

13 September 2012

Deputy Mayor for Transport  
Roads Task Force Secretariat  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Windsor House  
42-50 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0TL

Dear Ms Dedring

## **Roads Task Force**

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

In its contribution to the recent mayoral election, *10 policies to get Londoners moving*, we called for:

A road network which is fit for purpose and noted congestion on London's roads affects all travellers and is forecast to worsen as the population grows and economic activity increases, particularly in outer and east London. London TravelWatch wants to see a coherent plan to address these pressures.

London TravelWatch therefore welcomes the Mayor's ambition for a road system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the formation of a Roads Task Force. We are pleased to be invited to contribute to its work.

Please note that we have engaged with the London Assembly Transport Committee during the formulation of this response.

Below we briefly set out our responses to the questions in your letter. If you require any additional supporting material or background please do contact us.

### **Q1. What are the main challenges, short, medium and long term?**

In the short term the challenge is the day to day management of London's roads to maintain journey time and journey time reliability for general traffic and particularly for bus services.

In the medium term, against a background of increasing travel demand, London TravelWatch believes maintaining and improving the punctuality and frequency of the bus services is a priority<sup>1</sup> as is improving the journey time reliability of general traffic. There needs to be continuing modal shift to the more space efficient modes, bus, cycle

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<sup>1</sup> Bus passengers' priorities for improvements in London, London TravelWatch, May 2010

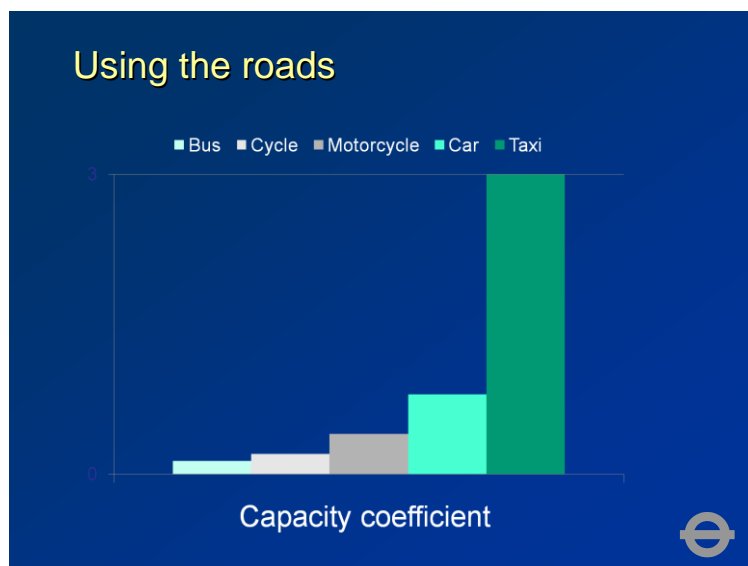
and walk. And, of course, there should be a continued focus on road danger and casualty reduction. Eastern and outer London will need to become a greater focus.

In the longer term, as travel demand continues to rise with population and employment growth, particularly in outer and eastern London, modal shift needs to continue, though, over the longer term, there will be more opportunity to improve spatial planning to reduce the need to travel by encouraging more local, less travel intensive activity.

## Q2. Approach - How should the competing demands on road space be defined and managed?

London's road capacity will remain broadly as it is now, yet demands upon it will grow significantly. London TravelWatch believes the overall approach should be to make best use of the existing capacity by encouraging modal switch to the more space efficient modes, particularly the bus. We want to see people moving at the heart of roads policy.

In 2008 TfL presented the graph below to members. It demonstrates the relative efficiencies, in terms of use of road capacity of the different modes, bus and cycle being the most space efficient.

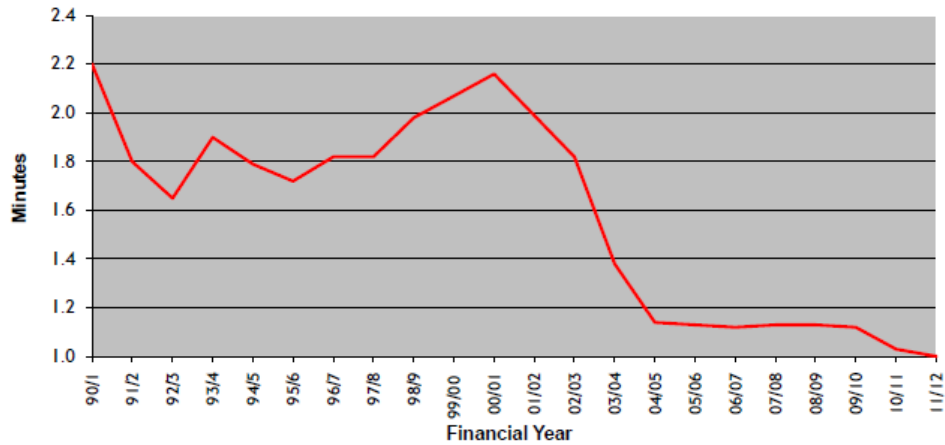


### Prioritising the bus

Bus priority, along with incentivised contracts and congestion charging has led to the best bus service performance London has experienced since performance was first recorded. London TravelWatch has always supported giving buses priority on bus routes.

The graph below demonstrates the huge improvement in performance over the last decade.

### EXCESS WAITING TIME FOR HIGH FREQUENCY BUS SERVICES



There was previously a London Bus Initiative (LBI), a partnership of TfL, operators and local authorities with London TravelWatch included as the passenger watchdog but regrettably this approach has not continued.

The recognition of the central role of the bus, in terms of passenger numbers, geographical coverage and accessibility in London's passenger transport provision was the most welcome development of the last decade. The LBI included measures such as:

- (a) Providing additional bus lanes, bus advance areas and other priority measures through known pinch points on the network;
- (b) Constructing contra-flow bus lanes on one-way streets to eliminate costly and circuitous diversions;
- (c) Installing selective detection equipment more widely, to permit bus activation of all traffic lights;
- (d) Bus stop clearways and, where suitable, pavement "boarders" to ensure that buses have unobstructed access to stops and can always pull close to the kerb; and
- (e) A determined assault on obstructive parking.

Crucially, the LBI operated on a whole-route basis, which led to a step-change in speed and reliability. The wealth of data now available from the IBus system now gives the possibility to progress priority even further, with the added benefit to general traffic.

London TravelWatch regrets that further LBI type initiatives, in development by TfL under the banner of 3G, were dropped in 2008/09. The most important recommendation we would want to see the Roads Task Force promote is a further round of whole route bus priority. Bus services are a strategic London asset and their development should be planned on a Londonwide basis rather than relying on borough councils to promote individual schemes, or worse still taking out bus priority for local reasons.

3G focussed on high ridership routes, however bus priority is also needed on roads with fewer bus services, for example the outer London orbital routes.

## **Walking**

There has been a seismic shift in the appreciation of walking and the notion of streets as places and not just transport corridors. The Board has debated the development of Kensington High Street, looked at street furniture clutter issues and endorsed the TfL commissioned Gehl Architects report '*Towards a fine city for people*'. We have conducted research at several transport interchanges<sup>2</sup> looking both inside the interchange, but also at the walking experience between modes utilising the street.

London TravelWatch wants to see wide, clear, continuous and level footways. We want to see single stage, direct crossings located on pedestrian desire lines. We want to see the development of public spaces, more pedestrian friendly high streets and transport interchanges.

We have endorsed the Legible London wayfinding system and want to see it consistently rolled out across London rather than the present piecemeal manner at the whim, or not, of the London boroughs – the availability of a consistent pedestrian wayfinding system is a strategic issue!

One of the work streams that has developed from our Walking and Interchange in London report and our work looking at the accessibility of London's Olympic venue stations has been the issue of highway obstructions. It is clear that London's streets should not be obstructed without lawful excuse and that local highway authorities have a duty to remove obstructions. TfL has recognised this issue in its *Better Streets* initiatives.<sup>3</sup>

However, TfL and the local highway authorities are not diligent in this duty, and all manner of obstructions are placed randomly on the pavement. This is a nuisance for able bodied pedestrians and a significant barrier for wheelchair users, the blind and partially sighted. We want to see the Roads Task Force recommend that TfL and the boroughs comply with their duty to keep their pavements clear of obstructions.

## **Cycling**

London TravelWatch supports the Mayor's targets for cycling to become a much larger proportion of travel in London. We have conducted a survey of stakeholders and produced a report<sup>4</sup> on Cycling in London.

Representing all transport users we want to see a holistic approach to developing cycling in London. We want to see greater emphasis on education, training and

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<sup>2</sup> Walking and Interchange in London, London TravelWatch, September 2011

<sup>3</sup> <http://urbandedesign.tfl.gov.uk/Design-Guidance/Better-Streets/BetterStreets/FiveStages.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Cycling in London, London TravelWatch, May 2009

enforcement. Cycling should take place on the carriageway. Tackling problematic junctions is our key safety priority for investment. Area wide 20 mph schemes will both improve cycle safety and encourage more cycling.

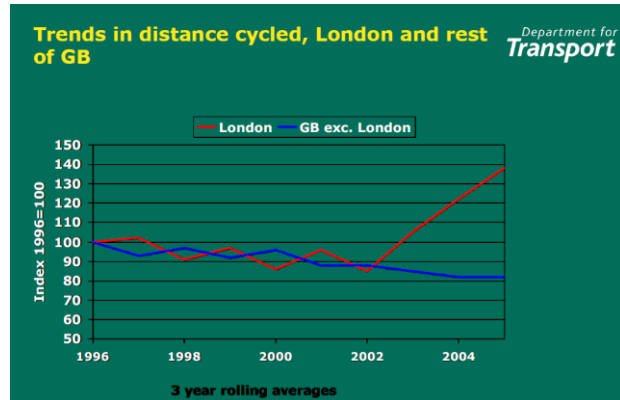
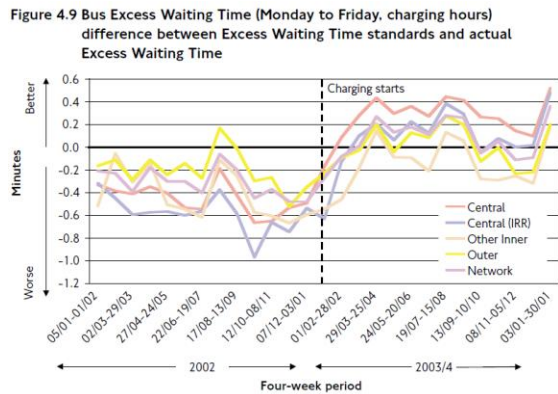
We question the priority, practicality and affordability of introducing widespread separated tracks alongside main roads for two reasons: i) because most collisions happen at road junctions and ii) most of London’s main roads vary in width and have to accommodate kerbside loading and bus stopping arrangements. There may, however, be some of London’s major highways that would benefit from such a treatment.

Improvements in cycle parking at stations and where possible of off road cycling and walking routes also contribute to reducing demand on the road network.

### Managing demand

All the evidence from academics and practitioners suggest the necessity of both carrot and stick – improved alternatives as well as restraining private car use.

London has experience of road user charging in the central zone. It led to dramatically reduced levels of congestion, higher road speeds, a huge increase in cycling and a 30% improvement in bus service performance. See TfL and DfT graphs below.



London TravelWatch has consistently supported congestion charging in central London. We were disappointed that the Western extension was removed and want to see the development of road user charging on a zonal basis with much more sophistication both technically and in terms of pricing and operational hours.

We would counsel caution, however, in assuming that the apparent success of the central London experiment could readily be extrapolated to other parts of the capital, except in special cases such as Heathrow. The wider implementation of road user charging must be accompanied by an improvement to public transport services and the encouragement of more cycling and walking.

Soft measures, such as travel planning, cycle training and travel awareness are promoted as less controversial methods of managing demand by encouraging modal

switch away from the private car. Whilst these techniques are supported it is important to note the caveats applied by researchers in this field. They suggest that alongside such measures it is also necessary to 'lock-in' the benefits of modal shift as other new journeys will simply fill the freed up road space.

### **Q3. Solutions, short, medium and long term**

#### **Short term**

In the short term TfL policies are maintaining and improving bus service performance. TfL are improving the management of the important road corridors (their TLRN) in terms of the day to day management of the network. However, despite this and continuing reductions in traffic volume (the main driver of congestion) TfL's new measure of congestion: Journey Time Reliability (JTR) remains constant and is forecast to slightly improve over the Business Plan time period.

In the short term TfL should maintain a focus on the day to day management of its roads, particularly minimising the impact of planned and unplanned events and street works. It is noted above that there is a day to day problem of highways obstructions on the TLRN pavements that is not being addressed. A more active approach to this would be a quick win for pedestrians, particularly those with mobility and sight impairments.

#### **Medium term**

In the medium term there needs to be a continued improvement in bus services, both in terms of performance and geographical coverage. There is a particular need for improved orbital services and improved priority for buses on orbital routes.

TfL needs to be able to take a greater strategic role in improving bus services, particularly in outer and east London. 80% of London's bus services operate on borough roads and therefore improvements in the operation of bus services is dependent upon the boroughs. The LIP mechanism should be used more strategically to influence bus priority on borough roads. The availability of IBus data should be used to make this case.

One-way gyratory systems are particularly problematical for buses and their passengers. They are problematic for cyclists and hostile to pedestrians. These type of systems should be programmed for removal.

The medium term opportunities to increase cycling and walking will be dependent upon how the road network develops. If London is to break out of the cycle of car dependency and promote modal shift to these modes then cycle and walk friendly junctions will become the norm and areawide slower speed zones and roads will continue to be introduced. We particularly want to see those junctions that are particularly problematical for cyclists addressed.

If, on the other hand, the choice is made to accommodate more private car use with higher capacity junctions then the opportunities to develop a cycle and walk friendly environment will be reduced.

In the medium to longer term, as suggested by the Mayor's Transport Strategy, London needs to move towards greater use of road user charging. This would ensure journey time reliability, reduce demand and generate income. This may be particularly relevant in east London as it rapidly develops.

### **Long term**

We would want to see the solutions described as medium term being applied in the longer term. Road user charging should be implemented on a wider scale than is presently the case.

### **Q. 4 Delivery priorities**

London TravelWatch's priority is that there should be a relaunch of bus priority programmes. We would also want to see priority given to re-engineering problematic traffic junctions and gyratory systems to be more friendly to bus, cycle and walking.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Stops  
Policy Officer