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**Secretariat memorandum**

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Agenda item 10

LTW 309

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**Motorcycles in bus lanes**

**1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To apprise the Board of the trial by the Mayor to allow motorcycles into red route bus lanes and to invite members to debate what London TravelWatch's response should be to the statutory consultation now being undertaken.

**2 Background**

- 2.1 The Mayor is implementing his manifesto pledge to allow motorcycles to use all red route bus lanes in London by way of an experimental traffic order that must last at least six months, but no more than 18 months, at the end of which time the scheme must be either removed or made permanent
- 2.2 This experimental order commenced on 5 January 2009 and is effectively the consultation period during which TfL will monitor the scheme and stakeholders can have their say. The statutory consultation period ends 6 months after the start date, i.e. 5 June 2009
- 2.3 London TravelWatch has historically taken the view that it should await the outcome of the several trials that TfL has undertaken before taking a view on this issue. However, in December 2006 we contributed to a Transport Select Committee saying:
- Allowing the appropriate use of bus lanes for [motor]bikes would provide an opportunity here to bring these road users together, training bus drivers in observation for [motor]bikes and cycles, and promote the safe use of the inside lane for these two distinct groups.
- 2.4 Prior to this present trial there were 3 bus lanes on TfL roads which motorcycles were allowed to use during operational hours. TfL published a report on this trial before the 2008 mayoral elections - [http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/transport/docs/p2ws\\_bus\\_lanes\\_report.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/transport/docs/p2ws_bus_lanes_report.pdf) Members may also be aware that there has also been an unpublished report which proponents of allowing motorcycles into bus lanes use to support their case.
- 2.5 Westminster and some other London councils have allowed some bus lanes to be used by motorcycles. Other towns and cities have allowed some bus lanes to be used, but not all. The details of these are summarised in a recent interim Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) report (Impacts of motorcycles in

Westminster bus lanes) commissioned by Westminster - [http://www.trl.co.uk/online\\_store/reports\\_publications/trl\\_reports/cat\\_traffic\\_engineering/report\\_Impacts\\_of\\_motorcycles\\_in\\_Westminster\\_bus\\_lanes\\_.htm](http://www.trl.co.uk/online_store/reports_publications/trl_reports/cat_traffic_engineering/report_Impacts_of_motorcycles_in_Westminster_bus_lanes_.htm)

- 2.6 Members should note that London TravelWatch has recently responded to a Freedom of Information request from the British Motorcycle Federation (BMF) regarding our policy development and stance. As part of that process the Secretariat has met BMF's representative.
- 2.7 TfL previously stated that that it would present an interim report to members at this May Board meeting, but has since reported that, because the casualty figures and market research will not be available, this interim report will not be available until September 2009. When available, it will cover:
- Initial analysis of three months worth of Transport for London Road Network collision/casualty data
  - Insights from public and stakeholder feedback
  - Trends from the online questionnaire
  - Findings from the independent Synovate target audience research
  - Outcomes of the statutory consultation process (closes on 5 July 2009).

### **3 Issues for members to consider**

- 3.1 TfL commenced the trial on 5 January 2009 for a period of eighteen months. At the end of that period it must either revoke the order or make it permanent. The trial will be monitored by TRL which has expertise in this field. Monitoring will take the form of before and after filming of a set of bus lanes and some attitudinal research. Traffic speeds, including motorcycle speeds in the bus lanes will also be monitored.
- 3.1 The BMF have stated that they advocate access to bus lanes both to benefit road safety and to reduce journey times. They believe the original TfL three bus lane study demonstrated (in the unpublished report referred to above) that allowing motorcyclists into bus lanes benefits all road users.
- 3.2 Analysis of London Plan growth in TfL's planning document, *Transport 2025*, proposes a quadrupling of cycling in London and an additional one million walking trips. London TravelWatch is supportive of this aspiration. In this context members should note that road danger and the perception of danger are often reported as a reason for not taking up cycling and making walking less pleasant.
- 3.3 Department for Transport (DfT) guidance (Traffic Advisory Note 2/07: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/tal/trafficmanagement/trafficadvisoryleaflet207.pdf>) has recently been revised (February 2007) and states:

The local highway or traffic authority is best placed to decide whether or not to allow motorcycles into with-flow bus lanes. Each case needs to be examined on its own merits, taking into account the positive and negative aspects in reaching a balanced view.

The guidance notes several issues that should be considered by local traffic authorities. It is cautious of allowing motorcyclists into narrow bus lanes, i.e those less than 4 metres.

3.4 Though motorcyclists, pedal cyclists and pedestrians are all said to be vulnerable users, TRL states in its report for Westminster that:

Overall little useful monitoring had been carried out by local authorities and accident data was inconclusive.

3.5 TfL's study (referred to in 2.4 above) is said, by TRL in its report, to be "one of the largest accident studies".

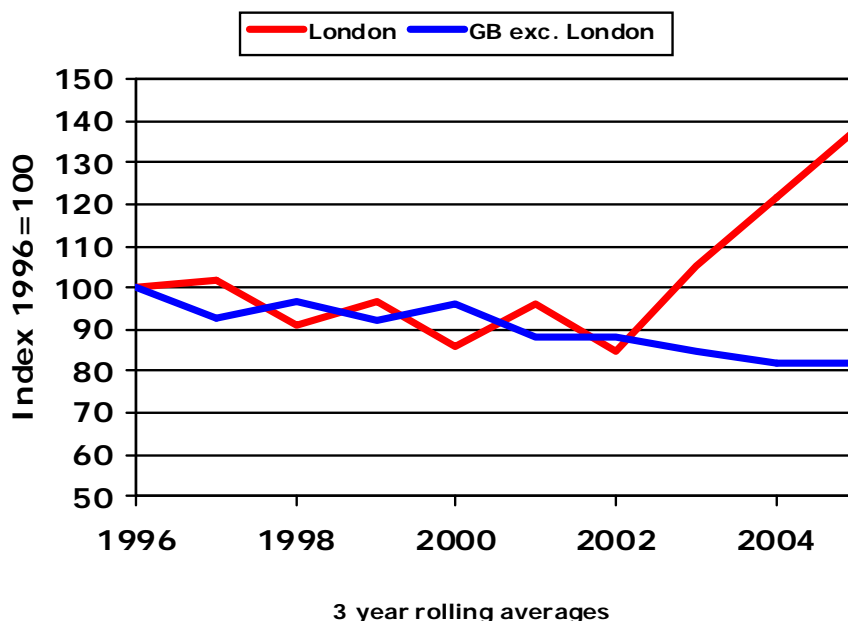
3.6 TRL's study for Westminster is inconclusive and only interim. Members should note that road safety studies ordinarily require three years of before and after data. Only one year's figures are so far available in this study.

3.7 The proposal to allow motorcycle in bus lanes would be a further dilution of the priority given to buses. The TRL Westminster report suggests that there is a slight increase in journey time for buses.

3.8 Bus lanes in London have been primarily promoted to benefit bus services, but there is often explicit recognition of their benefits to cyclists in promotional material.

3.9 It is said that allowing motorcycles into bus lanes has been successful in other towns and cities, though no other town or city in the UK has anything like the density of bus lanes that London has, nor the absolute number and growth in cycling as demonstrated by the DfT's National Travel Survey.

**Trends in distance cycled: London and rest of GB**



- 3.10 User groups representing the various modes of motorcycling, pedal cycling and pedestrians have taken entrenched positions.
- 3.11 TfL's proposals are to allow motorcycles into the bus lanes on roads it controls. London councils are taking independent decisions regarding their own roads on an ad-hoc basis. Trials are proposed by Hammersmith and Fulham; Ealing is reported to be already allowing motorcycles in bus lanes on the roads it controls.

## **4 Discussion**

- 4.1 The question to be answered is whether a decision by the Mayor to permanently allow motorcycles to use bus lanes on the TLRN would sit comfortably with London TravelWatch's aspiration to quadruple cycling in London and, of course, be safe.
- 4.2 DfT guidance is clear that each bus lane should be considered separately, there are particular issues for narrow bus lanes (less than 4 metres wide). This is not the approach that has been taken by the Mayor. Instead a blanket experimental order has been implemented. However, this will, if conducted with appropriate monitoring, significantly increase the understanding of this issue. There is presently too little data and too little agreement on the analysis of the data.
- 4.3 The objectives of this trial should be to answer the following:
- What are the road safety implications for all road users?
  - Does the introduction of motorcyclists into bus lanes deter cyclists and pedestrians?
  - What is the impact on bus performance?
- 4.4 This is an important issue and London TravelWatch would want to be kept informed of any evidence emerging from the pilot study and for any decision to be made in the light of evidence. We do not want the decision to be a *fait accompli*.

## **5 Equalities and inclusion implications**

- 5.1 Motorcycling, walking and pedal cycling are the most vulnerable transport modes and therefore a proper assessment of the impacts on these users is vital.

## **6 Legal powers**

- 6.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight).

## **7 Financial implications**

- 7.1 None.

## **8 Recommendations**

It is recommended to the Board that :

- 8.1 If the study demonstrates that there are safety disbenefits for users then London TravelWatch recommends that the trial is stopped.
- 8.2 If the study demonstrates that existing cyclists are be deterred from cycling or others are less willing to become cyclists then London TravelWatch recommends that the trial is stopped.
- 8.3 If the study demonstrates that bus service performance is negatively affected then London TravelWatch recommends that the trial is stopped.