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**Secretariat memorandum**

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Agenda item: 9

LTW423

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**The Mayor's Roads Taskforce**

**1 Purpose of report**

1.1 To update members on the formation of the Mayor's Roads Taskforce.

**2 Background**

2.1 On 7 July 2012 the Deputy Mayor for Transport wrote to stakeholders inviting them to contribute to the Mayor of London's Roads Task Force. In her letter (see appendix 1) she outlined the challenges facing London's roads 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 21<sup>st</sup> century city
- Growth in London's population and employment will add to existing pressures on the road network.
- Rising expectations of quality of public space
- Imperative to continue improving safety on London's roads.

2.2 The Deputy Mayor says in her letter : "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."

2.3 Views were sought under the headings: challenges, approach, solutions and delivery.

2.4 The Taskforce is made up of individuals with interests in many aspects of the operation of London's roads, both transport stakeholders and the utilities. London TravelWatch was concerned that there was no one representing the broad range of interests we represent, particularly there was no one representing bus passenger interests. It is therefore pleasing that following our approaches David Leibling, Acting Chair of London TravelWatch, has been invited to participate.

2.5 Members will know that London TravelWatch has responded to the deputy Mayor's call for submissions. The Task Force has commenced a series of meetings and has had a wider stakeholder event. Several further meetings are proposed.

### **3 Issues and discussion**

3.1 The issues, challenges and demands on London's road network are well known and are summarised succinctly in the bullet points, taken from the Deputy Mayor's letter, noted above. The Deputy Mayor's ambition for a 21<sup>st</sup> century network will be shared by many road users.

3.2 The Mayor's Transport Strategy, published in May 2010 sets out policies and programmes for the period to 2031. Road congestion is forecast to rise on average 14% by 203 with higher levels in east and outer London.

3.3 London TravelWatch has highlighted the issue of road congestion in its "10 policies to keep London moving" document and has called on the Mayor to "develop a coherent plan to address these pressures". The formation of a Roads Taskforce is therefore welcome.

3.4 Most practitioners and academics would propose a carrot and stick response to the challenges outlined by the Deputy Mayor to encourage modal switch to the more space efficient modes in order to reduce the demand for road space. Transport policies generally prioritise bus, cycle and pedestrian modes over private car.

3.5 This approach has been broadly followed by London Government over many years. The important elements have been:

- The London Bus Priority Network (bus priority implemented from the mid nineties), the London Bus Initiative (whole route bus priority implemented in the early 2000s) and incentivised bus contracts has greatly improved bus services;
- Improvements to the capacity and performance of both Underground and National Rail networks including interchanges between modes;
- Congestion charging in the central area was introduced in 2003 which made a huge impact on bus performance, encouraged much more cycling (albeit from a low base) and allowed the reallocation of road space to bus, cycle and walk modes;
- Cycling and walking have been promoted accompanied by improvement to cycling and walking conditions;
- Spatial planning has located travel intensive development at those locations best served by public transport and allowed parking availability to be reduced which in turn has had the effect of restraining private motoring;
- Generally more restrictive parking policies on bus routes and in areas of high demand such as town centres.

3.6 There has been some targeted additional road capacity, but the physical capacity of London's roads will remain largely as it is now. Additional capacity implemented without associated charging is liable to result in induced traffic.

3.7 London TravelWatch has generally supported the carrot and stick approach outlined above. London TravelWatch has particularly championed London's bus services and

bus priority (in all its forms) due to its efficient use of road space and its accessibility to all Londoners. London TravelWatch has supported road user charging and has been an advocate for a better pedestrian environment. London TravelWatch has supported policies to promote cycling, but has raised concerns regarding the interaction of cyclists with pedestrians on shared pavements.

- 3.8 The Mayor has promoted 'smooth traffic flow' with a greater emphasis on improving the management of the TLRN for all modes rather than prioritising modes. There is an ongoing review of traffic light timing, more pro-active management of road works and the management of planned and unplanned events. There have been some localised increases in road capacity. Motorcycles have been allowed to use bus lanes to reduce congestion and cycling has been promoted through the implementation of Cycle Superhighways, cycle hire and cycling borough projects.
- 3.9 The Mayor removed a western extension to the central London congestion charging zone and has stated his reluctance to introduce road user charging in the short term. There is no longer a bus priority team within TfL.
- 3.11 It should be noted that the 33 London boroughs control the majority of London's roads and that 80% of London bus routes are on borough roads. Much of the development of the London borough road network is undertaken using TfL grant. Boroughs are required to spend this grant in five broad areas, but are generally free to do as they choose with the grant.
- 3.12 There are two issues rising up the agenda which the Deputy Mayor highlights in her letter. The first is the concept of 'place' - the recognition that London's road network does not just serve transport needs, but is also where Londoners live, work, rest and play.
- 3.13 The second is road safety. As policy and programmes to increase the numbers cycling and walking are successful the exposure of these vulnerable modes increases. Those representing these groups want to see slower speeds and, effectively, road capacity reassigned to improve the safety of vulnerable road users.
- 3.14 London TravelWatch's response to the Deputy Mayor's call for submissions (in less than 10 pages as requested) is appended.

## **4 Equalities and inclusion implications**

- 4.1 There are clear equalities and social inclusion issues regarding how London's road network develops. The bus network (including the Dial-a-Ride service) is presently the most accessible and socially inclusive public transport mode and will remain so. Walking is the mode generally accessible to all, although to be truly accessible detailed work to improve the streetscape and the management of streets and public spaces is necessary.

## **5 Legal powers**

- 5.1 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).

## **6 Financial implications**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. The costs of conducting the closure process have been considered previously by members

## Appendix 1

21 07 2012

Dear colleague

### **Mayor of London's Roads Task Force**

I am writing to ask you whether you would be prepared to help shape the future of London's road network.

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. London's roads are also important public spaces and are the location for economic and social activity.

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 21<sup>st</sup> century city
- Growth in London's population and employment will add to existing pressures on the road network.
- Rising expectations of quality of public space
- 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

I am seeking your views to help inform the work of the Task Force, and would value your contribution. Your response will be collated with those of others and submitted to the Task Force with a view to being discussed at a stakeholder event later this year. In particular I would like to understand your views on the following:

1. Challenges - What are the main challenges facing London's roads, over the short medium and long term?
2. Approach - How should the competing demands on road space be defined and managed? For example the balance between the competing demands of different road users or between the role of London's roads as corridors for the movement of goods and people and their role as public spaces.
3. Solutions - What are the range of policy and investment options available to meet the short, medium and long-term challenges facing London's road network and how might these vary across London?
4. Delivery - Which of these options would you prioritise given the inevitable constraints in terms of physical space, funding and delivery capacity?
5. Any other issues you might want to raise.

Given the likely level of interest in the work of the Task Force, please can I request that you limit any written submission to no more than 10 sides of A4.

Responses should be provided by Friday 14th September. Please enter your response directly on the TfL consultation website: <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/roads/taskforce>.

Alternatively, you can email it to: [RoadsTaskForce@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:RoadsTaskForce@tfl.gov.uk) or post it to:

Roads Task Force secretariat  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Windsor House  
42-50 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0TL

I look forward to hearing your views on this vitally important topic.

Yours sincerely,

**Isabel Dedring**  
Deputy Mayor for Transport

## Appendix 2

13 September 2012

Deputy Mayor for Transport  
Roads Task Force Secretariat  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Windsor House  
42-50 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0TL

Dear Ms Deding

### **Roads Task Force**

London **TravelWatch** is the official body set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public.

In its contribution to the recent mayoral election, *10 policies to get Londoners moving*, we called for

A road network which is fit for purpose and noted Congestion on London's roads affects all travellers and is forecast to worsen as the population grows and economic activity increases, particularly in outer and east London. London TravelWatch wants to see a coherent plan to address these pressures.

London TravelWatch therefore welcomes the Mayor's ambition for a road system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the formation of a Roads Task Force. We are pleased to be invited to contribute to its work.

Please note that we have engaged with the London Assembly Transport Committee during the formulation of this response.

Below we briefly set out our responses to the questions in your letter. If you require any additional supporting material or background please do contact us.

### **Q1. What are the main challenges, short, medium and long term?**

In the short term the challenge is the day to day management of London's roads to maintain journey time and journey time reliability for general traffic and particularly for bus services.

In the medium term, against a background of increasing travel demand, London TravelWatch believes maintaining and improving the punctuality and frequency of the bus services is a priority<sup>1</sup> as is improving the journey time reliability of general traffic. There needs to be continuing modal shift to the more space efficient modes, bus, cycle and walk. And, of course, there should be a continued focus on road danger and casualty reduction. Eastern and outer London will need to become a greater focus.

In the longer term, as travel demand continues to rise with population and employment growth, particularly in outer and eastern London, modal shift needs to continue, though, over the longer

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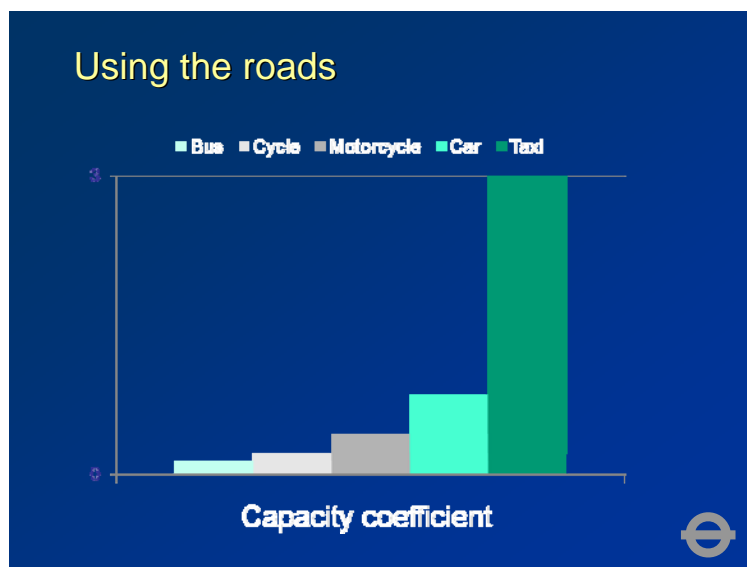
<sup>1</sup> Bus passengers' priorities for improvements in London, London TravelWatch, May 2010

term, there will be more opportunity to improve spatial planning to reduce the need to travel by encouraging more local, less travel intensive activity.

## Q2. Approach - How should the competing demands on road space be defined and managed?

London's road capacity will remain broadly as it is now, yet demands upon it will grow significantly. London TravelWatch believes the overall approach should be to make best use of the existing capacity by encouraging modal switch to the more space efficient modes, particularly the bus. We want to see people moving at the heart of roads policy.

In 2008 TfL presented the graph below to members. It demonstrates the relative efficiencies, in terms of use of road capacity of the different modes, bus and cycle being the most space efficient.



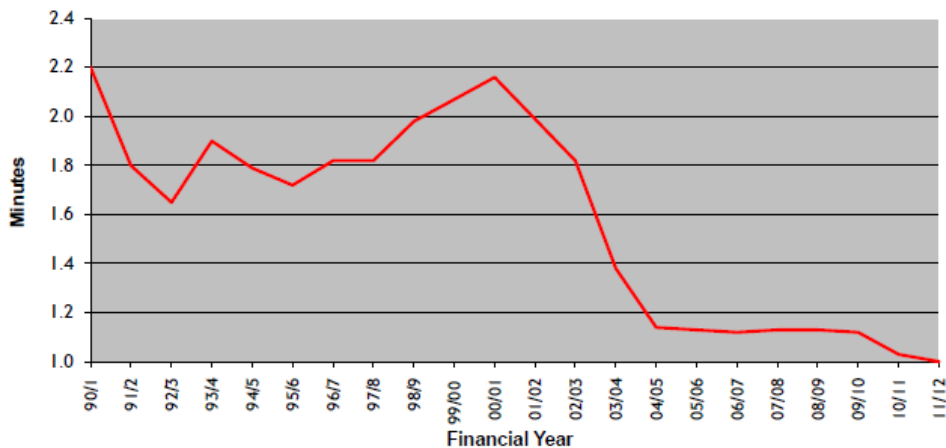
### Prioritising the bus

Bus priority, along with incentivised contracts and congestion charging has led to the best bus service performance London has experienced since performance was first recorded. London TravelWatch has always supported giving buses priority on bus routes.

The graph below demonstrates the huge improvement in performance over the last decade.



**EXCESS WAITING TIME FOR  
HIGH FREQUENCY BUS SERVICES**



There was previously a London Bus Initiative (LBI), a partnership of TfL, operators and local authorities with London TravelWatch included as the passenger watchdog but regrettably this approach has not continued.

The recognition of the central role of the bus, in terms of passenger numbers, geographical coverage and accessibility in London’s passenger transport provision was the most welcome development of the last decade. The LBI included measures such as:

- (a) Providing additional bus lanes, bus advance areas and other priority measures through known pinch points on the network;
- (b) Constructing contra-flow bus lanes on one-way streets to eliminate costly and circuitous diversions;
- (c) Installing selective detection equipment more widely, to permit bus activation of all traffic lights;
- (d) Bus stop clearways and, where suitable, pavement “boarders” to ensure that buses have unobstructed access to stops and can always pull close to the kerb; and
- (e) A determined assault on obstructive parking.

Crucially, the LBI operated on a whole-route basis, which led to a step-change in speed and reliability. The wealth of data now available from the IBus system now gives the possibility to progress priority even further, with the added benefit to general traffic.

London TravelWatch regrets that further LBI type initiatives, in development by TfL under the banner of 3G, were dropped in 2008/09. The most important recommendation we would want to see the Roads Task Force promote is a further round of whole route bus priority. Bus services are a strategic London asset and their development should be planned on a London wide basis rather than relying on borough councils to promote individual schemes, or worse still take out bus priority for local reasons.

3G focussed on high ridership routes, however bus priority is also needed on roads with fewer bus services, for example the outer London orbital routes.

**Walking**

There has been a seismic shift in the appreciation of walking and the notion of streets as places and not just transport corridors. The Board has debated the development of Kensington High Street, looked at street furniture clutter issues and endorsed the TfL commissioned Gehl Architects report '*Towards a fine city for people*'. We have conducted research at several transport interchanges<sup>2</sup> looking both inside the interchange, but also at the walking experience between modes utilising the street.

London TravelWatch wants to see wide, clear, continuous and level footways. We want to see single stage, direct crossings located on pedestrian desire lines. We want to see the development of public spaces, more pedestrian friendly high streets and transport interchanges.

We have endorsed the Legible London wayfinding system and want to see it consistently rolled out across London rather than the present piecemeal manner at the whim, or not, of the London boroughs – the availability of a consistent pedestrian wayfinding system is a strategic issue!

One of the work streams that has developed from our Walking and Interchange in London report and our work looking at the accessibility of London's Olympic venue stations has been the issue of highway obstructions. It is clear that London's streets should not be obstructed without lawful excuse and that local highway authorities have a duty to remove obstructions. TfL has recognised this issue in its Better Streets initiatives.<sup>3</sup>

However, TfL and the local highway authorities are not diligent in this duty, and all manner of obstructions are placed randomly on the pavement. This is a nuisance for able bodied pedestrians and a significant barrier for wheelchair users, the blind and partially sighted. We want to see the Roads Task Force recommend that TfL and the boroughs comply with their duty to keep their pavements clear of obstructions.

## **Cycling**

London TravelWatch supports the Mayor's targets for cycling to become a much larger proportion of travel in London. We have conducted a survey of stakeholders and produced a report<sup>4</sup> on Cycling in London.

Representing all transport users we want to see a holistic approach to developing cycling in London. We want to see greater emphasis on education, training and enforcement. Cycling should take place on the carriageway. Tackling problematic junctions is our key safety priority for investment. Area wide 20 mph schemes will both improve cycle safety and encourage more cycling.

We question the priority, practicality and affordability of introducing widespread separated tracks alongside main roads for two reasons: i) because most collisions happen at road junctions and ii) most of London's main roads vary in width and have to accommodate kerbside loading and bus stopping arrangements. There may, however, be some of London's major highways that would benefit from such a treatment.

Improvements in cycle parking at stations and where possible of off road cycling and walking routes also contribute to reducing demand on the road network.

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<sup>2</sup> Walking and Interchange in London, London TravelWatch, September 2011

<sup>3</sup> <http://urbandesign.tfl.gov.uk/Design-Guidance/Better-Streets/BetterStreets/FiveStages.aspx>

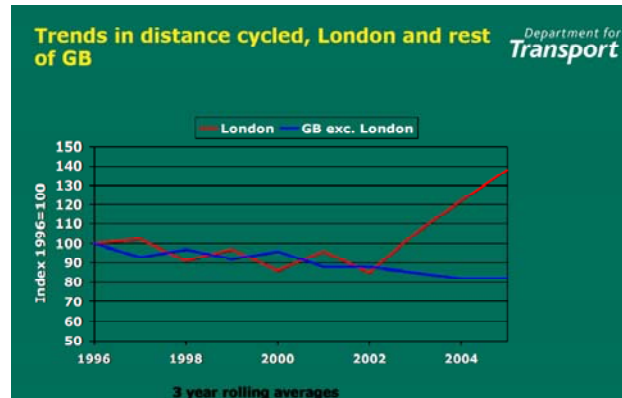
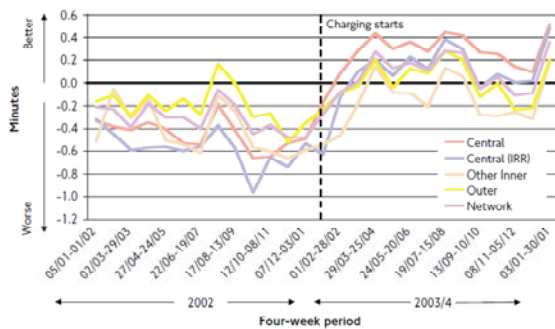
<sup>4</sup> Cycling in London, London TravelWatch, May 2009

## Managing demand

All the evidence from academics and practitioners suggest the necessity of both carrot and stick – improved alternatives as well as restraining private car use.

London has experience of road user charging in the central zone. It led to dramatically reduced levels of congestion, higher road speeds, a huge increase in cycling and a 30% improvement in bus service performance. See TfL and DfT graphs below.

Figure 4.9 Bus Excess Waiting Time (Monday to Friday, charging hours) difference between Excess Waiting Time standards and actual Excess Waiting Time



London TravelWatch has consistently supported congestion charging in central London. We were disappointed that the Western extension was removed and want to see the development of road user charging on a zonal basis with much more sophistication both technically and in terms of pricing and operational hours.

We would counsel caution, however, in assuming that the apparent success of the central London experiment could readily be extrapolated to other parts of the capital, except in special cases such as Heathrow. The wider implementation of road user charging must be accompanied by an improvement to public transport services and the encouragement of more cycling and walking.

Soft measures, such as travel planning, cycle training and travel awareness are promoted as less controversial methods of managing demand by encouraging modal switch away from the private car. Whilst these techniques are supported it is important to note the caveats applied by researchers in this field. They suggest that alongside such measures it is also necessary to 'lock-in' the benefits of modal shift as other new journeys will simply fill the freed up road space.

## Q3. Solutions, short, medium and long term

### Short term

In the short term TfL policies are maintaining and improving bus service performance. TfL are improving the management of the important road corridors (their TLRN) in terms of the day to day management of the network. However, despite this and continuing reductions in traffic volume (the main driver of congestion) TfL's new measure of congestion: Journey Time Reliability (JTR) remains constant and is forecast to slightly improve over the Business Plan time period.

In the short term TfL should maintain a focus on the day to day management of its roads, particularly minimising the impact of planned and unplanned events and street works. It is

noted above that there is a day to day problem of highways obstructions on the TLRN pavements that is not being addressed. A more active approach to this would be a quick win for pedestrians, particularly those with mobility and sight impairments.

### **Medium term**

In the medium term there needs to be a continued improvement in bus services, both in terms of performance and geographical coverage. There is a particular need for improved orbital services and improved priority for buses on orbital routes.

TfL needs to be able to take a greater strategic role in improving bus services, particularly in outer and east London. 80% of London's bus services operate on borough roads and therefore improvements in the operation of bus services is dependent upon the boroughs. The LIP mechanism should be used more strategically to influence bus priority on borough roads. The availability of IBus data should be used to make this case.

One-way gyratory systems are particularly problematical for buses and their passengers. They are problematic for cyclists and hostile to pedestrians. These type of systems should be programmed for removal.

The medium term opportunities to increase cycling and walking will be dependent upon how the road network develops. If London is to break out of the cycle of car dependency and promote modal shift to these modes then cycle and walk friendly junctions will become the norm and area wide slower speed zones and roads will continue to be introduced. We particularly want to see those junctions that are particularly problematical for cyclists addressed.

If, on the other hand, the choice is made to accommodate more private car use with higher capacity junctions then the opportunities to develop a cycle and walk friendly environment will be reduced.

In the medium to longer term, as suggested by the Mayor's Transport Strategy, London needs to move towards greater use of road user charging. This would ensure journey time reliability, reduce demand and generate income. This may be particularly relevant in east London as it rapidly develops.

### **Long term**

We would want to see the solutions described as medium term being applied in the longer term. Road user charging should be implemented on a wider scale than is presently the case.

## **Q. 4 Delivery priorities**

London TravelWatch's priority is that there should be a relaunch of bus priority programmes. We would also want to see priority given to re-engineering problematic traffic junctions and gyratory systems to be more friendly to bus, cycle and walking.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Stops  
Policy Officer

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