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Editorial

This edition was produced while the Olympic Games were in full swing, so our first report is on the traffic impact. These very expensive events, are of course one of the last follies with which Ken Livingstone lumbered us (we still have the London Congestion Tax though).

To permit the Olympic authorities to monopolise certain road lanes for the “games family” (in reality mostly those who have purchased expensive visitor packages, are commercial sponsors, the media, administrators or other “VIPs” who are too precious to take public transport) must be one of the worst decisions of any publicly elected person. What percentage of Londoners supported that idea I wonder?

The Latin tag for this sop to the electorate, to distract them from other serious considerations, is “panem et circenses” – bread and circuses.

As it is Transport for London (TfL) seem to have done a reasonably good job of managing the impact although with the dubious result that they have scared off most other tourists from visiting London this summer – particularly those who might spend some money. Streets are deserted, shops empty and hotels have lots of vacancies so this Olympics is not going to provide a financial boost as expected. It’s just going to be a expensive freebee paid for by taxpayers given to those who like watching sport.

Well at least we hopefully won’t have to suffer any more Livingstonian distractions because since our last edition he was narrowly defeated by Boris Johnson for Mayor. A postscript on that event is in another article.

I have not personally visited this Olympics or watched it on television. If I had I would have thought continuously of the wasted effort and money that has gone into this asinine event (total cost up to £24bn according to the Guardian). It has not provided an iota of benefit to anyone, but just large inconvenience to Londoners and at our expense. If athletes want to see who can run fastest or jump highest, let them pay for it out of their own pockets. Many of us simply see them as mentally deranged that they should dedicate their lives to such a pointless activity. Moderate physical exercise is a healthy pursuit, but taken to excess, it is not. Sports enthusiasts should send their brickbats to the editor.

Roger Lawson, Editor

The London Olympics



For those readers who don’t live in London (Londoners were well warned of the problems), as part of the Olympic Games arrangements TfL have established an “Olympic Route Network (ORN)” (see map later) so as to keep traffic moving. This includes a lot of additional parking restrictions, banned turns, rephased traffic lights and the introduction of “Olympic Lanes” reserved for authorised vehicles only.

This network is in place not just for the two weeks of the Olympic Games but also for some weeks before and after and for the Paralympic games also, so in effect it covers the 25th July to the 14th August and another period later in the summer.

In addition there was a lot of encouragement for ordinary commuters to work from home, for everyone not to drive into London, and as a result, for tourists to stay away after warnings of severe congestion on the tube network and at some London tube and mainline stations.

The photo above shows the games lane in operation on the 31st July on Lower Thames Street about midday, part of the main east-west route that includes the Embankment in central London. The right hand lane is that reserved for Olympic vehicles and as you can see there is the occasional bus in it, but with a solid queue of traffic on the remaining lane, going eastbound.

Why is there hardly any traffic going westbound (indeed less than normal)? Probably because it's been held back by retimed traffic lights on the Highway further east.



The same queue of traffic eastbound is shown above on Tower Hill, which shows an example of one of the “variable message signs” used to indicate when the games lanes are in use (from 6.0 am to midnight during most of the games).

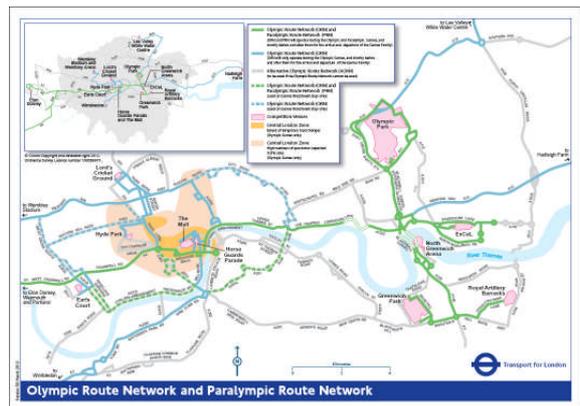
Shown below is an example of a change made by closing off one lane on Mansell Street (the approach to Tower Bridge). This generated gridlock in surrounding streets on a day before the games opened when traffic was blocked from forming the normal two-lane queue and obstructed other vehicles turning to the left.

Unexpected changes such as this caused a lot of confusion, and many vehicles did not understand that the right hand lane was the games lane and the left for other traffic.



Did it work? Well the traffic within central London (if you avoided the ORN) was actually quite light. But getting into central London was a problem with obstruction on routes such as the M4, A40, A12 and A2.

Public transport was similarly generally OK so long as you avoided the congestion hot-spots. But the effort involved in revising traffic signs, painting on the road all the required road markings and other changes to manage the traffic must have been enormous. The inconvenience to the ordinary residents of London has been very substantial, most of whom simply wished to go about their ordinary business.



The Olympic Route Network (ORN)

(Editor: Let us hope that we don't have to suffer such nonsense again in future. Other cities should be warned not to put in bids for the Olympics on such conditions simply because they wish to host the games. Or if they wish to do so, venues and hotel accommodation should be chosen to ensure they are supported by a good road network, which London simply does not have).

Boris Beats Ken



Yes Boris Johnson did beat Ken Livingstone to be elected Mayor of London but by only 3% (after second preference votes had been taken into account, which shows the importance of using them). So there probably won't be any major changes in transport policy in the near future.

However Labour gained GLA member seats although they still do not have an overall majority. But this might create difficulty in getting budget approvals in future because the Conservatives will need the support of other parties. One Conservative GLA member who was defeated was Brian Coleman, as predicted on our last edition. "Legendary for his rudeness" as one blogger described him, Mr Coleman fell victim to a coalition of groups opposed to his policies on such matters as parking in Barnet.

New "Roads Task Force"

Subsequent to his election, the Mayor has created a "Roads Task Force" to help shape the future of London's road network. A note it has issued says:

"Roads are vital to the Capital's economy and to movement around the city; roughly 80% of all passenger trips and many freight trips in London are made by road. However, London's roads face a number of challenges in the short, medium and long term:

- *Conflicts between competing uses and users.*
- *Need for significant investment in London's road asset, to ensure they are fit for a 21st century city.*
- *Growth in London's population and employment will add to existing pressures on the road network.*
- *Rising expectations for the quality of public space.*

- *The imperative to continue improving safety on London's roads.*

To meet these challenges, London needs a strategy for the development, design and management of its road network, building on the work of the Mayor's Transport Strategy. This would complement Transport for London's (TfL) strategy for rail based modes and would form an important part of TfL's contribution to the Mayor's 2020 vision for the capital, to be produced over the course of this year. We need to develop a road system fit for the 21st century that supports London's sustainable social and economic growth and all the Mayor's strategies: one which is more reliable, no more congested than it is today (and ideally less congested), safer, cleaner, healthier, better serves local communities, and contributes positively to the urban realm.

A re-invigorated, integrated approach is needed to achieve this vision. The Mayor has asked for this vision to be developed by a Roads Task Force."

They have invited views on how the vision should be developed and the ABD will be submitting a response. Let the Editor know your views if you have any opinions you would like to see included.

New Boris Hand-out



Just to show that the new Mayor is not averse to handing out sops to the electorate like his predecessor, he has announced one decision since being re-elected. The concessionary travel scheme (in London called the Freedom Pass) for the over 60s had the age limit raised to 61 and it will rise further in due course (to 67) due to central Government policy. But the Mayor of London is to supply a new "60+ Concessionary Travel Scheme", as it will be called, providing free travel just like the existing Freedom Pass to those who wouldn't otherwise be within the age limit.

(Editor: this will result in a substantial financial burden on the local London boroughs who pay for these "free" fares – they are not free at all of course but paid from taxation. Why politicians insist on trying to win popularity by bribing the electorate with their own money, I do not understand).

20-MPH Zones



We have covered the merits of wide-area 20 mph schemes in past newsletters, but proponents continue to promote this idea using spurious arguments. They claim improved road safety but

the facts actually show otherwise.

Eric Brigstock recently presented his findings on their effectiveness to an ABD meeting, and also gave a report on his presentation to a conference on the subject. This is some of what he had to say:

From the second year report on the Portsmouth scheme, the Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) figure rose from 19 before to 20 after implementation (this was despite there being a national reduction of 12% in the same period). There was also a 38% increase in pedestrian KSIs and an 11% increase in injured cyclists. The report says “*casualty benefits greater than the national trend have not been demonstrated*”. As Mr Brigstock pointed out, these are “weasel words” because the benefits were actually lower than the national trend. The campaign “20s Plenty” do of course continue to promote Portsmouth as a success based on overall casualty figures, when the data shows that the improvement is worse than the national trend (even more so when corrected for traffic volume).

In Bristol on another scheme, there was a net increase in overall casualties. In Oxford, where £250,000 was spent on a scheme in 2009, the KSI figures rose from 61 in 2008 to 71 in 2009 and 72 in 2010. Warrington reported a 66% increase in serious injuries and a 48% increase in minor injuries after the introduction of a 20-mph “pilot” scheme.

Although this data is limited in size, there is a consistent theme that there is no demonstrable benefit from simply putting up 20-mph signs, with no examples where there is a clear advantage.

Mr Brigstock argues that unfortunately 20-mph zones make roads appear safer when they are not. So pedestrians take less care when crossing the road.

In addition, slower moving vehicles are quieter and less easy to notice (human visual systems pick out fast moving objects more quickly) and driver’s attention drifts when they are driving slowly.

(Editor: as with most pet road safety ideas of many enthusiasts – speed humps, speed cameras, etc. – there is little attempt to collect scientifically sound evidence of the benefit of such ideas. No proper controlled, “double-blind” trials are undertaken. The enthusiasts rely on the strength of their rhetoric and the use of selective data to make their case. Don’t be fooled by these methods but look at the facts. And remember that all road safety schemes should be cost justified because if there are better things to spend the money on, then that is where the limited funds should be spent).

Islington and Camden (the Worst!)

Following the publication of accident statistics by the Department for Transport, the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) published an analysis of those local authority areas with the largest increases in KSIs between 2010 and 2011. Portsmouth was in the top two.

But also of interest was that Islington and Camden in London also had some of the worst figures of KSIs per vehicle mile travelled. Those boroughs do of course have more speed humps than many other London boroughs and lots of 20 mph zones. Islington overtook Camden to have the highest rate of KSIs per vehicle mile of all the London boroughs, after KSIs rose from 81 to 100.

Note from the Editor: you may have remarked that this newsletter did not adhere to the normal bi-monthly frequency of past editions. It is becoming more and more difficult to produce it due to my other commitments so it will likely be on a more infrequent or ad-hoc schedule in future. But I will continue to try and cover important events when necessary.

Eden Park CPZ Canned



B

Bromley Council recently undertook a public consultation on a wide area Controlled Parking Zone around Eden Park Station. But the majority of respondents opposed it so the council is not going to proceed with installation.

(Editor: this is what I said in a submission from the ABD to the consultation, and it would be a good template to use for any similar proposals: "We never see any justification for permit parking schemes. They just enable the council to raise funds from unsuspecting householders (and typically in excess of what it costs to administer such schemes) who think they will be guaranteed a parking space outside their own house - in many cases quite incorrectly. In any case I can never see why local householders should have any priority over other Bromley residents and roads are constructed and maintained out of taxation by all residents - not just those in a particular street.

Once introduced, they just cause people who need to park their cars to move to other streets outside the zone, much to the inconvenience of residents in those roads. In essence permit parking schemes are a money making scheme invented by council staff to introduce unnecessary regulation and charges when space allocation on the first-come, first-served principle is fairer and COSTS NOTHING!

Please reconsider these proposals."

So the moral is that if you live in Bromley and object to permit parking schemes then make sure you object as the Council will listen – yes democracy reigns there. Unfortunately that is not necessarily so in many London boroughs).

Parking Report from the RAC



The RAC Foundation have recently published a report on "parking" (see cover above). It's probably only worth reading the whole report of over 100 pages if you have a particular interest in this subject, but it does contain some interesting data on parking in the country as a whole with some particularly interesting statistics for London.

It reports that there are actually some 6.8 million parking spaces in London, of which 1.8m are in private garages or driveways. Some 2.4m are on-road without restrictions and 800,000 where there are yellow lines, meters or residents bays. More details of this data are in the report.

Overall there are considerably more spaces than there are cars (about double surprisingly) but in Inner London the balance is much more even.

In Inner London there are often more residents permits issued than there are spaces to park (for example 1.5 permits per space in Westminster).

There has been a significant drop in the use of residential garages nationwide – it seems they tend now to be filled with junk, cars are too big to fit in them, or residents have multiple cars.

Car ownership in London falling

A particularly interesting table taken from the London Travel Demand Survey shows that between the 2001 and the 2007/10 surveys there was a fall of 5% in car ownership in London even though the population rose by 8% (see p.30 of the RAC report).

This reduction in car availability was spread fairly evenly between inner and outer London boroughs so the report suggests car ownership is not dependent on parking provision. According to TfL there are lots of factors that affect car ownership such as household income, the cost of buying or running cars, public transport accessibility and even “nationality”.

Of course such data gives a lie to those who argue that London will sooner or later will suffer from gridlock due to rising population who all want to own cars. This data simply does not support that (and neither does traffic volume trends either).

Parking Revenue in London

Page 66 of the report gives a breakdown of income and expenses in London from parking versus the “Rest of England”. It shows that London alone generated income of £542m in 2009/2010 while the Rest of England generated £810m. This just shows how active London Boroughs and TfL are in generating income from this source.

The disparity between on-street and off-street parking is even more severe. London generates £465m on-street versus only £244 for the Rest of England. This demonstrates the low level of off-street car park provision in London and how councils rake in the money from on-street parking (they get a large surplus from it).

Speed Camera Count in London



last report.

The latest speed camera count in London is 780 cameras (based on sites and including red light cameras) - unchanged from our

See www.lscp.org.uk/cameralocations.html for the details.

We will continue to report these numbers in each newsletter.

News Snapshots

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

+ Diesel fumes cause cancer according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). They suggest they are a definite cause of lung cancer and may also cause bladder cancer. Particulates emitted by diesel engines seem to be the source of the problem. *(Editor: major cities such as London have high levels of such particulates because of the high proportion of buses, taxis and LGVs that run on diesel which emphasises the importance of converting some of these vehicles to other fuels or having efficient modern engines with filters).*

+ TfL is installing “green walls” on some roads to try and trap particulates. For example on Marylebone Road near the Edgware Road tube station and in the form of “plant towers” on Lower Thames Street.

+ The Judicial Review applied for by some Barnet residents in respect of raised parking charges is now alive again after the Court of Appeal overturned a previous decision to reject the application.

+ Clive Hyer, a City solicitor, was hit by a cyclist who had travelled through a red light on Holborn Viaduct. He was thrown onto the road and suffered a fractured skull and brain haemorrhage which has resulted in permanent brain damage. The cyclist was uninjured. He was subsequently prosecuted, on the lowest possible charge and received a fine plus costs of £1,780.

+ According to a report in the Economist, if someone breaks down in the Blackwall Tunnel then a 600-vehicle queue builds up within ten minutes. If the jam occurs at 7 a.m. then it takes three hours to clear. One breakdown in three is caused by running out of fuel and there are 200 breakdowns a year in the tunnels.

(Editor: although there are signs indicating petrol stations a mile or two back from the tunnel entrance, it would seem these need to be made more prominent. There are long stretches of road on the north bound approach roads with no refuelling stops).

+ The same Economist article mentioned above (which was a good overview of London transport issues apart from its support for the Congestion Tax, a common failing among economists), covered the costs of the Boris Bike scheme. They give the total cost as £120m with Barclays Bank, the sponsor, paying half that. The average cost per bike is £14,460 *(Editor: mainly I presume on the docking stations, otherwise they must be some of the most expensive bikes in the world).*

+ The Government is considering proposals to improve the A14 in Cambridgeshire by changing it into a toll road (so as to finance the development). This is a route used by many in east London to reach the A1 or other points north and east via the M11. *(Editor: there is likely to be significant public opposition to this as although some do not object to paying for new roads via tolls, nobody likes to pay to use an existing road – already paid for from our taxes. There is also little evidence that toll roads are economic where there are parallel non-tolled roads, as there will be in this case. Many believe it will be a white elephant like the M6 toll road, and not be taken up by commercial companies who would need to get on board to fund it).*

+ The Labour Party have suggested that all England's cities should adopt "TfL" style bodies as we have in London. *(Editor: not if they have any sense they won't. TfL is notoriously bureaucratic and publicly unaccountable).*



+ The London Cable Car across the Thames between Greenwich and the Royal Docks has opened for business, and is called the "Emirates Air Line" after the sponsor.

The cost? £8.60 for most (i.e. tourists and foreigners), but £6.40 for a round trip for those with an Oyster Card, Freedom Pass, etc (i.e. Londoners). At those prices they may only get thrill seekers surely.

Contact Information

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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 other 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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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

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