

Boris: What now for transport?



Ten days after the election it is too early to judge the transport policies and performance of the new Mayor.

So far he has made one transport appointment. Kulveer Ranger, vice-chair of the Conservative Party for cities, has been appointed Director of Transport Policy. His job is to liaise between the mayor and Transport for London.

In the last decade or so London's standing has improved; it has become a hugely attractive and interesting place for people from other countries. It has been fashionable again. How much of this is due to Livingstone and to his transport policies is debatable. Undoubtedly London has recently been a beacon of progressive transport. With the big improvements in buses, the Oyster Card and integrated ticketing, the increase in cycling and of course the congestion charge, London has been a model for other cities in the UK and even elsewhere. Supporters of these changes

must be concerned that London's enlightened stance is now at risk.

Johnson's manifesto both provokes that concern and gives some reassurance. First the negative side. Campaign for Better Transport was strongly in favour of the Emissions Related Congested Charge, which would have introduced a £25 charge for the gas-guzzling sports cars and 'Chelsea tractors' in Group G. This will not now go ahead. The original congestion charge itself is in also danger: Johnson has said he will consult on the Western Extension of the Congestion Charge Zone and abandon it if that's what the residents want.

The old issue of traffic light timings resurfaced during the campaign. Johnson promised to make traffic flow more smoothly by re-phasing traffic lights. Indeed he sees smoother traffic flows as essential to reducing carbon emissions. But will this just mean more traffic and worse

conditions for pedestrians? Despite a friendly stance on cycling, Johnson does not seem to appreciate the role that walking must play in a modern urban transport system. In an interview on the Jeremy Vine show during the campaign, he said that "as a cyclist, pedestrians are the most dangerous features on the road". His manifesto was lukewarm on 20 mph limits.

On the other hand, as a cyclist himself, Johnson really does seem intent on making London a 'truly cycle-friendly city' as his manifesto claims. Like the other candidates he will introduce a bike hire scheme in central London. It's not otherwise obvious what form his pro-cycling policies will take; apart from funding 13,000 bike parking stands he mentions no other plans to invest in cycling facilities.

Tacitly Johnson accepts Transport for London's investment programme which includes the major projects such as Crossrail, the East London Line and the DLR extensions. He did say that he was opposed to the Thames Gateway Bridge 'in its current form'. But will cosmetic changes be enough to make him change his mind? Some of his headline proposals were on buses. Bendy buses will be phased out and he'll hold a competition to design a new Routemaster. Whether these can be introduced within the time and the budget he claimed – they will have conductors – remains to be seen. But his proposals for more police will reassure those who find travelling on public transport intimidating, particularly at night. Johnson, like the other candidates, thinks something must be done about Oxford Street; his preference was for a tram.

As the campaign went on it became clear that Johnson's strategy was to court the voters of outer London. Here he echoed a criticism we and others had often made of Livingstone's transport policies; that they focused on Zone 1 and not on the outer London boroughs where two-thirds of Londoners live. We would welcome a transport programme that made good this omission.

None of the main Mayoral candidates supported the expansion of Heathrow. Johnson however professed himself in favour of building a brand new airport in the middle of the Thames Estuary. This might relieve the impact of aircraft movements on the London electorate. It would do nothing to reduce the growing climate change emissions from aviation.

A mixed picture then. At this stage of the Mayoralty one can only hope that Johnson has noticed for himself that progressive, enlightened transport policies are an essential part of a successful modern city.

Richard Bourn

Welcome to the third issue of our Newsletter which 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.

To contact the group write to Chris Barker, Campaign for Better Transport, 46 Redston Road, London N8 7HJ. email: c.barker@lineone.net: phone 020 8347 7684.

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.

Lib Dems warm to ULR

Brian Paddick's mayoral manifesto contained quite a few good ideas on transport. Amongst them is support for ultra light rail which we have been championing. He proposed that the routes currently busy enough to warrant bendy buses are those which should be tackled first and he mentioned 25 from Oxford Circus to Ilford and 453 from Waterloo to Deptford. We will press the mayor to continue with this idea.

The manifesto also repeated the Lib Dem idea of building a branch of the Cross-River tram to serve Oxford Street. Although we like the idea of reducing traffic in Oxford Street we are not happy with this idea. As we say elsewhere, these large, fast trams are not the most suitable vehicles to provide the hop-on, hop-off service which is required. ULR is a much better idea which will in any case appear in Oxford Street if the 25 bus is converted.

New money for Walking and Cycling

Will it Survive a Change of Mayor ?



During the run-up to the recent Mayoral elections, and just before the 'purdah' period preventing the announcement of new initiatives came into effect, Ken Livingstone announced that no less than £500m would be spent on new cycling initiatives over the next 10 years.

This sum was over and above the £62m already announced for the 2007-8 financial year. Labelled a 'bold new approach', this package was intended to capitalise on the fact that TfL's existing target of 0.5m annual journeys by cycle by 2010 has already been met in 2008, and is in the context of new targets of 0.9 m journeys by 2012, and 1.7m, or a 5% modal share by 2025. If achieved this would represent a 400% growth over 2008.

The cycling package consists of three strands:

- ◆ bike hire - along the lines of the wildly successful Velocity in Paris, making 6000 bikes available at docking stations at 300m intervals and at railway stations and other major attractions;
- ◆ cycling corridors along about 12 easily-accessible routes into Central London, aligned with known high volume routes, the LCN+, and bus lanes; high-profile, clear signage on, through and near the corridor; improved safety for all cyclists due to increased flows; first corridor in place by 2010
- ◆ bike zones in inner and outer London, covering a 5km radius

around town centres comprising 20 mph speed limits where feasible, cycle priority streets, greenways, and a well-signed network of routes linking schools, stations, residential areas and workplaces.

This attractive programme, if effectively implemented, would fill three major gaps in current cycling provision - the ability to access a bike in Central London without having to bring it with you from the suburbs (with a greatly-reduced risk of theft); safe and easy commuter routes into Central London; and local networks of cycle-friendly routes providing access to town centres, schools, stations and other key destinations.

The walking component of the package is built on two major strands, and it is designed to be the major means of achieving an objective of 22% modal share by 2025 - 7m journeys, which will be a 25% increase on the 2000 figure.

Strand one is Legible London, which will consist of on-street signage and information in Central London to help walkers make short trips they don't know how to make on foot. It is currently being piloted in Bond Street, and is intended to be rolled out to the Olympics area by 2012, and to major town centres by 2015.

Strand two is Streets of Gold. The core of this programme is the creation of pedestrian-friendly areas within 1/4-mile catchment areas linking shops, schools and stations. Better infrastructure and

pedestrian-centred design will be welcoming for pedestrians and discourage short trips by car - and generally promote walking as a way of getting around.

The walking programmes will fulfil an important role in pioneering new signage and information systems and establishing new models for pedestrian-centred street design. All of these initiatives will be supported by TfL's existing programmes to promote walking and cycling, and come on top of the £3.5m recently secured by cycling charity Sustrans for six key cycle routes in London boroughs. They clearly represent a 'step-change' in the promotion of sustainable transport modes in London, and it is to be hoped that the new Mayor, so often seen on his bike, will see fit to give these initiatives the support they deserve.

Norman Beddington



A cycle bridge for the Thames

More environmentally friendly than the Thames Gateway Bridge which is designed mainly for cars, is Sustrans' proposal for a 250 metre lifting bridge across the Thames for walkers and cyclists. The bridge would link Southwark with Canary Wharf and form part of walking and cycling plans for the Olympic Games. TfL has called the plan 'ambitious' but is working with Sustrans on a business case for it.

London's Green Transport Revolution

The new Mayor has the opportunity to modernise London's public transport surface system by up-grading old-fashioned, unacceptable diesel buses to modern, low-noise, non-polluting light trams, powered by renewable fuel made locally from recycled waste. The tram infrastructure will also be available for the collection of refuse, which can be brought at night to the anaerobic digestion (AD) plants for the production of the transport fuel. The digestate from the AD plants will be used for fertiliser on allotments and farms in and around London. The same infrastructure can also be used for the distribution of goods to shopping areas to reduce the number of HGVs entering London. The cost of the system will be compensated for by the uplift in property values.

Other towns and cities in Europe and elsewhere have initiated schemes for introducing renewable non-polluting fuels (Lille, Stockholm etc). Tram projects, using expensive conventional tram technology, have proliferated on the continent leaving the UK behind. However London will be the first city in the world to combine low-cost light trams, using bus technology, with low-noise, non-polluting renewable fuels, which will provide energy security in the face of increasing oil prices. People will come from all over the world to see this revolution in low-cost Green Transport, which can be in place in good time for the Olympics in 2012 if the new Mayor moves decisively.

James Skinner

Smart travel schemes

TfL has been working with Sutton for some years in a bid to test out behaviour change measures to reduce car use. The programme has seen the borough work with employers, schools, residents and visitors to encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling by using workplace and school travel planning and car club promotion.

Richmond is now being rewarded for its pioneering work in introducing differential parking charges related to a vehicle's carbon emission (see CBT London newsletter, September 2007) with a £5million award for a three year Smarter Travel Richmond package.



Reducing traffic in Oxford Street

Ten years ago a group of business people came together to form what was to become the New West End Company to tackle, as they saw it, the decline of the Oxford Street area as a desirable destination.

The issues on which they focussed were the overall quality of the public realm and, particularly, the issue of transportation and traffic pollution.

Private cars had been banned from Oxford Street during the working day for many years but the pedestrian experience was still one of wall to wall noise and pollution from buses and taxis. The big question was how to reduce this nuisance whilst still allowing easy access to the area for visitors.

One solution is to ban traffic from main streets altogether. In

2005 Oxford Street was closed for a day and visitors were able to use the whole width of the street for walking, strolling and chatting. This one day a year experiment has been repeated each year. In 2007, Living Streets, formerly the Pedestrians Association, carried out a survey of visitors' reactions to the closure. Those surveyed were overwhelmingly in favour, most saying that they would spend more time in Oxford Street and visit more often if the street was closed to traffic.

Although Living Streets favours the permanent closure of Oxford Street to all motor traffic including buses and taxis, this is a view not shared by the New West End Company, or by Westminster City Council or Transport for London. The immediate issue is visitor access. There are over 165,000 passenger boardings and alightings from buses in Oxford Street on a typical weekday and buses account for one in five trips to and from Oxford Street. 18 routes actually run along the street. Would people make the trip if they had to get off the bus and walk? And where would all these buses go if they were not allowed on Oxford Street?

When Simon Hughes was standing for Mayor of London he came up with a scheme to tackle this issue. Many of the routes would be diverted, resulting, for example,

in an additional three routes in Piccadilly. Others would terminate at Marble Arch (six routes) or Centre Point (four routes). Oxford Street itself would be traversed by a branch of TfL's proposed cross-river tram. The suggestion was rejected out of hand by TfL. Many passengers would be inconvenienced by being set down at a distance from their destination or would have to change onto the tram. Through passengers would particularly suffer as they would have to change, often twice. From an operating point of view there were more serious problems: how would it be possible to find terminating and interchange facilities at Marble Arch and Centre Point? How could other roads, such as Piccadilly, cope with the extra buses?

One radical proposal recently put forward in an article by the transport engineer Tam Parry, and published in the 2nd-15th May 2008 edition of *Local Transport Today* advocates the simplification of the Central London bus network. This would mean that, as on the tube network, only one or two key routes at most would traverse Oxford St, and passengers originating from outside Central London would interchange with the key routes at Marble Arch, Centre Point, or at other interchanges on the edge of Central London. A route

would thus be cleared for a shuttle tram or bus along Oxford St.

The tram idea was embraced by Ken Livingstone although still rejected by TfL. However, Boris Johnson, the incoming Mayor is on record as being in favour of a tram. The Campaign for Better Transport supports the idea of a shuttle tram, but, instead of the large, fast vehicles envisaged for that service, would prefer an ultra-light rail system with vehicles which can run slowly and stop frequently and, being light and powered by a hydrogen alkaline or fuel cell generator, would require light track and no other infrastructure.

Westminster City Council, Transport for London and the New West End Company have now published their Oxford Street, Regent Street and Bond Street Action Plan. Disappointingly they have ruled out any suggestion of full scale pedestrianisation of Oxford Street and the idea of a tram scheme. Instead they want to concentrate on widened pavements, a phased reduction in traffic and a series of side street 'oases'. Welcome as these proposals are, the major issue of reclaiming Oxford Street for pedestrians will not be met until the volume of buses and taxis is reduced. Ways to do this have yet to be tackled.

Chris Barker

A new bus network

A cross-party working group of London councillors has come up with a suggestion for rationalising the London bus network. The proposal involves a grid system of high frequency 'super-routes' on main corridors with feeder services connecting at interchange points. Such a system works very well in many European cities but, to maximise efficiency, the 'super-routes' are trams.

Although such a system could work in London it would not, under present legislation, be possible elsewhere in Britain where bus operators could not be prevented from operating competing services to the 'super-routes' instead of feeder services. This is precisely what happened to wreck the carefully designed system around the Tyneside metro system when buses were deregulated in 1985.

Friends of Capital Transport Campaign

We have just received the latest emailed newsletter from the Friends of Capital Transport Campaign, a sometimes idiosyncratic and always interesting commentary on public transport developments in London. It comes out every two months and anyone interested in improving public transport in London is welcome to join by sending their e-mail address to andrewbosi@aol.com.

20mph in Portsmouth

Last year the Government gave all local authorities the power to cut residential speed limits to 20 mph and Portsmouth became the first British city to take advantage of the offer. Eventually 187 miles of road will be affected.

The safety figures are compelling. There are already 400 20 mph zones in London ranging from zero in Chelsea to 30 in Tower Hamlets. According to the mayor's office, casualties in those areas fell by nearly 60 per cent after the limit came into force.

In other parts of the country there are prospects of still lower limits. If carried through, Government plans for a range of 'eco-towns' will aim to reduce the amount of private car journeys by at least 75 percent and see speed limits as low as 15 mph.

Information from the Institute of Advanced Motorists newsletter.

No more runways at Heathrow



The campaign to stop expansion at Heathrow is gathering strength. 70,000 people responded to the recent consultation.

20,000 attended nearly fifty public meetings held during the consultation period in January and February. And 3,000 people crammed into Central Halls, Westminster for an end-of-consultation rally.

The Government has been consulting on plans to significantly increase the number of flights using the existing runways at Heathrow and to build a third runway and sixth terminal. Flight numbers would go up by over 50%. The Government is expected to announce its decision in the summer or the autumn. If it

decides to approve the plans, it would then be up to BAA to come up with detailed proposals.

The Government has been taken aback by the strength of the campaign against expansion. The opposition includes not just local residents but also almost 20 local authorities, all the key Mayoral candidates, the London Assembly, the vast majority of MPs in West London and Berkshire, leading national environmental organisations such as Greenpeace and the Campaign for Better Transport as well as Plane Stupid, the direct action network, and environmentalists from across the country.

The Liberal Democrat, Green and Conservative parties are also opposed to the expansion proposals.

The opposition has attacked not only the environmental downsides of the proposals but also their economic justification. HACAN, which represents residents under the Heathrow flight paths, commissioned the independent Dutch consultancy CE Delft to carry out a major assessment of the economic impact of expansion. It found that

it would be negligible.

Whatever decision the Government comes to later this year, it is certain that the opposition campaign will continue and, indeed, intensify. Across the country an increasing number of people are seeing the fight against Heathrow expansion as the iconic battle in the campaign against the Government's national expansion plans for aviation. And it is not a fight we intend to lose.

◆ Details of the study are on the HACAN website: www.hacan.org.uk
John Stewart

John Stewart is the Chair of the Campaign for Better Transport

A huge march and rally is being organised to protest against expansion on Saturday 31st May. The march will be from Hatton Cross to end with a rally and carnival in Sipson (the village which would need to be knocked down to make way for a third runway). Assemble at Hatton Cross at 12 noon.

More details from www.hacan.org.uk or by calling 020 8847 1727.

Brent Cross scheme offers even more traffic

Barnet Council envisages 29,000 extra vehicle movements a day on roads around Brent Cross when their proposed massive development is complete. As an alternative the Campaign for Better Transport London group has published a proposal for a light rail line through the development, linking with Brent Cross station on the Northern line and continuing to Wembley and Park Royal using under-used freight corridors and requiring no land purchase. The new infrastructure would transform many people's travel options and, after Crossrail is built, it might stretch from Ealing Broadway in the west to Finchley Central in the east.

Barnet Council is currently consulting on the planning application for the scheme, even though the "Transport Assessment" will not be received by them until June. They have given a deadline of 30th May for comments on the transport aspects of the scheme. You are urged to do so.

You can live anywhere in London

to give comments to Barnet, because Brent Cross has always been classified as a "regional" shopping centre!

Go to www.barnet.gov.uk, and search on that site for "brent cross". The "first" result of the search tells you about the consultation, and the "second" result shows you the 2005 Barnet "Development Framework" document that the developers have responded to.

There is not enough high-quality public transport planned for the Brent Cross area of London, so our "Brent Cross Railway" needs to be seriously considered, perhaps alongside other ideas. The developers have been hostile to our ideas so far, so we may want to try to get the Government Office for London to "call the scheme in" to allow a public enquiry.

Finally, please come along to help us on our CBT stall at Brent's "Gladstonebury Festival" on 22 June 2008, in Gladstone Park, Kendal Road NW2.

John Cox

Integrating London's rail lines

It is TfL's aim to take control of all local rail lines in the London area and integrate them with its own system of tubes and buses.

One of the biggest affect of this would be the universal availability of the Oyster system which cannot yet be used on most of the national rail network.

However, progress is being made. The new national rail franchises require that all lines will be equipped for Oyster and TfL has won direct control of the former Silverlink network in north London. This system, rebranded as 'Overground', includes the line from Euston to Watford, but otherwise provides essential orbital links around London and will include the East London Line linking Highbury with West Croydon and Crystal Palace when it re-opens.

