taxicard**
You can only be a Capital Call member if you are already a member of Taxicard and live in one of the 10 boroughs. Therefore everyone who is a Capital Call member is also a Taxicard member. You are also eligible, and able to apply for automatic membership of Dial-a-Ride.

**Retain Capital Call but close Taxicard or Dial-a-Ride**
Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride are London wide schemes, with 70,000 and 48,000 members respectively. In the 10 boroughs that Capital Call operates in there are over 10,000 regular Taxicard members, and 5,500 active Dial-a-Ride members. By comparison Capital Call is only used by around 1,400 people once or more a year.

Before we make a decision we will carry out the full review of all available services. In the meantime we have suspended entry on to the Capital Call scheme for new members, but will continue to keep and operate Capital Call for existing members. We will revisit this following completion of the Social Needs Transport Review.

**I am concerned what effect closing Capital Call might have on other TfL funded assisted transport services**
Some respondents expressed concern that the other TfL funded assisted transport services would be overburdened by the addition of new members transferring from Capital Call. This is not the case. Both Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride are well established which cater for significantly more members than are currently active on the Capital Call service. We monitor the performance of all our funded assisted transport services to make sure they are performing well and regularly review the service to ensure they continue to achieve the necessary standards and are deployed in an equitable way and responsive to changing demand.

**Make improvements to other TfL funded assisted transport services**
Respondents had a number of suggestions on ways in which we could improve the provision of TfL funded assisted transport services. These ranged from driver training, the availability of the Dial-a-Ride service, and reducing the cost for long trips.

By investing in a thorough review of the TfL funded assisted transport services available across London, we will be able to create a better service, which is fit for the future. Improving customer satisfaction and ensuring a safe, efficient and reliable service are main aspirations of the Social Needs Transport Review.
3 Conclusion

Section 2 highlights the key questions raised by consultees, and our responses to them. We have responded to the majority of issues and questions but due to the diverse nature of some, it has not been possible to provide detailed answers to all of these in this document. Please contact us if you would like to discuss any query or issue.

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