

## **INVESTIGATION INTO TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN LONDON**

This response is made to the eighteen questions posed by the Assembly Transport Committee on this subject. The response is by the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies, an umbrella group for over 100 societies in London.

**1 - Traffic congestion has increased** despite staggered hours of working and deliveries extending the duration of 'rush hours', due to many more white vans, mini-cabs, take-away food deliveries and, possibly, the number of Uber vehicles. The Assembly should seek statistics on those aspects.

**2 – Causes of changes in congestion** include:

- Cycle Superhighway lanes which restrict lanes for traffic and in some cases moving buses into the main traffic lanes. The latter also frustrates passengers due to extended journey times and is likely to encourage the use of cars on some routes instead of public transport.
- Increases in construction activity, replacement of infrastructure, such as gas, water, general road works, etc. This may mean that 'lane rental' is not working as it should.
- Many licences are being granted to Uber drivers and the increase in the number of their vehicles on London's roads needs consideration by the Transport Committee.
- In some high streets there are very many commercial waste collection firms serving businesses which increases the number of collection vehicles and their impact on traffic flows when collecting waste.
- Workplace parking in old office blocks is generous and there has not been a tax applied to spaces, as there should have been to discourage the use of company cars. New office blocks continue the problem.
- Many sets of lights are not as well phased in London as observed in other European cities which causes delay, congestion, pollution and increased delivery costs for goods. TfL should be asked to comment.
- Failure of the last Mayor actively to promote consolidation and break-bulk centres in Outer London – identifying potential locations in the London Plan (Table 2.1) is not enough – little progress has

been made in the last 10 years. Similarly London Plan Policy 6.14 Freight does not appear to be implemented. Strategic action by the Mayor – how many London Boroughs have identified sites for consolidation centres and break-bulk facilities in the last 10 years. The Mayor need to be more interventionist in leading on this issue.

- Failure to promote car-free housing in Central/Inner London, in town centres and close to public transport interchanges – this would reduce house prices/increase housing choice for those not requiring a car and reduce car use.

**3. Impact of congestion on Londoners, the city's economy and its environment:** Congestion increases air pollution, business costs and bus journey times. Both congestion and the resulting state London's air quality have not been tackled robustly in the last two Mayoral terms.

4. Perhaps the way some have been more bold in pedestrianisation without increasing congestion needs to be examined.

5, 6, 8, 9 and 10. Whilst the existing **congestion charge** provides a disincentive for vehicles to commute into the zone, once inside, there is no further disincentive to driving around for the rest of the day. It thus entirely fails to address what is probably the larger problem of delivery vehicles and minicabs within the zone. Although more expensive to implement, it is only a usage-based charge which can effectively address this source of congestion, as well as commuting. It also has the advantage that it does not unfairly penalise those who need to make short journeys into (or within) the zone, can be readily adapted to incorporate different levels of charging according to type of vehicle (and level of polluting), time of day, and across several zones, and incorporate tolling of (e.g.) river crossings. Deterring people using a car when there are good public transport facilities would be very beneficial in tackling congestion.

The exemptions for types of vehicle in the congestion charge zone and its size should be considered for any beneficial changes.

If the Committee's view is that there is currently insufficient information to determine the most cost-effective technology for introducing user-based

charging, then the most urgent need is for a study to resolve this issue and estimate the costs. To gain experience of the system in practice, it might then be appropriate to introduce the system in stages, with the initial focus where it will have the largest impact, such as on delivery vehicles.

7. **ULEZ** would reduce congestion initially by driving some old cars out of the sensitive Inner and Central London area, but, unless roadspace for vehicles is progressively reduced, they would be replaced eventually with new vehicles. The advantage initially would also be in air pollution reduction, but to be secured long term this would need to achieve an overall reduction in the number of vehicles in these areas.

#### 8. **Other Interventions:**

See above for **workplace parking** levy which should be introduced, particularly for offices in high PTAL locations.

**Tolls** could help to reduce traffic volumes. The Committee could explore the use of an exit toll **at Heathrow and other airports** for certain types of vehicles to discourage business people using cars to access flights and friends/neighbours/family driving people to the airports for flights or to collect those arriving. Concessions would be needed for elderly or disabled people.

People going to flights could be dropped at the most convenient station with step free access connected to the airport. Transport facilities are generally good and make road access not usually necessary. Public transport access from the south into Heathrow airport should be improved.

Dealing with congestion in west London caused by traffic related to Heathrow airport is a difficult problem and therefore this suggests that an extra runway there would severely exacerbate the situation.

It is not so much the devolution of VED to the Mayor which will help as how the Mayor would use such new powers, which should be made to target more polluting vehicles; the Mayor should consult on a strategy for how he would use the powers as soon as possible, as he has to date been silent on this.

9. **Freight delivery:** See above, especially 2 on consolidation and break-bulk centres, to reduce the size of vehicles plus better scheduling of deliveries.

10. **Minicabs:** See 2. above. The impact of the Night Tube causing lower demand for taxis and cabs should be considered and the implications of their drivers waiting in streets for bookings.

The market for taxi and cab services has not yet stabilised and adapted to current conditions and it may be that some drivers will find lack of business and give up such work.

11. **Car clubs** are an excellent way of persuading people to give up using their own car. The statistics for the beneficial effect are in the Mayor's Transport Strategy and London Plan policies apply. However, boroughs have been reluctant to allocate the required number of bays for car club cars and vans because they object to "private companies making profit out of borough roads" and because car-owning residents do not want to see the number of parking bays for themselves and their visitors reduced. More attention must be paid to these problems. Car club bays could be in car parks of businesses and supermarkets but not enough planning has been applied.

12. **Bus Services:** The introduction of one fare for several bus journeys over a two-hour period would increase bus usage. More bus routes in Outer London to and from places of leisure, shopping, sport, entertainment, etc. are required. TfL should be persuaded **not** to move bus stops away from transport interchange points, as they have done.

13. **Modal Shift** TfL should encourage **car clubs** and reduce overcrowding on the Underground by increased service frequency. They should advertise both alternative routes and the beneficial impact of the introduction of Crossrail on services which people find uncomfortable now. More details on walking routes and times from stations should be publicised so that people leave their journey one stop early or do not change lines for one stop. The introduction of air-conditioned trains should be accelerated.

14 to 16: **Road Infrastructure:** Additional road capacity generates traffic – this was discovered in the 1920s following the construction of the Great West Road which not only showed huge amounts of traffic handled but also a more than doubling on Brentford High Street within 10 years (Source: Ministry of Transport, Highway Development Survey 1937 (aka Bresse-Lutyens Report, HMSO 1938 paragraph 39) which was quoted in the SACTRA Report.

The approach in the former Mayor's Transport Strategy 2025 recognised that demand management rather than increased capacity was essential.

17, 19 and 20. We have no comment on these questions.

18. See comments in 2. above.

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