
Secretariat memorandum

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Confidential: Cycling in London

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. Members have asked that the board review its perspective on cycling. This note is a summary of the paper that the Secretariat has prepared.

2 Cycling in London: executive summary

- 2.1. London TravelWatch represents all the users of London's streets. It takes a balanced view between the different modes, whilst prioritising those that are most space efficient: walking, cycling and bus. In 2009, London TravelWatch published Cycling in London, its perspectives on cycling. This was led by two members, one taking a particular interest in cycling, the other in pedestrian issues. In 2013 and 2014, members considered the issues raised by the cycle superhighway proposals. This developed policy further.
- 2.2. More and safer cycling has been a longstanding objective of public policy because cycling has many personal, societal and transport benefits. London TravelWatch has supported more and safer cycling.
- 2.3. Since the introduction of the congestion charge, and partly because of it, cycling levels have risen steadily over the last decade, albeit from a low base. Presently cycling represents 2% of all trips. The Mayor's Transport Strategy has a target of a 5% mode share for cycling by 2026 and seeks to 'normalise' cycling, with cycling undertaken by a much wider demographic, wearing ordinary clothing.
- 2.4. The number of casualties has declined on London's streets. The number of cyclist casualties has also declined steadily. If the greater volume of cycling is taken into account then it can be said that overall cycling is getting safer on London's streets. In 2015, there were 66 pedestrian, 9 cyclist, 36 motorcyclist, 20 car occupants, 1 bus and 4 other vehicle occupant fatalities on London's streets. Motorcyclists are by far the most vulnerable road users per mile travelled. Cyclists and pedestrians are also disproportionately represented in casualty statistics, per mile travelled.
- 2.5. The analysis of what might get more Londoners cycling has focussed on addressing the perceived barriers to cycling of those surveyed. Road safety and the fear of traffic are often stated as the most important barriers and cycle specific facilities (cycle lanes etc.) and cycling on streets with lower levels of traffic are a suggested solution.

- 2.6. However, this can be an over simplification. A lot of hope is invested in what people say they might do, too little in what people actually do. The overwhelming majority of those surveyed are often not cyclists, nor do they have any intention of cycling. There are examples of towns that have high quality cycling facilities with low cycling levels. Stevenage is often quoted as a town that was developed with a comprehensive cycle track network where in practice very few cycle. The London borough with the highest levels of cycling has generally not introduced cycle specific facilities. To the surprise of TfL (at the time), there was a 30% increase in cycle following the implementation of the central area congestion charging scheme.
- 2.7. *Cycling Cities*, recently published by Eindhoven University academics looks at the history of cycling in 14 different European cities. It suggests each city is different in many ways. The urban forms are different, the history and culture is different and the 'competition' between modes: cycling, walking, private vehicle and public transport is different. It suggests that attitudes and policies about private mobility is a significant factor in the level of cycling. Cities that restrain auto-mobility see higher levels of cycling.
- 2.8. Research, conducted on behalf of the Department for Transport¹ suggests that cyclists themselves have differing and potentially conflicting needs from infrastructure. And that cycling facilities can also make the road-sharing problem worse if they create additional confusion about where cyclists and drivers are meant to go. At the very least, infrastructure should be avoided that creates more confusion about whether, and where, bicycles should be.
- 2.9. Agreeing the policies to pursue to increase cycling is one thing. Delivering them can be more challenging because of the competition for road space, the impacts on other users and the very high costs that can be involved. The benefits of introducing separate cycle tracks, with multiple kerbs, into busy city streets has to be balanced against the impacts on other users: bus services, bus passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, general traffic, business loading as well as the look and feel of the street.
- 2.10. The challenges around road safety are not straightforward. The traditional approach to road safety is data-led. Highways authorities have invested in highways engineering schemes at locations where most collisions occur and in slower speed initiatives. This approach has been successful in terms of reducing casualties per mile travelled. Understandably, cycle campaigners want to see improved actual road safety, but they also want potential cyclists of all ages to 'feel' safe.
- 2.11. Some cycle specific facilities improve road safety and make cyclists feel safe, but some will give a false sense of safety or cause concerns for other users of the street. For example, motorcycle campaigners express concern about the narrowing of lane widths and the introduction of rubber blocks onto the carriageway as cycle lane delineators.
- 2.12. Some cycle specific facilities will be complex and confusing for cyclists and other street users, or they involve longer waits at signals resulting in non-compliance with signals.
- 2.13. Although the general term separated cycle track is used frequently, it can mean very different degree of separation from motor vehicles. Much of the cycle infrastructure

¹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121105134522/http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/rsrr-theme1-report-17/>

that is described as providing for separated cycling, will actually merge cycles with general traffic at intersections. This can mean greater risks to users than a conventional junction. A Danish academic study² sums these issues up well:

....it can be deduced that the construction of cycle tracks has resulted in three important gains in road safety: fewer accidents in which cars hit or ran over cyclists from the rear, fewer accidents with cyclists turning left [right in the UK] and fewer accidents in which cyclists rode into a parked car. These gains were more than outweighed by new safety problems: more accidents in which cyclists rode into other cyclists often when overtaking, more accidents with cars turning right [left in the UK], more accidents in which cars turning left [right in the UK] drove into cyclists as well as more accidents between cyclists and pedestrians and exiting or entering bus passengers.

- 2.14. Cycling policy is not clear-cut. London is a mega-city with a transport history, urban form and culture that is unique. London will have to develop its own policies for cycling that sit alongside others. It cannot simply scale up what happens in other small European cities with different cultures, traffic laws and urban forms. This report suggests an approach that takes account of all the users of transport in London from a user perspective and proposes pragmatic policies to get more Londoners cycling.
- 2.15. Some cycle campaign groups want to see 'mass cycling' at levels found in cities with very high cycle mode share with facilities that will enable cyclists between the ages of 8yrs and 80 to cycle in comfort and safety. London TravelWatch does not have a remit to campaign for 'mass cycling', but to represent the users of London's streets. Its policies support more and safer cycling and the continued focus on interventions to reduce speed, volumes of motor traffic and to reduce danger at major junctions where most (80+%) collisions occur. Its policies attempt to balance the needs of all of the users of London's streets and recognise the particular needs of older people and disabled users.
- 2.16. The Mayor's Cycling Vision has initiated a large programme of initiatives that seek to enable more and safer cycling. There are proposals that mean very little change, such as signing with very minimal impact on other users. But some will have substantial impacts and affect many other street users. Particularly, the reallocation of road space and signal time exclusively to cycles will affect reliability and mean longer journey times. The use of the pavement, the introduction of bus stop bypasses and loss of pedestrian facilities, such as refuges, will affect the amenity of bus passengers and pedestrians. These impacts will be cumulative as the programme continues and much thought needs to be given as to where this leads. The effectiveness of these types of schemes will vary and are unknown. We have called for:

A comprehensive assessment of the positive and negative impacts of the new cycle superhighways

- 2.17. This should be undertaken as soon as data becomes available. There should also be a review of the approaches taken by the London boroughs, some of which are novel.
- 2.18. TfL's bus stop bypass study is welcome. A Zebra type crossing should allow easier crossing of cycle tracks to and from bus stops. However, there will be a loss of

² <http://www.roadsafetyobservatory.com/Evidence/details/11592>

amenity for pedestrians and passengers, and collisions with cycles will occur. Some vulnerable users will not be able to use their bus services as they do now.

- 2.19. Cycling is not practicable along some of London's very busiest, fast roads, (often two or three lane dual carriageway roads where movement is the dominant use). Along many of these corridors it would be appropriate to plan for cycle tracks or cycle routes paralleling these existing routes, either alongside or on an adjacent corridor. These routes must be of the highest quality, intuitive, and provide for separation along both the links between junctions and through the junctions.
- 2.20. There are, of course, a host of other initiatives to support an increase in the levels of cycling. These include education and training, policing of all road users closing streets to through traffic and cycle parking. These initiatives are supported.

3 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 3.1. There are no equalities or inclusion implications arising from this report

4 Legal powers

- 4.1. 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). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate

5 Financial implications

- 5.1. There are no financial implications for London TravelWatch arising from this report.