

TfL - Facing both ways on congestion

The GLA Transport Committee has previously examined overcrowding on London's trains and the future of London's buses. It's now looking at congestion on London's roads.

Transport for London, the Mayor's agency, was invited to give evidence to the Committee and retreated from its own forecast, made only last year in the Mayor's Transport Strategy, that congestion on the roads would grow 14% by 2031 (see page 160).

That suits Boris Johnston, who backs cycle schemes and public transport investment but has no wish to inhibit motorists (on whose votes he depends). On the contrary, the London Plan, soon to be published, will probably abandon traffic reduction targets and policies, scrap the road user hierarchy which prioritises pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users over the needs of motorists and relax maximum parking standards and the environmental standards for new roads.

All this leads TfL into making contentious claims. For instance, in its evidence it claimed that congestion would be less than previously forecast, for a number of reasons including that:

- ◆ Measures to smooth traffic flow would increase the capacity of the road network (but in our view traffic volumes and congestion could become worse as a result)

- ◆ New developments would encourage a shift to walking, cycling and public transport travel (but massive amounts of car parking, for example 10,000 spaces at Stratford City and 20,000 at Brent Cross, must also mean more traffic)

◆ In East London, where traffic growth would be particularly marked, new road capacity and river crossings would cut congestion (but the evidence is that new roads generate traffic and as the Inspector in the Thames Gateway Bridge Public Inquiry concluded, the scheme was 'likely to cause increased congestion.')

TfL also puts too much faith in the fact that since 2000 there has been a 7% swing towards walking, cycling and public transport. If the population is growing it's perfectly possible to have modal shift and traffic

growth at the same time and that is exactly what's happening. The London population is forecast to grow by more than a million by 2031.

Campaign for Better Transport felt that TfL's evidence was so imbalanced that we asked the Committee for an opportunity to give evidence ourselves. In reply we were asked, not to speak to the Committee as TfL had done, but to submit evidence in writing. You can read our evidence by following this link. <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/system/files/Congestion-GLA-Transport-Committee.pdf>

Richard Bourn

Our Newsletter is sent out to our London members and other contacts. The group exists to campaign for sustainable transport solutions in London and to support the work of the Campaign nationally. If you have not already done so we would be pleased if you would also join our group and take part in our London based activities.

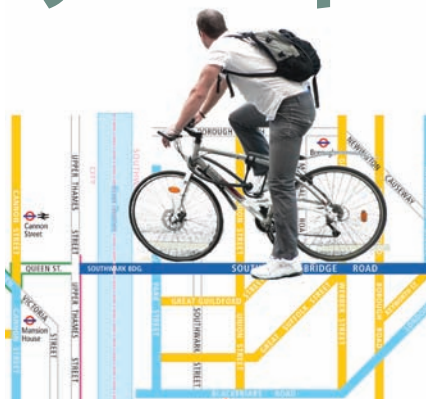
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Regular meetings of the group are held in central London. The Newsletter is edited by Chris Barker. Contributors are welcomed.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Campaign for Better Transport.

design: Eve Barker

Cycle Superhighways



One of the centerpieces of Boris's cycling programme, in addition to the Central London hire scheme and the Cycle Hubs for outer London town centres, is the Cycling Superhighways initiative.

Superhighways are continuous routes extending around 8-10 miles from the centre in all directions and providing easily recognisable and safer paths for cyclists into and out of central London. Coloured in blue, the planned 12 routes will be re-surfaced where required, clearly marked with journey times and connections, with new signals at junctions envisaged. All are planned to be complete by 2015, with routes opening in stages in 2011 and 2013.

Work started last October on the next two routes complementing the original two highways which opened in July 2010. These are

Routes 2 (Bow to Aldgate) – only part of a longer route beginning in Ilford - and 8 (Wandsworth to Westminster). Apart from installing the 1.5 m wide blue-painted cycle lanes, and the modification of 30 junctions to make them safer for cyclists, there will be major schemes to improve cycle safety at Bow Roundabout, and to provide a diversionary route around the busy junction of Battersea Park Rd and Queenstown Rd on route no 8.

The first part of CSH 8, linking Chelsea and Lambeth bridges following the north bank of the Thames via Grosvenor Road and Millbank has now opened. Along much of Millbank there is a two-metre wide mandatory cycle lane which is wide enough for a faster cyclist to overtake a slower one. First indications are that motorists and motorcyclists are keeping out of the new cycle lane. By last September about 90 businesses had registered for the CSH workplace scheme which offers free cycle stands, training and maintenance sessions to businesses located on a CSH.

A survey carried out by Transport for London in October 2010 compared the number of cyclists using the first two CSH routes with the number making use of the same roads in October 2009. This showed that numbers rose by an average of 70%. TfL claim that 'people do believe the routes...make them safer, and are allowing them to take direct and continuous routes into central London'. This increase in cycle usage was welcomed by the London Cycling Campaign. (continued back page)



VERDICT ON BORIS'S TRANSPORT RECORD

Not so good!

It's not that easy to check Boris's performance against his election promises as his election manifesto has all but disappeared from the internet.

Fortunately the Guardian is one place where it can still be found. The Guardian's London blogger Dave Hill has put it to good use, comparing the Manifesto with Boris's achievements after three years in office. The Mayor does not score well.

Hill concludes that Boris's efforts to "put the commuter first" have had limited success. "On road congestion progress has been slow". Neither the policies for tackling congestion nor those for smoothing traffic flow have yet "been shown to have had any very significant beneficial effect" and his road management policies may even "have made the overall situation worse". The abolition of the Western Extension of the Congestion Charge Zone certainly cannot have helped to relieve congestion and has incurred an annual revenue cost of £55 million to boot. On addressing crime on public transport Boris's "assertions should be treated with caution" and delivery of his policies to tackle transport problems with a fresh perspective has been patchy.

It's a mixed record on Boris's big pledges on cycling and public transport, according to Dave Hill. The cycle

hire scheme was supposed to get people out of their cars but has mostly got them out of public transport and has been expensive when it was to have had "no cost to the taxpayer". The cycle superhighways are said to have been more effective in changing travel habits but the Mayor's overall ambition of increasing cycling's share of journeys to "only five per cent by 2026" is unchallenging.

Boris is credited with TfL's buy-out of Tubelines and with preserving Crossrail, the Tube upgrades and bus service capacity. Against this, it is pointed out that he inherited a gushing funding stream, that his concentration on major projects has meant cutting back on almost everything else and that his above inflation public transport fare increases have included a 12.7% rise on bus users, hitting many poorer Londoners hardest. In breach of his manifesto commitment to maintain "a manned ticket office at every Tube station" he has cut 800 London Underground staff many from ticket offices.

A number of other Boris manifesto commitments have not been met. These include re-instating the 'tidal flow' in Blackwall Tunnel which was considered a liability, an orbital bus route which was found to be prohibitively expensive and allowing motorbikes to use bus lanes which was dangerous. Boris has removed most of the bendy buses from London's streets as he said he would but it remains to be seen how the new Routemaster is received when it goes into service later this year.

The full text of Dave Hill's blog, with links to the Boris Johnson manifesto, can be found at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/davehill-blog/2011/may/01/boris-johnson-three-years-of-transport-policy>

Railfreight in London

Due to the competitive nature of 19th century railways, and bespoke manual packing, invoicing and handling of goods traffic, London had at one time a multiplicity of freight terminals, often surrounded by warehouses specialising in the re-consignment and distribution of specific products – tea, coffee, sponges, oils and so forth.

For instance, in the east of the City alone there were East Smithfield (Great Eastern), Mint Street (Great Northern and Midland), Haydon Square (London and North Western) and Commercial Road (London Tilbury and Southend). Some traffic even moved over the underground. The Great Northern had a goods station at Farringdon and the Metropolitan, prior to absorption by London Transport, built a modern three story traffic accounting office for its extensive freight traffic at Blandford House, Marylebone. Today goods stations or sidings are conspicuous by their absence, and the requirements for concrete, for example, used in the re-building of the Isle of Dogs, was met by a depot at Limehouse, generating heavy road traffic.

Whilst railroads in the United States have suffered as much from underpriced road competition as here, the free market has ensured that at least a modicum of local lines and facilities have limped along. There was never a Stalinist Beeching or a National Freight Train plan to systematically get rid of local services, though sometimes whole railroads, which ran parallel to other routes, such as the Erie or the

Milwaukee, disappeared.

When such big lines were bankrupted, smaller lines were established from the wreckage, sometimes with local municipal help, to ensure that factories and warehouses continued to have access to rail. Such short lines have been remarkably successful in promoting rail in recent years, and provide a level of feeder services for customers not provided by the long haul carriers. For a long time innovators in areas such as budget accounting and flexible staffing, these lines are now finding out how to compete head on with road haulage for short distance traffic. Trains Vol. 7 No. 9 reports that the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway is to go over to one man operation of pick up freight trains, with the driver using a \$60,000 radio belt-pack to control the locomotive, when he is placing or picking up cars.

At the beginning of July the Russian Railways hosted an important joint conference with the International Union of Railways (UIC) in St Petersburg on Global Rail Freight Traffic. Emerging from this has been a call to look again at the local freight train (Railway Gazette International Vol. 166 No 9 - editorial) because current rail market share is only 10-20%.

Given these developments, it is doubly unfortunate that at this time the Mayor of London has dispensed with Transport for London's Freight Planning Section. Whilst the customer is king, an overriding authority is needed in a fragmented system, to knock heads together, take the long view and impel action.

Robin Whittaker



Pavement Parking It is illegal to park on the pavement in London but this is not so in other parts of the country. Following calls from Living Streets and its supporters, Transport Minister Norman Baker has written to councils prompting them to use their powers to prevent parking on the pavement. The Minister has also announced that local councils will for the first time be able to use signs to indicate a local pavement parking ban, without having to gain authorisation from Government.

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE...

TfL's proposals for Blackfriars Bridge

Living Streets responded recently to TfL's proposals for Blackfriars Bridge northern junction.

This area will need to accommodate more people when the northern Blackfriars station entrance opens; a great opportunity to: -

- ◆ Encourage walking and cycling -
- ◆ Improve the public realm in a motor-dominated part of central London

Disappointingly, early user group consultation was not sought. Nor is there any sense of the authorities having a progressive vision for Blackfriars streetscape; one that would have helped address climate change, road danger, air pollution, public health concerns and health inequalities, and improve people's quality of life.

Whilst fully supporting the need to accommodate pedestrians, Living Streets cannot support this

being done at the expense of cyclists' safety and amenity, as proposed at Blackfriars station for cyclists travelling south from Queen Victoria Street. We have suggested reconfiguring the footway here, retaining the necessary footway area but removing a potential pinchpoint.

TfL intends to remove the temporary pedestrian crossing linking Watergate and Queen Victoria Street, a strong East-West pedestrian desire line. Retaining this crossing would, it's suggested, cause the junction to go 'over-capacity' - in terms of (motor) traffic. We objected to TfL's proposal that mobility-impaired people detour, using three surface-level signalised crossings. No equality impact assessment has been offered in support of this proposal.

We have asked TfL to reconsider reverting to a 30mph speed limit for the locality, given the established (and increasingly strong)

case for a 20mph limit.

Overall, we think that TfL's approach at Blackfriars, of 'trying to find a balanced solution for all modes' - a familiar TfL refrain - will worsen conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. Modelling pedestrian flows seems secondary to considerations of 'smoothing traffic flow' - and 'traffic', in TfL's thinking, doesn't seem to include non-motorised traffic. Perhaps it's time for Network Assurance to be properly applied to the needs and wishes of pedestrians and cyclists in all TfL traffic schemes?

Susie Morrow (Member, London Action Group, Living Streets)

Crossing the Thames

Work on a greener way of crossing the Thames than new bridges is going to start this summer. This is the cable car line connecting the Greenwich peninsula with the area around the Royal Victoria Dock. The line will carry up to 2,500 people an hour and will also accommodate bicycles.

Oyster again

Charles Martin's piece *Oyster, not yet quite the only ticket Londoners need, called to mind the words of a Savoyard, "that's only a bit of it"*. TfL's fare structure might have been dreamed up by W. S. Gilbert.

Charles pointed out that paper tickets are now cheaper if you are lucky enough to hold a Network Railcard. Admittedly, the risk of providing this cheaper travel has been reduced by the introduction of a minimum fare. That caused this writer to abandon the Railcard and make fewer off-peak journeys as a result.

However, I still travel outside London and subsequently around London before reaching home. The out-of-London leg requires a paper ticket and touching in with Oyster when the journey back runs through the starting point is impractical. The solution to this would be to put a day return ticket onto Oyster in the same way as it can hold a weekly or longer season ticket.

A more frequent and irritating problem with Oyster arises from the lack of gates in use or of sufficient Oyster readers. Queues form as every alighting passenger awaits their turn on the solitary reader: unlike touching in, everyone touches out simultaneously. I have myself been inconvenienced by open gates, being more or less bullied through by a member of staff when doubtful that the reader had picked up my card, and then fleeced at the other end when touching out is recorded as touching in. If the next leg of your journey is by tube this does not matter, but if by bus you lose £6 and to add insult to injury have insufficient funds to travel. Valerie Shawcross has established that TfL has accumulated £18m in overpayments and Caroline Pidgeon has suggested there are structural problems with the way Oyster operates.

Finally, the outrageous abolition of the zone 2-6 daily travelcard creates an additional hazard for pay-as-you-go Oyster users travelling from and to stations in zone 2. "The system" decides whether your journey was via zone 1 or zone 3, unless you can touch a validator en route. There is no validator at Canonbury which is now an interchange point. If this is the only journey you make on a particular day, the cheapest option is via zone 3, but if you make further journeys it becomes cheaper to have travelled via zone 1. Oyster was supposed to take the thinking out of ticket purchase. Now you need to know exactly what you will be doing and then work out whether to touch the validator or avoid doing so to pay the lower fare.

The CBT campaign for simpler fares is mainly concerned with national fares. The complex fares on National Rail do at least encourage use of harder to fill trains and maximising income from prime time travel. The mess that Boris's TfL has created is completely illogical, its incentives often perverse, and its prestige project the Oystercard perhaps fatally undermined.

Andrew Bosi

London fails to tackle traffic pollution



The European Commission is on the brink of fining the UK for persistently breaching air quality standards in London. Compliance is demanded by June to avoid penalties. Particularly bad is Marylebone Road which has breached the daily limit 20 times so far this year. The Mayor is confident that measures in place, including his electric hybrid buses, will be sufficient to bring pollution down to an acceptable level but Simon Birkett, director of the Campaign for Clean Air in London, said 'it would be laughable to suggest the Mayor's current short-term measures will be enough'.

Cycle Superhighways (continued from page 1)

However the Transport Committee's own on-line survey of 1,297 CSH users in November 2010 has revealed that over half of users did not feel any safer on CSHs than on alternative routes, while two-thirds felt that CSHs were not respected by other users. Problems highlighted include that in some places the blue cycle lanes are too narrow, and in others they are occupied by other vehicles, disappear at busy junctions or are covered by parked vehicles. The campaign group Sustrans has pointed out that 'the greatest barrier to Londoners cycling is fear of traffic, but the CSHs generally follow busy arterial roads and provide no or minimal segregation from traffic'. Therefore it is unlikely that they will encourage greater cycling use, particularly by new cyclists.

Although the Mayor has said he will consider introducing 20 mph limits on specific parts of CSHs, it is difficult to see how cyclists will be able to negotiate some of the notorious black spots on some planned routes without major expenditure on dismantling gyratory systems. An example, on the route of CHS1 from Muswell Hill to the City along the route of the A1, is the Archway roundabout, which in its current state is a real challenge to life and limb for cyclists.

At this stage the jury must remain out on the long-term impact of the Cycle Superhighways on cycle uptake and user safety, although the experience of the first two routes gives grounds for some optimism.
[Norman Beddington](#)

Waiting for the S. London Metro

Some enhancements to south London metro services have arrived, but the wait continues for a turn-up-and-go service

In December 2010 Southern Railway, which provides rail services in south London, parts of Surrey and East and West Sussex, launched a new timetable that, according to the train operator, would provide over 400 more trains each week across the network particularly through the provision of more late night and weekend trains.

As a result, parts of the suburban network have benefited from these service enhancements. Some stations now see four trains-per-hour (TPH) during certain off-peak periods where previously – and presumably for several decades – there had been just two. These additional services were, of course, all part of the specifications contained within the new franchise agreement that was re-awarded to Southern in 2009.

The introduction of the extra services clearly provides an overall improvement, but the new timetable

is disappointing in three major respects. Firstly, the additional services have, in nearly all cases, been limited to certain off-peak periods only, specifically during Monday to Saturday evenings and Sunday daytime, with no enhancement to the busy peak periods, the weekday inter-peak or Sunday evenings. Secondly, the additional services on Saturday evenings have generally been provided simply by extending the often less than perfect daytime service of operation into the evening.

As a result, some of the shortcomings of the schedule, which include poor temporal distribution of train timings, along with 30-minute service intervals in certain cases, still remain. And thirdly, timings of the last trains to suburban destinations can vary quite markedly depending whether travelling on a Monday to Thursday, Friday, Saturday or Sunday evening.

Transport for London's recommended standard for stations within Greater London is for four TPH from first to last train. Although an increasing number of suburban routes in south London now operate with 4 TPH (although not from first to last train), they can be scheduled to run at highly irregular intervals – 7 then 23 minutes in each half-hour is not untypical. Therefore, instead of simply stating a requirement of 4 TPH, a more appropriate requisite would be to ensure that 15 minutes was the maximum service interval between trains.

Interestingly, four TPH is often described as enabling a "metro-style" or "turn-up-and-go-service". But even when four TPH operate at regular intervals, is this a true turn-up-and-go service? It all really depends on the context. A fifteen-minute interval service operating between Gatwick Airport and London Victoria or a thirty-minute interval service between London Euston and Manchester Piccadilly would both clearly qualify as turn-up-and-go services. Long distances are involved, journey times exceed the maximum service interval by a considerable margin, and in many cases the journeys are probably not being made regularly by the same people.

However, for the suburban network, where journey distances are relatively low, both the frequency and the volume of journey trips are high, journey times are typically less than 30-minutes in duration, and alternatives to car travel are being sought and encouraged, it could be argued that a better definition of turn-up-and-go would be

a regular ten-minute interval service.

If London's suburban railway is to become a more efficient and competitive part of the transport system as a whole, something that both the present and former mayors aspire to, then a bolder approach than that shown by Southern's service enhancements in December 2010 is going to be required.

The provision of more evenly-spaced services, with regular stopping and journey-time patterns, and improvements to connectivity would all be welcome objectives. For such aims to be achieved it is recognised that some route consolidation and infrastructure upgrades would almost certainly be required. But for now the long wait continues. If a truly turn-up-and-go future is ever to see the light of day, robust forward thinking and ambitious decision making is required now.
[Charles Martin](#)

Paris cycle scheme in trouble

VELIB, the Paris cycle hire service on which the Boris Bike scheme is modelled, has been experiencing mixed fortunes. Of the original 15,000 bikes at the 2009 launch, 11,000 have been vandalised and 8,000 have been stolen, with some turning up in North Africa! Despite the 42m users since the launch, JCDecaux, the company that runs the scheme is saying that their contract is 'unsustainable'.

Oyster Extension Permits to go

After the end of May holders of Oyster travelcards who travel outside the area for which the travelcard is valid need no longer load their card with an Oyster Extension Permit to avoid prosecution. This might be news to those who never realised they might need one in the first place but it will help the rather protracted integration of Oyster with the main line railway companies.

Tube accessibility - a long way to go

A recent GLA report revealed that only ten of London's 270 Tube stations are completely step-free all the way from street level to train. Only 61 Tube stations have step-free access from the street to the platform. Just one-third of London's 300 rail stations have step-free access from street to platform. Only half of London's 17,476 bus stops meet the criteria for full accessibility.

School Travel Plan Success

St Michael's Primary School in Wandsworth has been outstandingly successful in promoting more sustainable travel to school. Since 2005 the proportion of children being driven to school has fallen from 31 per cent to eight per cent. 91 per cent walk to school compared with 65 percent five years ago.

The impetus for the campaign which achieved this change was the death of two children outside a neighbouring school caused by vehicles blocking a crossing, stimulating mother Jo Levers to launch a 'name and shame' campaign including publicising the registration numbers of vehicles violating parking rules in newsletters and on the school perimeter fence.

