Case Study

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

 

 **Planes, Trains & Automobiles: examining the transport strategy for London 2012**

From 27th July – 11th August 2012, London will play host to the largest and most spectacular sporting event that the capital city has ever seen. During the Games, over 200 competing nations, 18,000 athletes and team officials, 26 sports and up to a total of 7.7 million spectators will grace the capital. The excitement does not stop there - the London 2012 Olympic Games are followed immediately by the London 2012 Paralympic Games - from 29th August 2012 to the 8th September, up to 150 competing nations, 4,000 athletes, 19 sports; and up to 1.5 million spectators will also grace our shores.

A significant part of the London 2012 host city bid revolved around the capacity of London to transport athletes, officials and spectators between Olympic venues effectively and quickly. A major question mark that lingered during the campaign was actually concerns over our ability to enhance our transport network appropriately so that London could meet the needs of the Paralympic and Olympic Games. LOCOG (the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games) met such concerns with a well-developed infrastructure improvement strategy that is designed to leave a lasting and positive impact on the City.

**Infrastructure Improvements**

There have been a number of specific improvements made to London’s transport in the run up to the Games:

1. **Stratford station:** A station already exists in Stratford, East London. However, following the successful London 2012 host city bid, the station has received a £125 million investment in order to enable it to handle the predicted massive Games-time demand for trave.

The £125 million investment encompasses a range of specific improvements. These include the provision of nine new lifts and eight new staircases, a lengthening of existing platforms, an addition of two new DLR platforms, two new London OverGround platforms, and a new westbound Central line platform. There is also a new station entrance and ticket hall, with a more accessible mezzanine-level that allows passengers to access westbound Central line and DLR services directly. The new station developments also offer direct access to the new Stratford City shopping centre, which will be used by spectators to get to the Olympic Park. This design has been created as a means of directing the flow of visitors through the shopping mall, potentially maximising sales within the shopping centre during Games-time. Subways will also be re-opened.

It is estimated that the number of passengers that currently use the station every morning (mostly to commute to work) will double by 2016 to 83,000 people. It is clear, therefore, that the legacy to the local community will be notable as a result of this Olympic investment.

Case Study

Transport Strategy for London 2012

 

Case Study

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

 

1. **West Ham station**: The station has received a number of temporary improvements that are designed to ease congestion during the Games. This includes a temporary walkway that will allow Olympic spectators to pass from the station to the Olympic Park with minimal disruption caused to commuters and local residents. A public walkway and cycle route called The Greenway will enable this transition between locations, but will be dismantled after the Games have been completed.
2. **Improvements to the Bus & Coach infrastructure:** A network of coaches will be laid on during the Games, and will service all Olympic routes to and between venues; these include an express services to the Olympic Park, and to venues at ExCeL, Greenwich Park, Weymouth and Portland, and shuttle services between Olympic venues and local park-and-ride sites.
3. **DLR (Docklands Light Railway):** DLR services will receive a permanent improvement to services, mainly in the form of new connections and an enhancement of existing trains. These improvements include: 55 new railcars, a new line extension between King George V and Woolwich Arsenal station, and a new line extension from Canning Town to Stratford International Station. The aforementioned 2 new DLR platforms at Stratford station also constitute major improvements to the network.
4. **Stratford International Station** Perhaps the most significant and well-known improvement to London Transport has been the development of a high-speed rail service called the Javelin®, which will run directly from St Pancras International station to Stratford International, and which will enable passengers to disembark only metres from the Olympic Park. The design is particularly attractive to international visitors who have travelled on the Eurostar from the Continent, as only a simply change of trains at St Pancras International is necessary to reach the Olympic Park.
5. **Walking & Cycling.** An investment of over £10 million has enabled the development of a network (known as the 2012 Games Walking and Cycling Routes) of 8 walking and cycling routes that link different parts of London to the Olympic Park and other Olympic venues. It is hoped that development of these routes might contribute effectively to health-related Olympic legacy goals.

**Olympic Family Transport**

Specific arrangements have been made to allow the smooth and timely transportation of the ‘Olympic family’ (5,000 Olympic Family members, made up of Olympic athletes, officials, media representatives, VIPs, and sponsors) to and from Olympic venues. Such a provision is crucial to the effective running of the Games, as the potential catastrophe of athletes and judges failing to reach venues on time (e.g. for specific events) cannot be ignored. Half of all athletes will live, train and compete in the Olympic Park. Whilst 80% of all athletes will be

Case Study

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

 

staying within 20 minutes of their venues (including 50% who will stay directly at the Olympic Park), the need to ensure smooth transition and punctuality is crucial.

Case Study

Transport Strategy for London

 

Case Study

Transport Strategy for London 2012

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

 

During the Games, BP, the official London 2012 Carbon Offset Partner – will provide low carbon bio fuels and engine oils for the vehicles transporting Olympic family members. This will help meet sustainability and environmental legacy goals associated with London’s Games strategy.

The ORN (Olympic Route Network) and PRN (Paralympic Route Network) will provide special Olympic routes (such as traffic lanes) that are designed solely and exclusively for the use of the Olympic Family. Whilst this might enable a far speedier transportation of key Olympics stakeholders to and from Olympic venues, it has nevertheless caused some controversy amongst London residents. The use of an ORN and PRN is not a new concept, with similar networks being enabled in Sydney (2000), Athens (2004), Beijing (2008) and Vancouver (2010).

**Spectators**

The ODA have also made significant investments in assisting the smooth transport of spectators to the Games. All spectator tickets to the Games include an all-zones London TravelCard. That means that approximately 7.7 million TravelCards will have been issued alongside spectator tickets.

**Local Businesses**

Local businesses have been encouraged to attend special Games workshops, and to take advantage of specially designed 2012 Games travel advice, in an attempt to minimise the disruption that the Games will cause to regular commuters. Many businesses are considering asking employees to work from home during the Games in an attempt to minimise disruption, in addition to utilising the www.tfl.gov.uk/2012 website, which will aim to provide up-to-date information about the potential effects of the Games (on a location-by-location basis) on commuting, congestion and general services.

**Media**

5,000 media representatives from across the globe will call Bloomsbury, central London, their temporary home during the duration of the Games. Media representatives can travel to and from Olympic venues using from the Media Transport Hub in Russell Square using specially provided shuttle buses. The ODA are, however, hoping that journalists and other media representatives will also consider taking advantage of London’s existing transport infrastructure, so as not to put too much pressure on the ORN or PRN. In particular, use of the Javelin[[1]](#footnote-1) is encouraged, due to the highly attractive 7 minute transport time that would take media reps from St Pancras International (close to their Russell Square base) to the Olympic Park in a far quicker time than any road transport would allow.

Case Study

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

 

Case Study

Transport Strategy for London 2012

 

**Use of Alternative Venues**

The use of alternative venues – to discourage non-ticket holders from travelling to Olympic zones – is also designed to ease congestion. One popular example is likely to the be the free-to-air live site at London’s Hyde Park which will host giant screens that capture and transmit Olympic and Paralympic action to viewers.

**Disability Transport**

The ODA and LOCOG are also confident that the significant investments that they have made to the transport infrastructure in London will greatly enhance disabled access. Disability Now previously voiced their concerns that disabled transport might not be designed as effectively as it needed to be, but Olympic organisers remained confident that they would deliver a high quality disabled provision. This will include a provision of 550 blue badge parking spaces at the Olympic Park, the creation of a map of accessible transport highlighting disabled access across the transport network. ODA research found that 7% of visitors to the Games will experience difficulty using escalators and stairs, and that 1% will not be able to use them at all. Clearly, the need to provide accessible alternatives to this demographic group is paramount in order to ensure the smooth running of the transportation of spectators to the Games on Games-days.

**Further Information**

* **Olympic Delivery Authority Transport Plan for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Strategic Environment Assessment Environment Report February 2011:** http://www.london2012.com/documents/oda-transport/sea-environmental-report.pdf
* **London 2012 Accessible Transport Strategy for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games; May 2008:** http://www.london2012.com/documents/oda-transport/accessible-transport-strategy-accessible-pdf.pdf
* **London 2012 Active Travel Programme**: http://www.london2012.com/making-it-happen/sustainability/active-travel-programme/

**Discussion**

1. The Games stand to cause significant disruption to London-based businesses, as it may prevent workers from commuting to and from their place of work. What strategies can organisational managers consider in terms of how such disruptions might be minimised?
2. The use of an ORN and PRN has caused considerable controversy amongst some parts of the community. Who exactly are protesting their use, and why?
3. Has the ODA & LOCOG done enough to enable disability travel? Please justify your answer with facts and figures.

Case Study

Transport Strategy for London 2012

 

 This resource was produced as part of the [2012 Learning Legacies Project](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/learninglegacies/home) managed by the

Case Study

Transport Strategy for London 2012

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

 

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1. The Javelin is a new high-speed train, built for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, that runs from King's Cross station to Stratford International Station. The journey time is a mere seven minutes. The Javelin will carry up to 25,000 passengers per hour and is a cornerstone of LOCOG’s Olympic transport strategy. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)