Campaign for Better Transport

LONDON GROUP NEWSLETTER

No 37 SEPTEMBER 2019

Campaign for better public transport in London by foot, on bike, by bus and by rail

Better means:
safer ◆ healthier ◆ speedier ◆ more reliable, ◆ better connected, ◆ more accessible, ◆ more convenient, ◆ more comfortable

Better public transport means:
◆ less car use
◆ less global heating

Enticing people back to buses

A KEY OBJECTIVE FOR THE NEXT MAYORAL TERM

So far in the relatively short life of the Greater London Authority each Mayor has served for exactly two terms. All the more reason for the incumbent to focus on what can be achieved by 2024.

None of the long term mega- projects will happen by then, though it is to be hoped that the next mayoral term will see the completion of Crossrail and the Northern Line extension, both of which are far enough advanced to ensure they must happen, eventually.

What can and must be addressed is the complete imbalance in public transport use. An increasing population coupled with an increase in home working has changed the pattern of public transport use, and not to the benefit of the TfL bank balance.

Peak hour underground services are so popular that station closures due to overcrowding have doubled in the last year, but there is no overall increase in usage and use of the buses continues to decline. Cutting services, and in particular cutting their scope rather than just their frequency, only exacerbates the problem. This was tried and found wanting more than 30 years ago.

The Mayor needs to address the need to entice people back to the buses. There are three areas in which he could do this.

FARES The Mayor has placed great emphasis on the hopper fare which has been his only strategy to date. Unfortunately, it touches less than half of all bus users – not those with freedom passes, nor those who make several trips in the course of a day. In order to address the perceived unfairness of the season ticket on those who work away from home only two or three times a week, the previous Mayor reduced the price of peak hours single tickets. He also abolished the zone 2-6 off peak travelcard, which could be used in zone 1 on buses only. The effect of these measures has been to reduce the financial incentive to use bus rather than tube, particularly in zone 1. If, as expected, the fare freeze is ended, the Mayor should use the opportunity to restore a fare structure appropriate to the supply of capacity.

CONGESTION This is now worse than before the introduction of the Congestion Zone. There is an urgent need for a new, modern scheme for rationing road space, which reflects the time of day and the level of competition for road space, particularly where buses operate or cyclists are obliged to leave their cycle lane. Planned diversions, either for maintenance or for events, should be planned with buses at the forefront of the minds of the planners. Diversionary routes should add no more than ten minutes to bus journey time. Planned works should not take place simultaneously on a diversionary route. If a bus route is to be diverted the replacement road should not be subject to planned maintenance as well.

INTERCHANGE The major breakthrough secured by the introduction of travelcards and daily caps is that public transport can be viewed as a single entity. Buses are not in competition with tubes, they should provide a valuable adjunct to them.

Key to this success is good interchange. If you can move seamlessly from one mode to another, or one line to another, the journey time for the passenger is significantly reduced as is the hassle of battling through hoards of people often meandering at a sub-optimal speed as they are distracted by their electronic device. Buses moving in the same general direction should stop close to one another. (Transport planners seem to struggle with the notion that people's destination is not a tube station or a bus stop, but somewhere between, so that they might take the first bus that comes even if a later bus would go closer to the destination).

Bus stops should be close to underground and rail stations with a direct route to the platform. In the 1930s buses stopped at junctions. Just because there is more competing traffic now is no excuse for conceding the best places to the private car. The Mayor's target of 80% of journeys by sustainable means will not be achieved if the unsustainable means have priority over the most critical spaces on our roads.

Andrew Bosi

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

The changing economics of bus service provision

The introduction of electric traction in buses should radically reduce the cost of providing bus services and two other imminent technological developments will reinforce this change.

The general cost breakdown of providing motorised bus services hasn't changed since their inception: vehicle-related, fuel-related, and driver-related. Vehicle-related costs are principally purchase, maintenance, insurance, and garaging. Fuel-related has principally meant the unit price and consumption per journey of petrol or diesel, including taxes and duty. Driver-related costs include direct costs (wages, pensions, and insurance) plus the costs of recruitment and management.

Battery power is only the first of the three new technologies that are beginning to transform the costs of bus service provision. The switch to hybrid (diesel plus battery-powered electric) traction has reduced fuel-related costs because the significantly lower price of electricity as a fuel (no tax or duty) outweighs (sic) the burden of transporting a heavy battery.

Switching London's bus fleet to all-electric traction has begun and, despite the batteries being larger and heavier, will significantly reduce fuel costs. And regenerative braking will marginally reduce fuel cost further.

But all-electric traction will also favourably affect vehicle-related costs. Electric engines are simpler and therefore cheaper than combustion engines, although initially the cost of batteries may wipe out any saving on vehicle purchase prices. Moreover, electric engines are intrinsically more reliable than combustion ones, potentially reducing maintenance costs significantly.

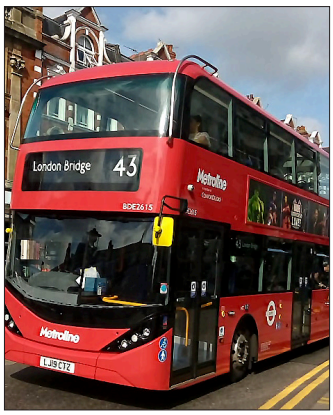
The second important new technology will be inductive top-up charging of bus batteries from chargers embedded in the road surface, while the buses are stopped to transfer passengers. Inductive charging of motor vehicles while at rest (in car-owners' garages and also while moving along the roadway) is under active development in several countries. This technology will permit much smaller, lighter, and therefore cheaper and more cheaply transported batteries.

The third, and most radically significant, new technology will be autonomous buses: buses without drivers. An on-board computer plus sensors and electronic communications will replace the driver, and the driver's cab, thereby not merely virtually eliminating the major remaining cost factor but potentially transforming the designs of buses.

To recoup the cost of the driver, buses necessarily had the capacity to transport 30+ passengers and routes and frequencies were only viable if they delivered about 50% occupancy on average. But with no driver these constraints are eased. More, smaller, buses will cost no more to operate than relatively few, large buses, as at present. And this will make more frequent services, and more routes, viable for the same cost: a revolution in bus service provision.

The above reasoning may be criticised for an absence of hard numbers. My response is that they are not available. The potential of the three technologies are clear, and so is the general pattern with new technologies: as they and their products mature, designs and manufacturing efficiencies both continually improve, continually bringing costs down. So, while benefits can be modest initially, their yield accelerates over time. This is true of computer-related innovations, driverless vehicles being an example, in a particularly extreme way: when their design has stabilised software elements can be replicated at essentially zero cost.

To conclude, three innovative technologies in bus service provision: battery-powered traction, inductive battery charging while buses are stopped to transfer passengers, and driverless buses will, within a few years, revolutionise bus service provision giving Londoners smaller and more frequent buses on more routes.



An all-electric double-decker at last.

SOUTH LONDON METRO

In his transport strategy the Mayor set out the case for taking over south London suburban rail services and implementing a metro-style operation.

He pointed out that since taking over a number of north London routes the service has improved dramatically with a six-fold increase in passengers since 2007. On the North London Line service has doubled from three to six trains an hour, all with far greater capacity. Service intervals are maintained in the evenings and at weekends and all stations are staffed from first to last trains. He wants to reproduce this level of success in south London where, at the moment, many stations have only a half hour service. His original demand was stymied by Transport Secretary Chris Grayling who was wary about putting the service into the hands of a 'socialist mayor'.

The Mayor has now renewed his call in TfL's 'Strategic Case for Metroisation in South and South East London' envisaging at least six trains an hour on all but a few routes and as many as 18 trains per hour on flagship routes such as Balham to Victoria. There would be trains every seven to eight minutes from Tulse Hill to London Bridge. The lack of a frequent service leads to many commuters bypassing their local rail station to travel to get more reliable and regular tube service into central London. For example, each day the equivalent of 33 double-deck bus-loads of Londoners living within a ten minute walk of West Norwood station take a bus to get to Brixton tube station.

To make the scheme work there will be need for considerable enhancement to the present service. A number of grade separated crossings are suggested, Balham being one example. Because lines were originally built by competing companies connectivity between one line and another is often poor. Brockley and Streatham Common are places where two lines cross but at which there is no connecting station.

TfL's plan is to transfer responsibility and funding for key rail assets such as tracks and stations from Network Rail to TfL. They say this would enable them to prioritise investment where it is most needed, whether new tracks or improved signalling, with rail infrastructure being used more intensively. In the past TfL's appeal to run the south London rail services has been turned down because of fears that an intensive metro service would cause unacceptable delays to long distance trains. However on most main lines into London fast lines are largely separate from slow and with some attention to pinch points and with faster and more reliable trains there will in fact be capacity for more long distance services. It is also important that capacity for freight is maintained. In the distant future total separation of long distance and metro services might be achieved by tunnelling. The line into Victoria via Herne Hill is one where this has been mooted.

Chris Barker

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ON DEMAND BUS IN SUTTON

A new on-demand bus service, GoSutton, was launched for a twelve-month trial period on 28 May 2019.

The service, which does not have a fixed route or schedule, 'responds' to a request to be picked up by the customer at the desired time of travel.

The key target markets for the service are those who usually use their car and who are not, for various reasons, using conventional public transport, walking or cycling. This small-scale research trial, operating across about half of the geographical area of the London Borough of Sutton between 06:30 and 21:30 seven days-a-week, is exploring whether these on-demand services can improve public transport while improving accessibility and air quality (by reducing car use) in an area of outer London where car dependency is high and other forms of public transport have limited availability.

The ability to support the objectives of the Mayor's Transport Strategy, including mode shift away from car travel and meeting the Healthy Streets principles, will be key to its success.

Early indicators are promising. By mid-July, just six weeks after the launch of the trial, 3,000 accounts had been opened by residents and up to 160 journeys were being made on a weekday (a 25 per cent week-on-week growth). The service has proved popular across the whole operating area, and the majority of users are between 25 and 55 years of age. Initially the highest demand had been during the inter-peak period, but within a short time this has expanded to include the commuter market (with evidence that these users are switching from the car). Fewer than half of the users (around 40 per cent) are on concessionary fares. The typical waiting time is eight minutes.

On 19th July 2019, TfL opened a consultation relating to a second demand responsive bus service trial in Ealing, due to launch in late 2019, and operate seven days a week between 06:00 and 01:00. Details at TfL Demand Responsive Bus Trial (Ealing). For both the Sutton and Ealing research trials, collecting feedback from users as well as non-users will continue throughout the respective 12 month trial periods.

Charles Martin

20 mph on TfL roads

TfL is proposing that all its roads within the Congestion Charge zone will be restricted to 20 mph from May 2020. Enforcement will be by a variety of methods including signs, humps and cameras. This points to a change of heart within TfL which previously was resistant to reducing speed on its roads. A second phase will see almost 90 miles - including the Inner Ring Road and TfL roads in suburban town centres - reduced from 50mph to 40mph, or 40mph to 30mph, or 20mph where appropriate, by 2024.

Promoting Healthy Streets

A coalition of transport campaigners from Campaign to Protect Rural England, London Cycling Campaign, Road Peace, Sustrans and our London group of Campaign for Better Transport have got together to produce a healthy streets scorecard.

They have looked at borough data to see how boroughs compare in relation to a number of inputs and outputs. The input indicators, as percentages of road length, are 20mph limited roads, the amount of modal filtering and lengths of controlled parking zones and protected cycle lanes. Outputs are mode share (how many people were walking or cycling), numbers taking regular active travel, road casualties and car ownership rates.

Transport and health are inextricably linked in two ways. Journeys by walking and cycling, or by public transport where it involves an element of active travel, have well documented health benefits, and air quality is poorer where the share of journeys being made by car is higher, because of increased air pollution and road danger.

For our health, London desperately needs to increase the number of trips being taken by public transport, walking or cycling. But road danger, air and noise pollution and unattractive car-dominant environments continue to act as a deterrent to walking and cycling in London.

The first scorecard was published on 15th July. It showed huge variations between boroughs. As might be expected the largest differences were between inner London and outer London with outer London on the whole being more dependent on cars. Hillingdon has an average of 1.27 cars per household whilst Islington has 0.35.

Some boroughs such as Tower Hamlets and Camden in inner London and Waltham Forest and Haringey in outer London, are rapidly progressing schemes to cut car use and road danger, boost air quality and walking and cycling rates, others such as Kensington & Chelsea and Havering have yet to take measures that start to put people, not cars, first. Kensington and Chelsea has very low rates of 20mph limits and protected cycle lanes. (Kensington and Chelsea has just rejected proposals for a cycle lane along Holland Park Avenue.) Waltham Forest has a high number of low traffic neighbourhoods (where through traffic is filtered out). Enfield has a high mileage of protected cycle lanes. Haringey has a high proportion of its roads limited to 20mph.

The scorecard can be downloaded at https://bettertransportlondon.org.uk/healthy-streets-scorecard/. The intention is to update it every year and issue monthly newsletters highlighting developments. The organisers hope the scorecard helps boroughs to compare how well they are doing in relation to other boroughs and to identify areas for future action.

Chris Barker

Traffic calming in the City

The City of London already has a 20mph speed limit on most of its roads and rules in place which restrict traffic across the Bank junction. But it is now going further. It proposes a 15mph limit and far reaching plans to prioritise cyclists and pedestrians over vehicles. Their strategy proposes 'pedestrian priority' streets where cyclists and drivers are obliged to give way to pedestrians.

Plans to assist pedestrians include radical changes to crossings. Maximum waiting time for the green man is to be reduced, crossing time is to be increased, crossings are to be widened and diagonal crossings are to be installed.

The Corporation wants the next Mayor to consider road user charging and to designate central London as a Zero Emission Zone by 2030.

Setback for bids to halt Heathrow's third runway

The High Court dismissed the complaint led by several environment groups and nearby London boroughs that proposals for a third runway breached environmental rules on climate change, air quality, surface access and noise. Campaigners have now won their right to appeal.

On climate change the complaint was based on the allegation that the proposal breached the Paris Agreement. But the judges said that this agreement, although ratified by the UK government, had not yet been incorporated into UK law. However they pointed out that, when it has been, there will emerge another opportunity for challenge.

On air quality the judges said that the government's National Policy Statement on airports set out air quality requirements and 'failure to demonstrate [compliance] would result in refusal of development consent'.

So, although the judgement was disappointing, there is clearly plenty of opportunity to continue the challenge in the next few years.

Meanwhile Heathrow is forging ahead with its plans for a phased delivery of the new runway and terminals starting as early as 2022. The expansion is expected to result in increased emissions and noise, require the use of some green belt land and the displacement of two villages, no doubt giving rise to numerous further political and legal challenges.

ULEZ a success

The number of the most polluting vehicles, subject to the ULEZ charge, entering Central London fell from around 35,000 in March to 26,000 after the charge was introduced. This had a positive effect on air quality. The Mayor reports a 20 per cent reduction in NO2 concentrations compared with 2017 although TfL admits other factors might also have influenced the fall. During the launch period owners of non-compliant vehicles were given a warning letter rather than a penalty.

To help small traders and charities who can ill afford to change their vehicle a scrappage scheme is in operation which can award £3,500. There is no requirement that a replacement vehicle is bought so the result might be that there are less vehicles on the road. A scrappage scheme for private cars is being prepared for launch before the 2021 extension of the ULEZ to the North and South Circular Roads.

Meanwhile, at the end of July, nearly 100,000 people have signed a petition claiming that the charge is merely a stealth tax and has nothing to do with air pollution.

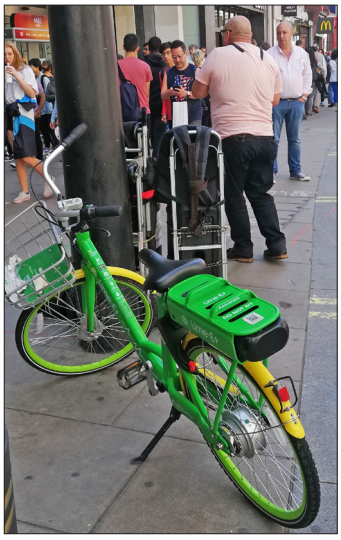
River crossing cancelled

Whilst plans for the Silvertown road tunnel presses ahead another, more sustainable, river crossing has been shelved as unaffordable.
The intention was to build a cycle and pedestrian bridge between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf. However TfL have now said this will not go ahead. Instead they are exploring the possibility of a ferry crossing between these points.

Dockless bikes and e-scooters

New technology is bringing new forms of urban transport and helping to reduce the need for cars. But it brings problems along with it. A number of companies are flooding areas of London with hire bikes which, after use, can be left anywhere. A great idea until their sheer number brings clutter and congestion. TfL have now responded to this proliferating problem by proposing a London-wide byelaw to control their operation. Under the scheme boroughs will designate approved parking areas for bikes and it will be an offence 'to place or allow their bikes to be parked anywhere other than at a location agreed by the local authority'. The operator will be liable for penalty but bikes will be chipped so that the operator can identify individual users.

E-scooters present a different problem. Their proliferation is bringing danger both to the riders and others using the streets. Hundred of incidents have been reported to the police. In one case a woman died.



In the UK their use is illegal on streets or pavements and the police are planning a crackdown. In other countries use is legal. In Paris, for example, a speed limit of 20 km/hr has been introduced but there are now more than 20,000 on the roads and they have been blamed for scores of crashes and two fatalities.

Liveable streets

Plans are being implemented throughout London to reclaim city streets from cars. Amongst them Tower Hamlets is introducing their 'Liveable Streets' project aiming to make neighbourhoods more attractive for cycling and walking. The City of London created a competition for architects, designers and artists to submit plans for parklets using kerbside space on city streets. Three were installed and will remain in place until the end of September. Meanwhile the Mayor is funding new Low Emission Zones designed to improve the capital's air. Four will be established in Hackney, Dagenham, Southwark and Camden They will contain electric vehicle charging points, cycle lanes, green walls and traffic reduction schemes.

20mph default speed limit

A group of eleven transport and active travel charities including the London group of CBT are calling on the UK Government to introduce a default 20mph urban speed limit in England. The Department for Transport recently issued a Road Safety Statement which set out the UK Government's road safety action plan. Amongst the 74 actions, there was little focus on reducing speeds in built-up areas in spite of the fact that research shows that casualties in built-up areas are reduced by up to two-fifths when motor vehicle speeds are kept to 20mph or below.

20mph limits are already widespread across the UK with more than 20 million people living in local authorities which are adopting or have adopted 20mph speed limits, including London.

The campaign groups are careful to stress it is the default speed that needs to change and this would not mean a blanket speed limit; local authorities would still be free to retain higher limits on roads where they believe this is appropriate.

Now it's hydrogen

The first all-electric double deck buses now operating in London are now being supplemented by 20 hydrogen fuelled buses. They will be used on routes 7 and 245 in North West London.

CBT LONDON – WHAT WE'VE DONE

- **Responded to the latest Heathrow Airport consultation reaffirming our opposition to a third runway**
- **Co-sponsored the Healthy Streets scorecard project**
- **Co-sponsored the Parks for People manifesto**
- **Joined other sustainability groups in advocating a 20mph default speed limit for urban roads**

PLEASE JOIN US.

Contact chrisjbarker46@gmail.com.