

WHAT IS THE MAYOR DOING ABOUT AIR POLLUTION?

Motor traffic dominates and consumes large parts of public space in the city, impeding safe sustainable active travel.

Congestion creates an inefficient and stagnant environment, delaying buses, essential commercial and emergency services. Cars are now the fastest growing contributor to climate meltdown. These are but a few of the externalities.

Recent research shows air pollution spikes are directly linked to hospitalisation. There have so far been nine high air pollution alerts in London under Sadiq Khan's mayoralty.

I have been told it is within mayoral powers to raise the congestion charge on high air pollution days to reduce motor traffic pollution. One wonders why this has not been done immediately, given the serious correlation between air pollution spikes and hospitalisation. Surely that is a moral imperative.

Guddi Singh, a paediatric doctor in London, writes this summer: 'The cocktail of pollution and pollen in London kills people. Politicians should spend a night on the wards to see the harm. I sat by (children's) beds as they writhed, struggling for air, their small bodies wracked with coughs. It is a kind of torture, to fear for your next breath. You can see the sheer terror in the children's eyes.'

The toxicity charge, introduced by the Mayor in 2017,

has cut the number of polluting vehicles entering Central London by about 1000 per day but this is simply tinkering in the context of an escalating public health crisis.

At its most basic the congestion charge helps make space for desirable road transport. In the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2018 the target of 80 per cent of personal journeys by walking, cycling and public transport requires prioritisation of space for pedestrianisation, wider footways, segregated cycling lanes and priority bus lanes. Janette Sadiq Khan (former commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation and an advisor on transportation and urban issues) has said that road pricing is a priority bus measure. Ken Livingstone understood the strategic importance of the congestion charge for the buses. When it was introduced in 2003 it was very successful at improving reliability.

Failure by the Mayor to update the congestion charge has not only delayed bus reliability but has made it more difficult for councils to introduce safer walking and cycling schemes. It is important to prepare the ground so there is less motor traffic when walking and cycling schemes go in. This makes the transition easier. Quick wins would see the present congestion charge hours extended from a third of the week (7am -6pm Mon-Fri) to

24/7. Additionally current exemptions could be removed. TfL are currently consulting on removing exemptions for non zero emission capable private hire vehicles like Uber. However this does not address the externalities of congestion from inefficient use of prime road space or particulate air and water pollution from brake tyre and road wear. And taxis and other polluting motor vehicles are not included in the consultation. Meanwhile the price of the congestion charge could simply be raised to meet a quantified, most desirable and efficient number of motor vehicles on central London streets.

The newly approved Silvertown Tunnel has been sold as a source of road pricing for TfL but a quick look at the Silvertown Mole blog 'Silvertown: Another Road To Nowhere?' shows that this is fundamentally flawed. The plan is that TfL will toll both the Blackwall and the Silvertown Tunnel but the project expects (at best) to maintain provision for existing levels of heavy motor traffic and existing levels of pollution. At worst, it will enable much more traffic and pollution. And then there is the pollution and carbon cost of building it. And in theory a future mayor could remove the Silvertown and Blackwall tolls entirely. They would need to consult the public on the proposal, but it is an executive decision for the Mayor.

This begs the question

what IS the Mayor of London's strategy on road pricing? Does he really want to save lives by cutting congestion and air pollution? Does he really want to make walking, cycling and public transport the most accessible options for all Londoners? Does he want to cut greenhouse emissions to mitigate climate meltdown? The Silvertown Tunnel is a road pricing infrastructure project that has no ambition to cut pollution, emissions and road danger in an already highly polluted part of London.

The Mayor is banking on an Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), to be introduced in *continued on page 2*

Our Newsletter is sent out to our London members and other contacts. The group exists to campaign for sustainable transport solutions in London and to support the work of the Campaign nationally. If you have not already done so we would be pleased if you would also join our group and take part in our London based activities.

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Regular meetings of the group are held in central London. The Newsletter is edited by Chris Barker.

Contributors are welcomed. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Campaign for Better Transport. Previous issues of the newsletter can be found at <http://bettertransportlondon.org.uk>.



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Central London from 8th April 2019, to improve air quality. It will replace the current T-Charge and will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year within the same area as the current Congestion Charging Zone (CCZ). The extension of the hours to 24/7 is good news. However there are still many exemptions for taxis, residents, private hire vehicles and more. It is worth noting that the Sivertown Tunnel falls outside this area.

And then the promise is that from 25th October 2021, should Sadiq Khan be re-elected, the area will be expanded to the inner London area bounded by the North and South Circular roads. Will this be enough to stop the Mayor's exposure to litigation from families whose loved ones have lost their lives and their health from illegal air pollution in London? We will have to wait and see.

Rosalind Readhead



Caroline Russell opens Hackney's People's Parking Bay

Parklets in Hackney

Following Brenda Peutch's short-lived 'direct action' take-over of a parking bay in Hackney for people instead of cars (CBT newsletter no 31) Hackney Council has now formally adopted the idea and is asking residents to nominate sites for up to 15 parklets, each to occupy a single parking space. The council is offering successful applicants up to £150 in grants to create each parklet. Brenda points out that only 35 per cent of households in Hackney own a car.

Arguments for road pricing

Congestion, pollution and danger caused by too many motor vehicles on the road is growing and measures to combat the problem are central to the Mayor's transport strategy.

The most important and potentially the most successful solutions are positive: better public transport and better facilities for cycling and walking. But there also has to be constraint on car use. The Central London congestion charge is a step in that direction. It initially resulted in a 15 per cent fall in the number of vehicles and a rise in their average speed from 8.8mph in 2002 to 10.9mph in 2003 (Financial Times, 4 Oct 2016). But speed then started to fall again as the number of vehicles entering increased so that in 2012 it was 8.98mph and in 2016 7.4mph (City Lab, 25 Mar 2016). Part of the reason is the large number of road works and part is the growing number of exempt vehicles, particularly private hire vehicles.

There are problems associated with the congestion charge which are beginning to be realised. One is the fact that it is a one-off charge. Once paid there is no restriction on the amount of miles travelled in that day. Another is that it is payable only between the hours of 7am and 6pm. Figures obtained from TfL showed that the number of vehicles entering the zone surged from 14,000 to 18,000 per hour in the hour after 18.00 (Understanding and Managing Congestion, TfL, November 2017). There is also a rising number of exempt vehicles including ultra low emission vehicles. Lastly it only applies to the central zone. Congestion and pollution is also rising in the rest of London.

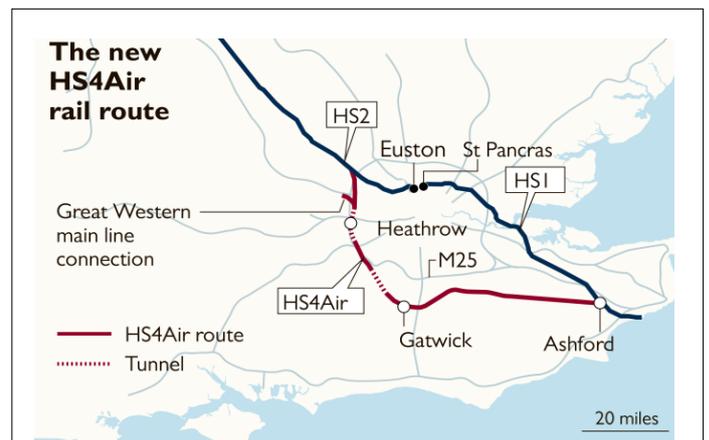
One solution to a number of these problems is a road pricing scheme where vehicles are charged according to the distance travelled. Such a scheme could be very flexible. Charges would vary according to congestion on the road being travelled, according to the time of day

and according to the type of vehicle and even the occupation or financial status of the driver. There is no doubt that there would be a public backlash against any proposal. In 2004 the government raised the possibility in its 10 year Transport Plan and it resulted in a petition containing 1.7 million signatures landing on No. 10's doormat. The petition claimed 'The idea of tracking every vehicle at all times is sinister and wrong. Road pricing is already here with the high level of taxation on fuel. The more you

travel - the more tax you pay. It will be an unfair tax on those who live apart from families and poorer people who will not be able to afford the high monthly costs.'

The Mayor is clearly taking account of this. He states that there is no plan to introduce road pricing in London. But the betting is that sooner or later the nettle of increasing congestion, pollution and danger will have to be grasped. Road pricing is likely to be an important element in the solution.

Chris Barker



HS4 a new line around London

A new way of linking HS1 and HS2 has been proposed by Expedition Engineering. The proposal is to build a new line around the south of London serving both Gatwick and Heathrow on the way. The line would start at Ashford using the present line towards Redhill upgraded for high speed trains and diverge to serve Gatwick Airport. It would then continue mostly in tunnel or alongside the M25 to Heathrow, giving a 15 minute connection between the two airports. After Heathrow the line would join HS2 at Denham with a spur to the Great Western main line.

The developers say that the line would create a much-needed direct link between northern England and the Channel Tunnel that avoided the capital although early proposals for such services were not proceeded with on the grounds that there would be little demand. Although not mentioned, the line, built to continental size, might have a use for freight linking Birmingham with the continent.

Meanwhile the West London Line Group is proposing a link between HS2 and the West London line to enable HS2 trains to run to places like Gatwick Airport and Kent. The prospect is also raised of a link with HS1 revising the notion of through trains from the Midlands to the continent. All this would of course necessitate the fitting of third rail shoes to the HS2 fleet.

Autonomous - cars and cabs Opportunity or Threat?

'Level 4 autonomy' completely driverless cars are predicted to be on our roads as soon as 2025.

Several consortia of car control developers and motor manufacturers are competing for pole position. Waycom, a sister company of Google, in partnership with Jaguar Land Rover among others, and in receipt of significant UK government funding, appears to be leading the pack.

Waymo's driverless control system requires little additional infrastructure – it is believed to rely instead, for both navigation and steering, on Google's enormous database of high-definition 3D street maps. Probably most of us have seen Google's street mapping vehicles at work with their characteristic rotating rooftop Lidar (a form of radar) cameras. Waymo's autonomous vehicle control uses the technology in reverse – scanning the environment and comparing it with the database (and potentially also keeping the database up to date).

Waymo's system uses a battery of sensors mounted on the vehicle to gain 360 degree views of its environment, including other road users. Their Lidar camera alone is said to cost around £7000, so the sensing hardware adds significantly to a vehicle's price, although, in large production volumes, the all-important controlling software would cost practically nothing.

There are various security concerns about autonomous cars. Most obviously, a driverless vehicle, filled with explosives, or worse, and directed towards a central London destination, would be a terrorist's dream.

Also, conceivably, driverless cars and could run amok, because their control programs were hacked or faulty. It is believed their algorithms

use an Artificial Intelligence (AI) technique called neural networks. Neural networks are trained, rather than conventionally programmed, by subjecting them to a training set of input conditions from which they learn generalised behaviours. Their operation is not understandable in detail, like a conventional program, and while this should provide protection against hacking, their programs would not be subject to the correctness reviews of conventional code. Failure of Google's street mapping system could immobilise all driverless cars across the city.

On the plus side it is likely that, in normal circumstances at least, driverless cars will have better 'road manners' than driven ones, causing fewer accidents and fewer injuries and deaths of cyclists and other road users.

But do Londoners want driverless cars on their streets? The substantial government investment of our money in support of the development of driverless cars suggests we may not be given the choice.

As soon as driverless cars are permitted on our streets, Uber and Google are expected to offer driverless App (ie hailed over the internet) cab services which, being driverless, will offer much cheaper journeys than the existing Uber services (already cheaper and/or more reliable than conventional cab and minicab services). Their low price will potentially flood London's streets with driverless cabs, rendering private cars uneconomic for commuting (because these cabs would potentially be in service 24/7 compared with the less than 10% utilisation of the average commuter's car) and adding to the existing traffic congestion problem.

A vision of US-based multinationals continually extracting vast

More trauma for Barking Gospel Oak passengers

Passengers who have already endured two lengthy closures face more misery before seeing longer trains powered by electricity. The rail replacement buses of 2016 were sold on the promise that the line would be electrified, only for serious bungling by Network Rail to result in a failure to complete the work. There had been inadequate assessment of ground conditions, and some gantries were erected in the wrong place. A second period of Rail replacement misery in 2017 was supposed to put things right, but at the end of it snagging work was still outstanding necessitating further weekend closures.

New rolling stock was never going to be available at the end of the first tranche of work. Some campaigners hoped that cascaded 315 class units might fill the gap, but this idea died the death when the electrification remained incomplete.

The new stock was supposed to be available by the time the work was completed, but issues remained for Network Rail and at the time of writing the new trains have still not been passed for use, even in driver training mode. Consequently, London Overground have declined to accept more units and Bombardier have slowed production, because they have no space to house them.

Transport for London has been desperate to bring the Elizabeth Line into being in December, and have diverted all available resources to that end – to no avail, as we now learn. They may have taken their eye off the Gospel Oak ball as a result. The lease on the existing diesel trains has expired, and they are needed elsewhere by November. Consequently there is a real risk of the return of the Rail Replacement bus, not for engineering work but because TfL do not have any train sets to run on the line. The option of a temporary resort to 315s discarded from the Elizabeth line is being spoken of once again.

Worse still, if Arriva continue to be messed around and lose money as a result, they may walk away from the Overground, giving Grayling another excuse to blame the Mayor for his own shortcomings, and withdraw the concession to TfL. That would set London's rail transport back twenty years, compared to the one year delay Crossrail is now suffering.

The embarrassment arising from the delay to Crossrail casts doubt over the timescale of future infrastructure projects, including the planned extension from Barking to Barking Riverside.

Andrew Bosi



Wires but no electric trains yet

sums from the economy of our city, while doing nothing for employment, is not an attractive one. Perhaps London should say 'No' to these driverless App Cab services. Perhaps TfL could provide App Cab services instead.

In principle London's bus services too could be driverless and controlled by Waymo's system. Is

this what we want? I suggest, rather, that we want to be confident that the control of our bus services, like our trains, is secure so that even if all driverless cars were 'grounded' for some reason our cities could continue to function.

More on buses next time.

Peter Osmon

NEWS ROUNDUP

Stephen Plowden

We are sorry to record the death of Stephen Plowden. Stephen was a controversial transport economist who wrote a number of books making the case for restricting the use of cars and replanning cities including *Town against traffic* (1972), *A case for traffic restraint in London* (1987) and, with Mayer Hillman, *Speed control and transport policy* (1996). Stephen was active in the campaign against HS2 and contributed to a paper in 2016 entitled *HS2 and the railway network: A case for a review*. In the same year he spoke to our CBT London branch under the title: *Two bad schemes: HS2 and Crossrail2*. He will be missed by transport environmentalists.

Electric car charging

The growth in the number of electric vehicles in the capital is outstripping the number of charge points and this could limit the number of people owning electric vehicles at a time when it is essential that Londoners move away from internal combustion engine vehicles. 60 per cent of Londoners do not have their own garage or driveway and would therefore need to rely on electric on-street charging.

The Mayor is proposing to offer TfL capital funding to install electric charging points where private sector investment is not happening quickly enough. At the same time he is concerned that charging points should not be put on pavements which would take pavement space away from pedestrians, especially those with buggies or wheelchairs, and may impede journeys, particularly if there are trailing cables. Charging points should be situated on the street or on lampposts.

Ultra low-emission zone

The Mayor is now proceeding with his proposals to extend the ULEZ. The consultation showed support for the Mayor's proposals, with 54 per cent supporting or strongly supporting the expansion of the ULEZ boundary from central London and 74 per cent backing the new London-wide emissions standards for heavy vehicles.

Under new changes the most-polluting heavy vehicles, including buses, coaches and lorries, will be subject to stronger emissions standards from 26th October

2020 London-wide. Cars, vans and motorcycles within North and South Circular Roads will be subject to stricter emissions standards from 25th October 2021.

Meanwhile two London boroughs, Hackney and Islington, are proposing to ban all but ultra-low emission vehicles such as electric cars, e-bikes, and the newest hybrids and hydrogen vehicles on nine streets in Hackney and Islington from 7am-10am and 4pm-7pm on weekdays.

Air quality at Heathrow

The Government has now approved the building of a third runway at Heathrow but the issue of air quality might still scupper the scheme.

In some communities around Heathrow levels of nitrogen dioxide, a substance which contributes to poor health and reduce life expectancy, are already exceeding limits set in European Union rules. Traffic noise, according to new research, has become one of the UK's most significant urban health threats, increasing the prevalence of heart disease, stroke and even diabetes.

The government is facing legal action at European and domestic level to bring pollution levels down and has been challenged successfully three times by ClientEarth on its failure to produce an air quality plan for the UK that is compliant with the EU Directive and domestic regulations.

Oxford Street and CS11

Following Westminster's announcement that the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street is off Mayor Sadiq Khan sent a strong letter to Nickie Aiken, the Westminster council leader, regretting the decision unilaterally to withdraw from the project jointly agreed by Westminster and TfL. He reiterated the core aims of the project which included dealing with air quality, crowding and danger and challenged Westminster to come up with a counter-proposal which would successfully deal with these challenges.

Westminster's reason for withdrawing from the scheme was that residents were overwhelmingly against it fearing displaced traffic blocking surrounding streets. The Mayor however pointed out that three quarters of more than 22,000 respondents to the consultation were in favour of the

scheme and that traffic displacement would not have materialised.

Living Streets and London Campaign for Better Transport are entering into discussions with Better Oxford Street, the group spearheading opposition, to look for ways of dealing with the problems around Oxford Street without resorting to full pedestrianisation. The two sides appear to have a common focus; reducing traffic across the area, tackling safety and pollution on Oxford Street (and at the same time protecting surrounding neighbourhoods from excess road traffic and displacement) and improving air quality across the wider area. Amongst suggestions are imposing 10mph limits for buses on Oxford St, better enforcement of vehicles that should not be on Oxford St at present, extending weekday parking restriction to weekends and evenings across the wide-area along with the introduction of 20mph limits. In addition to this would be the development of a high-quality cycle route that runs east-west and connects with existing/emerging networks.

Meanwhile the City of Westminster has won a bid for a judicial review against changes to the Swiss Cottage gyratory, a crucial part of CS11, the proposed cycle route connecting Finchley Road, Swiss Cottage and Regents Park. They also oppose the closing of Regents Park gates to motor traffic claiming that insufficient concern has been given to the fear that traffic will be displaced into nearby residential streets.

Uber

Uber is back in business in London but with conditions. They lost their licence (but were allowed to continue to operate pending an appeal) because of such things as failure to report crimes and making inadequate background checks on drivers.

An even more important issue was not addressed in TfL's decision but, in a landmark ruling, the Employment Appeal Tribunal ruled that Uber drivers are employees. Uber are appealing against this decision but it potentially has serious implications for the whole of the gig economy.

The growth in the number of private hire vehicles on London streets is contributing to growing congestion. The number has grown by 92 per cent since 2009

– numbers are up from a little over 60,000 to a little short of 120,000. At present TfL has no power to restrict their number.

Who will pay for TfL?

In June the London Assembly launched a consultation seeking ideas on how to solve TfL's financial problems. CBT London in its response said there were good reasons for freezing fares because of the dependency of people on low wages on travel, particularly buses and that the focus should therefore be on raising new revenue streams.

Passengers would return to buses if buses could be made faster and more reliable. This points to the need to restrict the circulation of non-essential traffic in order to keep congestion down. Essential to this strategy would be a restriction on the number of minicabs allowed. Raising the congestion charge, extending its hours of operation and extending road pricing to a much wider area of London would have the twin benefits of increasing revenue and easing congestion.

Realising the Mayor's Transport Strategy

Sadiq Khan has issued two new policy documents aimed at realising the Mayor's Transport Strategy's commitments. One is the Walking Action Plan and the other is the Vision Zero Action Plan.

The first, launched by London's Walking and Cycling Commissioner, Will Norman includes a number of measures affecting the built environment, with the aim of making London a city where 'walking, for those that can, is the most obvious, enjoyable and attractive means of travel for all short trips'.

The 'Vision Zero' action plan sets out measures aiming to reduce deaths and serious injuries on London's transport network. A key feature is the implementation of a 20mph speed limit on all roads controlled by TfL (which make up 5% of the city's roads, but at peak hours carry up to 30% of its traffic). There are also plans to transform unsafe junctions, new safety standards for the design of Heavy Goods Vehicles operating in London and a new bus safety programme, which will incorporate speed-limiting technology and additional training for all drivers.