

Campaign for better public transport in London by foot, on bike, by bus and by rail

Better means:
 ◆ safer ◆ healthier ◆ speedier ◆ more reliable,
 ◆ better connected, ◆ more accessible,
 ◆ more convenient, ◆ more comfortable

Better public transport means:
 ◆ less car use
 ◆ less global heating



Heathrow

This will be the last edition of the newsletter under the banner of campaign for better transport. We hope to continue under a new name. Thank you for your support which we hope will continue.

CBT London responded to the latest consultation on Heathrow despite being frustrated that the consultation document gave no opportunity for us to address our concerns.

We support the Mayor’s objectives for Healthy Streets and improved air quality. We also support the Government’s pledge to take action to tackle climate change although we would wish to see more rapid progress and interim targets between now and 2050.

It is clear from these documents that there is a requirement to reduce the carbon footprint of Heathrow, in terms of both emissions for aircraft and from road vehicles travelling to and from the airport. In pledging to make it no worse, Heathrow is failing

to make the necessary contribution to meeting government targets.

As a first step we suggested eliminating domestic flights from Heathrow. Journeys which can be made by rail should be. This change would have no disbenefit to the economy of the country.

Mayor Sadiq Khan has been on record as opposing the expansion of Heathrow. However the Secretary of State has instructed him to amend the London Plan by deleting reference to this policy and adding it into the list of planned infrastructure ‘benefits’, likely to lead to a major row.

All plans for Heathrow include measures to increase the number of passengers arriving by public transport. Links with areas south of the airport are crucial to this aim and the govern-

ment has been encouraging bids from the private sector. The most favoured plan has been the Southern Rail Link which proposed heavy rail lines joining Heathrow with the south western main line out of Waterloo enabling through trains from such places as Guildford and Basingstoke. Trains would enter Heathrow from the west and be able to continue to Paddington, thus giving south western passengers an alternative London destination.

The DfT’s interest in this scheme is now cooling. They say that ‘the increased passenger demand generated through natural growth and the construction of a third runway at Heathrow is not anticipated to increase as a step change but rather an incremental increase over a number of years’ and that therefore any

scheme can be implemented in stages and would not likely to be finished before 2030.

The Conservative election manifesto confirmed that it is for Heathrow to demonstrate that it can meet its air quality and noise obligations and that the business case is realistic. The scheme will receive no new public money.

As far as access to Heathrow is concerned, the DfT suggest that, although ‘heavy rail will be a vital component of this project, there are other mode options and interventions such as light rail, guided busways and emerging technologies such as maglev and autonomous pods that could be blended with heavy rail to enable the realisation of wider opportunities and benefits.’

Our Newsletter is sent out to our London members and other contacts. The group exists to campaign for sustainable transport solutions in London. From 1st March we will no longer be part of the Campaign for Better Transport but we hope to continue under a new name. 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.

To contact the group write to Chris Barker, 46 Redston Road, London N8 7HJ. E-mail: chrisbarker46@gmail.com; phone 020 8347 7684. 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>.

We welcome anyone to write articles and reviews, or contribute stories for publication on the website. To do this either send material directly to the editor Chris Barker or, if you would like to receive an invitation to be a direct contributor, please send a request to the site administrator Charles Martin (cmartin1713@gmail.com).

Autonomous Vehicles- a sceptical view

Peter Osmon, in newsletter 36 (May 2019), argued that it may be possible for autonomous vehicles to operate without using 5G. This was rather like discussing the merits of the on board service in the rockets that are going to take passengers to Australia in an hour.

Just like those rockets, which were frequently featured in the media of the 1960s and 1970s, driverless cars are a very distant prospect and are very unlikely to happen in the way that they have been promoted by the tech and motor car industries. Osmon seems to have drunk the Kool Aid and believes that autonomous vehicles will soon be on the road and will eventually dominate.

That is misleading. It is vital that the development of driverless cars is viewed with the appropriate amount of scepticism. The truth is that the massive hype around their development has not been matched by any achievements. We hear constantly of the progress of trials and test but when these are examined, the reality is that for all the hundreds of billions of dollars (yes, really!) expended on their development, there is very little to show for it.

Read the articles about the trials carefully and you will see that invariably there are still 'operators' in nearly all the vehicles or else they are geofenced to operate on a very limited route. The concept of autonomous vehicles has been around for nearly as long as the motor car but it was not until the early 2000s that serious money was being spent on their development. At first, there was much optimism as the motor manufacturers teamed up with tech companies to develop equipment, software and eventually test vehicles.

However, that optimism is rapidly dissipating as the difficulties of developing driverless cars that perform better than human-driven ones seem to be insuperable. Not only have they been involved in numerous accidents, including several fatalities, but there is nothing approaching a vehicle that could be used without a driver in conditions of snow, heavy rainfall, poor road markings, highly congested traffic, busy town centres and so on.

Articles like those of Osmon are dangerous because they skew the debate about the future of trans-

port towards the idea that soon we will all be in autonomous, shared use, electric vehicles that will be convenient, environmentally sustainable and safe. The truth is that this model is fraught with insuperable difficulties (the tech is not developed, autonomous vehicles will be very expensive, people want their own vehicles, etc) and in any case is not desirable (autonomous vehicles will cause more congestion, electric vehicles have environmental consequences, millions of drivers will be made redundant, etc). Transport planners know that the answer to congestion and environmental damage caused by transport remains improved public transport, encouragement of cycling and walking, road user charging and restrictions on vehicles entering city centres. The notion of a driverless car future solving any of the problems of the transport system is a dangerous fantasy and should not be promoted in this newsletter.

Christian Wolmar

Christian Wolmar is the author of *Driverless Cars: on a road to nowhere*, obtainable for £10 by emailing Christian.wolmar@gmail.com

Peter Osmon responds.

Christian, I am sorry you have misunderstood the thrust of my articles. Allow me to clarify.

From a scientific and engineering perspective driverless vehicles on the public roads is a challenging problem which I do think will be solved, perhaps soon. Currently London's roads are infested with a plague of driven private cars and I see no advantage in their being replaced, one-for-one by driverless. But driverless buses on urban roads are a very different proposition- technically and socially.

Because they travel repeatedly over a fixed route, navigation and steering could be controlled relatively easily, for example, by reference to the streetlight poles at the roadside: using 5G communications would be like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. And, since half the cost of bus travel is the driver, driverless buses could be smaller, more frequent and over more routes for the same price- a considerable benefit for Londoners (apart from the drivers).



Proposed site for Lewisham Bakerloo Line station.

Bakerloo Line extension

Towards the end of 2019, TfL was running a public consultation for the Bakerloo Line to be extended initially to Lewisham then, ultimately, to Beckenham Junction and Hayes (Kent).

New tunnels under St George's Road would link Lambeth North to brand new platforms and an improved interchange at Elephant & Castle. The extension would continue under the New Kent Road, with two intermediate stations along the Old Kent Road, another at New Cross Gate to terminate initially at Thurston Road, Lewisham.

That site is adjacent to the national rail station (which Network Rail is planning to modernise) and is currently used to stand numerous terminating buses: these would be displaced during construction of the enormous Bakerloo station 'box'. How inter-modal interchange will be achieved long term and what happens to the site above ground level have not yet been decided. The Bakerloo Line tunnels would continue beyond Thurston Road to sidings at Wearside Road, an existing Lewisham Council depot.

London Underground plans to operate 36 high-performance trains per peak hour along the extended Bakerloo Line to Lewisham. It remains to be seen how efficiently each train will reverse at busy Lewisham without delaying the following trains so close behind.

For the longer term, taking over the branch currently operated by South Eastern via Ladywell and Catford Bridge to Beckenham Junction and Hayes appears to give the best cost:benefit ratio. Of several route options, it is the easiest to link to the tunnels at Lewisham and offers the greatest journey time net savings. One longer term service option is for 18 trains per peak hour to reverse at Lewisham and 18 to continue onto the Hayes branch. Nine trains could terminate at Beckenham Junction and nine at Hayes.

Many existing trains between the Hayes branch and Charing Cross are scheduled to run nonstop between Ladywell and London Bridge, bypassing Lewisham and New Cross and discouraging interchange to/from the DLR and London Overground respectively. All Bakerloo trains, on the other hand, would serve all stations along the extended line, including the important interchanges at Lewisham and New Cross Gate.

In spite of serving intermediate stations, the extended Bakerloo Line would provide generally faster journeys. Hayes (Kent) to Charing Cross would take 35 minutes instead of the current 45. Avoiding time-consuming interchange at Charing Cross means that Piccadilly Circus and Oxford Circus would each be reached 18 minutes faster from Hayes.

The new Bakerloo Line trains would have fewer seats than those currently operating on the Hayes branch but be operated more frequently. With 18 trains per peak hour between New Beckenham and Ladywell, the extended Bakerloo would provide slightly more seats per hour and 50 per cent more total train capacity per hour than the current six trains per peak hour.

Neil Roth



Chiltern Suburban London's Cinderella service

Chiltern Railways' suburban service is currently the least frequent or attractive in the whole of the London area.

Apart from Wembley Stadium, which has a basic half-hourly service, standard frequencies at most stations are only hourly. The two Sudbury stations are particularly hard done by. Sudbury Hill Harrow has several gaps of well over an hour and no trains after mid-evening, while Sudbury & Harrow Road – despite its ideal town-centre location and recent adjacent housing development - has just four trains each way daily, Monday to Friday only: four to Marylebone in the morning and four back in the evening. Both stations are closed all weekend.

These service levels are woefully inadequate for the London inner-suburban area in the 21st century and bear no relation to people's present-day travel patterns and requirements. They were set by the franchising authorities in the mid-90s and were based on the then-existing service pattern, which was established in the early 60s when the two Sudbury stations lost nearly

all their off peak trains. The situation has remained basically unchanged since then, though London TravelWatch did score a significant success in December 2004 when – after concerted pressure – Chiltern agreed to reinstate a roughly-hourly all-day service at Sudbury Hill Harrow for the first time for 40 years.

The company has stubbornly resisted all requests to make any further improvements, claiming that track capacity rules this out and that people can use the underground instead. However, plenty of other two-track railways manage to give all their stations an adequate basic service – and as Chiltern manage to serve all their stations during the peaks, when track capacity is at its most stretched, it follows that it must be possible at off peak times and at weekends. As for the underground, the Piccadilly Line through Sudbury takes a much more circuitous route and is much slower – and a number of other Chiltern stations do

themselves have all-day services provided by both Chiltern and London Underground.

The current franchise is due to expire in 2021, so - depending on Government decisions on the future of franchising as a whole - the consultation process on what the new service specification should contain should be starting in the next year or two. This will provide the first real opportunity for 20 years to exert effective pressure for significant changes to the service requirement, obliging the new operator to provide a service level to meet the needs and potential of this busy, vibrant and ever-developing area of north west London.

Graham Larkbey

Sudbury Town Residents Association acts as the User Group for Sudbury & Harrow Road station and campaigns for improvements to the station and its service. For details see www.stra.org.uk, or contact info@stra.org.uk.

FALLEN ANGEL OF THE NORTH LONDON SUBURBS

The arrival from Monday 9th September of regular half-hourly, all-day every-day train services at London's newest station concludes a decade-long chapter in the recent history of rail in the Upper Lea Valley.

In 2011 Network Rail published their Route Utilisation Strategy for London and the South East. -It included options for adding capacity in London's Lea Valley, at the time an area designated for funding support from the European Union to address long-term structural socio-economic decline.

In common with other 20th century industrial parts of the capital - the former Barking power station, soon to be Barking Riverside, with a new rail station, and the former Ford stamping plant, soon to be Beam Park, also with a new rail station - Enfield had large areas needing regenerating by new land uses. As London's population levels have risen from their 1980s' nadir to surpass even their pre-WW2 zenith so industry has been replaced by residential developments. What has come to be known as Meridian Water

is Enfield's contribution to that emerging 21st century urban geography.

The scale of such new developments demands new services - utilities, education, health, as well as transport for residents and local workers alike - and supporting infrastructure. Initially the planned additional rail services to support the new 10,000-home Meridian Water were to be based on a modified Angel Road station. Longer platforms extended south to create new step-free access-points on slip-roads adjacent to the North Circular Road, and closer to significant local employers such as Tesco and IKEA superstores, would have enabled closure of the utterly dire trackside walk via the hostile environment of tortuous staircases beneath Conduit Lane to the north - and then footbridge to/from the London-bound platform.

As is the way with so many projects, the final product is seldom if ever the one first envisaged – just like the eventual cost and opening date! That is inherent to the very nature of project development, as are a

cocktail of competing/conflicting influences: realism, pragmatism, budget constraints, delivery timescales, compromise – and expectation management. Thus the service from 9th September, in addition to the seamless continuation of the weekday peak-only services inherited in June from Angel Road, is half-hourly when the initial aspiration was quarter-hourly, the Metro-style minimum.

As and when the new community of Meridian Water evolves, however, so too will the rail infrastructure and services, with funding support for both. On 17th August 2019 the Chancellor of the Exchequer included in his announcement of further funding to be made available through the government's

Housing Infrastructure Fund '£156 million for the Meridian Water bid from Enfield to deliver rail works, road infrastructure, land remediation, flood alleviation and utilities to unlock up to 10,000 homes' as one of five London and South East developments sharing £600million to support delivery of almost fifty thousand new homes.

'Lea Valley Rail – better access to jobs and homes' is the Railfuture-commissioned independent report by Jonathan Roberts Consulting summarising in 2012 the prospects for a three-stage development of rail in the Lea Valley, in which Meridian Water is the second. See <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/CLUA-JRC+Report>.

Roger Blake



Meridian Water Station.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Where is Crossrail?

It seems that Crossrail is going to be even more expensive and late than previously thought. After announcing that the initial opening date of December 2018 was impossible, it now seems unlikely that the line will open before the autumn of 2021. Crossrail's current cost projections suggest a likely scenario of £42m over budget and a relatively improbable worst-case scenario of £400m over budget.

A key focus during 2019 was finalising the stations, tunnels, portals and shafts. By the end of the year, Custom House, Farringdon and Tottenham Court Road stations will be complete and the project is on track to finish fit-out of the tunnels in January. The central section will be substantially complete by the end of the first quarter in 2020, except for Bond Street and Whitechapel stations where work will continue. Also unresolved is the complex business of making sure trains respond to the three different signalling sections involved.

Crossrail trains, under TfL branding, are now operating on the overground section of the line. The Liverpool Street and Shenfield section has now been operating for some time and, from 15th December, a service started between Paddington and Reading. Because of the age of the system, Oyster will not be useable beyond West Drayton, but contactless will and daily and weekly capping are expected to be introduced in spring 2020. Freedom Pass holders are able to travel free all the way to Reading but only in TfL trains.

There is better news for Crossrail 2. The project's Managing Director, Michelle Dix, has confirmed reports that the Department for Transport has committed £6m to support the further development of the new rail line although, ominously, there was no mention of the project in the Conservatives' 2019 manifesto.

Car Free Day

22nd September was World Car Free Day when all over the world city roads were closed to motor traffic to show people how much nicer places are without cars and how much more healthy they are without toxic fumes. In London practically the whole of the City was closed to traffic as was a large area of Southwark south of the river. The aim, according to the

Mayor, is to encourage Londoners to 'reimagine' their city as car-free and get around by either walking or cycling. Sadiq Khan launched the day cycling across Tower Bridge. 18 London boroughs joined the event.

Noise on the Underground

Excessive noise on parts of the underground system has been a problem for passengers as well as drivers for years. In 2018 the BBC used noise meters supplied by University College to record sound levels which revealed that in some sections, particularly the Northern Line between Kentish Town and Tufnell Park, the noise was equivalent to that of an electric drill. London Underground say they address the problem by a programme of rail grinding and lubrication. They also say they use resilient track fixings - a system that reduces ground-borne vibration from the track and installing innovative under-rail pads in the noisiest sections of the network. In the future new trains should help reduce noise levels.

Drivers understandably want more immediate action but have now accepted assurances that speed restrictions will be introduced and works to reduce noise levels would now begin. Ear protection has been offered to drivers.

New use for car parks

There are 868 car parks in London that are within one mile of a tube or train station. If they were repurposed they could accommodate around 80,000 new homes. This was revealed by Nick Whitten, director of UK research at estate agents JLL. Removing car parks from near stations would, he said, 'encourage other transport users and persuade people away from the highly inefficient private use model'.

He set his sights also on urban multi-storey car parks which could be transformed for retail or leisure use. He cited Peckham Levels car park 'which has been turned into a cultural amenity where people can eat and drink'.

At Arnos Grove 2,000 people have signed a petition opposing the conversion of the car park there.

On-demand buses

Following the successful launch of the on-demand bus service in Sutton a similar service has now

started in Ealing, called Slide Ealing. Like Sutton, the area was chosen because its inhabitants are particularly reliant on cars. Buses can be summoned using an app. The flat fare is £3.50 but Freedom Pass holders travel free. An evaluation of the Sutton service is due soon.

Making London's transport system fairer

A report from the Centre for London considers ways in which London's transport system can be made fairer particularly for disabled people or those on low incomes such as benefits claimants and jobseekers. Londoners spend more of their income on transport than people outside the capital or in other world cities. They also point out that people in these categories are amongst the worst sufferers from poor air quality.

Centre for London says the Mayor should consider wider social benefits alongside economic benefits when preparing business cases for new developments. One suggestion is to reduce the number of zones, reduce the difference in fares between zones and rezone particular stations that are in low-affordability areas. The report calls on Transport for London to create a system of mobility credits to allow tailored discounts and subsidies for low-income and disabled Londoners.

Centre for London also considered the Freedom Pass, available to all over the age of 65 irrespective of income. They reject the idea of means-testing but feel that the 60+ London Oyster photocard should be phased out. The vast majority of people between the ages of 60 and 65, they say, are in work and tend to be wealthier than younger age groups.

Silvertown Tunnel

Like other transport campaigners we were disappointed that the Mayor has signed an agreement to build the Silvertown Tunnel, even before the consultation formally closed. Many sustainable transport groups, including CBT London, have objected to the tunnel. It is well documented that new infrastructure induces new traffic, not just in the immediate area of the new road but elsewhere. This is contrary to the Mayor's transport strategy of reducing traffic and is not in line with step

changes needed to tackle the climate emergency. This is why we oppose the building of the Silvertown Tunnel and regret that it was the proposed foot and cycle bridge at Canary Wharf that was cancelled rather than Silvertown.

Demands to mayoral candidates on traffic and road safety

A number of organisations are formulating demands to London mayoral candidates aimed at improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. The coalition of transport campaigners who recently published the Healthy Streets scorecard, including CBT London, (see out last issue on promoting healthy streets) set out the following:

- To set a target to increase the share of trips walked or cycled to 36% by 2032,
- Develop options for a simple, smart and fair road user charging scheme to replace existing charges
- In each London borough, transform a traffic-dominated town or district centre into a low-traffic place for people
- Create 100 new liveable neighbourhoods in residential and mixed-use areas to open local streets as places for living and enjoying by taking disruptive through-traffic away to main roads
- Create 500 school streets, including, where school entrances are located on TfL roads, rebuilding streets around those entrances to prioritise children and young people over traffic
- Double the kilometres of cycleways that meet the cycleway criteria, connecting all of London's people and places, particularly where Londoners are divided by barriers such as the Thames, major roads and rail lines.

CBT London are also concerned to make public transport a more attractive alternative to cars or private hire vehicles. We would like to see public transport capacity boosted and fares cut financed by a road user charge in which drivers pay for each mile they travel. 24 hour bus lanes, a reduction of parking on bus routes and selective vehicle detection (SVD) are also measures which could help make bus journeys faster and more reliable.