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Editorial

This edition includes a few comments on the likely impact of the General Election on transport in London, but it is going to be some time before the implications really become apparent in detail.

There are two major public consultations in London on Air Quality Strategy and on the Congestion Charge (including removal of the Western Extension), which we cover in some depth. Please make sure you respond with your own comments on these subject, particularly on the latter one. You can of course do this on-line very quickly by clicking on the links from this newsletter.

Roger Lawson

Editor

General Election Impact

The result of the General Election is likely to have a significant impact on transport in London. Although the junior partner in the new coalition Government, the LibDems, have consistently supported road pricing, this seems to be one of their policies that is not an element in the joint manifesto.



The new Transport Minister is Philip Hammond (photo left) who drives a Jaguar apparently and presumably will have use of an XJ

model as a ministerial car which now seems to be the favoured brand for that role (and very good cars they are too – Ed). He has promised to “end the war on motorists”, but has warned that “motoring has got to get greener”. He did say he would put in a fuel price stabilizer (i.e. taxation would fall when oil prices were high and vice-versa) although that seemed to be dropped from the Coalition “Pact” subsequently, but he has also ruled out road pricing.

He has pointed out that funding new road projects might be difficult given the likely crack-down on Government spending. One probable impact in London is an attack on the enormously expensive Crossrail project, although it has not yet been dropped. *(Editor's Comment: when I looked at this when it was in the planning stage, it seemed economically very difficult to justify and my view has not changed since. It was an extreme example of the poor economics and defective capital investment justification for many rail schemes which the former Government loved.*

At least the fact that Mr Hammond owns a car suggests he can drive, which is more than can be said of some Transport Ministers we have been saddled with in the past).

Richmond Election Result



One of the most gratifying results in the London Council elections, at least to your editor, was the loss of the London Borough of Richmond to the Conservatives by the Liberal Democrats.

The Liberal Democrats in Richmond adopted many “anti-car” policies, and when they proposed a “CO2-based” permit parking charge the ABD joined in the democratic opposition to it. There was widespread public revolt which culminated in a public meeting organised by the council where almost all the audience was against it. You can see more details of the arguments and the speech given by your editor at the public meeting, in one of our past newsletters – see: Newsletter No. 2 on this web page:

www.freedomfordrivers.org/Newsletters.htm

The local Conservative manifesto included an “*End to the war on high streets, adopt fair parking policies and scrap failed CPZ tax surcharge on parking permits*”.

Even more satisfying was the eviction of former LibDem Council Leader Serge Lourie who lost his seat by just 6 votes. He was clearly a very arrogant person and did not seem to believe in democracy at all from his handling of the affair.

Conservatives also won two local parliamentary seats from the Liberal Democrats. Of course there may have been other factors at work in these successes but it shows how local democracy does work when issues which personally affect them are presented to the voters in the right way.

One ABD member has commented that “*We visited friends in central Richmond recently - the cost for a max of 4 hours pay and display parking regardless of vehicle type was £12*” which shows how far the LibDem policies had gone.

Air Quality Consultation



As mentioned in our last newsletter, the Mayor of London has published a draft Air Quality Strategy document and is inviting public consultation responses (it’s not too late to submit your own comments so long as they are in by June 20th). The

submission from the ABD is now present on our web site (see www.freedomfordrivers.org/Consultations.htm).

As usual we criticise the promotion of the Congestion Charging scheme as having any benefit in reducing emissions and reducing traffic congestion. On both points, the evidence is absolutely to the contrary.

We suggest speed humps should be removed as they contribute significantly to additional air pollution; we oppose “action days” and other “special measures”; but we do support many other policies put forward by the Mayor.

Please do give the document a read and submit your own comments via email to maqs@london.gov.uk

(Editor’s Note: it really is important to submit your own comments to these kind of consultations, even if you crib a lot. As you can see from the later article, these consultations tend to be swamped by responses from left wing or environmental groups who are often funded by interested third parties. Submitting responses may not have a great or immediate impact but the people who write these documents do need to be enlightened on the general public’s view on the key issues. Also where their logic is clearly wrong, then they need to be corrected so that these errors do not persist in future).

Congestion Charge Consultation



After two public consultations on removal of the Western Extension of the Congestion Charge, a further, and hopefully final one, is now being run by the Mayor of London. Please go to

this web page to submit your own comments:
www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging/15520.aspx

The submission from the Association of British Drivers (London) can be obtained from here:
www.freedomfordrivers.org/Consultations.htm

Unless there is a last minute hitch, the western extension should be removed on Dec 24th 2010, which should be a nice Christmas present for local residents and traders. The removal of the Western Extension will consummate the success of the campaign by the ABD and the West London Residents Associations.

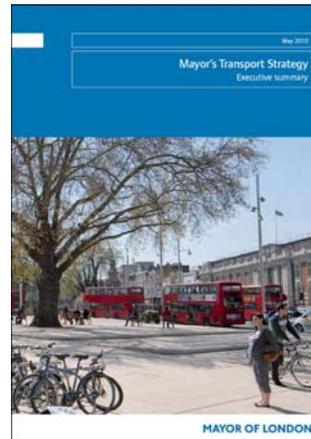
Charge to Rise to £10

Other changes proposed at the same time are a rise in the standard charge to £10 if you pay by existing methods. Readers should bear in mind that when originally proposed the charge was £5 which many people thought acceptable, but surely £10 is not, particularly as the scheme has not met its original objectives of reducing congestion. However, there will be a new "Auto Pay" system that will automatically debit a credit card that is pre-registered if you drive into the zone. The charge will then only be £9. The other big advantage of Auto Pay is that you won't have to pay a large penalty fine if you accidentally drive in the zone and forget to pay, if you are registered for it. Penalty charges generate a very substantial proportion of the Congestion Charge scheme revenue, and many of them must be accidental infringements. *(Editor: I have collected at least two penalty charges this way, and even Boris Johnson admitted to one).*

Low Emission Vehicles

There are also some changes proposed for the discounts available to electric and other low emission vehicles, with a phasing out of the "alternative fuel" discount.

Mayor's Transport Strategy



Boris Johnson has published the final version of his Transport Strategy which will now be in effect for some years, effectively dictating the agenda for some time to come. You can obtain it, together with the TfL report on the public

consultation from this web page:

www.london.gov.uk/publication/mayors-transport-strategy

The final version was not much changed from the draft, and it confirmed the Mayor's commitment to the removal of the Western Extension of the Congestion Charge which is expected to be removed before the end of this year.

As regards the consultation responses, there were about 5,700 in total and the Association of British Drivers submission was mentioned 18 times in the report.

On the Western Extension (which as one person pointed out, had now been consulted on three times), the responses were 58% supporting removal versus 25% disagreeing, which is pretty conclusive. But it was clear that there was consistent lobbying against this and other measures by partisan organisations representing anti-car or public transport financed groups. For example, the objectors to removal included these groups: Campaign for Better Transport, Campaign for Clean Air in London, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, CTC, Energy Saving Trust, Friends of the Earth, Inclusion London, Living Streets, London Civic Forum, London Cycling Campaign, London First, London TravelWatch, NHS London, Railfuture, and the TUC. It is perhaps unfortunate that such groups tend to proliferate and have the time and funds to make submissions to these kind of consultations, while the general public and business groups are less well represented.

The West London Residents Association and the ABD did of course actively support the removal though and had a major impact.

TfL did recommend some changes to the final report in regards to River Crossings which emphasised the role of “modal shift” and the possibility of tolling of existing or new river crossings to fund infrastructure improvements and/or to manage demand. So don’t be surprised if you see any new crossings in the east of London are subject to tolls.

Despite the “loaded question” on demand management by road pricing in the consultation (which was emphasised in the ABD’s response which is on our web site), there was only a small minority in favour. It is clear that an unbiased question is very unlikely to produce an overall response in favour, even taking into account that many London residents who will have responded to this consultation are not car owners or drivers.

One point worth noting however is that the Mayor is committed to using parking charges to encourage the purchase and use of vehicles with low emissions. So the policy of Emission Related Permit Parking charges, and indeed general parking charges, which proved so unpopular in Richmond might become more widespread.

London Borough Funding

It has been pointed out to me that the article in the last edition on how London Councils operate with regards to transport matters was slightly out of date. From April 2010, there is a more flexible funding arrangement from Transport for London (TfL). Previously boroughs had to bid for funding within 23 separate TfL funding programmes, each of which had centrally determined criteria. From 2010/2011, the majority of the funding streams will be amalgamated into three much wider programmes with funding allocated by a formula.

This seems to provide a lot more flexibility in terms of enabling boroughs to meet local transport needs and priorities. However, any “bids” for funding still need to be consistent with the Mayor’s Transport Strategy.

Here’s a breakdown of the bids submitted by the Borough of Bromley for 2010/2011 so you get some idea of the figures (these figures exclude £1.1 million for bridge strengthening and principal road renewal, and “reserve schemes”):

| Heading – Draft LIP Bids | Cost £ |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Congestion relief | 445,000 |
| Network Infrastructure | 216,000 |
| Cycling (cycle paths/parking) | 360,000 |
| Casualty Reduction (road safety) | 587,000 |
| Bromley Town Centre Action Plan | 125,000 |
| Parking schemes | 455,000 |
| School Travel Plans Eng. Works | 25,000 |
| Decluttering streets (pilots) | 35,000 |
| Walking | 235,000 |
| Local member suggested schemes | 195,000 |
| Freight Quality Partnership | 10,000 |
| Light against crime | 25,000 |
| School schemes (education, etc) | 469,000 |
| Travel awareness | 9,000 |
| Seltrans funding | 35,000 |
| Mobility/accessibility | 40,000 |
| Total | 3,266,000 |

Without going into the individual programmes under each of those headings, you can immediately question the balance of expenditure. For example more is proposed for parking schemes than on “congestion relief” (and half of the latter is going on one junction apparently).

(Editor’s Comments: At least it seems to be a step in the right direction in comparison with previous TfL funding arrangements and budgets. It’s always very important when looking at what is wrong with the transport network to look at where the money is being spent.

Politicians and bureaucrats have a great habit of not publicly announcing what they doing, but changing things by granting or withdrawing money. So for example, don't tell anyone you are not going to spend money on building roads but instead spend it on enormously expensive and economically unviable rail schemes – simply don't fund the former and don't mention it, but announce the latter as “major improvements to public transport infrastructure”. This will win you votes and plaudits from pundits with nobody being aware that you are reluctant to announce a major policy change.)

News Snapshots

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

+ A CCTV camera in Wandsworth is generating almost £1 million a year in fines. It catches drivers as they park in a lay-by to drop off passengers outside Clapham South underground station. Although it only has a single yellow line on the kerb, it is in fact a bus stop, but drivers are complaining it is not clearly marked. *(Editor's Comment: these fines seem questionable but people probably pay them rather than appeal. It's yet another case of unreasonable enforcement and the automatic generation of penalty fines, and hence income, that local councils love).*

+ TfL have said that its “Drivers’ Charter” programme has improved compliance with traffic regulations. This scheme was intended to counter driver resentment regarding enforcement of parking regulations, the Congestion Charge and LEZ schemes. There is an interesting presentation on the views of the public, and TfLs responses via this scheme, on this web page: www.nsl.co.uk/seminars/towards-a-drivers-charter.pdf . For example, allegedly taxis are now allowed to stop on red routes without automatically getting a PCN, and more time is allowed for loading/unloading in loading bays.

+ Graeme Craig, responsible for Congestion Charging and Traffic Enforcement at Transport for London (TfL) said at a recent meeting that PCNs had dropped from a peak of 310,000 per year to 155,000 in the last year. This is a result of the “Driver’s Charter” with a more flexible

approach to enforcement and more discretion being used. He also said that there were no new CCTV cameras installed in the last 2 years. However he still received much criticism over the enforcement of a car ban on Wilton Road near Victoria which received a lot of television publicity (enforced by a presumably new CCTV camera). Many of the thousands of motorists who were penalised were accidentally infringing a temporary road closure due to confusion, and the fact that it was not an obviously permitted detour from the congestion charge free route through the zone.

+ One of the Conservative wins in marginal seats in the General Election was Dartford. New M.P. Gareth Johnson has vowed to fight against plans to sell off the Dartford Crossing. He also is in favour of scrapping the tolls, as many local politicians are.

+ Transport for London (TfL) are about to commence trials of “pedestrian count-down signals”. The new signals will count-down the seconds left in the black-out period so that pedestrians know to hurry up, and may enable the period to be reduced. Trials are planned for eight locations.

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

Contact Information

This Newsletter is published by the London Region of the Association of British Drivers (A.B.D.), PO Box 62, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5YB and is distributed free of charge to ABD Members in the London area and to those Members of BBKAG who formerly received the Bromley Borough Roads Action Group newsletter. All material contained herein is Copyright of the A.B.D. or of the authors and may only be reproduced with permission. Any opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author of the article or that of the Editor which do not necessarily represent the official policies of the A.B.D.

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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 keep an eye on local news and advise on local transport issues then please let me know. Roger Lawson

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