

Crossrail

the Mayor's financial headache

The Government's decision to remove all subsidy from London's transport – making it the only major city in the world to attempt unsubsidised public transport – might have attracted more protest.

Although the Underground covers its costs from fares, buses have never done so. The decision though was tempered by the news that TfL would keep all the revenue from Crossrail. The Mayor's transport budget was thus heavily dependent on the Elizabeth Line opening on time.

Most new infrastructure suffers delays. The Jubilee Line is still remembered because nearly two years after the planned opening it struggled to deliver the great and the good to the Millennium Dome. More recently, the DLR from Stratford International to Canning Town was delayed by two years because of signalling problems. When the signalling was switched on, it confounded the system on the parallel Jubilee Line.

Problems had been evident for some time. In November 2017, an explosion at Pudding Mill Lane in a transformer (due to a slipshod contractor) set the project back by more than the time taken to repair the damage and re-

configure the fuses. The new trains, introduced on the Liverpool Street to Shenfield line earlier that year, were experiencing problems and it has recently been reported that the Transport Commissioner was told in Spring 2018 that they would be 18 months late. They could not be used on the Heathrow-Paddington line when that opened as part of TfL Rail in May. In spite of that, and a detailed presentation in July, the fiction of the December 2018 opening of the central section was maintained until the end of August 2018. Even Sir Terry Morgan, who has contradicted the Mayor's version about when he knew, claimed to be unaware of the extent of the problems when he took on the second role of chairing HS2. He was relieved of both roles months later. The Chief Executive of Crossrail has also fallen on his sword.

When Network Rail announced a postponement of many of the timetable improvements planned for December 2018, following the catastrophes that accompanied the May timetable, an ideal opportunity presented itself for Crossrail to come clean. At the end of August, the postponement was not to May 2019 as many had expected, but to Autumn

2019. The addition of several months, probably a year, to a timetable apparently only 15 weeks away, was intended to avoid the risk of any further embarrassing postponements but in the event it failed miserably. By the time funding arrangements for the completion of the project had been agreed the expected date of arrival had receded still further to some time in 2020. You might need 2020 vision to see the exact date.

The Mayor's continued adherence to his pledge to freeze fares irks the Transport Secretary, but the policy has shielded London from the downturn in use evident throughout the rest of the south-east. Conversely, cuts in bus services may fail to achieve savings as they drive passengers away. Of the four million passengers lost to the 73 as a result of its curtailment at Oxford Circus, only 1.5 million have migrated to the 390 which replaced it from there to Victoria. Austerity does not work.

A surer source of funding is the precept included in council tax bills. In the first year of the GLA this raised £20million for transport, but it was then reduced to £12million to off-set increased numbers working in City Hall. The Mayor is planning to further

increase that number, which may prove the most controversial aspect of his 2019/20 budget.

Another source which might reasonably be tapped is a modern version of the congestion charge. How the annual receipts tossed away when the western extension was abandoned would be welcome now! But the existing system no longer protects buses from congestion, with a consequent loss of passengers. The best thing about the financial crisis may be that it compels the speedy introduction of road pricing.

Andrew Bosi

Our Newsletter is sent out to our London members and other contacts. The group exists to campaign for sustainable transport solutions in London and to support the work of the Campaign nationally. If you have not already done so we would be pleased if you would also join our group and take part in our London based activities.

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Regular meetings of the group are held in central London. The Newsletter is edited by Chris Barker.

Contributors are welcomed. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Campaign for Better Transport. Previous issues of the newsletter can be found at <http://bettertransportlondon.org.uk>.





Autonomous cars are expected on London's streets within a decade and autonomous buses could follow.

Presumably TfL is working out how it might deploy them to develop London's bus services. Aside from the loss of driving jobs, autonomous buses could be beneficial in several ways but would, of course, present some issues. Here I speculate on the possibilities.

■ Most obviously, without drivers to pay: bus operation will be cheaper, thereby allowing lower fares and/or more frequent services. Being wholly electric, autonomous buses will be less polluting, more energy efficient, and more mechanically reliable, than present day buses - requiring much less servicing. In fact, if these future buses could

Autonomous Buses, a vision for the future

maintain their battery charge while operating, for example by inductive charging when paused at stops, it is likely they could operate continuously 24/7. Presumably there would be continuous automatic monitoring of their mechanics and mobile mechanical support, and of course they would need regular cleaning, perhaps by mobile crews, at bus stands at the ends of routes. So another economy would be fewer bus garages. (In the Brent Borough Plan the site of my local garage in Cricklewood is already designated for development. Is this a coincidence?)

Without a driver, fare collection is an issue. Some form of card and phone actuated e-turn-style will likely be necessary.

■ The very different economics of driverless buses suggests a range of possibilities for types of bus design and services.

Double-deckers are relatively capital expensive: driverless, their only virtue will be good capacity/road space occupancy, so will likely only have a future on the congested streets of Central London. Multiple

single-deck autonomous buses would therefore replace each double-decker on most routes giving shorter service intervals for the same capital cost.

The capital cost of single-deck autonomous buses will generally reduce with size, so smaller buses will allow more frequent services for the same cost. Probably the optimal size and service interval depends on the route, implying designs for several bus sizes.

Autonomous hail-and-ride local bus services, with their characteristic smaller buses, will benefit from autonomy: they will be cheaper to provide and so more routes and shorter service intervals would be economic.

How to hail an autonomous bus? Perhaps the answer is: request-stops at every street-lamp with hailing effected by pressing a button to switch on a signal light which is reset by the bus when it stops.

■ Without a driver's cabin, the interior space of an autonomous bus will be given over entirely to accommodation for passengers and their luggage. The design of passenger space in TfL's current buses pretty much

guarantees some seats remain unfilled and passengers are liable to have an uncomfortable experience as the bus fills up. The successful designs of TfL's newer trains suggest some

design principles for the interior of autonomous buses: aisle-facing seats around the internal perimeter of the cabin, except of course where there are doors. Wheels close to the four corners of the relatively light vehicle would allow semi-circular seating arrangements at both ends of the cabin, with pull-down seats around a clear central space for buggies, together with anchor points for shopping carts, opposite the entrance and exit doors.

Ensuring that passengers feel safe and are indeed safe is an issue. Passengers might be concerned about the possibility of being trapped in the presence of a violent person, or in a bus that had broken-down, or had been taken over by a criminal gang. Again, TfL's record with its train services is cause for optimism.

Peter Osmon

Old Oak Common cannot be the terminus for HS2

By 2026 all fast trains from Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh will use the HS2 line.

It is ludicrous to expect Old Oak Common in west London to cope with such passenger numbers, plus clean and service those trains, without massive extra investment - all of it wasted when HS2 at Euston station finally opens.

Some passengers will still need to transfer at Old Oak Common to avoid overloading Euston. Yet there is no current funding for London Overground stations there. Only the Treasury can break the log-jam.

Full marks however to west London council leaders - they have independently developed a West London Orbital scheme via Old Oak Common, reopening the Dudding Hill railway closed in 1902. With 8-car platforms this can provide long-distance links as important as the successful Milton Keynes-South Croydon trains via Shepherds Bush. Not all trains have to run to and from the central London terminuses.

John Cox

BRENT CROSS

Although the Brent Cross Shopping Centre expansion north of the North Circular Road has collapsed, Barnet Council seems determined to get into the railway business. It now wants Thameslink platforms by 2022 at Staples Corner, ten years earlier than planned. It assumes that even the first blocks of new housing to the south of the North Circular cannot be delivered without them.

Unfortunately, further platforms for the Mayor-supported 'West London Orbital Railway' (reopening the freight-only Dudding Hill line via Old Oak Common HS2/Crossrail) cannot be included unless Barnet delays its Thameslink-only station for a year. It refuses to do so.

Capita has now awarded Capita £50,000 (Barnet is that sort of borough) for a new report. This will consider much inferior sites for WLO platforms. They would be cumbersome for passengers to reach and increase the WLO project's budget - not a problem for the borough of short-termism, Barnet.

Closure of overground booking offices

Following the removal of booking offices from Underground stations TfL are now proposing to close 51 stations on the Overground system. Transport for All is organising a campaign against these closures. They say that many disabled and older people, including those with a learning difficulty, visually impaired people, deaf and hard of hearing people, and those who are simply unfamiliar with computers, find it difficult or impossible to use ticket machines – especially when making more complicated requests, such as registering a Disabled Person's Railcard to an Oyster.

London's pedestrian crossings

What is to be done?



Asking Londoners how they experience using London's crossings

In September and October 2018, some 35 Londoners dedicated many hours of their time to a survey of pedestrian experiences on London's signalised crossings. Organised by London Living Streets, and working with Signals engineers at Transport for London who selected 12 representative crossings, we spoke to nearly 2,000 people who had just crossed the road. We asked them questions and recorded their views. The engineers then reduced the wait times on these crossings and we returned a few weeks later and surveyed another 2,000 Londoners. Not surprisingly,

few of them had noticed the change, let alone could identify what it was. But their rating of those crossings where wait times had been reduced significantly (often by 50%) rose sharply. At some subliminal level, they were aware that their crossing experience had improved! TfL is now in the process of examining wait times on all London crossings, and reducing them where possible.

Where do we go from here?

Getting pedestrian wait times on signalised crossings reduced is only a first step. In our survey the most often mentioned improvement Londoners want is a longer time

provided for by the signals actually to get across the road. The present Department for Transport guidelines as to the walking speed highway authorities should assume is unrealistically fast, in particular for elderly people, parents with small children and buggies, and disabled people.

There are also other things that need to be done. Some signalised junctions still have no green man provision at all for pedestrians to cross the road safely. For example, Cheyne Walk in Chelsea where pedestrians going to and fro from Battersea Park have to take their lives in their hands. Another change must be to install Countdown indicators informing pedestrians how many seconds they still have to cross the road. Not all signalised crossings have these. They are essential for reassuring vulnerable road users. What's more, TfL should develop what Spain has (Malaga is an example): when the lights are allowing the traffic to flow, Countdown informs pedestrians how long they still have to wait before it will be their turn.

Creating a virtuous circle

London Living Streets will be taking up all these, and other, improvements to our crossings.

Our aim is to create a virtuous circle of changes on London's streets. We must enable Londoners on foot to cross the road more safely, and feeling secure while doing so, and not waiting for long periods breathing in vehicle emissions. We also need a lower speed limit – 20mph on all London residential roads, shopping streets, and around schools. And changes to carriageway design – in particular, tighter-angled corners at intersections and raised straight-across pavements making clear to drivers they must wait for pedestrians before they drive across into the next road. London's boroughs must also join TfL in making the Vision Zero approach a reality. We do not tolerate deaths and serious injuries on our tubes and trains, or at our airports and in the air. We must move, like Sweden, to the same goal on our roads. But in the end Londoners, when on foot, will only regain the rightful place on the street when many more of us choose to walk and cycle short trips, use public transport for longer journeys, and resort to our private cars within London only in exceptional circumstances.

Robert Molteno
London Living Streets

Fares up again

Despite deteriorating rail services fares went up on 2nd January by an average of 3.1 per cent. RailFuture called it 'another kick in the wallet'. In London this only applied to national rail fares: Sadiq Khan's fares freeze still applies to TfL services. Slightly sweetening the pill was the simultaneous announcement of an extension of the young person's railcard to 30 year olds, although the demand was so high that the computer crashed.

There were demonstrations against the increases at many stations around London and the rest of the country, including King's Cross where Jeremy Corbyn joined the demonstrators.



NEWS ROUNDUP



Ultra-Low Emission Zone

London's Ultra-Low Emission Zone is coming into operation on 8th April 2019. Initially the zone covers only the existing Central London Congestion Zone but it will operate 24 hours a day and be extended to the North and South Circular Roads in 2021. The intention is to take the most polluting vehicles off the road and drivers of non-compliant vehicles will have to pay a daily charge (£12.50 a day for cars). Broadly the restriction applies to petrol cars registered before 2006 and diesels more than five years old. There have been complaints in the press that this has not been sufficiently advertised. TfL have responded by issuing a leaflet. It is not clear how this is to be distributed except through contacts. It can be obtained by emailing LorraineHinds@tfl.gov.uk.

New Transport Strategy for the City

The City of London Corporation has launched a new transport strategy which includes a number of ambitious measures designed to ease congestion and improve safety in the financial district. Central to these is the creation of 'pedestrian priority' zones on about half of the Square Mile's roads, banning all vehicles (apart from for access) and giving priority to pedestrians over cyclists. There is to be a 15mph speed limit throughout the city. The proposals would also see the creation of a 'core cycle network', comprised of either a series of 2m-wide cycle lanes along streets or a limit of 150 vehicles per hour on certain streets, which would prioritise cyclists over other road users. The Corporation has already banned all traffic apart from cyclists and buses around Bank between 7am and 7pm on weekdays. The collapse of the Mayor's plans for the gradual pedestrianisation of Oxford Street earlier this year acts as a cautionary tale, demonstrating that the execution of such proposals

requires securing extensive buy-in from affected residents and businesses, so it will be interesting to see how the Corporation will proceed.

Information courtesy of London communications - www.londoncommunications.co.uk.

A Cycling Action Plan for London

In December the Mayor launched his new Cycling Action Plan setting out how TfL and the boroughs will create a unified, London-wide cycle network, use cycling to help address poor air quality and congestion, while improving the infrastructure to make cycling easier, safer and more accessible for everyone. The aim is to increase the proportion of people walking, cycling and taking public transport to 80 per cent of journeys by 2041, from 63 per cent now, and to see cycling journeys double over the next six years.

Measures to assist this include launching the world's first Cycling Infrastructure Database, a comprehensive digital record of all cycling facilities on the streets of the capital and to significantly increase the number of schools engaged with TfL's free cycle training and active travel programme.

A single brand for all cycle routes, merging the two existing Cycle Superhighway and Quietway brands into a single system, is also proposed creating a Pan-London network supported by simple, easy-to-use signs. A cycle parking strategy for London is due to be published in 2019.

The plan follows a report by the Greater London Assembly in March which asked if progress on the cycling infrastructure is going ahead at the right pace and in the right way.

Reviewing Central London bus routes

TfL consulted on changes in 33 Central London bus routes in November resulting in a number of routes being shortened and others rerouted. The rationale for the changes was that bus use is declining, particularly in central London where the reduction is in the region of nine per cent. It is thought that part of the reason for this is that congestion is making buses increasingly unreliable. The changes therefore reduce the number of buses on key roads and withdraw some on sections which experience particular delay. These

changes have to be seen in the context of a serious hole in TfL's finances and the consequent need to save money.

Transport for All is particularly concerned about the impact on disabled and older people. In a city where only a third of the Underground is accessible, they say, disabled and older people rely heavily on bus services. Buses are the only mode of transport in London that is fully accessible. TfL's proposals depend upon passengers using other nearby routes to complete their journey when routes have been shortened or restructured. But it completely ignores the fact that interchanges (such as Elephant and Castle) can be a real challenge for disabled and older people and especially for visually impaired or autistic people.

Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that congestion is putting people off travelling by bus, reacting by reducing the number of buses might be seen as dealing with the symptom rather than the cause. Congestion is the result of a failure to restrict the number of vehicles on the roads which such measures as controls on the number of private hire vehicles and a road user charge which is more effective than the present congestion charge might be used.

Westminster's plans for Oxford Street

The City of Westminster are now developing their plans for Oxford Street as an alternative to TfL's plans for full pedestrianisation. The main feature of their plan is to prioritise pedestrians by massively increasing walking space throughout the whole district whilst retaining two-way vehicle movement along the length of Oxford Street. They propose that the number of bus routes should be reduced to four and that there should be restrictions on taxis and also. The times restricting other vehicles would be extended to the early evening. Work is planned towards a future where all commercial vehicles that are not zero emission are banned as is the introduction of a 20mph limit across the district.

Westminster want to create the equivalent of two Trafalgar Squares of additional pedestrian space amidst beautiful new public spaces and make major improvements at key locations, including a new public piazza style space at Oxford

Circus and a reinvigorated gateway to the West End at Marble Arch. Living Streets would like to see more streets in which traffic is restricted and suggests Experimental Traffic Orders might be used to trial street closures as the City did at Bank.

Last mile delivery schemes

Transport for London is encouraging schemes which reduce the number of delivery vans on streets in Central London. The schemes involve grants towards the purchase of cargo bikes and electric vehicles which can be used to consolidate loads or collect waste. Areas targeted include Old Street, Borough Market and Archway. Also included is the installation of waste storage compactors and containers at Angel Islington and Vauxhall. The aim is to reduce the number of lorries and vans entering Central London by 10 per cent by 2026.

Low Emission Zones for buses

Seven low emission zones for buses have now been implemented in London. The first two were Putney High Street and Brixton Road and to them have been added Camberwell to New Cross, Wandsworth to St John's Hill, High Road Haringey to Green Lanes, A12 Eastern Avenue to Homerton Road and Staples Corner (Cricklewood) to Maida Vale. Since 2016 Putney has seen a reduction of 99 per cent in the number of hours exceeding legal limits and Brixton an 85 per cent reduction. All buses serving these roads are hybrids and engines meet the Euro VI standard.

A further five zones are due to be implemented during 2019. They are Lewisham to Catford, Stratford (from Mile End Road to Romford Road), Edmonton to Seven Sisters, Shepherds Bush to Ealing Broadway and Chiswick High Road to Kensington High Street.

More pain at Gospel Oak

Passengers on the Gospel Oak to Barking line are faced with a month or so of bus replacement from January. Despite the fact that electrification work is now complete the new electric trains are not yet ready for service and the diesel trains currently operating the route are due to be withdrawn by the end of the year to be refurbished for service in the West Midlands in January.