

Future Transport London campaigns for sustainable solutions to London's transport problems favouring public transport, walking and cycling over private cars. Membership £15 a year. Please join us. Contact Chris Barker. 46 Redston Road, N8 7HJ. chrisjbarker46@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. Please look at and comment on our new website at: [www.futuretransportlondon.org/](http://www.futuretransportlondon.org/). Recent issues of the newsletter can also be found there.

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## PROBLEMS FOR DISABLED TRAVELLERS DURING COVID



### Travel on Tfl services is gradually rising after slumping to catastrophically low levels during the Covid lockdowns.

By mid-August 2021, Underground ridership was up to nearly half of the pre-pandemic volumes during the week, and two-thirds at weekends. The comparable figures for buses

were even higher, while TfL has active campaigns to encourage a return to public transport and raise confidence in its Covid-security. Already three-quarters of Londoners have used scheduled public transport in the previous month (black cabs excluded), and higher patronage can be expected in September with a return to

school and some offices.

Throughout, the figures for disabled passengers were lower for a wide variety of reasons, some of them not so obvious, and some unrelated to features of the TfL network. Disabled people are as varied as the rest of the population, with varying travel patterns, but commonly face a number of different

barriers to mobility.

At the beginning of the pandemic, many disabled people began shielding due to their having additional vulnerability to Covid associated with their disabilities and/or age – and are continuing to be cautious. They also had less

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reason to go out. Aside from their working from home and being unable to socialise, like the rest of the population, many of the specific attractions to which some would normally travel were closed, such as lunch clubs for older people, day centres, physiotherapists and podiatrists. The closure of many public lavatories was a further serious disincentive to any travel for some disabled and older people. Conversely the availability of priority slots for on-line supermarket shopping meant that many disabled people had less need than others to go out to buy food.

Even when more activity was allowed, it was much more difficult for some disabled people to use public transport. In particular the staff assistance provided through the Turn Up And Go (TUAG) scheme was largely withdrawn and replaced by a taxi service, although many disabled people noted that Network Rail operators continued to offer such help. This meant, for example, that underground stations requiring a manual boarding ramp were no longer 'step-free' precluding wheelchair and scooter users from accessing the trains. Visually impaired travellers could no longer find their way on the arm of a TfL staff member. After one brief renewal of operation earlier in 2021, TUAG was finally reinstated permanently (we hope) towards the end of July 2021. However staff shortages due to the pandemic and the 'pingdemic' are still significant and affect the availability of TUAG assistance, often at short notice.

Free taxis (black cabs) are always offered to the next step-free station or the destination when lack of TUAG or a

broken lift means that a disabled passenger cannot use the supposedly step-free station where they have "turned up". Nonetheless many wheelchair users in particular find this option unsatisfactory, because of the difficulty of getting many of the (increasingly more common) larger powered chairs into the cab and, during the pandemic, because of the necessary close proximity of the driver while the chair is being secured. Some visually impaired travellers are anxious that a black cab may drop them off somewhere in the vicinity of their destination but without any waymarks to orient them to a route they know.

Many visually impaired people also hesitated to go out at all, even walking, because it is difficult for them to maintain social distancing, and they can become confused by diversions and changes of route in Streetspace schemes or inside stations, shops and other public places. They are not alone in fearing being abused if they are perceived as queue jumping or are inadvertently walking the wrong way in a one way route. Guide dogs are no help in this regard, and many will need retraining after this long period of inactivity, which will lead to a further and longer term suppression of travel by their humans. Even with some limited sight, diversionary signs and arrows can be difficult to notice and/or comprehend due to poor positioning and use of unsatisfactory colours and fonts.

Neurodiverse people can also easily become anxious or confused by the anti-covid regulations (like so many of us) and by the many different measures taken: masked faces, the need for social distancing, diversions, a clutter of signs on the pavement.

Deaf people who rely on lipreading were put off making other than regular well-known journeys because they cannot get directions or other information from staff wearing face coverings. Transparent masks

are available but do not protect the wearer to an acceptable degree.

The Streetspace schemes and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods were introduced in a hurry, without consultation, and were planned and installed by non-specialised planners and contractors, so not all are wheelchair and scooter friendly thus, among other effects, reducing access to bus and underground services. The introduction of many cycle lanes to encourage active travel also had a downside for many disabled and older people (and others, such as parents with small children) in terms of perceived hazard, especially where passengers boarding or alighting from buses have to cross an active cycle lane.

A return to pre-pandemic levels of travel will necessarily be slower for disabled people

than for the rest of the travelling public. In particular, until there is a guaranteed availability of assistance, wheelchair users will worry about being stuck on an underground train because no staff member is available to provide a ramp at their destination. Live information on mobile phone apps (such as TfLGo) is helpful in this regard but not every disabled person has a mobile phone. (Disabled people have a disproportionately lower ownership and usage of mobile phones.) Others, like many people, will be keeping an eye on Delta or other variants. Confidence building will take time.

**Maggie Heraty OBE MSc FCILT FRSA**

*Maggie is an advisor on transport and humanitarian logistics*

## ONWARD FROM EUSTON

**As the number of passengers arriving by rail at Euston increases, there will be a need for increased dispersal toward St Pancras, the City and beyond.**

The journey time from Euston to Bank is relatively short (10 minutes off peak). But the somewhat circuitous nature of the route, with four intermediate stations, presents an attractive possibility of a shortcut which would release substantial capacity of the Northern Line and on services between Euston Square and St Pancras.

Extending the DLR from Bank to Farringdon and Euston would create a shortcut which would appeal to people who must anyway change trains at Euston, or who must otherwise change at Camden Town or Moorgate. The DLR from Euston to Farringdon will be convenient for people setting off from Euston to reach the eastern Elizabeth Line or stations of southern Thameslink. Though there may not presently be funding for this, it needs planning for now and no money should be spent on constructing additional Euston – St Pancras capacity as the capacity released by this DLR shortcut would render that unnecessary.

**Rob Adamson**



# Streetspace on again, but doubts surface



**TfL's Streetspace scheme was launched by the Mayor in 2020 to increase the space available to walkers and cyclists to cope with the Covid crisis.**

New installations were put in a hurry to take advantage of the fall in vehicular traffic and the rise in the number of cyclists and also to provide more pavement space to enable people to maintain social distance. Schemes were put in without prior consultation as a temporary measure, with the possibility of making them permanent at a later date.

Taxi drivers' organisations were amongst those unhappy at the new arrangements. They seized upon a scheme in Bishopsgate which excluded taxis, saying that this unfairly and unlawfully discriminated against them and thus also fell foul of the public sector equality duty because it discriminated

against disabled people who were more likely to use taxis.

The judge ruled not only that they were right, but that the whole Streetspace scheme was illegal, TfL having 'taken advantage of the pandemic' to rush through changes to road layouts which 'far exceeded what was reasonable required to meet the temporary challenges created by the pandemic'.

TfL appealed to the Court of Appeal and the ruling has now been overturned. Sadiq Khan said: 'This decision from the Court of Appeal is a vindication of our policies. Our world-leading Streetspace schemes are helping protect the health of Londoners, and this decision reinforces my determination to make it safer and easier for Londoners to walk and cycle, and to help ensure a green and sustainable recovery from the pandemic'.

Worries about the schemes are not confined to taxi drivers. Others are concerned about the effect that cycle lanes have on other essential traffic. Nick Biskinis of the Clapham Transport Users Group writes the following:

'The road to hell is paved with good intentions, or in this case Streetspace. The introduction of Streetspace was of course designed (as elsewhere) to stop a traffic-led recovery through discouraging car use by restricting road capacity. This would in turn encourage "active" travel by allocating space for cycling and walking.

'The reality is ironically bringing about the very scenario Streetspace were meant to avoid. Clapham High Street is a main trunk road, used heavily by buses and more importantly ambulances from both St George's and St. Thomas's hospitals. The wands protecting the cycle lanes have restricted this key road to one lane south-bound. This has meant buses and ambulances stuck behind general traffic. Whereas once ambulances could clear Clapham High Street in 30 seconds, on a bad day this is now taking two to three minutes.

'We have spoken to TfL and the Council on many occasions to discuss the problems only to be met with assertions that the schemes needed time to bed in. Over a year on there is no evidence of mass migration from bus/car to cycling. With Covid restrictions lifting, traffic congestion is again mounting.

'The net outcome is one which is markedly worse than the situation pre pandemic and one which affects the most vulnerable - namely those with asthma, the disabled and



those who are dependent on buses whether for work or for going to hospital visits. Indeed by making buses more unreliable and crowded the schemes may incentivise someone to take the car. A much better solution would be to promote use of the Cycle Quietways in Clapham which guide cyclists down less well used roads, rather than creating bottlenecks which do little to boost cycling whilst seemingly penalising bus passengers. Cycling policy needs to become nuanced and part of an inter-modal approach to reducing car usage. Streetspace are sad examples of bad policy design, spearheaded by siloed assumptions substituting for area knowledge. Ultimately there may be a hubris in the reckoning as the political tide may turn in the 2022 elections. The tragedy will be that support for cycle measures will have been damaged by these schemes and that TfL and the cycling lobbies have alienated the wider majority of non-car users and transport advocate groups who once were natural allies.'

# Oxford Street

**I wrote in the last issue about the politics of the Oxford Street District (OSD) so here are a few words about the proposals themselves.**

Two words will suffice - 'hugely disappointing'! Apart from the two piazzas east and west of Oxford Circus which will divert traffic north of this notorious and jam-packed junction and which will be trialled for 18 months before being made permanent with all the risks of being withdrawn, there is little or nothing to get excited about with OSD. No filtering of traffic, few or no street closures and, most critically, ignoring the huge potential of the four Garden squares - Soho/Cavendish/Manchester/Bryanston - which, if treated as Camden have done with Fitzroy Square, would truly be the 'lungs' of Oxford Street which Westminster talked about when OSD was launched.

What is even more worrying is that there is no correlation between the amount of dangerous emissions created by

the incessant traffic in the West End and the high levels of air pollution caused by this constant 24 hour flow of vehicles. You wonder why Westminster City Council declared a climate emergency when so little is done to minimise the impending nightmare for all of us if we do not alter course. I am afraid the Mayor's vision of a pedestrianised Oxford Street is dead in the water, killed off by weak political leadership on active travel issues by both the Westminster Tory majority in fear of the wrath of a very vociferous group of residents and the Labour opposition trying to win votes by taking a fairly unprincipled stand against restricting traffic in the West End.

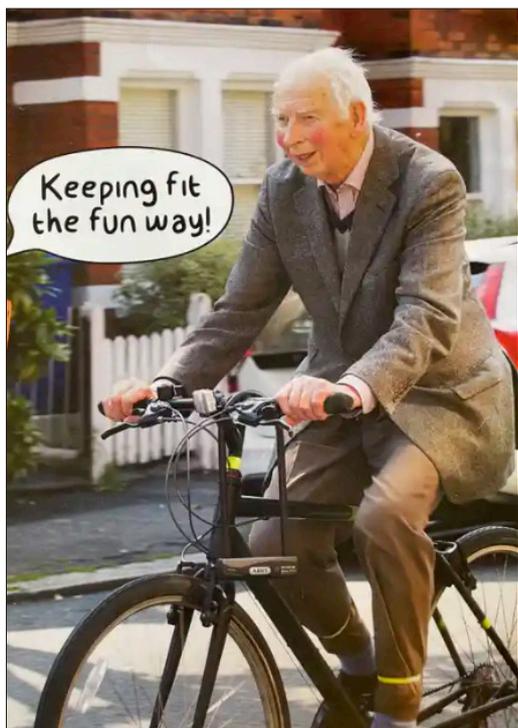
No one really knows yet the effect of the Crossrail opening on Oxford Street as it is going to take years for the street to recover from its sharp decline through Covid and other structural issues, but I take the optimistic view that the current plethora of empty shops and offices will find a new life and

bring back even more visitors to the heart of the West End. Whatever happens Crossrail is going to have a fairly dramatic effect on public transport capacity over the next decade. Something fairly radical though needs to happen to stop our streets becoming even more congested with even more vehicles. It's so obvious what needs to happen but we need to breed some politicians with a backbone first!

**Peter Hartley**



*Soho Square above contrasting with Fitzroy Square where the air is much cleaner.*



## Alastair Hanton

**Alastair, who has died at the age of 94, was an avid campaigner for sustainable transport.**

He set up or joined a prodigious number of organisations including the ETA (Environmental Transport Association), a green alternative to the AA and RAC. Another campaign which has been in the news a great deal recently was his campaign for lorry safety after he discovered how many road deaths involved lorry drivers reversing or turning left without being able to see cyclists on their nearside.

He worked on the 20's Plenty initiative to spread 20mph zones in residential areas.. He founded RoadPeace to publicise road deaths and to help traffic planners make roads safer. He chaired Living Streets and In 2016 he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Cycle Planning Awards.

He set up the Foundation for Integrated Transport with Simon Norton to campaign to ensure that public transport and safe cycle routes were integrated into new housing estates and new towns to provide residents with easy alternatives to owning a car.

He was a long standing supporter of the Campaign for Better Transport and an active member of our London group. He continued his membership when we became Future Transport London and recently presented plans to reorganise the railway layout at Herne Hill to enable trains to avoid conflicting movements.

Alastair was an indefatigable campaigner and he will be sorely missed.

### Camden Highline on the skids

It seems likely that plans for the 'Camden Highline', a new walkway between Camden and Kings Cross, will be abandoned. Unlike the successful route in New York City, it was to be built on railway land across Camden that is now wanted - for more railway tracks!

Network Rail's London Rail Freight Strategy Summary Report shows a third platform at Camden Road station to cope with more freight trains running through the station. Their plan is unfunded so far, but it's one of four London schemes being submitted to the Department for Transport.

Industry experts have further pointed out that three tracks could easily become four tracks through Camden Road. That would extend the East London Line, reopen Primrose Hill station near Chalk Farm tube (closed in 1992) and link Camden Road to South Hampstead and Queens Park.

The effect of Covid may reduce passenger numbers into central London, but London Overground orbital routes around London are a different matter. More such trains would be possible east-west across Camden once improvements for freight trains had paid for the initial work.

### Easing freight movements on London's rail network

Another item from the Freight Strategy Summary Report suggests a series of enhancements to improve the capacity and speed of freight moving around the capital. One suggestion is to extend the 25kV AC wires on the West London line (WLL) from North Pole Junction (near Westway) either to Shepherds Bush station or to Kensington Olympia, where the line is level. Northbound electric freight trains (to replace diesels) would not then need to change from third rail DC to overhead AC on an upward gradient, with resulting loss of speed, and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) trains need not

stop at North Pole junction. Why GTR choose to operate trains which need to stop for changeover (when many other trains do not) is unexplained.

Relocating the changeover to Kensington Olympia would require overhead wires where the WLL passes under the Holland Park roundabout and there is, reportedly, insufficient clearance. If it were moved to Shepherds Bush, the overhead line would still have to extend under the roundabout in case of a southbound platform overrun. South of North Pole Junction, the WLL crosses under the Hammersmith & City Line, over the Central Line and (at Kensington Olympia) parallels the District Line. So, London Underground signalling may have to be immunised from 25 kV AC wires at considerable cost. Would all those costs justify the benefits?

### Parcels by rail

Internet shopping has brought a huge increase in the quantity of freight being brought into London and distributed to homes. It is a growing trend for loads being brought into London by HGVs to be broken down at consolidation centres for onward transport by small vans, by bike or courier, (see newsletter 39 for more on this).

The question now being asked is why the long distance

moves into London should not be by rail. London terminals are centrally placed and are little used during the night. The goods concerned are light weight and do not require heavy freight vehicles to carry them so high speed trains designed for passengers, suitably converted, could be used.

This vision is now being turned into reality. Distribution firm Orion has converted a redundant class 319 train, formerly used on Thameslink, into a cargo carrying train and brought it into Euston in July to demonstrate the concept. Orion plans to start a service between the Midlands and Scotland later in the year. The trains, to be reclassified class 786, will retain their electrical capability but be equipped also with a diesel engine for short distances away from the wires.

Swift Express Freight are also investigating this new concept and have converted a class 321 train. They also plan to start with services between the Midlands and Scotland. Unlike Orion's train, they will not be equipped with diesel engines but will be capable of being hauled by diesel locomotives away from the wires.

### Silvertown Tunnel

The 'No to the Silvertown Tunnel' campaign led a protest march on 5th June. The march

wound around a number of Silvertown streets to alert residents about it and finished up outside the Crystal, due to become the new City Hall. About 600 people took part and the rally was addressed by the mayor of Newham Rokshana Fiaz and Green and Conservative London Assembly Members. Opponents are concerned about its impact on air quality in the area as well as increased traffic congestion and would like to see the £2.2bn project cancelled.

### E-scooters and cycle parking

As the trials get under way to allow rented e-scooters to use streets in some London boroughs, the London Cycling Campaign (LCC) is becoming concerned about parking provision for them and for cycles. They say the growing number of cycles, cargo bikes and e-scooters on our streets is causing a shortage of parking spaces for these 'micromobilities' and parking provision needs to be doubled.

LCC are particularly concerned that e-scooters and hire bikes are left in designated places and not allowed to cause a hazard on the street.

### Healthy Streets Scorecard

The Healthy Streets Scorecard coalition sets out to track boroughs on action they have taken to reduce congestion, enable people to walk and cycle more, improve road safety and reduce carbon emissions from transport. On 6th July they launched their third annual scorecard showing how boroughs have changed.

Islington, closely followed by Hackney and Camden, are the top scoring boroughs in 2021 but, say the coalition, 'while many London boroughs are forging ahead, some are still failing to take action, leaving their residents choking and stuck in congestion, and London risks becoming a tale of two cities as a huge divergence in action emerges'.

The criteria include the



GRAPHIC: LOIS DODDS

percentage of streets in low traffic neighbourhoods and with 20mph speed limits. The extent of controlled parking zones, protected cycle tracks and school streets are also measured as is the extent of car ownership. The scorecard can be downloaded where it is possible to see how your borough is doing.

[www.healthystreetscorecard.london](http://www.healthystreetscorecard.london)

Future Transport London is one of the sponsors of Healthy Streets Scorecard.

**Battery train for West London**

Great Western Railway plans to operate the West Ealing to Greenford branch line with a train running on a battery. The short 12-minute shuttle trips gives a half-hourly service including turn-around times at each end. The proposal is for the battery to be fast charged at West Ealing after each trip.

**Hydrogen buses for London**

London now has more than 500 all-electric buses and all new buses introduced into the fleet are at least hybrid (diesel assisted by battery). There are eight all-electric routes including three operated by

double-deckers. In Central London all buses are either hybrid or electric.

TfL are now taking delivery of 20 hydrogen fuelled double-deck buses which are being used on route 7 between East Acton and Oxford Circus. Although hydrogen fuelled vehicles produce no emission at the point of use this does not necessarily apply to the production of the fuel. The hydrogen for the buses currently is produced as a by-product of an industrial process but the intention is that, from 2023, it will be produced by electrolysis – using electricity to separate hydrogen from oxygen. The electricity used for this process will come from offshore wind farms during times when there is little other use for it, thus ensuring that it will be a green fuel.

**Great Eastern parks route**

Hard on the heels of the Camden Highline comes another proposal to use an old railway formation for a green walk. This one makes use of some of the remains of Bishopsgate goods station, closed suddenly after a disastrous fire in 1964 and lying derelict ever since. Buried amongst the debris is the

listed Braithwaite Viaduct, one of the oldest such structures in the world.

The Shoreditch Forest Garden is a proposal to use an old railway formation for a green walk. The idea started with a campaign by the East London Garden Society to convince property developers Hammersons and Ballymore to include a green space in their redevelopment of the Bishopsgate goods station to lessen the effect of the development and improve the air quality of the area, offsetting some of the pollution and creating a self-sustaining green space.

The eight mile walk will run from Shoreditch High Street to Newham. It will start at Shoreditch High Street, then use the Brick Lane bridge to get to the south side of the Great Eastern Main Line, then follow disused railway viaducts adjacent to the Great Eastern main line past the existing Spitalfields City Farm to a point where it would cross the tracks again to reach Meath Gardens. From there on the route is already walkable. It will then pass Mile End Park, Victoria Park and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and then follow the River Lea to Leamouth.

**Bus services review**

The bus services review which the Department for Transport has required TfL to conduct in July has been postponed until September. Emma Gibson, TravelWatch’s director, was pleased that the review was postponed. She was worried that it would not give an accurate picture of future demand for buses given that many people would not yet have returned to offices, and that it could lead to ‘premature or ill-considered cuts to services’. In August bus and tube usage was about two thirds of pre-Covid numbers. Andy Byford, TfL commissioner, reckons that in a ‘best-case scenario’, passenger numbers across London’s transport network could be expected to reach 90 per cent by March 2022.

London TravelWatch has set

up a Bus Alliance of campaigning groups to fight against cuts in bus services to which Future Transport London is affiliated. They are planning a bus tour of London to launch the campaign on 15th September.

**London TravelWatch researches personal security**

It is a disturbing fact that many people avoid using public transport, particularly after dark, because they fear being abused, harassed or attacked. London TravelWatch has published research into the issue and has made some recommendations about how travel can be made safer.

A common worry is lack of support for people if they feel threatened. Uber was commented on favourably in this regard. The user knows the name of the driver, the company knows where the vehicle is going and the passenger is in constant contact with help through the app on their phone. If these advantages could be copied for public transport, passengers would feel more confident. Suggestions include more staff patrolling the system, more help points with perhaps a dedicated button on buses to alert the driver to an issue, better wi-fi connections and a direct reporting function built into the TfL app. Many believe that it is neither easy nor straightforward to report a crime on public transport.

Transport providers and the police need to make it easier to report incidents which threaten transport users’ personal security as well as building trust in the reporting process. The watchdog also wants the Mayor of London to build on his Women’s Night Safety Charter with a new strategy for night-time safety that includes the transport network.

More generally respondents to the survey mentioned frequency of bus services, minimum delays and better lighting at interchange points. CCTV was welcomed although it was a concern that images are not kept long enough before being overwritten.



The proposed Great Eastern Parks Route