



Central London Tube and Rail Capacity

01. Momentum insight & foresight

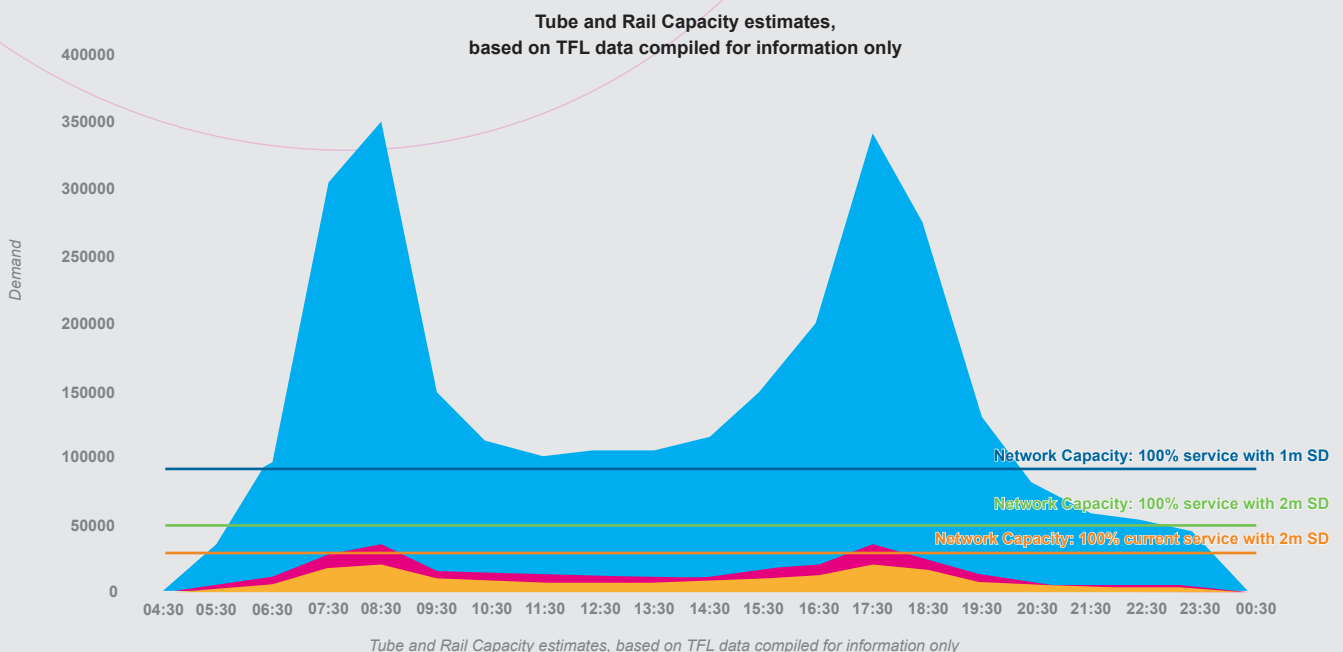
There is a lot of interest in how central London office teams can start planning a return to working from the office again. Keyworkers have continued to attend at their workplaces throughout and there has been an increase in construction workers travelling to site. Additional premises and businesses will open again in June such as dentists and non-essential shops.

Momentum has been reviewing the public transport capacity that is available with social distancing in place and it is clear that during the peak periods there is no spare safe capacity available on the TfL Underground and Overground rail services beyond what is already being used by keyworkers and others. Only the off-peak periods and weekends can be used safely.

This concern was underlined by Alex Williams the Director of City Planning for TfL at the recent Centre for London event on 4th June for Keeping the Distance:

Can London's transport network adapt and survive? "We're conscious we are in a car-led recovery and that's why we turned the congestion charge back on" said Williams. "There are a lot more bikes out there – but a lot more cars as well" [1]. Alex explained that 42 TfL workers have died after contracting Covid-19 and that "TfL is not a machine and relies on human resource to deliver services.... and unlikely to operate a 100% rail service with members of staff off sick and self-isolating"

The Momentum team is planning a soft return to the office from 22nd June but only for those who can use Active Travel. We think that this is safer for our team and for others and that rail capacity should be reserved for use by key workers. Here is a link to some of our thoughts on the future of city transport [2]



- Demand on Feb 26 (typical pre-Covid19 demand)
- Demand on Apr 15
- Demand on May 18



02. About the recent TfL report

A TfL report on the London Tube has been released, showing that even with a 100% service and two-metre social distancing, only 50,000 passengers could board every 15 minutes. That compares to 325,000 normally boarding every 15 minutes at the peak of rush hour prior to lockdown. In other words, it will only be able to transport tens of thousands of commuters rather than hundreds of thousands.

On the Tube for example, TfL can only carry 13-15 % of normal passenger numbers once services are back to full strength

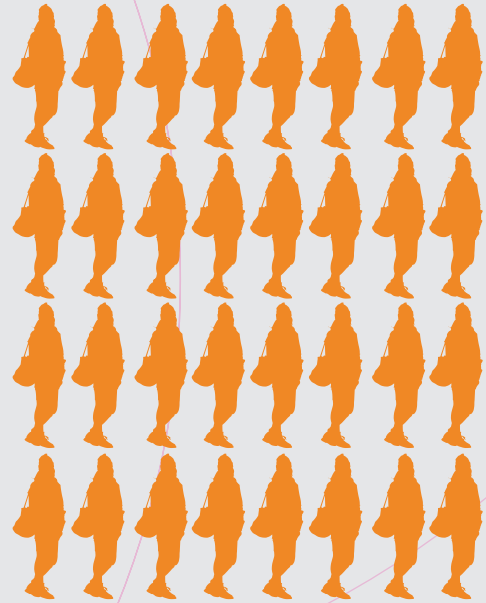
According to the Cities Today newspaper: “Even in a very early-stage lockdown release with less than 20 percent of pre-coronavirus morning peak public transport trips to central London, tens of thousands of trips would need to shift from public transport to active travel in order to maintain social distancing. This could rapidly become hundreds of thousands if demand increases to even half of pre-coronavirus levels, implying a massive uplift in active travel numbers and an urgent need for action.” active travel numbers and an urgent need for action.”

According to TfL, on the 18th of May, services had been increased to the following levels:

- around 85% on the bus network,
- at least 70% on the Tube and London Overground (in line with national rail services),
- 80% on the DLR and
- a full service on TfL Rail.

According to TfL, for the mid-May period, passengers' journeys were still 93% lower than this time last year. The graphs below help to explain the situation with other transport capacities:

Before lockdown



325,000 peak boarding

With 2m social distancing



Only 50,000 passengers can board every 15 minutes

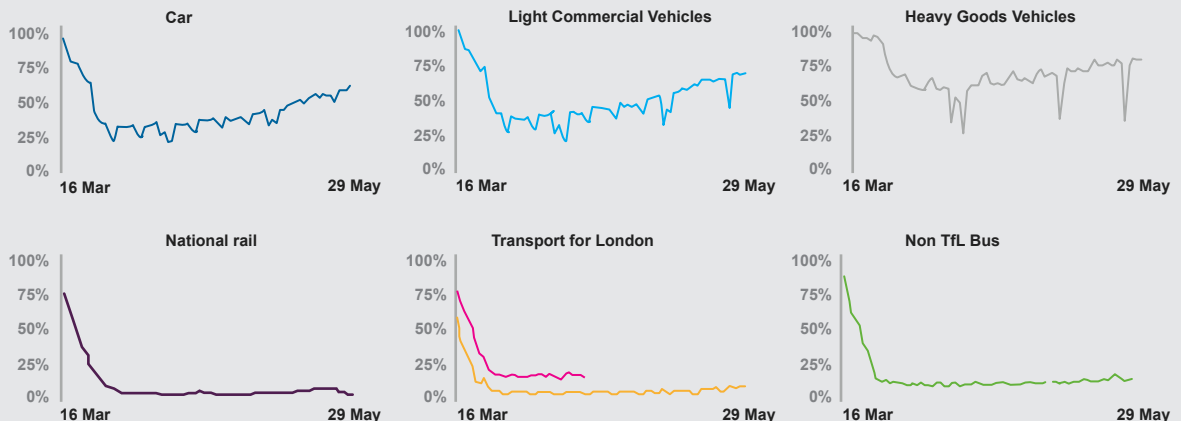
Social Distancing

Changes in transport use (Great Britain)

Transport data is indexed to the equivalent day in either January or February 2020 (Traffic and Buses) or 2019 (Rail). Shaded areas represent weekends.

Source: Department for Transport.

Further details on data sources can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/slides-and-datasetsto-accompany-coronavirus-press-conferences>





03. What is planned for the upcoming weeks

According to TfL, “to enable social distancing, our network should only carry around 13-15% of normal passenger numbers on the Tube and on buses, even when 100% of our services are running.” But there is no precise date on going back on 100% of the services, as both the Mayor and TfL say “as soon as possible”. Information is from updates from the 4th of June 2020

The main question is whether TfL is able to contain people and how could they do so. TfL has published a list of the closed stations and of the busiest stations and lines ^[3]

About 25% of the TfL workforce has been furloughed in order to reduce costs, as TfL has lost 90% of its overall income during the lockdown. The government has agreed to help TfL with £1.6bn but demanding that service delivery is back to 100% which remains work in progress

Finally, as 43 TfL staff died of the Covid-19 during the lockdown, some TfL staff refuse to go back to work as they say TfL is unable to provide them with personal protective equipment.

The LU union have also announced that they have been told there will be no night tube until March 31st, 2021. They have also accepted TfL’s plan to implement a new risk assessment scheme for BAME staff, to better understand the inequalities in exposure to Covid-19.

There is a lot of change for us all to adapt to for our travel and work and Momentum has been looking at some of the space planning changes as well as the rail capacity reductions for this. As part of sharing in the spirit that we are all still learning through this challenging period we have provided a link to some of our latest analysis on people movement and modelling ^[4]



Sources

^[1] <https://www.onlondon.co.uk/car-led-recovery-increasingly-apparent-transport-for-london-chief-planner-warns/>

^[2] <https://momentum-transport.com/the-future-of-travel-shock-or-shift/>

^[3] <https://tfl.gov.uk/status-updates/stations-lifts-and-escalators-works-and-closures>

^[4] <https://momentum-transport.com/crowd-and-pedestrian-modelling-to-safely-re-open-your-space/>