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Editorial

The biggest transport issue in the news in the last few weeks has definitely been the petition against road pricing and this is covered briefly in our first article. What an interesting example of on-line democracy in action, where the policies of Ministers and Civil Servants have been brought into total disrepute by a few individuals.

And if you read the Eddington report (few have but I did) you will realise that the return on investment in the road network would be better than any congestion charge system. One only has to look at the London congestion charge tax to see how loony the economics are.

Note though that as this newsletter concentrates on London issues (the main ABD newsletter, OTR covers national issues) I have only given it brief coverage.

Roger Lawson, Editor

Petitions Against Road Pricing and Speed Humps



Pictured left is Peter Roberts, a member of the Association of British Drivers (ABD) who set up a petition against road pricing on the Prime Ministers web site. To his surprise, it collected over 1.8 million signatures which

demonstrates the strength of feeling of the public against these proposals.

If you aren't already aware of the arguments against road pricing, then you might want to visit Peter's web site at: www.traveltax.org.uk or go to the ABD web site at www.abd.org.uk.

Not to be outdone, your editor has registered a petition against the use of speed humps on the 10 Downing Street. As you probably know, I have campaigned against the use of speed humps for some years and I hope you will sign the petition by going to <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Nohumps/> and submitting your name.

Let's get as many as we can. So don't forget to forward this information to all your friends and acquaintances and encourage them to sign it also. This information has already been circulated via email to ABD London members but if anyone reading this has not already signed it then please do so now. If you want to get rid of the pain and suffering they inflict, you have to sign the petition!

There is also a petition against CO2 based permit parking taxes (see: <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/parkingtax/> and a number of others that are likely to be of interest to motorists on this web site.

London's Low Emission Zone (LEZ)



Public consultation on the proposed Low Emission Zone in London took place early in 2006. The final proposals and draft "Scheme Order" have recently been published – see

www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/low-emission-zone/consultation.asp

You can submit your comments, but it is doubtful whether Transport for London (TfL) will take any more notice of them than they did of those to the initial consultation. The scheme is very little changed from the original proposals – in essence HGVs, LGVs and buses that are not compliant with the latest vehicle emission standards will have to pay a toll of £200 to drive within London (or of course they can adapt their vehicles to be compliant or scrap them and buy new ones). To enforce the system there will be cameras covering the whole of the greater London area which will issue fines of £1,000 for infringement.

The only changes to the proposals have been as follows:

- The Euro IV emission standard for HGVs and buses has been postponed to 2012.
- A NO_x standard has been omitted (probably because of the difficulty in getting vehicles to comply, particularly London buses).
- Inclusion of heavier, diesel engined LGVs and minibuses from 2010.
- TfL to look at the possibility of including cars in the LEZ at a later date.

Yes that last is a new idea which was not in the original plans. But what else can you expect when the proposed system was clearly only going to be necessary for a very limited number of years. Improvements in vehicle technology are going to be so effective over the next few years, that in 5 years time the whole scheme may be unnecessary. But of course there is no time limit on the "Scheme Order" – it is an indefinite one – so you can well imagine what other things the Mayor may want to use this extensive network of public surveillance for.

The estimated cost of the scheme until 2015/16 is still £120 million. The report says " the proposed LEZ is not designed to be a **net** revenue generating scheme" – in other words revenue may only cover the costs of implementation. But it also says "some **gross** revenues" may result from penalty charges. And what can the surplus be spent on? Well almost anything that is transport related according to the Scheme Order.

(Editor's comments: well as I said in my comments on the original proposals, I am in favour of a scheme to improve air quality in London. I noticed it yet again in the period just before Christmas when fog blanketed the capital, the air was static and more vehicles were on the road. But there was a much cheaper and simpler solution as has been adopted in other countries – you simply ban all older or non-compliant vehicles from the city after a certain date. The cost to goods vehicles operators would not have been much different, so why did not the Mayor and TfL propose that? Probably because the new system gives them even more powers to interfere with individual owners of such vehicles, more ability to monitor the lives of individuals in general, and easier justification for future similar schemes -(particularly for cars of course).

Removal Firm in Blockade Threat

The above was the headline in the Bromley Newsshopper newspaper reporting that a local removal firm (Dee and Dee Removals of Erith) had just realised the likely impact and cost of the LEZ. When the previous public consultation was undertaken, haulage firms did not all object, but it is quite likely that larger firms were more likely to have responded than others. But the removal industry is full of small operators, and the vehicles are used for much longer than other types of haulage vehicles. Likewise smaller coach and bus operators are likely to be more affected. The bigger operators are probably happy to have the smaller operators put out of business by the large costs of upgrading their vehicle fleets, and as everyone will be affected, the end consumers will bear the cost.

See also the letter below from Malcolm Grace about the impact of the scheme on an ABD member.

Richmond Permit Parking Campaign



ABD members in London have been campaigning against the proposed implementation of changes to permit parking charges in the London Borough of Richmond. The new charges

will be based on the CO2 emissions of the vehicle – low emission vehicles will pay less and those in the highest band will pay three times as much. There is also a much higher charge for a second vehicle.

Needless to say that there was widespread consternation among residents who live in permit parking zones when these proposals were first announced. Even non car owners and people with a strong commitment to environmental issues thought the proposals were a nonsense. ABD members distributed some 7000 leaflets encouraging residents to object to the proposals, which got a good response.

The following is an extract from a note sent to respondents to the ABD leaflet that gives the current position.

“As most recipients of this letter will know, Richmond Liberal Democrat councillors voted to proceed with the plans for the CO2 based permit parking on the 29th January.

Although there were some last minute changes to the proposals, apparently to ensure that it is not "revenue raising" (ie. will not produce total charges higher than the existing arrangements, other than to take account of inflation), councillors chose to ignore the views of the residents of Richmond, and particularly those who reside in permit parking zones.

Attached is the three minute speech I made at the council meeting, which spells out the arguments in essence. Other members of the public who spoke, and Conservative councillors, generally made similar points. One particularly interesting speaker was Michael Williams, a market research expert, who confirmed that in his view the council's survey form was a good example of bad survey design as it was clearly

designed to bias the answer.

Since that meeting local residents have considered the issue of possible legal action and that is still being examined. Rod Kebble of RRAPPET is also pursuing a complaint via the office of the Local Government Ombudsman.

But it is possible that the only way to get this scheme revoked might be when the Liberal Democrats next come up for re-election in a couple of years time, and I would hope that all Richmond residents remember what happened to democracy in the borough when the Liberal Democrats adopted their policies on this issue. Also don't forget to ensure that other political parties make it an election issue at that time. Of course we might be lucky and find that there is a bye-election in the meantime at which you can express your views, but otherwise you just have to make sure you don't forget about this issue. Also it is possible that Richmond Liberal Democrats might change their policies in due course – in other London boroughs their views on this issue are different.

Thanks to everyone for supporting opposition to these proposals to date - democracy should not be undermined in this way, and common sense should prevail as opposed to environmental hysteria as demonstrated by the Liberal Democrats.

Unfortunately this example in Richmond is typical of the irrational attacks and unreasonable levels of taxation on car users. This is just one of the many campaigns by the Association of British Drivers (ABD) to protect your interests against such policies which tend to be promoted by car haters.

But we need your help to fight these kinds of campaigns and get more rational policies adopted by both central and local government. The way you can do this best is to become a member of the ABD."

Speech at Richmond Council Meeting on 29/1/2007

Firstly let me declare that I have no financial interest in this matter. I don't live in a permit parking zone, and in fact I don't even live in Richmond. But I do

represent the London region of the Association of British Drivers which supports ordinary motorists. You may be wondering why the ABD has bothered to interfere in this local matter. Well the answer is simple. Because when we saw the initial press release from the council on these proposals, we instantly knew someone was suffering from "environmental hysteria".

It said: "By implementing a scheme to reduce CO2 emissions locally, Richmond upon Thames can make a positive impact on climate change nationally and globally". A totally misleading statement and a gross exaggeration.

It also became clear that nobody had bothered to calculate the likely impact in terms of actual CO2 reduction before council staff, and Councillor Lourie, started to promote the wonders of this scheme. But as pointed out by Mr Kebble last week, and confirmed by the council's own environmental expert, Mr Coates, the actual reduction might be a fall of 0.2% in Richmond. In other words an imperceptible change.

There are only four questions councillors should ask about this proposal.

- 1. Will it significantly reduce CO2 levels? The answer is no.*
- 2. Will it be legal? Questionable..*
- 3. Is it fair to enforce a CO2 tax on permit parking holders, when other residents will not be so taxed – in my view, no.*
- 4. Has it been democratically introduced?*

The answer to the last question is definitely no. From the first misleading statement, through the whole consultation process, it has been grossly mishandled.

The survey form, which was only sent to a small proportion of residents and not those mainly affected, is a classic of how to obtain the right answer by asking leading questions. Even the title links climate change to car parking. But of course residents were not informed of the true benefit of this proposal, which is negligible.

The council has also deliberately downplayed the one thousand four hundred objection letters and emails they received on this matter, and also ignored the evidence of their own eyes and ears in respect of the public who turned out for last week's meeting.

If you proceed to vote for this proposal, without further and proper consultation, then you are no doubt destroying the spirit of democracy in this borough.

To quote from a Liberal Democrat councillor in Haringey on the same subject – "what is being proposed is just gesture politics". Just empty and futile gestures.

Thank you, Roger Lawson

Ealing Campaign



Another campaign that ABD London members have undertaken (with particular support from local resident Richard Ashmore) is against a traffic calming scheme in the Mount Avenue area of Ealing. Pictures of some of the roads in the area are shown above and below.



As you can see, many of the roads are quite wide and traffic often exceeds the 30 mph speed limit. The proposal was to have a 20 mph zone over the whole area, to add speed humps to certain roads (they were already present on some) and use speed display devices, mini-roundabouts and "rippleprint" (a proprietary road surface treatment) in other spots.

The council justified the scheme by claiming that there had been 2 serious and 17 slight accidents in the area. However when the detailed accident data was obtained, it was obvious that five of the claimed accidents were not within the area and six of the accidents were on roads that already contained speed humps. This reduced the number of accidents that would likely benefit from the treatment to 1 serious and 7 slight. At a cost of £145,000, this scheme was going to be very poor value for money in terms of return on investment.

ABD members circulated a leaflet to all residents in the area and as a result an overwhelming majority voted against the speed humps. We pointed out that other councils such as Barnet and Bromley have improved road safety by using other measures and that speed humps are a poor solution to road safety problems. We are awaiting news as to what the council plans to do in regard to revising the scheme.

Thanks to all ABD members who support this campaign and the one in Richmond.

Croydon Tramlink

Our last edition mentioned the proposed extension of the Croydon Tramlink system to Crystal Palace. For those readers not familiar with the economics of that system and the impact it has had on travel generally in Croydon, the following articles were previously published in the BBRAG newsletter (the local Bromley magazine your editor also produces).

The following material should tell you all you may ever want to know about tram systems!

Croydon Tramlink Extension

(Article published in the BBRAG Newsletter in October 2006)



At a meeting held at Bromley council on the 31st August, staff from Transport for London (TfL) presented their proposals for an extension of the Croydon Tramlink to Crystal Palace. The presentation was given to Councillor Colin Smith, Environment Portfolio Holder and other councillors with members of the public also present. Luke Albanese of TfL gave a glowing report on the existing tram system, with 20% of riders claimed to be former car users (*Editor: that does not seem a very high number to me and I know that most of the rest are former bus users from past reports*). He suggested that it would be difficult to justify extending the system to Beckenham on economic grounds, and that bearing in mind the recent scrutiny of tram schemes, which have tended to be over budget on costs, and under budget on passenger revenue, he considered that the extension to Crystal Palace alone was a scheme that TfL could justify. But when a member of the public asked him how much it would cost, he refused to say.

It also transpired during his presentation that there were going to be a number of contentious issues on the route of the tram. Some of it would undoubtedly be alongside a rail track, ie. on existing Network Rail land, but the rest would involve running on part of Anerley Road, or on part of Crystal Palace Park. The former is always problematic on roads with heavy traffic, and the latter is not going to please any lovers of the park. In addition a number of properties would need to be compulsorily purchased and demolished.

The proposal is quite modest in some ways, but even so would not be due for completion until 2013.

TfL and the Freedom of Information Act

At the end of the meeting a member of the public asked if he could have a copy of the presentation, but it was suggested that this would only be possible in "due course". After the meeting your editor rang TfL to ask for one but that was also refused, so I submitted a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) - it seems astonishing to me that TfL staff can give a public presentation and then refuse to release the document they have just presented. The file could of course have been emailed within a matter of seconds as it was readily available. They seem to have no understanding of the concept of open government or the principles of the FOI Act. Such behaviour has of course already offended some of the likely opposition to this scheme, such as the Crystal Palace Campaign who are not going to be happy with any infringement of the park.

Note that the FOI Act says that information requested should be disclosed "promptly", but TfL deliberately delayed releasing the presentation document although they did finally supply it three weeks later. This decision to ignore the specific wording of the Act was even backed up by a letter from Commissioner Peter Hendy. This seems to be typical of the general attitude of TfL to public consultation and involvement. If they think you may not agree with their proposals, they seem to obstruct you in every way they can – even down to ignoring the wording of an Act of Parliament.

And what was the reason for the delay in sending the presentation document? Simply that TfL apparently wanted to manage the release of the information to a selected group of people first before it became widely available. Is that a valid reason for delay under the FOI Act? No.

More Information on the Tramlink Extension

As more information was obtained as a result of the FOI request, it can now be stated that the capital cost of the proposed extension will be approximately £60 million, with operating costs likely to run at about £1 million per year.

TfL expects to be able to justify those figures by demonstrating that the benefits of the scheme including "non-financial" and "economic regeneration" benefits will exceed those costs, but the details are still being worked on. If anyone requires more information on the route options, then they should contact the editor.

The Economics of Tramlink



The last accounts for Tramtrack Croydon Ltd, who are the Tramlink operator, were filed for the period ending March 2005. They show a loss of £5.9 million pounds for the year, on revenue of £19 million. The loss was primarily caused as a result of the payment of interest of £8.3 million on the outstanding loans of £120 million used to finance construction (the total cost was about £200 million but central Government funded the difference).

The revenue figure includes income from TfL to cover fares for "freedom passes" and other concessionary fares that taxpayers effectively subsidise. In the 2005/2006 financial year, TfL made payments of £6.7 million in total to TfL to cover such "fares compensation" and for "outstanding construction grant" plus "competing buses compensation" – yes the last is a special payment agreed with Tramlink to cover unexpected competition from buses apparently.

The owners of Tramtrack Croydon Ltd are Amey Tramlink Ltd, Sir Robert McAlpine (Holdings) Ltd, Royal Bank Project Investments Ltd, Bombardier Prorail Ltd, CentreWest Ltd and 3i Group Ltd – these organisations have also provided the above mentioned loans.

(Editors Comments: Would you invest in this business? I certainly wouldn't. In fact it is technically insolvent with negative shareholders equity of £21.6 million, and how it is ever likely to turn a profit is not at all clear. In reality the only thing that keeps it afloat is subsidies from TfL. The justification for maintaining this light rail system is apparently that people might use their cars instead if it was not there, but in reality most of them would simply use local buses, as they did before – and the latter would be enormously cheaper to operate.

Whether it is economically sensible to extend the system I will leave judgement on until a later date when more information has been published, but at first glance it does not look promising. To recoup the capital cost requires a very substantial income to be generated which appears quite unlikely to be achieved).

Croydon Tramlink - Is it a Success?

(Article published in the BBRAG Newsletter in April 2003)

An interesting recent report in the Financial Times was headlined "Croydon Trams Facing Cash Crisis". This was based on the fact that in the financial statements recently filed at Companies House, it was stated that "At the time of preparation of these accounts, the company did not have sufficient funds to continue trading beyond March 25th 2003". Restructuring or further bank funds were clearly necessary.

Tramlink was built under a PFI scheme and is operated by a joint venture between Amey and an offshore company. Amey was reported as saying that there was a "shortfall in revenue" (presumably actual as against budget). The operating company, Tramtrack Croydon, in fact made a loss of £9.5million on a turnover of £13.4million in the year to March 2002. That's ignoring any operating subsidies they received (probably similar to those of buses). That's equivalent to a loss of 55p on every passenger trip.

But presumably that calculation ignores the capital funding provided by the government, which if they had paid an economic interest rate on it would have increased the annual losses by about £9million so the real loss per trip is probably more like £1.

Now oddly enough, the Croydon Tramlink is often mentioned as an example of how successful a light rail or tram system can be. Ken Livingstone is pushing ahead with proposals for trams in other areas such as West London (where it would run down a main road and occupy normal road space for part of the way, much to the annoyance of local residents and businesses). Trams are seen as quieter and less polluting than either buses or railways, but the costs are rarely mentioned.

A study of the impact of the Croydon Tramlink scheme was published last year. The following is an interesting table from the report, based on a survey of Tramlink passengers:

| Mode previously used | % |
|----------------------|----|
| Bus | 69 |
| Car | 19 |
| Rail | 7 |
| Walk | 4 |
| Other | 1 |

In other words, the vast majority of previous users were bus passengers, and it even persuaded some walkers to stop doing so. Of course the above figures don't tell you how many current car users stopped using public transport! There are always going to be some people moving from one mode to another. Although some car users were clearly persuaded to change to public transport, other information in the report tells you that car journeys only fell by 4% which is barely perceptible and could be due to random annual variations.

The users of the trams were generally very satisfied, as they might well be bearing in mind the massive cost subsidy on their fares. But they also thought the trams were more comfortable and more reliable than buses.

Incidentally there have been 2 fatalities so far associated with these trams so it would be wrong to assume that they are safer than other transport modes such as buses.

The Croydon Tramlink operates mainly on old rail lines or new private rights of way, but part of it also operates on the street and it is seen to contribute to congestion in South Croydon (tram breakdowns can also cause major traffic difficulties, and it certainly created many problems during the period of construction).

What did this wonderful system cost? Well here's a statement that was made to the House of Commons by the Secretary of State: "The total capital cost was estimated to be £200m of which £125m was provided by Central Government in recognition of the benefit to other road users and the easing of congestion."

(Editors Comments: Effectively 125 million pounds of taxpayers money was spent to provide minor improvements to the comfort of former bus passengers, and we will probably have to bale out the business also in due course. There has been negligible reduction in car use which was the original justification for government funding, and no obvious benefit to anyone else (nowhere is any information supplied indicating that some people are travelling who were not doing so before).

Are the running costs of light rail systems likely to be better than buses? From other surveys the answer is definitely no, and as you can see this scheme already has major operating losses. Surely the money invested in the Tramlink would have been much better spent on improving the existing road, rail and bus networks. If buses were subsidised to the same level as trams are in this scheme, and had the same level of capital investment, then they would be a paragon of comfort and reliability. Buses are also a lot more flexible in routing and timing to cope with changes in demand. Anyone who advocates the widespread re-establishment of trams simply has not taken notice of the facts).

Tramlink and Bus Competition

A good example of the inflexibility of trams, and their problems with competing with buses was a recent report on London Tonight. It seems that the number of trams on the New Addington branch has been reduced from 9 to 8 because one has been transferred to cover the East and West Croydon stations where there is overcrowding. But Transport for London have therefore ordered more buses to run to New Addington to make up the deficit.

Roger Harding of Tramlink claimed they could not cost justify buying more trams because they face more competition from buses and lower passenger loading than originally forecast.

Mayor Livingstone apparently thinks it madness.

(Editors Comments: Of course this was exactly one the reasons why buses replaced trams many years ago. They are simply easier to move around to meet changing requirements, and it's simple to buy another bus whereas trams are purpose built).

Cross River Tram

Transport for London have recently published details of the proposed Cross River Tram (CRT) which is a new tram scheme that runs from Peckham and Brixton in the south of London, to Euston, Kings Cross and Camden. Unlike most other new tram schemes, almost all of the route runs on existing roads.

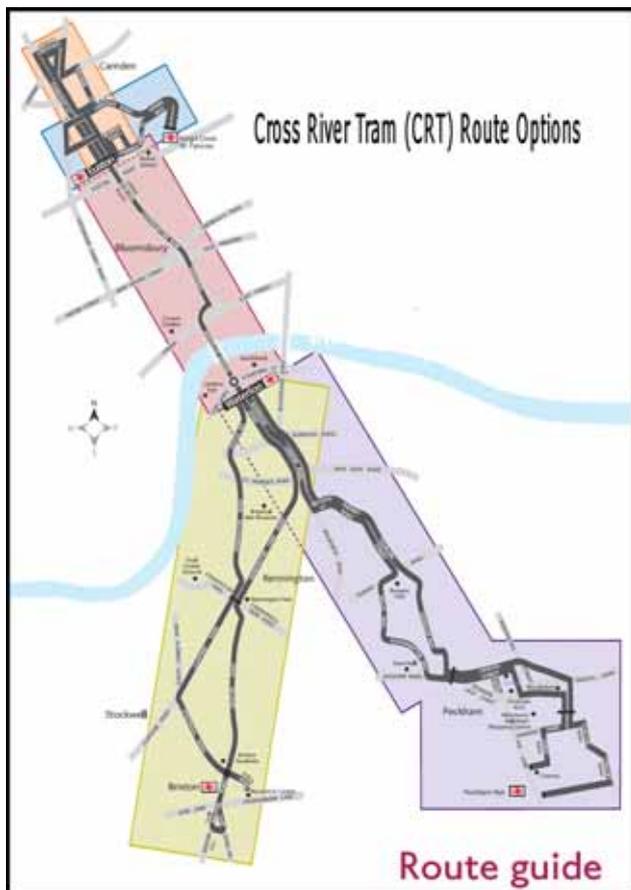
The consultation document can be seen at www.tfl.gov.uk/trams/initiatives/crt/consultation.asp You can also read more about it on the following page of the sponsoring organisation: www.crossriverpartnership.org/page.asp?id=1236

According to Transport for London (TfL), the anticipated cost of the scheme is about £650 million. Which they say equates to about 33p per passenger over 30 years if the expected passenger loadings are met (although they rarely are for tram services). Or to put it another way, that's £100 roughly that every Londoner will have to pay to cover the capital costs. Just for the record, the current estimate of passenger journeys each year on CRT is 66 million after it opens in 2016.

And you might ask where is the money coming from to fund this project? Well it is not very clear. TfL are paying for the initial design work but they probably don't have the ability to fund the whole project so it looks like they are hoping for some central Government funds, or European Union grants. In addition the Cross River Partnership suggests there "will be attractiveness of the project to the private sector". They also suggest it will "provide London with a state-of-the-art transport system that's an eye-catching asset".

As with the Croydon Tramlink extension, there seems to be no intention to do any separate public consultation on the scheme as a whole. The only public consultation being done is on the route options. Much of the route runs along roads that are already congested such as Kingsway and Southampton Row where it crosses High Holborn. The ABD has of course submitted objections to much of the route and to the failure to undertake proper consultation on the project.

The general route of the tram and the route options are shown in the following diagram.



The Dangers of Street Trams

Why is the running of trams down existing streets a bad idea? Well would you want a train (which is effectively what they are) running down your street? Apart from the issue of traffic congestion the main concerns are simply safety – particularly to pedestrians and cyclists.

There don't seem to be any accurate records of injuries to pedestrians caused by trams in the UK (until recently there have not been enough trams to make them measurable anyway). But the problem with trams is that they have very poor stopping distances in comparison with other modern road vehicles. They also tend to be much heavier with the result that accidents tend to be more severe.

A good site to look at if you want to see some details of accidents involving trams and pedestrians is to look at this site which covers the aptly named Wham-Bam-Tram in Houston, Texas:

www.actionamerica.org/houston/index.shtml

This tram system has caused more than 90 injuries, or more than 3 injuries per month.

Tram tracks are also a particular danger to cyclists who tend to get stuck in the ruts, or skid over them when the tracks are wet.

The Reliability of Trams

And of course the other problem is that other vehicles tend to regularly break down over the tracks which brings the whole tram network to a halt – this happens quite regularly in Croydon where the line runs on the street for only a small part of its total distance. The “unofficial” Croydon Tramlink web site (maintained by a fan of the system) shows a number of pictures of “misplaced” vehicles as it calls them (ie. accidents involving cars and the tram network) at: www.croydon-tramlink.co.uk/pictures/misplacedvehicles/index.shtml.

Incidentally, and unfortunately as the site is a mine of useful information, the developer of this web site, Stephen Parascandolo, recently died in a car crash in Hitchin.

How well did the trams cope with the January gales this year? To quote from the Croydon Tramlink Unofficial Site: “*On the afternoon of Thursday 18th January, trams were caught up in the general chaos following 80mph winds throughout the UK. During the afternoon, there was no service Wimbledon - Phipps Bridge (due to a tree down on both tracks between Merton Park and Dundonald Road stops), no service East Croydon - Sandilands (due to a tree in Addiscombe Road leaning on the*

overhead wire), no service Sandilands - Addiscombe (due to a tree on the OHLE), and no service Sandilands - Addington Village (due to a tree on the OHLE near to Oaks Road).” Did other road traffic come to a halt? Not in my experience as I drove extensively around south London on the worst day. There were a few fallen trees but the traffic simply drove around them.

New Draconian Powers in TfL Bill

Transport for London (TfL) have sponsored a new Bill that is going through Parliament. It provides extra powers to operate road tolling schemes. It is a complex and seemingly innocuous Bill which has received almost no publicity or comment in the national press. But it introduces a whole new raft of infringements that might make drivers liable to imprisonment.

For example, it will mean that any driver who permits his number plate to become obscured could be imprisoned. So failing to keep your plates clean in winter weather might result in you being taken to court and imprisoned - six months is the maximum penalty.

Is this reasonable? I don't think so. The normal penalties for offences such as not having a readable number plate are a fixed penalty notice and a fine of up to £1,000. Why does the Mayor of London need additional powers?

In addition it provides severe penalties for obstructing anyone who wishes to inspect in-car equipment related to road usage charging – clearly in anticipation of GPS or “tag & beacon” charging systems. It looks like someone has already anticipated the use of GPS jammers (which are quite widely available apparently) and other equipment to obstruct such charging.

The Bill in question is the Transport for London (Supplemental Toll Provisions) Bill and it can be seen on the internet at:

www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/about/report-library/private-bill.asp

Members may care to write to their MPs on this issue.

Mayoral Candidate Steps Forward



One declared candidate for the London Mayoral election in 2008 is Chris Prior (picture left). He has formed a political party called the “Stop Congestion

Charging Party” so clearly he is going to be primarily a “single issue” candidate. However he does have declared policies on quite a number of issues which you can see on his web site at www.stopcc.com.

These include removing a lot of speed humps and speed cameras, introducing school buses, installing air conditioning on public transport and other popular measures. He also wants to bring back Routemaster buses (probably a popular policy but perhaps not very practical), and is in favour of trams “*provided the infrastructure can be put in place with the minimum of disruption*”.

Mr Prior does have some political experience but needs to raise some funds for a campaign so please donate if you can. Your editor has made a contribution because, if nothing else, this candidate should ensure that scrapping the London Congestion Charge is a significant election issue.

Orpington Bus Lane Cameras



We have previously reported on the large amount of revenue being collected from infringers of the Cray Avenue, Orpington bus lane. Many people turned left through the bus lane unthinkingly and collected a penalty notice.

Indeed the amount of revenue the council was collecting from this scam was enough to make a substantial contribution to the budget. As pointed out in previous editions, it is very doubtful that such penalty notices adhered with the law. But two things have changed.

Firstly PCN revenue from this source has fallen by £263,000 – a fall of 90% - resulting in a major shortfall in council budgets. Clearly people have been learning to avoid the trap, and only unsuspecting “out of towners” now get caught.

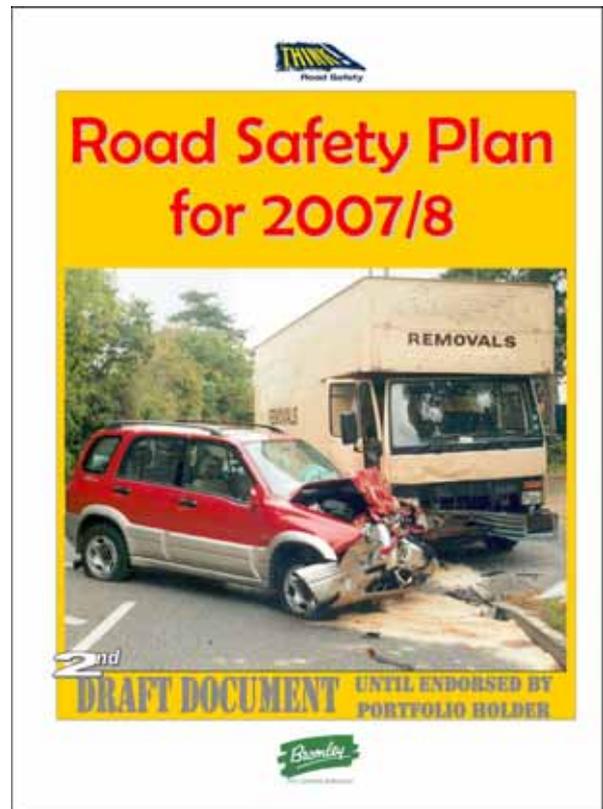
Secondly, Bromley Councillor Colin Smith has approved two changes to the road layout and markings near Station Approach:

- The existing dotted line that indicates where you can turn will be extended another 30 metres to 60 metres in total. This should minimise the number of accidental infringements just before Station Approach.
- The road will be widened and the box junction and other markings changed to try and improve traffic flow at this junction.

He is also going to consider the issue of whether the bus lane should have more restricted times than the current “all day” limits.

(Editor's Comments: This should go a long way to solve the problem in future. However it is unlikely to pacify those people who have already paid fines resulting from excessive “enforcement”. And it still leaves the basic issue that the council appeared to be ignoring the wording of the “Traffic Management Order” that established this bus lane, and the wording of the Highway Code when enforcing the lane – as was upheld by at least one PATAS adjudicator when one victim appealed. Council staff are persisting in saying their actions were reasonable when they were not and that moral issue remains unresolved. A change in “enforcement policy” should also have been made to rectify this as there are other locations and will be other circumstances where people will still be penalised unreasonably. Also refunds should be given to past victims of these unreasonable actions by the council).

Bromley Road Safety Plan



Bromley Council have recently published their road safety plan for the coming year (see cover above – it suggests this is a draft but in fact it has already been approved by Environment portfolio holder Colin Smith). Anyone who is interested in road safety should read this document as it explains why Bromley is better than most other London boroughs in road safety measures.

To quote from the report: “Bromley has a generally low number of casualties overall, compared with the rest of London, and numbers are also low in most individual road user categories. Bromley is in the best ten boroughs for all but car user casualties, where Bromley is 12th [out of 33 London boroughs]”.

For “all severities” Bromley ranks 4th in casualties per head of population, even though Bromley has more cars per head of population than any other London borough. *(Editor's Comments: Of course some wag may argue that one reason why Bromley residents are safer is because they all drive around in cars rather than use those means of transport which are known to be more risky such as cycles and motorcycles but there is no real evidence for this).*

Bromley is therefore well on the way to meeting the road casualty reduction targets set by the Government and the Mayor of London – the targets include a 50% reduction in KSIs by 2010. In fact Bromley has already met the 2010 target for slight casualties.

And they manage to do this without speed humps and speed cameras everywhere, so this surely should set an example for other London boroughs!

How has Bromley achieved such good results? Well read the report to find out in detail, but one very clear aspect is the emphasis on identifying the statistically dangerous roads and tackling those, with a proper cost justification for all the proposals. In other words, the most dangerous locations, and those where treatment can provide the most benefits are tackled first.

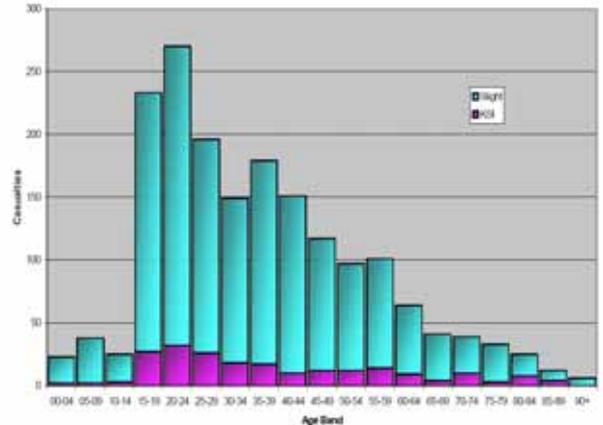
The local action group BBRAG (run by your editor) possibly contributed to this result as one of our early campaign themes some years ago was that money should stop being wasted on ineffective schemes, or those roads where residents simply complained loudest. A good example of wasting money on “headline” schemes is that in Ealing covered elsewhere in this newsletter. Wide area speed humps schemes are often the least cost effective approach to improving road safety.

These policies have been so successful in fact in Bromley that it is getting harder to identify the most dangerous locations, as the number of accidents is now so few that they are more randomly distributed across the borough.

But some problems certainly remain. For example road deaths in Bromley have not fallen at all over the years – there were 9 in 2005. But many of these are quite exceptional incidents, and in fact if car occupants involved in these accidents had been wearing seat belts, most would probably not have died.

There is also a particular problem with young drivers and motorcyclists. The following chart taken from the report shows the age profile of car occupant casualties over the last 3 years.

Figure 6.4d. Car user casualties by age, LBB 2003-2005



Clearly education has a big part to play here and Bromley spends considerable sums on that. For example the education of cyclists and motorcyclists in schools and young driver education in general has been a high priority in Bromley.

Bromley’s Road Safety Plan is definitely worth reading and it should be available on the council’s web site – see www.bromley.gov.uk – but the last time I looked it could not be found so ask your editor for a copy. It should be recommended reading in every other London borough. And note that Bromley does not have more financial or other resources than other London boroughs – they just spend the money they do have more effectively.

Dartford Crossing Consultation

The submission from the ABD on the public consultation to the Dartford Crossing toll changes is now present on the ABD web site. There was a petition on this subject on the PM’s Office web site which collected 936 signatures and is now closed. The Prime Minister’s response was:

“Given the forecast growth in traffic, the Government believes that maintaining a charge for the use of the crossing is the only credible way of keeping traffic at manageable levels in the short to medium term. This is because our analysis indicates that if daytime charges are left at the current levels then traffic will continue to grow, leading to worsening congestion.”

Without significant intervention, the daily average number of vehicles using the crossing is forecast to increase to between 170,000 and 190,000 by 2016, with consequent implications for congestion and for wider impacts, notably air quality.

Without taking action now there is a high risk that serious delays will occur with increasing frequency, which would have a negative impact on safety, the environment and the economy.

This is why the Government is currently consulting on changes to the charging regime at the crossing to manage growing traffic demand. The consultation document can be accessed on the Department for Transport website.

The consultation includes an option for spending a higher proportion of charging revenues on transport projects in the area around the crossing, and an option for a substantial discount on the crossing charge for local residents. The proposed charging structure reflects an increase in charges for users paying in cash, but drivers who opt for a 'Dart Tag' would pay the same as the current cash charge.

We have also initiated study work that could, in the longer term, lead to a third crossing, further helping to relieve congestion at the crossing."

Three comments:

- It suggests that air quality problems require traffic to be restrained, but in fact the existing air quality problems are caused by congestion which results from the delays to traffic at the toll booths.
- It promotes the policy that traffic can be constrained by road pricing and "demand management", which the ABD opposes as a matter of principle.
- It nicely pre-empts the public consultation by suggesting that government policy is to raise the charge anyway. So much for democracy!

Congestion Charge Extension



The day before the London Congestion Tax zone was extended to the west, a demonstration took place on the streets of Hammersmith. It was organised by Hammersmith

Conservative Association but got widespread support – a number of ABD members also attended.

Below is a picture of Councillor Merrick Cockell, Leader of the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, speaking to the crowd and to his right is Gordon Taylor, Chairman of the West London Residents Association. The latter has been very active in opposing the London Congestion Charge system. He has done a lot of detailed analysis of the effect of the scheme and its economics and simply thinks there are better alternatives.



Below is a picture of the cavalcade of cars before it took off on a tour of the area. Let us hope that Mr Livingstone takes note of the public opposition to the extension, but he certainly didn't when the public consultation took place.



Letters/Emails

From ABD Member, Malcolm Grace

"Thanks for the on line newsletter, which I intend to copy to a friend of mine in UKIP (like me he owns his own Minicoach Company and is being dogged with the same legislation mire as me).

I will sign the petition against road humps as my "coaches" are three LDVHi Loader converted vans, as used by Parcel Force, and 95% of all road humps cause serious problems for me More than 10 mph and the back of the coach will take off! Years ago when I owned double deckers we had this problem with a Lightweight AEC in which we could bump passengers off the rear seats by hitting hump back bridges at the right speed. (This was only by a couple of inches by the way, they didn't end up on the floor.) But I have lost parties who found that the LDVs bounced too much, usually it turned out over humps. On those installed in Hayes Lane Kenley, which are double sized for a school the first time I drove over them I totally misjudged the severity of them and ended up bumping on the grass verge.

I have managed to get a copy of the "LEZ Questionare" which will give me a stab at trying to get my message across. Luckily the Coach Industry is slowly waking up to what TfL are proposing - basically no coach over 5 years old will get into London without a fine, and most five year old coaches still cost in excess of £100,000. As a coach is designed for a 15 to 20 year life span this is going to cause major problems in the coach industry. It will hit the poorer hardest, those that Livingstone says he represents, because cheaper but perfectly roadworthy coaches are often used by mid range operators, like myself, for schools, clubs and older people who usually want a bit of comfort at a fair price rather than a brand new coach with leather seats, air conditioning DVDs etc at a premium price. And again those operators who do invest in a £200,000 coach are going for the American Tourist, Corporate market, they are not interested in taking the locals, who live in sheltered accommodation, shopping at Asda for cost."

News Snapshots

Sundry news in the last few weeks that is worth a mention is as follows:

+ A two-tier system for parking penalties will be introduced in London. A £120 fine will apply in central London for "serious" contraventions such as parking on double yellow lines or outside schools, or £100 in outer London. Lesser infringements such as overstaying in a parking meter will cost £100 or £80. Bus lane infringements will go up to £120 from July. *(Editor's Comments: Differentiating the penalties seems a lot fairer, but the charges are much too high, particularly the new bus lane infringement charge, for what could be quite trivial or accidental infringements. The power to set the levels of such fines should be taken out of the hands of Local Government as they have a vested interest in maximising their revenue.)*

+ According to a report in the HACAN newsletter, aircraft flights are responsible for one third of London's carbon emissions. The information was obtained in response to a question to the Mayor. Aviation emits 19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions every year, twice as much as from all other forms of transport in London combined.

+ It was reported in the Financial Times that Transport for London are predicting that congestion in the central zone will rise by 5% after the Congestion Charge zone is extended to the west. This is simply because more people will have residents discount permits and are likely to drive in the old zone. More east-west traffic is also expected to pay the charge as it will be more trouble than it is worth to drive around the new extended zone. *(Editor's Comments: This is yet another example of the incompetent design of the system and demonstrates yet again that the charge was introduced, and is now being extended, purely as a way to raise money. It's more about political dogma from Mr Livingstone than any rational argument. Congestion within the tax zone has been rising and if this latest forecast is met it is likely to be back pretty much back to where it was before the congestion tax was first introduced).*

+ It seems that public consultation responses to the Croydon Tramlink Extension generally supported Option 2 (the off-street option) for the route. Bromley council and the ABD also supported that option.

+ Your editor appeared on BBC Newsnight TV representing the ABD on the 7th February on a feature on the harassment of motorists in general. This was prompted by the letter bombs to motoring related organisations. We drove around the streets of Bromley for 30 minutes covering speed cameras, bus lanes, speed humps, box junctions while talking "on-camera". Fortunately my driving turned out to look quite safe. It was followed by a session with Jeremy Paxman on which Transport 2000 and someone else claiming to represent motorists was present – the latter will remain nameless as he made a real hash of putting our case. In addition I did interviews on SkyNews and BBC News 24 on the road usage charging petition set up by ABD member Peter Roberts, plus several other media interviews with international networks.

+ A good source of material on American transport issues is the American Dream Coalition web site, run by Randall O'Toole – see www.americandreamcoalition.org. It includes a large number of conference papers and talks – go to the tab labelled "Guide to the American Dream", then look under each topic and select "References and Experts". It's an amazing source of pro-car material and anti light rail (a.k.a. trams) and excessive public transport funding. There's even some material from your editor in there.

+ It is reported that average speed cameras have been installed in the Blackwall Tunnel (30 mph limit on the north bound side, 40 mph on the south bound). There was no consultation on this of course.



+ Cafepress have now started to market a number of items such as t-shirts and caps with anti-congestion charge slogans. The item on the left is an example. See www.cafepress.com/tanksandtottie for more details.

Contact Information

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About The Association of British Drivers (ABD)

The ABD is the leading independent organisation which represents the interests of private motorists in the United Kingdom. We campaign to protect the rights of individual road users and believe that road transport is a beneficial and essential element in the UK transport infrastructure. We oppose excessive taxation of motorists and are against tolls and road usage charging. We also campaign for more enlightened road safety policies. The Association is a "not for profit" voluntary organisation which is financially supported primarily by its individual members. More information on the ABD is available from our web site at www.abd.org.uk