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Editorial

Not a great deal of news came out over the summer period, and there seem to be no great new controversies on the transport front in London – at least until the Mayor publishes more specific details of his future transport policies.

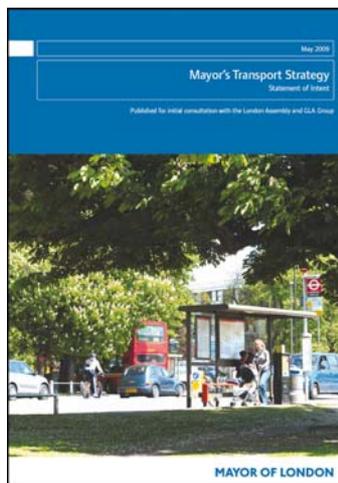
This edition is also late, and brief in scope due to your editor's shortage of time of late. But of course this newsletter is always open to submissions of articles or letters if you want a platform for your own views or think there is some newsworthy item that should be covered.

Just send me your submissions if you have any.

We also welcome many new readers who previously received the BBRAG newsletter.

Roger Lawson
Editor

Mayor's Transport Strategy



In May, Boris Johnson published a consultation document entitled "Mayor's Transport Strategy – Statement of Intent" (see cover on left). It outlined in a rather imprecise way his proposals for changes to the future transport

policies in London. The full report can be read at:

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/publications/2009/docs/transport-strategy.pdf

It's certainly an improvement on his predecessor's ideas, with more emphasis on the outer London boroughs and the need for orbital links and better local transport networks to support regional centres. But it still contains some lingering hangovers from the previous regime such as hints of "demand management by congestion charging" and removing "dysfunctional gyratories" and "one-way streets". But it's well worth reading and not too long.

On behalf of the ABD a submission was made commenting on some aspects of the report – see www.freedomfordrivers.org/News.htm for a copy (latest news item). This is of course the ABD London web site which contains a wide range of information on transport in London in case you haven't yet looked at it.

One Way Streets



The report mentioned above supports the views of the cycling and pedestrian lobby that one-way streets are a bad idea, although it's not totally clear why. They smooth the flow of traffic of course and hence might allow it to go faster, and it might be more convenient for cyclists by reducing distance travelled (and avoiding the need to ride on pavements), but these arguments ignore the reasons why they were introduced in the first place – mainly to try and reduce traffic congestion. In addition they ignore the safety aspects.

The picture above shows Aldgate High St near the junction with Mansell St in London before the work done recently to reduce the road space and change the gyratory system, with major negative impacts on traffic flows.

A recent study by Michael J. Cunneen in Albuquerque, USA reveals why such changes should be opposed on safety grounds alone.

This is what an abstract of a paper he is about to publish says: "Because of the claims for one-way to two-way conversion being 'pedestrian-friendly' and appropriate for downtown areas, the author sought a major city downtown area that had been extensively converted from one-way to two-way street flow. The prime example was found in Albuquerque, New Mexico. There, city planners, between 1999 and 2003, converted 62 blocks from one-way to two-way street flow on what had been four different one-way couplets. The great size of the area covered and the availability of up to four years worth of before and after accident data (1,600 accidents) made downtown Albuquerque the most comprehensive test of converting to two-way flow.

This paper presents the safety impact of this conversion as well as related conversions elsewhere. The Albuquerque results showed a 34% increase in the overall traffic accident rate with an increase in the pedestrian accident rate of 135% and an increase in the bicycle accident rate of 213%. These results confirm much earlier studies done in Oregon that one-way streets provide much better safety for pedestrians and are safer for traffic as well. When Portland, Oregon converted many two-way streets in its downtown area to one-way it found that the pedestrian accident rate declined 38% while all traffic accidents declined 24%. The Oregon State Highway Department published a 1959 report which summarized the impact of converting two-way state highway sections to one-way couplets through city centers in twelve smaller Oregon cities. The weighted average traffic accident rate declined 24% while the weighted average pedestrian accident rate declined 38%. When Modesto, California converted two-way streets to one-way it found that pedestrian injuries declined 57% while the traffic accident rate declined 10%.

The paper summarizes safety results from these and other studies as well as the comprehensive before-and-after Albuquerque results and discusses why there are these marked safety differences between one-way and two-way flow. It also examines why one-way flow, while fostering higher average speeds, is safer than two-way flow and where greater use of one-way flow may be beneficial in reducing congestion, accidents, air pollution, and fossil fuel consumption and bringing about a safer, smoother, and calmer flow of traffic. This old idea has much future potential with considerable safety and environmental benefits."

Costs Awards in Criminal Cases



In our December 2008 edition of this newsletter we covered the issue of proposals from the Government to withdraw the right of successful defendants in criminal

cases to reclaim all their costs. This potentially affects many thousands of motorists each year who are prosecuted, often on flimsy evidence, for minor motoring offences.

You can see the submission made by your editor on behalf of the ABD at:

www.freedomfordrivers.org/ABD_Legal_Costs_Consultation.pdf

The responses to the public consultation were overwhelmingly opposed (not just by solicitors whose livelihood will be affected but by other members of the legal profession and the general public). However that has not stopped the Government from deciding that it is going to push ahead with the proposals and severely limit the costs that can be awarded. A petition has been started on the Prime Ministers No.10 web site opposing these changes and I would urge all readers to sign it. Please go to:

<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/costsrecovery/>

(Editor's comments: this is yet another step in this Government's undermining of justice in the UK along with all the other attacks they have made on the rights and freedoms of the individual in the ten years they have been in power. It should be vigorously opposed).

Thames Crossings



Transport for London have outlined options for improved river crossings east of London following abandonment of the Thames Gateway Bridge (TGB – see artists impression above).

A bridge or tunnel running from Silvertown to the Greenwich peninsula is one possibility. An upgrade to the Woolwich ferries, which are coming to the end of their practical life, is also a possibility although this would probably entail imposing a charge for their use when there is none at present.

Another possible ferry idea is one for Gallions Reach to open up the Thamesmead area, or alternatively a smaller version of the TGB. Other possible foot/cycle bridges or small ferries are also being mooted.

No new road crossings are expected to be in place before 2020 though.

The Green party unsurprisingly opposed all future vehicle crossing proposals on the basis that “new roads just cause new traffic jams”. The Labour party continued to support the TGB as the only sensible solution.

Meanwhile as many people will have experienced of late, the Dartford crossing now has almost continuous queues of traffic at the toll booths during most of the day even after the toll has been increased by 50% to £1.50 for cars. Even when the rest of the M25 is free flowing, there are queues here, with associated air pollution affecting the surrounding area, simply because of the toll booths. With no prospect of any other Thames crossings in the short to medium term, it should surely make sense to remove the tolls?

Stepney Way Now Unimpeded



Congratulations to the London Borough of Lambeth for removing the “throttles” on Stepney Way (pictured above before the change).

These “one-way working” systems are an absolute menace and positively dangerous in the view of your editor, and bearing in mind the cost of the change I can only imagine it has been done because of the number of accidents and the residents’ complaints. It has been replaced by a system of speed tables.

Newsletters On Web Site

All past editions of the ABD London Region newsletters are now available from our web site (www.freedomfordrivers.org) as pdf documents from the “Newsletters” page. This will ensure they are readily accessible to anyone with an interest in transport issues.

News Snapshots

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

+ Transport for London (TfL) have indicated that they plan to relax traffic enforcement on red routes as part of a “Fair deal for drivers” programme. They accept that the use of automated camera enforcement has brought resentment from drivers. For example only 5 minutes are allowed in a loading bay before a ticket is issued, and this time will be increased. Yellow box junction infringement PCNs will only be issued where a vehicle is actually causing an obstruction in future. Whether it will affect cab drivers who can collect tickets for simply dropping off passengers on red routes or where yellow lines are present, much to their disgust, remains to be seen.

Note that the total PCNs issued in 2008/09 fell by 11% over the previous year. Various explanations have been put forward for the reduction such as the impact of the recession, drivers being more careful and more relaxed enforcement.

+ Lord Adonis, Transport Secretary, has indicated the abandonment of a national road-user charging policy. He said in a recent speech that “it won’t be in the Labour manifesto for the next election”. However, that won’t stop the Government supporting local schemes where there is a “democratic mandate” for them apparently.

+ Low cost versions of “Home Zones” under the “DIY Streets” initiative are being tried in some cities including three sites in London (two in Hackney and one in Islington). Sustrans are managing the projects.

+ TfL has hailed the success of 20 “intelligent cameras” that identify traffic congestion developing at hotspots on their road network. They recognise particular problems by using image recognition technology and avoid the need for camera operators to visually monitor all their cameras.

+ The London Borough of Hillingdon have introduced a scheme called “HillingdonFirst” that issues a card to residents and then gives them free or discounted parking. Non-residents pay the additional cost of the scheme.

+ TfL along with 18 London boroughs have submitted an application to the DfT for a permit scheme to manage road works. This may be one step that might stop repeated and pointless digging up of the roads, and excessive delays in putting them back in working order. Such schemes are possible under the Traffic Management Act 2004 but seem to be taking a long time to formulate and gain approval.

+ The London Road Safety Unit (part of TfL) have a new web site – see <http://londonroadsafety.tfl.gov.uk/> . It’s a useful source of information and data on road accidents in London.

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

Note that the ABD maintains a list of members who are familiar with individual London boroughs and may be able to help with information on local issues in those boroughs. The current list is below. If any members would like to take responsibility for any boroughs and report back on local transport issues so we can monitor them then please let me know. Roger Lawson

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