

# Covid-19 decimates transport



## The order that we all stay at home has resulted in a dramatic fall in the use of buses and trains.

In London there has been an 80 percent fall in bus use and a 94 per cent fall in use of the underground – the latter despite worries about crowds on the tube at certain times. Underground lines are mostly running with a six or ten minute service interval.

Most bus routes are running to Saturday or Sunday times but it's a bit spooky to see buses going about their usual business with only one or two passengers on board. There is concern for the safety of bus drivers. At the time of writing 20 bus workers have died from the virus. Safety improvements to protect drivers include a clear film covering holes in their protective screen and

discouraging the use of seats near the driver. From 20th April front doors were shut off requiring passengers to board by the middle door.

This reduction in passengers is having a huge effect on TfL's finances. Even before the virus hit passenger numbers were beginning to decline slightly but there is now a step-change beyond that. Simon Kilonback, TfL's Chief Finance Officer, said: 'Our best forecast, based on government scenarios, is that the financial impact of the coronavirus could be up to £500m. [The loss is now set to be greater because the disruption to society looks set to continue for months.] We manage our finances prudently and have reduced our deficit hugely in recent years. This means that we can manage the impacts on our passenger numbers and

finances that are currently envisaged. But, given the nature of the situation, we will be looking to the Government to provide appropriate financial support.'

One piece of good news is the dramatic fall in air pollution with traffic reverting to levels last seen in the fifties. On Euston

Road pollution dropped by 60 per cent. Simon Birkett, founder of Clean Air in London, said: 'This has been an experiment, forced upon us in tragic circumstances, which shows how much traffic pollution harms a city.'

Looking beyond the present crisis it seems likely that there will be major changes in the way in which people work. Many individual workers and their employers are realising that much work can be done at home with internet connection. This seems likely to have an impact on the need for office accommodation and on passenger numbers on public transport. A recasting and possible reduction of services seems likely, perhaps calling into question the need for new infrastructure like HS2 and Crossrail 2.

## Engine idling

London boroughs are getting tough on drivers who leave their engines running whilst stationary. This is funded from the Mayor's £500,000 London Idling Action project. The project is being led by the City of London and Camden and all but one of the boroughs are taking part.

The fund will support the employment of enforcement officers. They will have to ask drivers to turn their engines off and can then issue a fine if they refuse.

Future Transport London is the successor to the London group of the Campaign for Better Transport. Our newsletter is sent out to our members and other contacts. The group exists to campaign for sustainable transport solutions in London. If you have not already done so we would be pleased if you would also join our group and take part in our activities. We hold regular meetings in central London.

To contact the group write to Chris Barker, 46 Redston Road, N8 7HJ. email: [chrisbarker46@gmail.com](mailto:chrisbarker46@gmail.com) phone: 020 8347 7684.

The newsletter is edited by Chris Barker. Contributions are welcomed. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of Future Transport London.

Previous issues of the newsletter and be found at <http://bettertransport-london.org.uk>

## REVERSING AT THE ENDS OF TUBE LINES

**Many London Underground lines have two or three platforms at their ends where trains reverse. In most cases, the arriving driver or operator has time to walk from one end of the train to the other, ready for departure.**

The period of time ('layover') scheduled in one of the terminus platforms is key to ironing out service delays and (where the terminus is busy) giving passengers sufficient alighting/boarding time.

Overrun tunnels south of Brixton enable southbound trains to approach the platform at full speed during most of the operational day and for the last trains at night to be stabled there to form the first trains next morning, with significant time-table benefits. The Victoria Line service is sometimes so intensive that there is insufficient layover at Brixton for the operator to change ends. So 'stepping back' is used, whereby the arriving operator alights from the cab at the south end of the train and another operator (from an earlier train) simultaneously boards the north end cab, for swifter departure northbound.

There are a few termini where trains are scheduled to reverse around a tight loop (such as at Kennington where most Charing Cross branch trains now terminate) or via sidings beyond the platform, for example at Heathrow Terminal 5, Bank DLR, Waterloo on the Waterloo & City line and, proposed, at Lewisham on the Bakerloo line extension. All of these examples represent considerable waste, as the reversing process requires extra energy, extra train maintenance and extra track maintenance for every train every day.

Extra infrastructure may also be required. Without platform layover, these locations restrict the time available for passengers to alight/board, which can be a problem at busy termini. While it removes the need for the driver/operator to change ends, a simple loop arrangement provides nowhere to leave a defective train temporarily, so that other trains can get past.

There was one tight loop at the old Wood Lane station (Central Line) and another at the old Charing Cross station (Northern Line) but these were abandoned (wastefully again) when the respective lines were extended. Kennington loop, on the other hand, will become more of an intermediate reversing facility when the line is extended to Battersea Power Station.

The big loop built to serve Heathrow Terminal 4 was designed also to serve the future Terminal 5 but the latter was eventually constructed further west than originally planned, so the Piccadilly Line had to be adapted in a different way and T4 and T5 are served separately.

A simple loop terminus means that trains must depart in the same order as they arrive, which is not always desirable.

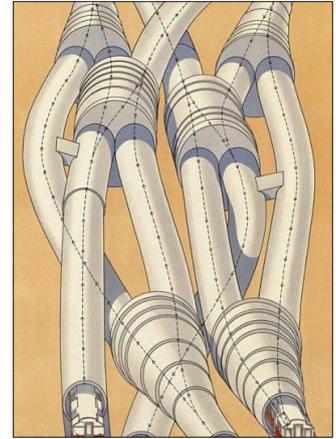
Furthermore, layover is restricted to being less than the service frequency, because a given train has to be out of the way before the next train arrives. Reliability and layover requirements can thus limit the service frequency. None of this is so acute when trains reverse in two (or more) platforms: a given train does not then have to be out of the way until the next train but one (or more) arrives.

Extending the Charing Cross branch of the Northern Line from its current Kennington loop terminus to Battersea Power Station (where reversing will take place in two platforms) should improve the reliability of that branch. However, the overrun tunnels beyond the terminus will be too short to stable a train.

When the Bakerloo Line is initially extended to Lewisham, it is

understood that all trains will run empty beyond the station to reverse via sidings, ie, no layover in either platform. Will this give enough alighting/boarding time at such a busy terminus and interchange?

Neil Roth



## Crash landing for the third runway

As I write this, the fate of Heathrow's third runway hangs in the balance. It had looked like a done deal. In 2018 MPs backed it by a majority of over 300. Theresa May and her Transport Secretary Chris Grayling were enthusiasts for it. But in late February the Court of Appeal delivered what may be a knock-out blow. It ruled that the Airports National Policy Statement, the document MPs voted on when they backed the third runway, was illegal because it didn't take account of the climate implications of the Paris Agreement.

The court invited the Government to insert a clause to rectify its mistake. Most Governments would do that and a third runway would be back on course. But this Prime Minister is famously opposed to the runway. The Government has indicated that, in time, it will revise the Policy Statement but the thinking is that Boris Johnson sees it as an opportunity to ditch the third runway.

The Government has declined to appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court. Heathrow will to do but it is thought they will struggle to win without the backing of the Government. If Heathrow does get a result, the third runway will be back on course. A Public Inquiry will take place next year. The final decision, though, would rest with the Government as the Secretary of State for Transport needs to approve or reject the Public Inquiry's recommendations.

A new runway would mean over 700 extra planes using Heathrow each day. But already noise from the airport is a big problem. According to the European Commission around 700,000 people are impacted by noise from Heathrow – that is, 28% of all people affected by aircraft noise across Europe.

Whether or not Heathrow finally gets permission for a new runway, it is embarking on the biggest shake-up of its flight paths since it opened over 50 years ago. The changes are driven by a move from ground-based navigation to a satellite system to guide aircraft in and out of the airport. It will mean narrower, more direct and more concentrated flight paths which allow the airlines to make time and fuel savings as well as improve the resilience of the airport. Such narrow, concentrated flight paths, though, would have a devastating impact on local people if the same communities were overflowed all day long. Heathrow has therefore said that it will introduce multiple flight paths which it will rotate to give each community respite - a predictable break from the noise.

Heathrow is expecting to consult on its new flight paths in 2022 whether or not a third runway goes ahead. The rotating flight paths should improve the noise climate for a wide number of communities. At present only people living in West London get a guaranteed break from the noise. Consultation responses, focus groups and surveys all have consistently showed that is what other people want. With or without a third runway, these new flight paths could bring much-desired relief from the noise for many communities.

John Stewart

Chair HACAN (Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise)

## Freight transport in London is a dynamic, multifaceted industry

London has become a destination for freight much more than it is a source: Londoners and London businesses consume great quantities of stuff (particularly food, drink, clothing and printed matter and, of course, building materials); London outputs returns of clothing (25% of on-line purchases), packaging and, of course, waste matter.

The quantity of freight being transported to London homes and businesses is growing along with the population. Besides this demographic driven growth, shopping habits are changing, from shopping in person to ordering goods on-line for delivery to one's residence or workplace, thereby changing delivery patterns towards larger numbers of smaller size deliveries to more destinations.

London's freight transport and people transport necessarily contend for the same roads and rail tracks but not necessarily at the same time. Since freight transport is generally less time critical it is evidently desirable for it to be scheduled, wherever possible, off-peak and during the night.

Rail is well-suited to movement of large container size loads, but few destinations are directly accessible by rail and so most freight journeys are generally at least completed by road.

With the exception of the Underground London does not control usage of its rail lines. These are a scarce resource and, unfortunately, are to an extent used for transporting freight through London. It is highly desirable that the Mayor should succeed in persuading the Department for Transport to route these cargoes around London.

London's roads transport a great variety of loads, extending from, at one extreme, large loads, carried over long distances to widely separated destinations (eg HGVs carrying construction materials or articulated trucks delivering stock to supermarkets) while at the other extreme, small



loads, moved over short distances to closely spaced destinations (for example a postman delivering on foot or pizza deliveries by bike to the houses in a residential street).

Loads are matched to vehicles with a broad range of capacities: HGVs: >3.5 tonnes; LGVs or vans: <3.5 tonnes; bikes with capacity about one cubic metre; and, at the end of the scale, couriers equipped with trolleys, paniers, backpacks, or satchels.

Safety, pollution, and congestion are ongoing issues and TfL is working with the road freight industry to establish good practices, including

- improvement in HGV driving habits so as to reduce injury and mortality rates,
  - development of ULEZ encouraging use of electric delivery vehicles so as to reduce pollution and carbon dioxide emission
  - controlling freight vehicle behaviour in Inner London to prevent congestion (large freight vehicles travelling or manoeuvring in London's busy streets cause traffic congestion, as do LGVs (vans) waiting or parked at the roadside while delivering)
  - discouraging non-essential deliveries to workplaces in Central London and encouraging development of consolidation methods so as to minimise delivery journeys generally.
- Freight consolidation aims to match loads to destinations so as to minimise journeys. Two stages of consolidation are distinguishable.

The first stage is characterised by delivery of large loads, from suppliers by HGVs, to consolidation and distribution centres in Outer London where they are broken down and re-assembled into medium loads for onward

transport by LGVs towards their destinations across London. (All the major supermarket chains have these first stage centres, although they don't fit the model perfectly because they tend to use HGVs for onward transport from their first stage centres to at least their larger supermarkets.)

The second stage uses more, relatively local, centres, where these medium loads are further broken down and reassembled into small loads for last-mile delivery by bike or courier. (In the supermarket example, the local supermarkets are the local consolidation and distribution centres, and the consolidation and last-mile distribution and delivery are undertaken by us, the customers, as we, either in person or indirectly via on-line order, transfer chosen goods from the shelves to our trolleys and then to our cars or to the delivery service.)

Construction (as distinct from building maintenance), being project-oriented, is a special case. In the earlier stages of a project a stream of HGVs flows towards the site, replaced in the fitting-out stage by a stream of LGVs. TfL report that several construction consolidation and distribution centres are currently operating in London where multiple bulk material deliveries from suppliers are stored, packed into consolidated loads as required and then transported to construction sites. The Mayor's Transport strategy calls for more of these so that all of London is within 30 minutes of one.

London's continuing vitality depends on having efficient and economical transport of freight while minimally interfering with the movements of people.

Peter Osmon

## Mayfair: A Case Study

**A project initiated by the New West End Company and the City of Westminster has drastically reduced the number of delivery and waste collection vehicles in Mayfair.**

There were as many as fifty different waste and recycling companies operating in the borough, in many circumstances duplicating one another's vehicle trips. Under the project there are now four preferred suppliers and an increasing number of businesses have signed up to use one of two recycling firms and two delivery firms.

The two recycling firms are Veolia, which already holds the contract for domestic waste collection, and First Mile, a commercial recycling company which uses electric vans and cargo bikes, resulting in a 17.4 per cent reduction in the number of waste and recycling vehicles in two representative streets.

The two delivery firms are Anglo and Gnewt Cargo, both of which use all electric vehicles. Gnewt's consolidation centre is in Bow in East London. Whilst in general total miles travelled by vehicles in London is declining, there has been a 54 per cent increase in the number for delivery vans in the last 25 years. The project has resulted in an 80 per cent reduction in parcel delivery kerbside stops.

Amongst the reasons cited for the huge rise in the number of delivery vehicles is Amazon Prime's promise of one day delivery and the increasing desire for workers to have their purchases delivered to their work places.

Chris Barker

### Cars in the Royal Parks

London Living Streets has been campaigning vigorously for the reduction in traffic in the Royal Parks. In its response to Phase 2 of the Royal Parks Movement Strategy Engagement they stress their concern for the safety of people who walk in the parks and whose journeys, to or from the park, include walking.

Fundamental to these wholesale improvements is the urgent need for the removal of through (motor) traffic using the Parks as a short cut and the elimination of all but the most essential service vehicles whose entry and exit should be strictly controlled.

London Living Streets observes that there does not appear to be the wholesale commitment to the elimination of through traffic that is needed and was envisaged. Words and phrases have now appeared like: overcoming challenges; exploring opportunities; decreasing motor traffic; discouraging through movement. Instead they say that it is quite clear from the results of the initial consultation that the vast majority of the respondents support a rapid reduction in the number of motor vehicles in the Royal Parks.

Amongst their specific proposals is the banning of through traffic, the imposition of 20 mph, or lower, speed limits, the extension of car free days, and the adjustment of signalised crossings with the dominant phase being one that allows pedestrians to cross.

The countryside charity (CPRE) has also responded making much the same points. They also accuse the strategy of being unnecessarily negative about cycling. They say cycling through, to and from, or in the parks should be supported and championed.

### March of 20 mph

TfL have long been reluctant to impose 20 mph limits on its roads in London which has led to the anomalous situation, for example in Islington where all borough roads have a 20 mph limit but the main road through the borough has not. Things

began to change when TfL roads in the City of London adopted the new limit but now the decision has been made that all their roads within the Congestion Charge zone will be 20 mph. It is hopefully only a matter of time before the rest of the TfL network in London follows suit.

The City now plans to go one further and apply a 15 mph limit on its own roads.

### Radical cycling

In Berlin space on a number of key roads is being reallocated from cars to people on foot or to cyclists to take account of the drop in traffic during the coronavirus epidemic and to enable people to remain healthy and active while socially distancing. Sustrans and the London Cycling Campaign are urging local authorities to do the same, particularly on routes providing access for NHS staff to get to work.

Both organisations are also campaigning for barriers to remove traffic from as many residential streets as possible,

to reduce city roads speed limits to 20 mph and to make pedestrian lights work automatically to remove the need to push buttons.

Looking ahead to the future and remembering that the climate crisis continues despite being overlaid in people's consciousness by the corona crisis, LCC advocates that space allocated to active and sustainable travel modes be retained so that people may continue to travel in this way rather than revert to using cars.

### New ferry to cross the Thames

Following the shelving of plans for a pedestrian and cyclists bridge across the Thames between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf, TfL have now come up with a plan for a ferry. The plans will go to consultation later this year, with the aim of starting construction in 2021. TfL has said that the ferries will be 'as environmentally friendly as practicable', will encourage walking and cycling and have space for adapted cycles and cargo bikes. No news

yet on the form of propulsion. Maybe battery power might be considered.

### Who will be the new Mayor?

London mayoral election has been postponed for a year. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that Sadiq Khan has announced that he would introduce a green new deal for London and make the city carbon-neutral by 2030 if re-elected and create the green jobs and industry that can sustain our communities in the future. This contrasts with a Tory pledge to achieve net zero by 2050 and the Lib Dems by 2045. A new runway at Heathrow would be catastrophic, he said, adding 'I think that a new runway at Heathrow won't happen for the foreseeable future because of the legal challenges going ahead'.

### Hot air from the tube

A new energy centre on the site of the abandoned City Road Underground station, closed in 1922, is using a large fan to suck air via a six-storey shaft from the northern line. This new project neatly deals with two ongoing problems: how to cool the tube and how to find sustainable ways to heat homes.

The problem of dissipating heat on the tube has been building up ever since the tunnels were first dug. When they were built the clay temperature was around 14°C; this has now risen to 19–26°C and air temperatures in the tunnels now reach as high as 30°C. Unlike in the open most of the heat generated by tube trains and staff and passengers has nowhere to go. Only 10 per cent is removed by ventilation and the rest stays in the tunnels and stations or is absorbed by the tunnel lining.

The heat at City Road is captured by the Bunhill 2 Energy Centre and helps to warm over 1,000 nearby buildings. The centre is an offshoot of the Bunhill Energy Centre which was set up with Islington Borough Council to install a gas powered combined heat and power plant in 2012 to serve over 1,300 homes, two leisure centres and four office blocks.

