

London Cycling Hits the Headlines



In November 2013 six cyclists were killed on London streets within a two-week period, bringing the number of cyclists killed in London during the year to 14.

Of these nine involved a heavy goods vehicle. As a result the issue of cycling safety was seldom out of the headlines during November and it remains a hot issue.

The outcry generated by these tragic accidents is understandable in view of the vulnerability of cyclists exposed to motor traffic, especially HGVs, and where they may have been lulled into a false sense of security by making use of the Mayor's new Cycle Superhighways.

However this is in the context of a very considerable rise in cycle journeys in London in recent years: the Mayor's March 2013 Vision for Cycling in London reported that cycling on London's main roads had risen by 173% since 2001, and that a further doubling in cycle use is planned in the next ten years. In 2011 around 2.5% of all commutes to work in London were by bike (but around 9% in Hackney), compared with 4.3% in Cardiff, 18% in York, 28% in Cambridge, and compared with continental cities, 23% in Copenhagen and 37% in Am-

sterdam. So there have been major increases in cycling in London in recent years, but there is also a long way to go to match other major cities.

The Impact of Cycling Deaths

In addition to the cycling deaths, there is also the question of injuries, with 1054 cyclists seriously injured in 2012, a rise of 17% on 2011. There is no doubt that riding a bike in London can be dangerous, particularly with both drivers and cyclists often behaving recklessly on the road. There have been calls to ban HGVs from some London roads during the rush hour, something which is already in force in Paris and other cities.

There is no doubt that the recent succession of deaths has impacted on the levels of cycle use; a BBC poll in December 2013 found that about 20% of regular cycle commuters had stopped cycling to work as a result of the deaths, and 68% of respondents believed that London's roads were not safe to cycle on.

Real Superhighways

The challenge for the Mayor and TfL is how to stop both the reality and perception of cycling casualties deterring cyclists from using the roads and reducing the recent encourag-

ing growth in cycling. Attention should be paid to:

- ◆ physical improvements to the network of cycleways, including upgrading the existing superhighways and construction of new mainly-segregated routes across central London
- ◆ new approaches to junction safety including cycle-separated junctions and cycle-specific traffic lights with a cyclist phase
- ◆ measures to make lorries safer, ensuring that they meet basic safety requirements, including development of an entirely new construction lorry with improved mirrors and visibility.

What is Already Happening

Much of the above is already being rolled out by the Mayor, partly to meet a target announced in June 2013 of reducing KSI (killed and seriously injured) by 40% by 2020. Upgrading work on the cycle Superhighways has begun, with just under two miles of CS2 between Bow and Stratford already open, almost entirely segregated, and incorporating 'bus-stop bypasses'.

Boris announced on 6th November 2013 that the remainder of CS2 will be the first to be substantially upgraded – from Aldgate to Bow. Design work has been ongoing since the announcement of his Vision for Cycling and will include the return of the Aldgate gyratory to two-way traffic, with separated space for cyclists being trialled now. Fully-separated approaches to junctions, with cycle-only light phases, are part of TfL's current cycle safety research programme. Special traffic lights have been approved for on-street trials by the Department for Transport.

Detailed designs will be published for consultation in 2014 for the new north-south substantially-segregated route to run from Elephant and Castle to Kings Cross, connecting at Blackfriars with a similar east-west route from Barking to West London. On 19th December Boris and seven central London boroughs published for consultation the Central London Quietways grid, described by Boris as an attempt to 'de-Lycrafy the bicycle and move towards a continental-style cycling culture, where it becomes normal.' The network is planned to be complete by 2016.

Much is now beginning to happen to reduce the danger levels of cycling in London and to strive to bring down the stubbornly high levels of 'KSI.' Boris's commitment to spend £913 m over ten years will be needed in full. The Met's recent drive to get all road users, including cyclists, to understand the risks of bad behaviour, which has seen 800 goods vehicles stopped and checked since Sept 2013, resulting in the issuing of over 250 Fixed Penalty Notices, will also need to continue at full throttle.

Norman Beddington

20 mph for the City

The City of London is to make 20mph the speed limit on all its roads. The City joins neighbouring boroughs – Camden, Islington, Southwark and Tower Hamlets – in imposing the limit. They say they were also motivated by the need to retain competitiveness with other global financial centres such as Paris, New York and Tokyo, all of which are imposing reduced speed

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 www.bettertransport.org.uk/london_local_group#letter

New bus for London



Tom Ball rode on the new bus for London on route 24. He was not impressed. These are some of his criticisms.

A number of the design features leave passengers with a very uncomfortable ride.

Because of the suspension system the ride is very 'rough' and a rock and roll effect is common. The front stair hand rail has an obtrusive bracket, making a continuous grip impossible to maintain. This can be distressing given the rates of acceleration deceleration as well as the 'rock and roll' momentum.

The space for passengers on the lower deck is substandard, far lower space than on a train, and less than on other buses. The block of four facing seats results in knee contact. A passenger in this situation by the window cannot reach a bell and has difficulty in getting up and out as there is nothing to hold onto except behind him.

The ceiling spot light is immediately above the window side passenger's head and shines straight into glasses, causing discomfort.

The seats are incredible uncomfortable and seem to have no 'give'; generally the back 'shaping' is not in best ergonomic position - particularly so where the seat backs are very high. In several in-

stances there is an upstand beneath the seats, which means the feet cannot be set back in the natural position. This means the feet are further forward than they would otherwise be. Further, the junction between floor and side wall is curved meaning that the feet are pushed sideways and not as in the sitter's normal position, impacting on the spine.

Finally, there is absolutely no excuse for the failures experienced with the air conditioning. The system does not supply either the front four seats nor the rear two seats on the left and the noise level is very high.

In my opinion the Mayor and TfL are required to explain to the GLA and London's rate payers just what they intend to do about the major failings in design. In my opinion, until there is a substantial rethink, there should be a stop on any more contracts. A comprehensive review of all design aspects is required immediately. Not to do that would be disastrous for London.

I cannot comprehend how the Mayor could have claimed that this is a 'great British success' Clearly he had not experienced what regular travellers have to put up with. In no way does this bus design compare with the original Routemaster which was very rigorously tested before being on London's streets.

Cashless buses

London Buses' proposal for drivers to stop issuing tickets for travel has aroused opposition from London TravelWatch. They are concerned about the impact on vulnerable people, particularly at night times when agencies for Oyster products or top-ups may be closed, or in areas where such facilities may not exist.

They are also concerned about the impact on visitors to London who might not understand the Oyster system or who want to make only one or two journeys.



GLA reviews

Last May the GLA Transport Committee agreed to carry out an investigation into bus services in London and the report was published in October.

The main concern is crowding levels on buses and the fear that, with a growing population, it is going to get worse with an estimated seven per cent rise in the number of passengers by 2022 on top of a 64 per cent rise since 2000. Despite the growing number of Londoners wanting to make journeys by bus there are no plans for major expansion. Nearly three quarter of the respondents to the committee's survey reported that their bus was busy or overcrowded.

In the long term more funding for London's buses would appear to be inevitable although currently TfL's revenue grant for the period up to 2016 is being cut by 25 per cent. In the short term there are some strategies to alleviate overcrowding involving differential pricing using the Oyster system. Off-peak fares, part time travel cards and 'early bird' fares are suggested. Many people also advocate a one-hour bus ticket to enable passengers to make two short bus rides without having to pay twice.

The report points out that there is no published vision for the future development of the bus network. By contrast, there are published plans for the development of the tube and rail networks setting out future forecast demand and how this will be met. For buses, it appears that TfL makes changes only on a route by route basis and their methodology for making changes is obscure.

The committee appeals for more emphasis on a long term strategy and area wide studies involving local stakeholders which might, for example, reveal the potential for more orbital and express routes. The borough of Enfield set up a programme to identify the impact of future local developments including new schools, regeneration projects and planned changes in health service provision on demand for its bus routes which resulted in some route changes.

The report ends with a plea for more vigorous efforts to reduce pollution from buses. It notes that TfL are exploring the use of electric buses (they have two on trial from China although the report does not mention any new tram routes) and rolling out hybrids.

Chris Barker

Tackling air pollution

It has emerged that the death rate caused by air pollution has increased in almost half of all London Boroughs (in 15 out of 33). The figures from 2011 were released by the Department of Health in November 2013. Hillingdon in West London has the highest increase with almost 7%. The areas which are most affected by the carcinogenic fumes are the City of London, Westminster & Kensington and Chelsea. Some of the solutions that Simon Birkett from Clean Air in London suggested as a response included banning all four year old diesel vehicles and all ten year old petrol vehicles from the area bounded by the North and South Circular roads by May 2018 and all diesel vehicles from that area by January.



More runways in the south east

The independent airports commission chaired by Sir Howard Davies has now issued its interim report. He was asked to consider the need for more runways in the south east and to suggest where they might be.

Predictably he concludes that pressure on the UK's busiest airports is likely to continue to grow even with a more conservative view of future aviation demand than has been taken by the Department for Transport in the past. This is likely to see levels of demand exceed airport capacity. His proposed solutions were also predictable. The leading two are the expansion of either Heathrow or Gatwick.

This 'predict and provide' approach fails to take into account certain uncomfortable facts. Foremost amongst them is the damage which air travel does to the environment when it is becoming more and more urgent to reduce carbon emissions. The demand for a larger single airport centres around the notion of creating a hub so that passengers can use it to change planes. Actually only around a third of Heathrow passengers are in transit and in the future it is likely to be less when it becomes economical to fly smaller aircraft which can offer direct services to more destinations. If it is really so important to offer more slots to America and Asia consideration might be given to reducing the number of short haul flights which could better be managed by rail.

There is also the bigger question about whether, if more air capacity is needed, it should be concentrated in the south east. The centralisation of power in Britain around London has the most dire consequences, not only for the economy of the rest of the country but also for Londoners, manifesting itself in such phenomena as runaway house prices.

bus services

TfL's Lethal Oxford Street Buses

Hugh Small, secretary of Westminster Living Streets, is concerned by John Cartledge's disparaging treatment of David Martin's arguments for removing TfL's nearly 300 buses per hour from Oxford Street. He says:

Mr. Cartledge is Safety and Policy advisor for Travelwatch, whose statutory role is to 'represent the interests of transport users'. He should take into account the health and well-being of users of foot or bicycle transport. Since 2006, 53 pedestrians and cyclists have been killed or seriously injured in collisions involving buses on Oxford Street, and another 207 less seriously injured. Bus collisions with pedestrians have increased 30 per cent since 2010.

Mr Cartledge's arguments for continuing to run nearly empty buses on Oxford Street do not stand scrutiny. He says that Mr. Martin's estimate of only 4.7 passengers per bus in Oxford Street must be wrong

because it's hard to count them. He doesn't give a better estimate but implies that it's as high as the London-wide average of 17 passengers which is obviously wrong. He says bus frequency is important but this is irrelevant when there is one bus every 25 seconds in each direction in Oxford Street. He says it doesn't make sense to leave an empty bus in the garage because the marginal cost of driving it is low.

He should have pointed out that, more importantly, the marginal cost to the private bus operator of keeping an empty bus in the garage is high because London bus companies are paid on the basis of miles travelled by the bus, not by the passengers. As long as TfL refuses to study the multi-route ticketing arrangements which other cities use to help passengers to reduce their mileage and speed their journeys, any attempt to justify the current number of buses in Oxford Street will fail.



Street Talks, 22nd January 6.30pm
The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EJ.

In partnership with Sustrans London
The quick, the cheap and the temporary: Speeding up the transformation of London's streets and public spaces

Is it time London loosened up and lightened up its approach to the design and delivery of cycle infrastructure and other public realm improvements?

We hope you can join us for the first Street Talks of 2014 when our panel of speakers will explore the potential for quick, cheap and temporary projects to speed up the transformation of London's streets and public spaces.

Hannah Padgett from Sustrans will explain how the Pocket Places project in Peckham is using temporary and semi-permanent interventions to transform unused spaces along Rye Lane and stimulate debate about the future of this important local high street,

Brian Deegan, who pioneered 'light segregation' for cycle lanes on Royal College Street, Camden will consider the importance of adaptability when delivering cycle infrastructure; and Hackney Council's

Ben Kennedy will present a series of case studies ranging from on-street cycle lockers to a pilot project to test the potential for pedestrianising the Narrow Way on Mare Street.

Keep up to date with news from the Campaign for Better Transport by signing up to their e-bulletin.

<http://eepurl.com/ecvH>



NEWS ROUNDUP

Time to Cross

Living Streets and Transport for All are campaigning to increase the crossing times at signalled crossings. They say that, over the age of 65, 76% of men and 85% of women have a walking speed slower than that needed to use a pedestrian crossing. In 66% of local authority areas the numbers of lollipop people helping children safely across the road has reduced.



A 20 seconds countdown gives a warning of the end of crossing time for pedestrians in Oxford Street

Government set to profit from rail passengers

A report, commissioned by the Campaign for Better Transport on the day that rail commuters have seen their season tickets rise by an average 3.1 per cent, has revealed that the Government will be making a profit from passengers by the end of the next Parliament.

It revealed that, by 2018, fares revenue will cover 103 per cent of the operating costs of the railways, up from 80 per cent in 2009. Revenue from fares has increased from 54 per cent of overall funding in 2009 to 66 per cent today and is forecast to grow to 69 per cent by 2018.

Air pollution on the M4

Clean Air in London has complained to the European Commission about the breaches of NO2 limits caused by the permanent removal of the M4 bus lane. They urge the commission to pursue infringement action against the UK.

The M4 bus lane was introduced in 1999 to give buses, coaches and taxis, many from Heathrow, priority on the often congested section of the M4 approaching

the two lane elevated road at Chiswick. Philip Hammond, when secretary of state for transport, suspended the lane in 2010. A report estimated that the removal gave a journey saving of 44 seconds for all vehicles during the morning peak and of one minute 18 seconds per vehicle throughout the day.

It was not mentioned that the saving of journey time by private cars was partly offset by the deterioration of journey time for buses, coaches and taxis and no measure was made of the effect on passengers rather than vehicles. As buses and coaches carry many more passengers than private cars it is quite likely that more people overall have been inconvenienced rather than benefit from the change.

Orbital Rail

London now has two orbital rail routes: the Circle Line and London Overground. Ian Brown, TfL's former managing director for rail, envisages a third incorporating Gatwick airport, Reading, Rugby, Milton Keynes, Peterborough and Cambridge. The missing link is in the east where Brown suggests an electrified eastern spine linking the Channel Tunnel with the east coast main line, taking in the Medway ports and London

Gateway. Apart from taking transiting passengers away from London this could also take a lot of freight away from the North London Line and the Gospel Oak to Barking line opening these out for a more frequent metro service for passengers.

Driverless cars in Milton Keynes

Is this the future of public transport? By mid-2017 it is planned that 100 fully autonomous vehicles will run on pathways and cycleways in Milton Keynes. The PRT (Personal Rapid Transport system) pods are being tested at Heathrow. Initially they will run on segregated paths but eventually they are designed to interact with people, eventually sharing the pavement with pedestrians and cyclists, relying on sensors to keep them clear from pedestrians and obstacles.

Underground ticket offices

Rumour has become fact as the mayor announces the closure of all London Underground ticket offices. It is difficult to imagine how people will manage when they are new to the system. The ticket office at Kings Cross, for example, always has long queues. And what about Heathrow with large numbers of bemused

foreigners? And who do you go to when you have problems with your Oyster card? Maybe the solution is to employ roving staff to help with problems as they do in other cities. Lyon is an example.

The announcement of 24 hour tubes at weekends seems to be designed to be the good news to drown out the bad. It is, however, time for this to happen. London Underground have presumably discovered that they can squeeze maintenance and cleaning into the other five nights.

Bring back British Rail

On 18th October a big crowd of campaigners and transport union members were joined by MPs Caroline Lucas and Lillian Greenwood to deliver a 25,000-signature strong petition to Parliament to bring back British Rail. The MPs are also leading the fight against the privatisation of East Coast in the House of Commons in the coming months. On Tuesday 5th November, Bring Back British Rail and Action for Rail organised a 'day of action' to mark the 20th Anniversary of the privatisation of our railways. Further information about the campaign: www.bringbackbritishrail.org or email: info@bringbackbritishrail.org



Bring Back British Rail demonstration at Waterloo last August