

# Gyratories on the way out?

## An update on GLA plans

**Gyratory or one-way systems are one of the most unfortunate results of the 1960s' drive to speed up traffic flows on London's congested streets - however their introduction led to higher levels of pollution, congestion and the severance of town centres from their hinterlands.**

In early 2002 the London Group of CBT, then named Transport 2000, asked for nominations for London's worst gyratory system. Heading the list of 17 systems entered for the competition were Hyde Park Corner, Bricklayers Arms, Walworth, Tottenham Hale and Aldgate. Nearly six years later Hyde Park Corner has accommodated a cycle lane linking Hyde and Green Parks (but not much else has changed), Bricklayers Arms has seen its concrete underpasses replaced by at-grade pedestrian crossings, and plans have been advanced to take out the enormous Tottenham Hale system.

The biggest progress to date has been made at Shoreditch Triangle, on the Inner Ring Road, where three very busy streets, Old St, Great Eastern St and Shoreditch High St have been successfully returned to two-way traffic, and vastly improved pavements, crossings and lighting and new cycle lanes were installed.

In January 2008 one of the budget commitments made for the period 2008-9 and beyond by the Mayor to GLA Green members was a list of 12 gyratory systems whose removal would be actively pursued.



Of these the top four, Aldgate East, Kender St Triangle, Tottenham Hale and Brixton Square have schemes which are agreed or under active development, and are funded. The Mayor also agreed to seek funding and agreement for the remaining six schemes. Furthermore, in a significant development, he agreed to undertake an initial review of all major gyratories in London with the aim of assessing the costs and benefits of restoring two way working. Although many of the most damaging systems in Greater London are included in the list, there is a focus on Inner London, and many town centre gyratories in Outer London - for example Kingston, Richmond, Ilford, Enfield - are notable omissions.

Three of the top four schemes have work programmed to begin during 2008 or 2009. All involve the complete removal of gyratory systems combined with town-scape improvements. The Brixton Central Square

project, which will take a full year to implement, is also included in the Mayor's 100 Public Spaces programme. Major elements comprise the re-connection of the island on which St Matthew's Church sits to its surrounds, and the re-design of a major public space to the east of a re-aligned Effra Road. At Kender

St, one arm of a triangular traffic system on the A3 at New Cross will be removed from the main road network and returned to local use, while traffic speeds will be reduced and pedestrian routes improved on the remaining two arms as part of a restoration of two-way working. *continued on back page*

Welcome to the second issue of our Newsletter which is sent out to all supporters in the London area.

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 at the Campaign for Better Transport office in Hoxton.

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.

## 20 mph limits as a mayoral election issue

**Campaign for Better Transport is one of the groups in the London Transport Activists Roundtable which also includes pedestrians and cyclists groups, Friends of the Earth and others.**

In the last Mayoral election in 2004 we jointly organised a transport hustings attended by the candidates of the four largest parties in the GLA.

In this year's election campaign, which is to end on the 1st of May, we hope to do the same though securing the agreement of the main candidates has so far eluded us! Once again the focus would be on sustainable transport issues. But whereas last time round we produced a manifesto with ten priorities, which perhaps could be too

readily ignored, this time we are focusing solely on the promotion of a default 20 mph limit (though the hustings would also cover other topics).

There's already considerable momentum behind this measure. Ken Livingstone has said he supports the wider use of 20 mph limits and the new budget agreement between the Mayor and the Greens in the Greater London Assembly commits TfL to working with the boroughs to encourage their implementation in all residential areas. There are now other towns in the UK, such as Portsmouth, where the use of 20 mph limits is almost complete. Several London boroughs are likely to follow that example quite soon. [Richard Bourn](#)

# Brent Cross development threatens huge traffic growth

## The present shopping centre at Brent Cross was developed during the 1970s.

Although a large bus station was incorporated and a number of bus routes were rerouted to serve the centre it was always envisaged that the majority of visitors would come by car. Although generously surrounded by main arterial roads (the M1 ends here and the A406 North Circular Road and the A41 both skirt the site) the site is somewhat cramped and is isolated from the surrounding areas.

A new £4 billion scheme aims to regenerate the area. In addition to an expansion of the shopping centre it is proposed to build an industrial and commercial area providing 20,000 jobs, and 7,500 new homes. A new 'town centre' will straddle the North Circular.

The local authority's own development framework acknowl-

edges the massive transport and traffic impact this will have. The existing shopping centre has 8,000 parking spaces. There will be 7,500 additional parking spaces in the residential element of the new scheme and an untold number in the commercial parts. An extra 133,000 people and 29,000 vehicles will come into the area every week day.

Brent Cross is only one of 42 'areas of opportunity' and 'areas of intensification' where the forecast growth in London's housing and employment is to be concentrated. If they all generate extra traffic on the scale envisaged for Brent Cross the problems of traffic growth and congestion will become even more acute, particularly in outer London. That this should happen when everyone knows that global warming emissions from transport must be reduced makes the

situation even more unsatisfactory.

Part of the answer is, of course, to improve public transport access to the area. There are two rail routes near the centre but since the use of either would require a ten to fifteen minute walk, they are not near enough to rely upon without a connecting link. One nearby rail link is via the existing Brent Cross underground station on the Northern Line and the other is a proposed new station on the Thameslink suburban line.

The developers propose a 'rapid transit' link between the stations and the centre but, although this is to be on dedicated roads, it will still be a conventionally fuelled bus. Campaign for Better Transport London has produced a plan to install a 'Docklands Light Railway' type line instead which would not only connect the stations with the centre but also be extended towards Neasden, Harlesden and North Acton (and possibly Wembley and Park Royal), providing a valuable additional rail link using the existing under-used Dudding

Hill rail corridor. Although this has yet to be costed, it would seem to go some way to reduce the reliance on road vehicles.

The provision of car parking at Brent Cross must be looked at again. It is proposed to allow one space for each residential unit. It is becoming common practice to reduce this allowance drastically and to make it clear to most residents that car parking provision is not provided. GLA guidelines indicate that this is acceptable providing that there is adequate public transport provision (it certainly passes that test) and that residential parking controls are in place in the surrounding area (they are).

Brent Cross is certainly in need of upgrading and, unlike the original 1970s development, attention is being paid to the need to reduce vehicle movements and promote the use of public transport, walking and cycling. However the new plans have not gone nearly far enough and are storing up problems for the future.

Chris Barker



## Sharing isn't always good!

*The concept of shared space, is one which is attractive to those of us who campaign for traffic calming measures but, as Sue Sharp from Guide Dogs for the Blind says, this causes problems for disabled people, particularly those who are blind or partially sighted. The question of how we integrate the needs of all requires urgent consideration. This is a contribution to the debate.*

### A number of local authorities have redesigned town centres and high streets using the concept of shared space. Other schemes are in the planning stage.

Shared space aims to create shared 'social' areas for all users, reducing the dominance of motor vehicles and making streets more people-friendly. Laudable aims – but the devil is in their implementation.

Shared space developments are frequently implemented through the creation of a shared surface for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. The traditional kerbs and footways are removed and little, or no demarcation is provided between areas predominantly used by vehicles and pedestrians.

For blind and partially sighted people, who use the kerbs and other tactile demarcations as orientation cues, such developments are a major concern.

They are put at an immediate disadvantage too, because the shared surface approach relies on pedestrians negotiating priority through 'eye contact' with other road users!

Research carried out by Guide Dogs, and

published in 2006, established that the safety, confidence and independence of blind and partially sighted people are undermined by shared surfaces. Those concerns were shared by other disability organisations and a joint statement on the implications of shared surfaces for disabled people was agreed and published in May 2007.

Guide Dogs has gone on to examine whether design solutions could be developed that could be applied in a range of street areas, and which would be consistent with the shared space concept but which would also take into account the needs of blind and partially sighted people.

The international design practice Ramboll Nyvig was commissioned to produce design proposals. Their report advocated the creation of 'safe space', equivalent to the traditional footway, within shared space schemes, where vulnerable pedestrians could remain away from vehicles, giving them confidence to use the street independently. At the same time it would allow the rest of the area to be shared by

motorists, cyclists and those pedestrians able and willing to do so.

The design solutions identified by Ramboll Nyvig had all been used or were proposed for use as delineators in shared space schemes in the UK. Trials were carried out in collaboration with University College London at their Pedestrian Accessibility and Movement Environment Laboratory (PAMELA). The results will be published by Guide Dogs shortly and will be available at [www.guidedogs.org.uk/sharedsurfaces](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/sharedsurfaces) but the trials did not identify any delineator that would be suitable for the application in the form tested.

Guide Dogs position, supported by other disability organisations, is that until a delineator can be shown to be effective, local authorities must continue to incorporate a traditional kerb edge in their shared space schemes. To do otherwise is to put blind and partially sighted people at risk and could lead local authorities to fall foul of their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

As children we are all told to share, but sharing your sweets is not the same as sharing the highway. For blind and partially sighted people, this sharing isn't a good thing at all!

Sue Sharp

Head of Public Policy and Campaigns, Guide Dogs

# Rainham Marshes and the green tram

## **The Hanoverian monarchy endowed London with its magnificent parks in the 18th century.**

Today we have the responsibility of ensuring that green areas of open land survive and flourish in London as the city grows and spreads over the Thames Gateway and beyond.

East London possesses the unique and extraordinary resource of Rainham Marshes where wildlife is still able to survive in the midst of the devastation of nature created by human habitation. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has already taken steps to protect the area for wildlife and has built an Information Centre at the Purfleet edge of the reserve. Now there is an opportunity to use imagination and enterprise to make the best possible use of the whole resource for the benefit of the local inhabitants, the wildlife, the rest of London and those who visit the city.

Many suggestions are being made for enhancing the whole Rainham Marshes area, which includes 177 hectares of landfill between the river Thames and the

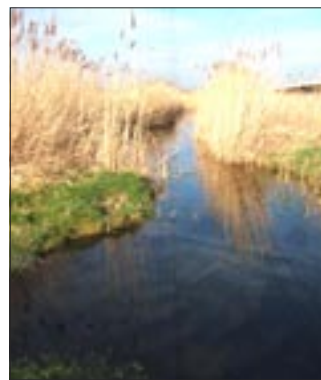
reserve. This land is to be reclaimed and rehabilitated progressively over the next ten years, creating opportunities for a City Farm, allotments, a recreational beach area etc.

Optimising the benefits of the area will only be achieved if access is made simple, attractive and non-polluting. The RSPB have already initiated plans for a Green Tram, which will provide access, act as an attraction in its own right and at the same time demonstrate a novel form of clean, energy-efficient public transport. The 6 kilometre scenic tram route will link the reserve and its Information Centre with the two adjacent railway stations, Rainham and Purfleet, whilst enabling the reserve and the Thames foreshore to be integrated into the whole East London public transport network.

The Green Tram will be an Ultra Light Railbus equipped with onboard power, so there will be no need for expensive external electrification. The light track for it to run on can be laid quickly, cheaply and unobtrusively, straight into the ground, with minimal substructure, at less cost than a

paved road. Since no costly, unsightly tarmac will be needed, grass will be able to grow between the tracks. The Green Tram will run, almost noiselessly, on biomethane, (methane gas made locally from organic waste), thus making no net contribution to carbon emissions. Biomethane is a renewable, non-polluting source of energy that will make the public transport system independent from any need for supplies of increasingly expensive fossil fuels. The Green Tram itself will be designed specifically for Rainham Marshes and will combine the attractions of traditional trams with the latest modern transport technology.

Because the Green Tram will demonstrate the latest environmental technology for public transport the promoters of the scheme, RSPB and Sustraco Ltd, feel that there is no time to be lost in putting it into operation – global warming and energy security are too important to allow time to be wasted. The Green Tram will enable the people of London to see what sustainable, low carbon public transport actually means in practice – and to enjoy it. The Green Tram will also help to focus the attention of the public on the fantastic resource they have in Rainham Marshes. It is hoped that this will stimulate people to contribute their ideas and volunteer their input into making the best possible use of the resource. The



promoters are currently considering the possible creation of a locally based not-for-profit Green Tram Company which will take on the task of raising the money and operating the service for the benefit of the whole community, its wildlife and its visitors. If the public react positively to these proposals and charitable and official funding sources support the scheme, then it will still be possible for the Green Tram to be in service before the Olympics in 2012.

James Skinner

## A Missing Rail Link

**A rail link runs from Chingford in NE London, passes Walthamstow, then runs through Hackney and Bethnal Green to Liverpool Street.**

It connects to the frequent tube service at Walthamstow Central which opens up access to Central London via the Victoria line.

In the past a rail service also ran south to Stratford via the Hall Farm Curve. A campaign has been building to restore this link to connect Waltham Forest to the Olympic Park area and the developing Stratford City. Ultimately an alternative route via Stratford to Liverpool Street is envisaged when Crossrail frees up track space.

When it comes, just like the new 'one' rail services up the Lea Valley from Stratford, trains will quickly fill up, as many travellers in north east London do not have nor want to use cars for work, shopping or leisure.

Would you help us campaign? The Hall Farm Curve scheme has the support of all political parties locally and is popular with the public when they hear about it. This 'Missing Link' should be part of our Olympic legacy, a 2010-2015 scheme.

Roger Gillham

To join us please contact David Shepherd or Roger Gillham and join the Chingford Line Users' Association, email: HallFarmCurve@phonecoop.coop or phone 0845 456 4977.

## Campaigning on London issues

**In addition to topics already mentioned elsewhere, Campaign for Better Transport is working on a number of other current London transport concerns.**

Outer London has been one of our work strands for several years and remains so. There is some debate about the extent of reductions in traffic volume in central London that have occurred since the introduction of the congestion charge. But there is no doubt about the pressure for traffic growth in outer London where 70% of car travel occurs and only 13% of journeys are made by public transport.

The Brent Cross development is reported on elsewhere. It is one of 42 locations in which much of the future growth in London's housing and employment will take place. We intend to look at what is planned for the other 41 areas, particularly those in outer London,

and whether they are likely to generate traffic to the same degree. This will usefully inform our work later in the year when the Mayor's Transport Strategy and its outer London traffic targets are revised.

To take another perspective on planned new development—much of the new housing for south east England will be located in the Thames Gateway area of east London, south Essex and north Kent. Doubts have been raised over the years about the quality of public transport provision for this growth area and whether a land use pattern is likely to emerge which will reduce travel and car dependency. We have commissioned work to look at this, the first stage of which is to be a literature review, and hope to be getting some results in April.

We are also commissioning research on two aspects of the aviation debate in order to shed

light on claims that London needs more airport capacity to provide for ever increasing flight numbers. The first will look at the alternatives to short haul flights while the second will examine the frequently made assertion that aviation is crucial for the economy.

It's not research but our work on the draft revisions to the Mayor's London Plan should also be mentioned. We made submissions to the Examination in Public on the revisions arguing that reducing the need to travel is a principle which should be endorsed by the Plan and reflected in its other policies. The Inspectors agreed with us and recommended accordingly. We're now awaiting publication of the amended plan to find out if the recommendations have been followed and whether we need to consider further action.

Richard Bourn

# The low emission zone: local pollutants and climate change

**On 4th February 2008 the Mayor's new Low Emission Zone (LEZ) came into force. Covering almost the whole of the Greater London area, but with the important exception of the M25 motorway, it will only be accessible to vehicles complying with exhaust emission standards.**

Compliance with these is estimated to bring about a 20% reduction in the area of London forecast to exceed pollution limits. Initially the scheme will only cover the 160,000 or so heavy vehicles using London roads every day, but lighter trucks, buses, coaches and eventually large vans and minibuses will be covered in stages in the period up to 2012. Drivers failing to comply can be fined up to £200 per day, and therefore a high level of compliance is expected by Transport for London (TfL), which is responsible for the LEZ's introduction.

The initial targets laid down for the LEZ are that all vehicles should meet the Euro III standard for PM

(Particulate Matter), and that after January 2012 HGVs of over 3.5 tonnes, buses and coaches should meet the Euro IV standard for PM. The scheme is designed to discourage the use of the most heavily-polluting diesel vehicles in London, and secure their replacement with cleaner engines or the fitting of PM traps. These vehicles are particularly heavy emitters of PM10, or very small soot particulates which are known to lodge in the lungs and can trigger asthma and bronchitis and lead to cancer. For the period to 2015 the estimated health benefits to London of the EZ include the saving of 5200 years of life, and the avoidance of 340,00 cases of respiratory illness, among other benefits. We can conclude from this research that the LEZ will go some way to reducing the severe air pollution suffered by many parts of London, and is thus a very worthwhile objective.

In advance of the LEZ introduc-

tion TfL has secured the modification with PM traps of all the buses which provide its own services. However, although climate change is one of its priorities, it is in the critical area of carbon reduction that TfL policies appear to have a significant gap. To reduce the operational impact of the 8,000 buses on London roads, it has been trialling both fuel-cell powered buses and diesel electric hybrid buses over the past few years; however the former cost £750,000 each and are therefore unlikely to be introduced on any scale in the short term. So far only a small numbers of hybrid buses are currently in operation, although the Mayor has announced that all new buses will be hybrids as soon as volume production is available. Hybrids will emit 30-40% less CO<sub>2</sub> than comparable diesel buses, however there does not seem to be any real interest in pursuing much cleaner fuels for buses, such as biogas, available locally in London from both sewage gas and from methane derived from organic waste.

These clean fuels make no net contribution to carbon emissions, and, as pointed out in by James Skinner in the last edition of the Newsletter several continental cities have converted all or nearly all their

buses to run on biogas - so the technology is available now. Surely with his recently increased powers over waste disposal in London, the Mayor should be in an excellent position to introduce biogas-powered buses on a large scale, thus making good use of a locally-derived waste product and filling the gap until hybrid buses can be produced on a large scale.

Norman Beddington

## High speed to the continent

**The opening of St Pancras International Station on 6th November is not just a publicity plug for rail travel but could be a nail in the coffin for about a fifth of Heathrow's flights.**

Research by HECAN, the campaigning group against airport expansion, claims that 100,000 flights a year are to destinations accessible by high speed rail taking a comparable journey time. This compares with a current total of 480,000 flights overall.



The European cities receiving the most daily flights from London are Paris and Brussels, both of which can be as easily reached by rail. Amsterdam, also, is a popular destination for flights from Heathrow. At the moment, travel by rail involves a frustrating and time consuming change in Brussels.

It is not only flights to the near continent which can be challenged by rail. An improved service to Manchester recently added 5,000 additional seats each weekday at a speed comparable with air. A high speed line would improve on it and also compete with air on routes to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The only remaining advantage which air has on these short journeys is price and that should be dealt with by charging airlines the true cost of their fuel and also the disturbance and pollution they cause.

Chris Barker

## Gyratories continued from page 1

The remaining six schemes are mostly at an early stage of feasibility planning - Archway being typical in that an engineering study assessing the options only got under way in late 2007/early 2008, and even then only after political pressure was applied by GLA members. A common theme in many schemes is a dependence on funding from major development schemes for implementation. At Catford Town Centre Lewisham Council have for some years been pursuing a major redevelopment scheme, for which the re-alignment of the A205 South Circular is a requirement. However TfL funding for this will not be available until sometime after 2010. Equally at Archway TfL seem mesmerised by the lure of potential funding from a development scheme adjacent to the gyratory - which is now unlikely to be large enough to produce much funding. Both there and at Stoke Newington active local residents groups are campaigning for TfL to begin serious study of options for removal of the gyratory.

However proposals are further developed at Highbury Corner, where consultation finished in January 2008 on alternative

schemes for re-connecting the island in the centre of the gyratory to its surroundings and improving the public realm.

Perhaps the greatest impact of any scheme, if implemented, will be that of the 'crown jewel' of gyratory removal, the project for returning the Tottenham Court Rd/Gower St gyratory system to two-way working. The major outcome to date is a proposal to create 'Euston Circus' at the junction of Euston, Hampstead and Tottenham Court Roads. Developed by the urban designer Terry Farrell, this would consist of improved and simplified pedestrian routes, bus improvements and the release of some carriageway for public open space, all brought together as a proposed public square. Camden Council are further investigating the restoration of two-way working on Tottenham Court Rd and Gower St and have commissioned studies of the traffic impacts and of the potential for urban realm improvements (including better cycle facilities and wider pavements), both of which will report in summer 2008. If funding can be found for these proposals, and they

are implemented, they will have a dramatic impact both on Bloomsbury and on the eastern edge of the West End. However the rebuilding of Tottenham Court Rd station over the next five years is likely to prove a significant barrier to implementation.

Since 2002 there have been welcome developments in the campaign to secure the removal of gyratory systems, with some progress on at least 11 schemes (not counting the recent announcement about Parliament Square). Several of these, widely spread across London, are likely to be implemented during the next few years, while options for the massive Tottenham Court Rd/Gower St system are being actively pursued. The promised initial assessment of all major gyratories should provide much needed policy guidance for the eventual removal of all London systems. However there remain some significant pitfalls, in particular the need for continuing political support, a real shortage of funding, and the umbilical connection of many schemes to adjacent developments whose prospects are equally uncertain.

Norman Beddington