



Investigation into traffic congestion in London

London Assembly Transport Committee

30 August 2016

Living Streets

We want to create a walking nation, free from congested roads and pollution, reducing the risk of preventable illness and social isolation and making walking the natural choice. We believe that a walking nation means progress for everyone.

For more than 85 years we've been a beacon for walking. In our early days our campaigning led to the UK's first zebra crossings and speed limits. Now our campaigns change minds and ensure that every one of us is able to exercise our right to walk and the freedoms and possibilities it brings.

Our local projects deliver real change to overcome barriers to walking and our ground breaking initiatives such as the world's biggest Walk to School campaign encourage millions of people to walk.

This is a joint submission on behalf of national charity Living Streets and the London Living Streets Group. We welcome the London Assembly Transport Committee's investigation into traffic congestion and would be happy to give evidence in front of the committee.

Introduction

London's ambitions for creating a world class city for living, a healthier population and a more prosperous economy will only be fully realised if the mayor and TfL take bold action to encourage Londoners out of their cars and onto their feet, bicycles and public transport.

When the Congestion Charge was first introduced it made significant changes to the way people travelled around central London. The decrease in traffic gave space for more sustainable travel: walking, cycling and public transport. It brought revenue into London's transport system to pay for public realm and public transport improvements that have made London a better city to live, visit and work.

That was 13 years ago. It is time to look again at how we pay to use the roads in London.

We want the new mayor of London to act now, by committing Transport for London to complete a feasibility study on the options of an extended road-pricing scheme, bringing together the current congestion charging and ultra-low-emissions zones.

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This should be combined with wider infrastructure and public realm improvements to encourage more people to walk and cycle their everyday journeys.

Key questions

- 1. *How has traffic congestion changed in London in recent years? Are there differences in the amount, time, type and/or location of congestion?***
- 2. *What are the key causes of these changes in congestion?***

Over the last 15 years London has experienced strong growth in public transport, walking and cycling, with a trend of falling car use despite an increasing population¹.

This fall in road traffic has been attributed to a much-improved public transport offering, societal changes affecting car ownership and use, and reductions to available road network capacity. Increasing densification in London has also contributed. These trends are consistent with the 'peak car' theory that proposes that per capita car travel has begun a decline from a peak in major Western cities².

Over this period, average journey times, congestion and journey time reliability on London's roads have been maintained at relatively consistent levels.

The causes of the recent increases in congestion are complex. Part of the problem has been increases in certain types of vehicle, such as delivery vans and minicabs.

Pedestrian traffic has also increased, but is rarely given the attention it deserves. That's despite some 6.4 million walk-all-the-way trips being made on an average day in London in 2014. This is an increase of 9.3 per cent since 2008, reflecting population growth over the period. This gives a walking mode share of 24 per cent³.

Walking plays an essential role in many more door-to-door journeys and increased public transport use has also increased the number of walk journey stages undertaken by Londoners. This brings health benefits, but is putting additional pressure on available pedestrian space on London's streets.

- 3. *What impact does congestion have on Londoners, the city's economy and its environment?***

Over the next 15 years an extra 1.5 million people will move to London, bringing the population to over 10 million. This will increase demand for transport and other resources, with significant consequences for the economy, public health, and Londoners quality of life.

Lots of cars and traffic results in a lower quality of life for people living in cities. Time spent in traffic jams is unpleasant for drivers, but the knock on effects can be deadly for everyone else, with at least 9,000 people dying prematurely a year in London because of air pollution.

¹ Since 2000, London has achieved a net shift in mode share (at the journey stage level) of 11.0 per cent away from private transport, principally the car, towards public transport, walking and cycling – a feat unprecedented in any major city.

² Transport for London (2015) Travel in London Report 8

³ Transport for London (2015) Travel in London Report 8

Assuming no policies are put in place to manage increased demand, it is estimated that every five years the transport system will need to cater for more than a million extra trips per day⁴. Only by encouraging people out of their cars towards other more sustainable modes of transport, will the mayor reduce inequalities, tackle pollution and make London a more attractive place to live and do business.

- Air pollution

Air pollution from vehicular traffic has a detrimental impact on Londoners' health and quality of life. The most significant cause of London's air pollution is its road traffic. NO₂ concentrations throughout central London remain above the legal limit of 40 µg/m³.

The average NO₂ concentration at Oxford Street in the 12 months to August 2015 was more than four times the legal limit. London is not expected to comply with NO₂ standards until after 2030⁵.

The mayor has a number of policies in place to combat air pollution. Of these, the London Assembly's environment committee has concluded that the 'major mayoral success has been in traffic reduction'⁶.

A holistic approach to London's road traffic pressures should seek to reduce the volume of vehicles on the network in order to tackle the major source of air pollution, whilst promoting alternative ways for Londoners to get around.

- Health

TfL's Health Action Plan, published in 2014, committed to improving public health through transport. The report highlights the importance of physical inactivity as one of the biggest threats to the health of Londoners which the transport system has a central role in tackling. Currently it is estimated that only 57.8 per cent of adults in London are meeting the minimum recommended physical activity levels while 27 per cent do not manage even 30 minutes of activity per week⁷.

The mayor must seek to tackle congestion in a way that both reduces motor traffic and improves the health of Londoners by enabling more people to travel actively by foot or by bicycle.

- Economic

In recent times there has been a decrease in average road speeds as a result of an increase in vehicular traffic. However, the main perceived business problem arising from congestion is unreliability, rather than increased time taken. In that respect, the TfL road network has largely retained its historic stability in the most recent year.

⁴ Transport for London (2014) London's Road Modernisation Plan. <https://t.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/whats-the-plan>

⁵ Institute for Public Policy Research (2016) London: Global Green City http://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/london-global-green-city_Apr2016.pdf?noredirect=1

⁶ London Assembly Environment Committee (2015) Driving away from diesel: Reducing air pollution from diesel vehicles, Greater London Authority. <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Driving%20Away%20from%20Diesel%20na%20report.pdf>

⁷ Public Health England (2014) Active People Survey

There are a number of solutions the mayor might consider in order to tackle unreliable journey times. For example providing road users with good predictive travel time information before they set out, so reducing uncertainty in arrival time. This is becoming increasingly possible through digital technologies, which are far more cost effective than traditional civil engineering technologies in meeting the needs of road users⁸.

Increasingly a 'new economy' which encompasses sectors like tech, legal and finance and creative are choosing to locate in urban centres and have transport priorities focused on urban realm and active travel. Attracting this new economy will necessitate a reallocation of London's road space requiring a reduction in vehicular traffic.

4. What can London learn from other cities in its effort to reduce congestion?

"In successful cities, there is a clear trend towards reducing the impact of motor traffic to improve the quality of life and make them more attractive to live in and to do business. Exciting new spaces for city life have been created, and they have delivered high-quality cycling networks and made cities great for walking." (Roads Task Force, 2012⁹)

For the majority of the twentieth century, city planning in London and elsewhere, focused on designing around the car, effectively engineering walking out of our everyday lives. Now, an increasing number of city leaders are beginning to understand the benefits of getting more people onto their feet and reducing the number of cars, in order to improve the health and happiness of their citizens and create more vibrant, thriving economies¹⁰.

This is resulting in the rise of new policies centred on encouraging walking and putting people back in at the heart of decisions about the built environment. Several cities have already started to take action. Oslo for example is planning to go car free in its central district by 2019¹¹. Hamburg, Helsinki, and Madrid are also contemplating going car free and in Paris there are ambitious plans to semi-pedestrianise seven of its most famous squares by 2020. Madrid's car free initiative has led to cars being banned from the city's four central districts whilst in Buenos Aires, they are pedestrianising 100 city blocks.

Stockholm's system charges each time a 'gate' is passed. The user then pays each time they cross into the city – this acts as a deterrent to through-traffic and encourages users to complete their business in one visit. The London zone, in contrast, can be entered and left any number of times throughout the day. In addition, Stockholm's charge varies between the peaks, inter-peak and night time¹².

⁸ David Metz (2015) Can we build our way out of congestion? <http://peakcar.org/can-we-build-our-way-out-of-congestion/>

⁹ TfL (2012) Roads Task Force Report <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/rtf-report-chapter-1.pdf>

¹⁰ Arup (2016) Cities Alive : Towards a Walking World
http://publications.arup.com/publications/c/cities_alive_towards_a_walking_world

¹¹ <http://www.citylab.com/cityfixer/2015/10/6-european-cities-with-plans-to-go-car-free/411439/>

¹² Eliasson, J. (2014) The Stockholm Congestion charges: an overview, Centre for Transport Studies, Stockholm

The Italian city of Florence operates an “access control” area based scheme. If you live in one area you can drive in that area, but you have to pay to cross boundaries. This serves to reduce traffic in residential streets, making them more pedestrian and cycle friendly¹³.

These cities, and many others across the world, are realising that you can't simply build your way out of congestion and that by reducing vehicles you can create better places to live and do business.

The Mayor of London must now engage with TfL and the London boroughs to deliver a larger, coordinated programme of place improvements, complemented by well-designed strategic measures to reduce motor vehicles and make London a great city to walk and live in.

5. ***How effective is the Congestion Charge? How should this scheme be modified?***
6. ***To what extent would a usage-based road pricing regime help reduce congestion?***
7. ***How might the Ultra Low Emission Zone and Emissions Surcharge affect congestion levels?***

When the Congestion Charge was first introduced it made significant changes to the way people travelled around central London. The decrease in traffic gave space for more sustainable modes of travel: walking, cycling and public transport. It brought revenue into London's transport system to pay for these improvements. It made London a better city to live, visit and work. That was 13 years ago. It is time to look again at how we pay to use the roads in London.

We want the new Mayor of London to act now, by committing Transport for London to complete a feasibility study on the options of an extended road-pricing scheme, bringing together the current congestion charging and ultra-low-emissions zones.

While it is clear that an expanded road pricing scheme would result in significant benefits, many complex factors would have to be considered in the development of a successful scheme.

Providing a definitive set of recommendations based on a comprehensive analysis of the many factors involved can only be properly undertaken by TfL. For this reason, we recommend that the mayor should mandate TfL to assess the feasibility of an expanded road-pricing scheme that considers:

1. Integrating the CCZ, LEZ and ULEZ to create a single road-pricing zone.
2. Expanding this zone across the existing London-wide low emission zone in order to maximise its impact.
3. Implementing the zone by 2019, with all taxis and buses to be fully compliant by this date also.

Such a scheme more effectively charge road users for their contribution to air pollution and congestion and could raise revenue to reinvest in public transport,

¹³ <http://www.visitflorence.com/moving-around-florence/by-car.html>

cycling and walking. Future revenues could also be used to compensate for the loss of TfL's general grant from central government.

There is a good precedent here: the greatest cost incurred in establishing the CCZ lay in upgrading the public transport network, but since then around 80 per cent of the resultant revenues have been invested in the bus network alone.¹⁴

8. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of these other interventions?

- Tolling for river crossings or other major infrastructure

We consider that new road infrastructure would have a detrimental impact on London by increasing traffic volumes as a result of induced or generated traffic. Even with tolls on new capacity, we would expect a certain level of induced traffic. We are therefore opposed to new road capacity even when tolled.

We would like instead for the mayor to invest in new infrastructure that improves walking and cycling connections, necessary to create a modal shift towards active travel. For example we support the proposal by Sustrans for a new walking and cycling bridge over the river Thames between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf. Walking and cycling infrastructure like this can have major health benefits, and should play a central role in keeping London moving actively and connecting our growing capital.

It may be that existing road infrastructure is suitable for tolling as part of a package of smart road pricing measures. Tolling of this type should be considered in a wider feasibility study of road pricing to be undertaken by the mayor and TfL.

- Workplace Parking Levy

We believe a Workplace Levy (with an associated package of support measures e.g. personal travel planning and season ticket loans) has significant potential and should be seriously considered as part of a wider feasibility study we are calling on the mayor to undertake.

- Devolving Vehicle Excise Duty to London

The UK Government recently took the decision to reform the banding structure of Vehicle Excise Duty (VED). However, the new VED model will continue to be levied on the basis of carbon dioxide emissions. Indeed, even after the changes to banding are implemented, VED remains a tax on pollution.

The UK Government's plan to dedicate all VED revenue to a new Roads Fund therefore contradicts the very purpose of the tax. Additional strategic road capacity will tend to lead to increased demand and, inevitably, more pollution.

In London we would like to see the mayor working with the Chancellor to explore a different approach. Instead of using VED to increase road capacity and pollution, we believe revenue raised from the tax should be allocated to infrastructure to increase walking and cycling and integrate sustainable transport modes to enable people to

¹⁴ Institute for Public Policy Research (2016) London: Global Green City
http://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/london-global-green-city_Apr2016.pdf?noredirect=1

choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, while reducing pressure on existing roads by cutting congestion.

9. How can the Mayor and TfL reduce the number of delivery vehicles on London's roads, especially in congested areas at peak times?

The mayor and TfL should work with industry to reduce inefficient van traffic. The mayor should establish a working group with Transport for London, the logistics sector and online businesses tasked with maximising the efficiency of van use for deliveries in London. The success of TfL's CLOCs programme to improve road safety in the construction sector shows what the private sector can achieve with leadership from the public sector.

There is scope for delivery vehicles and those linked to employment to be more efficient and reduce their mileage. A paper for the Roads Task Force suggested that there was significant scope to reduce van traffic in London, because:

- The average load factor for vans was 38 per cent, and
- On average, 39 per cent of vans are less than ¼ full.¹⁵

Consolidation centres provide the opportunity to maximise the efficiency of deliveries into central London, by consolidating materials at another location and ensuring a full load at least one way if not both. For example, by collecting waste for the return trip.

Through supportive planning policies and incentives, the mayor could further increase the uptake of freight consolidation to reduce traffic from delivery vehicles.

10. To what extent is an increase in minicabs contributing to traffic congestion, and how could this issue be addressed?

In recent years, van traffic in London has been growing strongly. In 2014 van traffic was 10.1 per cent higher than in 2011.

In addition, recent technology change has meant the number of licensed private hire vehicles has also increased at a rapid rate – up by a net 27.2 per cent between 2008 and 2014, and up by 18.8 per cent over the latest year alone.¹⁶

As part of the proposed road pricing feasibility study we would like to see the mayor consider targeting heavy road users – like commercial delivery vehicles, minicabs or private cars – with specific measures to reduce congestion and air pollution.

11. What contribution can car clubs make to tackling congestion, and how can the Mayor and TfL encourage these?

A shift to greater use of various forms of car-sharing can reduce congestion and emissions¹⁷. There are opportunities in shared ownership, taking advantage of the fact that most private cars are parked for more than 95% of the time. Car clubs also

¹⁵ Transport for London (2013) Roads Task Force – Technical Note 5: What are the main trends and developments affecting van traffic in London?

¹⁶ Transport for London (2015) Travel in London Report 8

¹⁷ Car Club Coalition (2015) A Car Club Strategy for London: Growing car clubs to support London's transport future, London. <http://content.t.gov.uk/t-car-club-strategy.pdf>

allow people to avoid owning their own car when their need to drive is limited, freeing up parking space for other uses.

It has been demonstrated that people who don't own a car are more likely to walk and cycle. However, it is not clear what impact increased car sharing would have on overall traffic.

For example, car ownership would be reduced but car use would be more intensive, which might make little difference to overall traffic. Roadside parking could be reduced if personal ownership declines. But this would be in the neighbourhoods where on-street parking is permitted, so the impact on urban traffic congestion would not be great. Ride sharing could reduce car use, or it might take people away from public transport.¹⁸

It may be that shared use vehicles could be promoted through road pricing or similar demand management measures.

12. *To what extent could greater efficiency in the provision of bus services help reduce congestion, and how?*

Buses play a hugely important role in moving Londoners across the capital. TfL's bus network also has significant health benefits, encouraging Londoners to be more active. We would like the significant level of forward investment in the network to continue.

However the bus network could also be made more efficient, maximising its quality of service whilst minimising its impact on London's congestion and air pollution. We are calling on the mayor to undertake a comprehensive review of the bus network in inner London that will allow space to be reallocated to improving London's public spaces, including a vehicle free Oxford Street. The new 'hopper' ticket should allow a bus gate type model to be introduced aiding this reconfiguration in inner London.

13. *How can TfL further encourage a shift from private car use to public transport or active travel modes?*

Between 1994 and 2014 there has been a net shift in mode share, at the trip level, of 13 percentage points away from the private car towards public transport, walking and cycling. There has been a particularly strong and sustained decline in private transport mode share among inner London residents, from 27 per cent in 2005/06 to 20 per cent in 2014/15.¹⁹

Among inner Londoners, the modal shift away from private transport in the last 10 years has been towards cycling, with a 2 percentage point increase in mode share, and walking, which has seen a 3 percentage point increase.

Recent cycling investment has provided clear gains, with the number of cyclists having tripled since 2000²⁰. This investment should continue. Walking has also increased in popularity, and investments in walking infrastructure should continue as

¹⁸ David Metz (2015) Car Sharing: how disruptive? <http://peakcar.org/car-sharing-how-disruptive/>

¹⁹ Transport for London (2015) Travel in London Report 8

²⁰ Transport for London (2015) Travel in London Report 8

part of a broader process of urban development that encourages walking through the improvement of public spaces.

Making London a world class city for walking will require a series of complimentary measures, including:

- **Ambition and strong leadership** to ensure walking is at the heart of policy and practice and that the quality of the pedestrian environment is prioritised.
- **Streets and public spaces designed around the needs of people walking**, and in consultation with the local community, so that people choose to walk and spend time there. Flagship initiatives to re-allocate space to pedestrians should become principles firmly embedded in both TfL and Borough maintenance and improvement schedules. This should include a focus on London's high streets and town centres along the lines of the Healthy Streets agenda to encourage more to walk and cycle to their local town centres.
- **A high quality network** of well connected, direct and easy to follow routes encouraging people to walk, supporting local services and reducing road traffic congestion.
- **Supportive land use and planning** will help create walkable neighbourhoods and improve access to local centres that will allow communities to walk to everyday services and facilities and reduce the need for short journeys by car, avoiding auto-centric development which facilitates car-based journeys and disenfranchises those with out access to motor vehicles²¹. Part of what makes London so car dependent are the relatively low population densities of the outer boroughs. Encouraging sustainable growth in the outer boroughs will increase their economic mass and make the opening of adjacent businesses to support these denser populations more attractive.
- **Promotion of sustainable transport choices** and behaviour change campaigns to encourage more people to walk their everyday journeys to school, work and the shops.
- **Tackling road danger** at source by managing traffic (for example, by slower speeds and reducing the numbers of HGVs on London streets), rather than restricting pedestrian movements. TfL deserves praise for its planned introduction of mandatory Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) on its buses and this approach should be rolled out to all the fleets that it has a duty of care/management of such as Cabs and Private Hire Vehicles and Goods Vehicles. As new vehicles are purchased, Local Authorities should be incentivised to ensure their vehicles are fitted with ISA as are those of their contractors.

²¹ An interesting example of emerging good practice comes from the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area where consideration is being given to coupling public transport improvements (with the Bakerloo Line extension and improvements to walking and cycling facilities) with a removal of the auto-centric developments of the 1980s as out-of-town style retail would be replaced with far denser people centric development.

- **Designing the urban environment so that people feel safe.** In general, life and people themselves make streets feel safer.

14. Can new road infrastructure help reduce traffic congestion? What specific new infrastructure is required in London?

15. To what extent is there a risk of new roads encouraging more people to drive? How can this risk be avoided?

Travel behaviour patterns, tracked over the past 40 years by the National Travel Survey show average travel times staying steady at about 370 hours a year, or an hour a day. What has changed over the period is the average distance travelled, which increased from 4500 miles a year in the early 1970s to 7000 miles in the mid 1990s, since when this has ceased to grow.²²

In other words, people have taken the benefit of investment by travelling further to more distant destinations, not by saving time in reaching unchanged destinations. This is contrary to what transport economists suppose when they estimate the main benefit of investment as time savings, valued for the extra work or leisure supposedly made possible.

This extra traffic is what is known as ‘induced traffic’ - extra traffic that arises because people take the benefit of road improvements that allow faster travel as more opportunities and choices at greater distances.

We consider that new road infrastructure would have a detrimental impact on London by increasing traffic volumes as a result of induced or generated traffic. We are therefore opposed to new road capacity even when tolled.

16. How should new road infrastructure be funded?

We are calling on the mayor to extend the current road-pricing scheme. This would raise revenue to reinvest in public transport, cycling and walking.

There is a good precedent here: the greatest cost incurred in establishing the CCZ lay in upgrading the public transport network, but since then around 80 per cent of the resultant revenues have been invested in the bus network alone.²³

Future revenues could also be used to compensate for the loss of TfL’s general grant from central government.

We would also like to see the mayor working with the Chancellor to explore a different approach to using Vehicle Exercise Duty (VED). Instead of using it to increase road capacity and pollution, we believe revenue raised from the tax should be allocated to infrastructure to increase walking and cycling and integrate sustainable transport modes to enable people to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, while reducing pressure on existing roads by cutting congestion.

²² David Metz (2015) Can we build our way out of congestion? <http://peakcar.org/can-we-build-our-way-out-of-congestion/>

²³ Transport for London (2015) Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) Portfolio <http://content.t.gov.uk/board-20151217-pt1-item12-ulez.pdf>

17. ***How effective are TfL's measures to limit roadworks, such as the lane rental scheme? How can these measures be made more effective?***
18. ***What effect has the additional space provided for cycling and pedestrian infrastructure had on congestion?***

People travelling on foot, bicycle or public transport is a far more efficient use of road space than people travelling by car. Reallocation to walking and cycling infrastructure has facilitated a significant 'modal shift' in the type of transport people are using: between 2001 and 2011 the number of cycling trips increased by 66.6 per cent, bus by 59.7 per cent and overground rail by 41.9 per cent²⁴. Wider benefits include reductions in cycling and pedestrian deaths, and decreases in air pollution.

Walking is an important and often under-estimated transport mode for Londoners. Some 6.4 million walk-all-the-way trips were made on an average day in London in 2014. This is an increase of 9.3 per cent since 2008, reflecting population growth over the period. This gives a walking mode share (for all travel) of 24 per cent. In addition, increased public transport use has also increased the number of walk journey stages undertaken by Londoners. This brings health benefits, but is putting additional pressure on available pedestrian space on London's roads.

Walking has increased in popularity, and investments in better walking infrastructure should continue as part of a broader process of urban development that encourages walking through the improvement of public spaces.

19. ***How can the use of technology be enhanced to help TfL manage congestion? For instance, how can the iBus system be used for this purpose?***
20. ***How effective has the Road and Transport Enforcement team been in tackling congestion***

N/A

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²⁴ Transport for London (2012) Travel in London: Report 5. <https://t.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/travel-in-london-reports>