
Secretariat memorandum

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Agenda item : 6

AT028

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Actions taken

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. To record matters dealt with by the Chair, Deputy Chair, Chief Executive and/or the secretariat since the last meeting.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1. That the report is received for information.

3 Information

- 3.1 On 24 August 2010, London TravelWatch's response to London Assembly Transport Committee's scrutiny on walking was submitted. It is included in the annex to this report.

4 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 4.1. In accordance with London TravelWatch's duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and other legislation, account is taken when responding to consultations on proposals from external bodies of their particular impact (if any) on the needs of people whose access to transport may be restricted by reason of disability or social exclusion.

5 Financial implications

- 5.1. No specific financial implications for London TravelWatch arise from this report.

6 Legal powers

- 6.1. Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the

public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

London TravelWatch submission to the Transport Committee investigation into making it easier and safer to walk in London

August 2010



London TravelWatch is the official body set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public.

Our role is to:

- Speak up for transport users in discussions with policy-makers and the media;
- Consult with the transport industry, its regulators and funders on matters affecting users;
- Investigate complaints users have been unable to resolve with service providers, and;
- Monitor trends in service quality.

Our aim is to press in all that we do for a better travel experience all those living, working or visiting London and its surrounding region.

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Executive Summary

London TravelWatch is pleased to provide a written submission to the Transport Committee investigation into making it easier and safer to walk in London.

The importance of walking as a mode in its own right is now recognised by the Mayor, TfL and the London boroughs’.

There is some progress towards improving conditions in London for pedestrians. Initiatives such as the Mayor’s Better Streets agenda builds on the previous administrations Walking Plan for London, and the seminal Jan Gehl study: *Towards a fine City for people*¹

However TfL’s network assurance regime often works against Better Streets initiatives. We would welcome a review of that regime to allow more walk friendly initiatives to be implemented or at least the network assurance regime should be more transparent. There are other contradictory policies that work against those seeking to improve the pedestrian environment and promote walking.

Legible London is now well developed and has the potential to be a pan-London pedestrian wayfinding scheme, but some of its potential benefits will be lost as it may well not be taken up by all boroughs.

There are many years of detailed work to be done by TfL and the London boroughs to systematically and incrementally improve the walkability of London.

Decluttering of pavements is now embraced by all of London’s highway authorities, but there are constant pressures to put more clutter onto London’s pavements. There is a need to resist this and to undertake more enforcement of unlicensed obstructions on pavements.

¹ Towards a Fine City for People, Gehl Architects, 2004

1 Introduction

London TravelWatch is the statutory watchdog representing transport users in London.

The importance of walking both as a mode in its own right and as the link between trips and modes is recognised by London TravelWatch.

The Committee contributed to, and has supported the findings and approach of, the House of Commons Select Committee investigation: *Walking in Towns and Cities*² and would commend that report to the London assembly scrutiny.

In 2004 TfL and the Central London Partnership commissioned Jan Gehl to report on what might be done in London to promote more walking in central London. The report *Towards a fine City for People* has been debated by London TravelWatch members. We support the approach and the principles it promotes. Again we would commend this report to the assembly scrutiny.

London is making good progress in improving the walking environment. It has adopted policies and programmes that support walking:

- The Mayor has published *Better Streets*³ a practical guide to prompt better street design.
- There are also great examples in London of better street design, for example Kensington High Street, the most high profile, innovative and brave attempt to improve the pedestrian environment. This has been followed by other schemes such as at the junction of City Road and Old Street. The Committee has visited the Kensington High Street scheme and supported Kensington and Chelsea in its implementation.
- TfL and some boroughs have been reassessing the value of removing 'pedestrian' guard railing. TfL has removed many kilometres of guard rail.
- Removing pavement clutter is now universally accepted as a good thing.
- The pan-London pedestrian wayfinding scheme, *Legible London*⁴, is now well developed and is being promoted to all London's boroughs.

² *Walking in Towns and Cities*, Environment, Transport and Regional affairs Committee, 2001: <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200001/cmselect/cmenvtra/167/16707.htm>

³ *Better Streets: Practical Steps*, Mayor of London, 2009: <http://www.london.gov.uk/greatoutdoors/docs/better-streets.pdf>

⁴ *Legible London*: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/microsites/legible-london/>

However, there are some contradictory policies that work against policies to improve the pedestrian environment:

- The emphasis on keeping traffic moving as opposed to traffic reduction will limit the scope to rebalance the use of London's streets in favour of the pedestrian.
- The reversal of support for congestion charging will reduce the incentives to walk and worsen the pedestrian experience.
- The reduction in emphasis on supportive policies that would promote walking such as bus priority is disappointing.

Finally there is need for more attention to detail. Of all the modes walking is the one that is most sensitive to getting the detail of street design correct. Pedestrians may never notice, but Jan Gehl demonstrated in his report that the detail is important: pedestrians want wider, continuous and level pavements, places to sit and watch the world go by, simpler road crossings and a much simpler, uncluttered streetscape.

2 The Committee's questions

Which of the Mayor and TfL's current initiatives to promote walking are resulting in more people walking or which might deliver a sustained increase in walking in the future? Which should be prioritised in 2011 and why?

It is difficult to quantify the impact of individual policies and programmes that will deliver an increase in walking. However, we do believe that the adoption of the recommendations of the House of Commons Select Committee investigation: *Walking in Towns and Cities* and Gehl's *Towards a fine city* for people is most likely to result in an increase in walking and would commend those reports to the London assembly scrutiny.

Our assessment of TfL's current initiatives is based on our support for these reports and London TravelWatch's consideration of these issues over many years.

2.1.1 Better Streets: Practical Steps

TfL has recently renamed its main streets directorate Better Routes and Places and organised the directorate around the notion that all that they do should create better routes and places. This is welcome, as is the publication by the Mayor of *Better Streets: Practical Steps*⁵ that describes a fresh and more holistic approach to street design.

This guide represents a step change in the approach to good street design and gives some very simple practical steps to promote change.

However, TfL has adopted a Network Management Plan that is policed by its Network Assurance team, following the enactment of the Traffic Management Act 2004. This approach is traffic engineering led and seems to us to work against the more holistic approach promoted by *Better Streets*. This is in contrast with Camden's⁶ Network Management Plan which takes a much more rounded approach than TfL and notes:

"Network management is one element of an authority's transport activities...."

TfL's approach to the Network Management Act places much emphasis on keeping the traffic moving as opposed to delivering holistic schemes that will promote modal switch.

⁵ Better Streets: Practical Steps, Mayor of London 2009, <http://www.london.gov.uk/greatoutdoors/docs/better-streets.pdf>

⁶ Camden's Network Management Plan : http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=397883

This has resulted in the schemes such as Tottenham High Street (which we generally support) leading to the loss of a pedestrian crossing and at the Angel Islington (which again we generally support) having a crossing of Upper Street at a location away from the pedestrian desire lines.

These are both town centre schemes which would have benefited from the more holistic approach *Better Streets* advocates. Numerous other pedestrian crossing schemes continue to be designed that are two stage, staggered crossings because of the requirements of Network Assurance. TfL's Network Assurance regime also effectively manages the borough's street designs, particularly on the statutory Strategic Road Network (SRN) and leads to similar pedestrian unfriendly proposals.

We want to see TfL review its Network Management Plan regime in the light of the *Better Streets* approach and be more transparent as to how it makes the 'balanced decisions' that it makes..

2.1.2 Design for London⁷

Design for London, part of the London Development Agency (LDA) has been, and is, involved in some great schemes that, by creating better public spaces, will encourage more walking.

2.1.3 Legible London

London TravelWatch has been supportive of Legible London throughout its evolution and would very much want to see it rolled out as a pan-London scheme. Part of its value is its potential to rationalise the numerous wayfinding schemes across London. Being a single London wide system would mean that pedestrians / passengers would only have to understand a single system and have confidence that it exists wherever they travel in London. It is therefore disappointing that the devolving of funding for boroughs may well mean the scheme is not taken up by all boroughs.

TfL, as the strategic transport authority, can influence the decisions of boroughs using the guidance it issues with respect to the Local Implementation Plan (LIP).

We recommend that the implementation of Legible London be a requirement of London Boroughs Local Implementation Plan.

2.1.4 Guardrail removal and decluttering

London TravelWatch members have considered the reasons for the installation of pedestrian guard rail at a committee meeting with TfL officers and have visited Kensington High Street with Kensington and Chelsea officers. London TravelWatch

⁷ Design for London: <http://www.designforlondon.gov.uk>

generally supports the removal of pedestrian guard railing unless there is a specific safety reason for its installation. We welcome the Mayor's support for its general removal and would hope the London boroughs follow the Mayor's lead on this issue.

London TravelWatch supports TfL policy of decluttering pavements. We have supported TfL in its approaches to the DfT to remove the requirement on it to supplement double red lines markings on the carriageway with a 'no-stopping' sign. We believe London's drivers understand the meaning of double red lines and that there would be much benefit in removing the numerous supporting signs.

However, there is much to be done. From observation London's streets they remain cluttered with sign poles, lampposts etc.

2.1.5 The Wandsworth pilot to tackle obstructions on the pavement

In 2000 the then Managing Director of Streets wrote to all TLRN frontagers asking them to remove unlicensed highway obstructions, A-boards etc from TLRN pavements. Then some work was done to enforce against highway obstructions, but enforcement, from observation, has not achieved compliance.

TfL has recently undertaken a pilot project with the London Borough of Wandsworth who has been frustrated by a lack of enforcement to determine if the local borough would be best placed to take on TfL's responsibility for keeping the TLRN pavements clear of obstructions and to ascertain whether delegating any of its highways powers to Wandsworth is necessary.

Pedestrians will have no interest in who is managing the streets and keeping them clear of obstructions, but will be concerned if they are not kept clear, particularly those with impaired vision or mobility problems. We understand from Wandsworth that the outcome has been positive from a pedestrian's perspective. However, more work and an agreement as to how this is funded needs still to be resolved.

We would recommend that TfL increases enforcement activity against unlicensed obstructions on the TLRN pavements to a level such that there is general compliance.

2.1.6 Sutton pilot

In 2006 Sutton was chosen for an area wide approach to 'travel awareness' programmes. This was an intensification of existing, but geographically spread, initiatives such as personal travel planning, cycle training schemes, 20mph schemes etc, to persuade Sutton residents to choose more sustainable modes for some of their journeys. This programme has followed on from similar 'smarter travel' national programmes.

Whilst we welcome such initiatives and recognise they have the potential to change travel behaviour it should also be recognised that researchers⁸ advise that in order for these types of initiatives to be sustainable, in the long term, they should be accompanied by proposals to 'lock-in' the benefits. In brief it is suggested that persuading some drivers to change mode would release road capacity, in urban areas, but that others would take up the released capacity. Therefore alongside such initiatives other schemes such as bus priority, road user charging, and reallocation of road space to pedestrians are necessary.

2.1.7 Pedestrian countdown

Pedestrian countdown is being trialled at eight sites⁹ in London. It has been developed as part of the Mayor's smoothing the traffic agenda. London TravelWatch members have discussed the proposals with TfL officers, but have yet to take a considered view on the scheme.

There is presently confusion regarding the sequence of pedestrian crossing lights – the green man time etc. We have been assured that the 'green man' time (invitation to cross time) would not go below 6 seconds and the crossing time (the period counted down) would be as per the DfT specification. We would want to see any saving in 'green man' time allocated to benefit buses where possible and not routinely added to the general traffic time.

The proposal, although originally a smoothing the traffic initiative, has potential benefits for pedestrians in providing them with more information as to how long they have to cross the road. The scheme appears to have merit and we look forward to seeing the trial report.

What, if any, other initiatives should the Mayor and TfL adopt to make it easier and safer to walk in London and why? Please provide as much detail as possible, including what the initiative involves, where it is already happening (e.g. in London, elsewhere in the UK and/or abroad), which organisation(s) are responsible, its cost and how it is funded, and its measurable impact e.g. how many more people are walking as a result of the initiative.

Jan Gehl's report mentioned above identified five themes that we would want to see adopted to make it easier and safer to walk in London. This approach has proved

⁸ The Effects of Smarter Choice Programmes in the Sustainable Travel Towns: Summary Report:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/smarterchoices/smarterchoiceprogrammes/pdf/summaryreport.pdf>

⁹ Pedestrian Countdown at Traffic Lights, <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/projectsandschemes/15490.aspx>

successful in other European cities highlighted in Gehl's report notably, Copenhagen, Lyon and Barcelona, but it will take more than a single 'year of walking'. It will take many years of sustained commitment to create a more walkable London.

In 2009 the Mayor of New York and Commissioner Sadit-Khan embarked on similar programmes to that Gehl suggests for London. Iconic spaces such as parts of Broadway have been closed to traffic and become pedestrian space.

Gehl's five themes:

1. Creating a better balance between vehicular traffic, pedestrians and cyclists;
2. Improving conditions for walking and cycling
3. Improving conditions for resting and simply passing by
4. Upgrading the visual quality of the streetscape
5. Promoting a shift in mind-sets towards a more people-orientated city culture.

Gehl suggests an incremental approach to both improving the pedestrian environment by for example increasing footway widths, simplifying crossings, decluttering, providing seating and places to rest, creating a level and continuous footway by the introduction of junction entry treatments, pedestrian crossovers rather than vehicular access etc. These are simple interventions, but Gehl stresses the importance of getting the detail right.

TfL and the London boroughs are doing some of this both in major schemes and as part of their works on corridors, but there is not a systematic and stated approach to making a step change in the 'walkability' of London. We do hope the Year of Walking will provide that. The Mayor's *Better Streets* guide suggests this approach, but is focussed on new one-off schemes, whereas Gehl suggests a much more incremental approach as part of an ongoing evolution of all London's streets.

The second, and as important part of Gehl's proposal to improve the walkability of London and create a better balance between pedestrian's and vehicles is to restrain motor vehicles; congestion charging, parking restraint, reallocation of road space. Disappointingly this side of the transport equation is not being adopted by the Mayor. Much investment and effort creating a more walkable London will be being lost by an unwillingness to adopt complementary restraint policies.

What, if any, other measures should the Mayor and TfL take to ensure the 'year of walking' delivers a sustained increase in walking?

Nothing further to add

What work are you currently engaged in at a borough level outside of work with the Mayor or TfL? Please give details on any programmes which might affect the 2011 Year of Walking.

London TravelWatch is consulted by most London boroughs on many highway schemes and we routinely comment on these on behalf of users.

As part of its pro-active work to improve conditions for travellers in London we have promoted a better pedestrian route between Euston and St Pancras¹⁰. Instead of the very busy Euston Road we have suggested improvements to a parallel route via Brill Place and Phoenix Road – primarily creating a more pleasant level and continuous footway with wayfinding.

We brought together all the rail industry players and the local authority to meet with us to discuss this in January 2010 and are pleased that all have expressed support for this proposal. Subsequently Camden has committed funding to start making implementing improvements. Latterly the ODA has offered its support to the route and is working with Camden.

¹⁰ A better pedestrian route between Euston and St Pancras:
<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/news.php?id=722>