

Is this the 'Way to Go'?

A personal view

The mayor's transport policy enshrined in his document 'Way to Go' envisages orbital bus services in outer London but new bus services on congested roads are mostly not feasible.

The outer boroughs need considerable investment in fast, orbital rail based public transport, to interconnect with the mostly 'radial only' rail and Underground lines. Only in this way will significant numbers

of people decide it is feasible to use public transport in outer London, instead of the motor car.

The recently announced upgrading of the orbital limited stop bus service from Croydon to Heathrow is useful, but such a solution is impossible in many outer boroughs. However, in North London a different solution is possible. There are hardly used freight railway lines (the Dudding Hill line



South London orbital in the 1970s

and the Midland Main Line freight tracks) as well as abandoned track beds (parts of the Mill Hill East to Edgware line, and within the Wembley and Park Royal industrial estates) that could be considered for rail based solutions.

North London has several massive London Plan redevelopment areas (Park Royal, Wembley, Brent Cross, Colindale and Mill Hill East) where planning gain from development could be directed by City Hall at funding a light rail system like the Docklands Light Railway. This could be done at modest cost, given the existing routes mentioned above. Campaign for Better Transport's plan for the Brent Cross Railway (see the CBT website: www.bettertransport.org.uk) is one such proposal.

New motive power, such as biogas from London's waste, could be investigated instead of electricity, but still making use of the same body shells as DLR trains. Such a light rail system could then be extended due east, to serve the Upper Lea Valley, where there are no east-west rail lines north of the

Gospel Oak to Barking line. All this would meet considerable suppressed demand, and might slightly reduce radial travel in peak hours.

City Hall should review the current piecemeal redevelopment plans of the major brown field sites, and consider the considerable planning gain investment they could give to public transport if considered collectively. For instance, the Brent Cross and Colindale developments in Barnet are being studied separately, even though they will share the same Northern Line underground branch. The developers of Brent Cross just say 'we were there first with a planning application, so Colindale is not our problem.'

In general, the 'area action plans' for many of the development areas just offer new bus services, even though considering them together might well allow the funding of rail-based solutions. The boroughs are not thinking strategically enough, even though they are theoretically grouped together in 'alliances' of boroughs. So there is a big mess and Boris must step in.

John Cox

End to Western Congestion Charge Zone

The mayor promised to consult on the future of the western extension to the London congestion charge. His consultation revealed that 67 per cent of individuals who responded said they wanted the zone abolished so steps are to be put in place to remove it. Counting only people who respond to consultation is one way to measure opinion although Transport for London in a survey which actually went out to ask people concluded that the majority wanted it kept.

This is not, however, the final chance for those who support the scheme to make their feelings known. Next summer there will be a 12 week statutory public and stakeholder consultation and TfL will also have to consult before they can formally remove the charge.

London TravelWatch called it a significant decision, signalling a sea change in transport policy in London and said that we now needed to see substantive alternative proposals for addressing congestion and ensuring that buses and essential car vehicles move freely in the western zone.

Articulated buses not so bad

London TravelWatch has reported on the proposal to replace bendy buses with conventional buses on routes 38, 507 and 521, the first

bendy bus routes to come up for review. Their conclusion is that the case for replacing these buses is weak. Congestion would be greater because there would be a need for more buses – up by 80% on route 507. Dwell time at stops would increase. Manoeuvring around corners would be harder. Costs would increase because, although bendy buses are more expensive there is a need for less of them.

There are two common criticisms of bendy buses: that they inadvertently provide a 'free' service and that they are dangerous for cyclists. However, TfL say that, although there is a problem of fare evasion this is only marginally greater than with conventional buses. Part of the reason is no doubt that a large proportion of passengers have either pre-paid or free tickets. As far as cyclists are concerned records show that their safety record is not significantly different from buses on similar (that is busy, central London) routes.

Outer London

One of Boris Johnson's criticisms of Ken Livingstone was his jibe that Livingstone was a 'zone 1 mayor', with his interests concentrated too much on inner London. To counteract this he is to set up a new Outer London Commission. Amongst the policies he intends to pursue are a network of fast orbital bus routes and a concentration on revitalising outer London town centres.

New hybrids for London

TfL has announced that a fleet of 56 hybrid buses will be introduced in early 2009 and a further 300 by 2011, some of them being double deckers. They expect them to reduce emissions of CO₂ by 40 per cent.

The mayor's target is to reduce emissions in London by 60 per cent by 2025 and this will certainly contribute, although recent research suggests that this is not enough to stave off a climate catastrophe.

The way to reduce it further would be to do what TfL and the mayor seem to have set their hearts against, that is progressively replacing fossil fuel powered buses on major routes with trams powered by renewable electricity.

EU slates Britain on pollution

The EU environmental commissioner is taking Britain to court over breaching air pollution laws. It seems particularly bad in London where PM10 emissions from diesel engines and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution massively exceed air pollution laws.

In this context it seems that Ken Livingstone's imposition of congestion charging and the establishment of the low emission zone, far from being draconian, were essential steps to get Britain back into line. Any suggestion that these measures should be pared back would clearly make matters worse. Such news also sharpens the case against a third runway at Heathrow. Aviation is a significant contributor to NO₂ pollution.



Opening up the bus industry's closed shop

2009 looks like being a tough year. The DfT and Local Authorities need, now more than ever, to make the most of their limited resources by deciding where the transport priorities lie and how best to achieve them – at minimum cost.

The most urgent needs are plain enough. They are:

- ◆ eliminating carbon emissions from traffic, to combat climate change
- ◆ eliminating toxic emissions from traffic, to improve air quality
- ◆ maximising energy security, so we are not vulnerable to disruptions in energy supplies
- ◆ maximising energy efficiency, to get more passenger kilometres per unit of energy
- ◆ encouraging people to use public transport by providing what they want and
- ◆ achieving best value for money – using less money but tackling these problems, not ignoring them.

It is obvious that these objectives cannot be achieved by a continuation of 'business as usual' – innovation will be essential. New vehicles and transport systems are urgently needed. Diesel powered vehicles have to be replaced by new, more efficient vehicles, powered by different forms of renewable energy, such as biomethane made from recycled waste or green electricity that does not come from coal-fired power stations. Trams are needed to boost public transport patronage and save energy. At present the only 'innovations' being considered are different kinds of diesel buses. This is perverse,

now that we all recognise that fossil fuels have to be phased out if we are to reduce carbon emissions and prepare for ever higher diesel prices when the economy recovers.

Now that conventional light rail has become too expensive for all but the biggest cities in the UK, low-cost tram or ultra light rail is the obvious alternative. Diesel buses do not have the public appeal required to encourage people to leave their cars behind and use public transport. Ultra light rail offers the opportunity to substitute trams for buses at a comparable cost. The increased energy efficiency of the rail vehicles allows them to make the best use of renewable fuels such as biomethane, made locally from recycled waste.

In the UK the introduction of ultra light rail has been held back by the DfT's apparent determination to give preference to diesel buses. Despite its protestations of 'mode neutrality' the DfT still insists that Local Authorities have to find 25% of the cost of light rail schemes but only 10% of bus projects. Worse still, Government procurement procedure can make it virtually impossible for any form of light rail to compete with buses directly in open public tenders. Under present DfT rules the mode of transport has to be pre-determined by Local Authorities on the advice of private consultants, who often have close links with the bus industry, their principal clients. This can have the effect of creating a virtual closed shop for the bus industry, thereby stifling

innovation and preventing low-cost incremental improvement to public transport. This is in nobody's best interest, except that of the bus industry.

This procedure needs to be changed by throwing open the public tender process to allow suppliers of rail-based vehicles to bid against suppliers of rubber-tired vehicles in open public tenders. Since both systems use similar vehicle technology, performance and reliability are equally assured.

These priorities can best be achieved by confining the role of consultants to advising local authorities on the principal requirements and basic specifications for any new transport service.

The tender specifications for suppliers can then be drawn up without specifying the mode and without excluding any innovative offers. The essential requirements for the specification will include the following:

- ◆ a single chosen agreed route
- ◆ a minimum acceptable patronage, which the promoters can demonstrate is achievable and which is used for value-for-money assessments.
- ◆ a minimum service specification which the operator

must achieve.

- ◆ minimum environmental requirements.

This system will enable those tendering to meet all the essential requirements of the service but will leave open both the mode of transport and the type of fuel to be used. Tendering companies will thus be free to compete in these two crucial areas. This will provide a strong and much needed incentive for innovation. There are numerous UK and other European manufacturing companies (mostly small and medium-sized enterprises) which will be willing and able to bid for the supply of low-cost, hybrid, ultra light trams. Suppliers will, of course, be required to provide the normal guarantees for the performance and reliability of their vehicles but at least they will have the chance to compete directly with the bus companies who currently enjoy a virtual monopoly through never having to bid against suppliers of alternative vehicles. This will open the door to innovation, without which we shall never make any progress towards achieving our transport priorities.

James Skinner, Sustraco Ltd

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.



Boris's record six months on



The direction of the mayor's transport policies is becoming depressingly clear.

Boris Johnson has set out his first thoughts on the revision of his transport strategy in the discussion document 'Way to Go'. His protestations that City Hall has not been captured by 'J Bonington Jagsworth of the Motorists' Liberation Front' are looking more hollow by the day.

Having cancelled the planned Emissions Related Congestion Charge shortly after the election, Boris has now announced that he will abolish the Western Extension of the Congestion Charging Zone as well. TfL had reported that traffic in the Western Extension had gone down by 10% since the extension of the charge. The fact that there had been no corresponding improvement in congestion was mostly due to road and development works. Now inevitably, traffic will rise again (above the original level) and congestion and carbon emissions with it.

Johnson has adopted a misguided notion of 'mode neutrality', abandoning the progressive road user hierarchy, which puts the needs of pedestrians and cyclists first, public transport users in the middle and car traffic last. Now TfL is required

No more road humps

No one likes road humps but it has been accepted that they are a necessary measure to slow traffic. Drivers might more readily keep below 20 mph if this were the norm in residential streets. In this connection the initiatives of Portsmouth, and now Newcastle, where all residential streets are to have a 20 mph limit, are worth watching. There is no physical restraints in place, only the installation of traffic signs.

to develop plans to pursue Boris's impossible dream of reducing congestion by smoothing traffic flow. Increasing capacity at traffic light and other junctions will increase traffic – this is road building without building any roads. It can only make congestion worse. Will no-one tell the emperor that he's wearing no clothes?

And as road traffic is boosted the alternatives are cut. The publication of TfL's Business Plan showed

that resources are to be focused on the construction of Crossrail and the modernisation of the tube. But there is no money in the Plan to continue even the planning of other major public transport projects including Cross River Tram, the Croydon Tramlink Extension, an Oxford Street tram or the DLR extension to Dagenham Dock (on which major Thames Gateway developments depend). London now has no tram investment project.

One great thing: the Thames Gateway Bridge has finally been cancelled, a successful outcome to years of campaigning by us and others. Our joy is only tempered by apprehension about its mooted replacement; the Silvertown Link would double the capacity of the Blackwall Tunnel.

Even Boris the cyclist has started to disappoint. Funding for the London Cycling Network Plus has been halved (a saving that equals the cost of altering traffic lights to allow more time for cars). Motor bikes are now to be allowed in bus lanes with no proper idea of the effects on pedestrian or cyclist safety. In general there is no love lost in the current administration

for bus lanes, one of the big achievements of the last Mayor, and there are even murmurs about 'reviews' of the original congestion charge zone.

Apparently nothing must now stand in the way of motor traffic capacity and movement. The scheme for the pedestrianisation of Parliament Square has been cancelled because of the loss of road space and the regeneration proposals for the Elephant and Castle have been altered to prevent restrictions on traffic flow. In the last issue we reported the cancellation of Livingstone's 100 Spaces Programme which would have reversed decades of traffic domination in many strategic locations.

There is no satisfaction in all this. Time after time increasing capacity has been shown not to work as a means of tackling congestion; now it is to be tried yet again. In the last few years London had shaken off its reputation as the laggard among major European cities and had become one of the pioneers.

Now it's losing its status as a leader in progressive transport policies.

Richard Bourn

Access to Health Sites

The forthcoming centralisation of health centres brings transport problems for patients.

Brent Council has established a working party to investigate. Other councils might like to take up this initiative.

Healthcare in London is on the verge of major change.

Primary care trusts and acute healthcare providers are starting to implement Lord Ara Darzi's vision of health services in the capital, set out in his report, Healthcare for London – A Framework for Action. At the heart of Darzi's vision was the creation of a world class health service, with a strong focus on quality and giving patients more choice over the services they receive.

However, even if London does have a world class healthcare system, it will be irrelevant if people are not able to access those services. Public transport has a crucial role to play to ensure people get the healthcare they need. Ahead of the forthcoming developments,

Brent Council's Health Select Committee established a task group to look at public transport access to health sites in the borough. The focus of the group's work was on current public transport access to health sites as well as work that is taking place to improve access in the future. The task group was interested in access to hospitals and primary care facilities in Brent.

The key issue that the task group believes should be addressed above all others to improve public transport access to health sites is to strengthen working relationships, particularly between parts of the NHS in Brent and Transport for London. The task group would like to see early involvement of transport providers and Brent Council's Transportation Unit in health service planning. Identifying potential transport issues when services are in the planning stage will allow all parties to work on solutions before new services are opened and the task group has made a number of recommendations to address this point.

The task group found that there is already a great deal of work taking place to improve access to health sites in Brent, particularly in the acute sector. For example, the Northwick Park Public

Transport Liaison Group works to improve transport access to the hospital site. Setting up a similar group might be something other hospitals want to consider.

Improving public transport access to primary care presents more of a challenge given the number of sites involved. The task group has made recommendations about the location of services and travel plan requirements for primary care facilities to try and address some of these issues. Improving access to primary care facilities will be particularly important if services are moved from hospital settings and into community facilities in line with Healthcare for London's proposals.

The task group hopes that by carrying out this review and making recommendations directly to NHS Brent, North West London NHS Hospitals Trust, Transport for London and Brent Council, it can raise the profile of transport issues in the health sector and ensure that they are fully considered when services are being planned.

Councillor Chris Leaman
Chair, Health Select Committee
London Borough of Brent

Copies of the report are available from the Local Democracy Team at Brent Council. Call 020 8937 1609 for more information.

Plans for Kings Cross a disaster for pedestrians



This is where a pedestrian and cycle bridge over Kings Cross station could once again be sited

Kings Cross Station in central London is now undergoing a £400 million redevelopment programme.

For the most part, this is likely to be of great benefit with the ugly plastic frontage being removed to reveal the original Lewis Cubitt design, a new public square where the main Euston Road entrance stands and a brand new semi-circular concourse diagonally opposite the entrance to St Pancras solving the chronic overcrowding problem that has always dogged the station.

However, there remains one glaring error in the redesign: total lack of permeability. In the new station there will be one entrance and one exit to Kings Cross. Everyone entering will do so through the new concourse. Everyone leaving will do so through what is now the Euston Road entrance. This flies in the face of best practice in urban design, places station users at greater risk should another disaster strike Kings Cross, shuts out the over 17,000 strong local community. It also ends the potential for a continuous Angel Islington to Marylebone cycle and pedestrian route avoiding the highly congested A501 ring road which includes Pentonville Road, Euston Road and Marylebone Road.

Yet Network Rail and LB Camden (the planning authority for Kings Cross Station) refuse to implement what would be a straightforward solution.

In the context of the current design and recognising that it would not be practical at this stage to go back to the drawing board, this is for a pedestrian and cycle bridge at the rear of the station. Simple.

A bridge stood at this position from 1872 to after the first world war. The foundations for it still exist, a remnant of it can be seen at the junction of Wharfdale Road and York Way – but this north eastern entrance to the station will be closing soon as Network Rail builds a new 'Platform Y' to take the longer and more modern trains that will hopefully one day run once the tracks to the north are upgraded.

This solution has the active support of local residents and businesses and a number of local politicians including the Chair of the London Assembly, Green Party principle speakers, one of the two local Labour MPs and both Lib Dem prospective parliamentary candidates and the vast majority of local councillors.

The cost? Network Rail estimates the cost of such a bridge would be £4 million or 1 per cent of the redevelopment budget and very comfortably within its contingency fund. There are possibly reasons why the bridge is not wanted by Network Rail or Argent, the company developing the railway lands site behind the station, but neither is saying anything on the subject.

The campaign to open up Kings Cross Station will have submitted its 1000 strong petition to Government on the issue by the time you read this. They are not expecting great things as a result but are planning to step up the campaign in 2009 with a series of public events. If you'd like to know more subscribe to the campaign blog at www.kingscrossaccess.com.

Sophie Talbot

No to Terminal 3: No to Thames Estuary Airport

Steven Norris has added his voice to those who are opposed to expanding Heathrow and instead advocate a high speed rail solution. Unlike Boris Johnson, however, he is also opposed to the idea of building a new airport in the Thames Estuary. Instead transport should be improved by new high speed rail lines. Norris, former Conservative minister, a founder patron of Transport 2000 (now the Campaign for Better Transport) and currently a member of the Board of Transport for London was speaking at CBT's London group AGM on 11th November on the future of transport in London under the new mayor.

Enforcing 20mph limits The Case for Time and Distance monitoring



London Forum approved Ken Livingstone's proposals for traffic speed controls to be operated by time-and-distance monitoring.

This system would use cameras with numberplate recognition and would result in vehicle owners receiving an automatic penalty notice for speeding. It would enable 'rat-runs' that crossed borough boundaries and which used residential streets to be monitored by such a system over some distance.

Such a system would obviate the need for expensive road humps and chicanes. Humps particularly cause problems with drivers braking on approach and accelerating away,

consuming more energy, increasing noise and adding to pollution. Residents complain about the noise from vehicles hitting speed humps during the night-time and disturbing sleep. The humps are disliked by drivers of ambulances and other public service vehicles for the effect they have on passengers and goods being transported.

Budgets for all that expensive 'hardware' are limited and result in fewer speed limiting schemes than required. The 'time-and-distance' monitoring of vehicle speed costs less, results in penalties, conditions drivers' behaviour, facilitates borough cooperation, covers larger areas and deals better with varying speed limits.

Boris Johnson's published intention to leave traffic speed management to the boroughs, rather than implementing a 20mph limit on non-distributor roads, is unsatisfactory unless he insists upon 'time-and-distance' monitoring methods and enforcement by linked camera systems.

Community groups want safer roads without their streets being adversely affected by physical methods of vehicle speed limiting. Residents do not think the flashing signs make drivers slow down and they are not keen to have them near to their homes.

Peter Eversden