

GLA Transport investigation: submission from the London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies

1. How will the transport system need to develop to keep pace with London's growing population?

It is essential that such development is not done in isolation. More important is that planning decisions ensure that people can live as close as possible to their places of work schooling or leisure, so that the need to travel and the distances needed to travel is/are reduced. Less 9-5 working in a single place of work may compensate for population growth. An increase in leisure time may spread the time over which public transport services are needed. However, there is little reason to believe that the severe overcrowding in parts of the network will go away without active intervention.

2. Does London's transport offer need to change to reflect changing work and leisure patterns? If so, how?

Yes. The fare structure needs to be changed to encourage use of buses and rail lines which have capacity, or the capability to provide capacity to relieve those tube and rail lines where overcrowding is severe. Journeys are not, in the words of London Travelwatch, as seamless as they might be, and better interchange and reduced congestion must be confronted.

3. What would most improve people's experience of moving around the capital?

Smooth interchange, fewer unexpected delays and improved air quality. Walking routes between platforms should be as direct as possible, bus stops should be as close to station entrances as possible, even if this inconveniences private vehicles and taxis, and it should be possible to catch any bus to an intended destination from a single stop. TfL does not recognise that people are travelling to a destination which is not a bus stop or railway station. It might be equidistant between two bus stops approached from different routes.

The transport system is still predicated on radial, rather than circular, travel, and thus travelling between adjoining areas not linked by radial transport routes, particularly in the suburbs, is extremely difficult and/or time consuming and dependent on car transport. While the problem is less likely to be addressed by rail development, it does require a focus on improving circular links by bus.

4. In the coming years what are likely to be the big changes in how people move around the city?

If driverless cars became a reality this would clearly make a significant difference to people who through infirmity are unable to drive a car. There would need to be a satisfactory method of ensuring that the user pays, in line with a sophisticated road pricing scheme which is needed in any event to ensure that the polluter and the congester pays in proportion to the degree of congestion and pollution they cause, and is targeted to improve traffic flow.

5. What are the key projects which should be prioritised to ensure London's transport system delivers for London, is resilient to future constraints, and plays a role in addressing the challenges facing the capital?

We are strongly of the view that mega projects, supported in the belief that they will attract private finance, simply force people to live further from their place of work. They create a demand for increased travel that serves no greater purpose than pre-existing travel patterns. Priority should be given to projects that relieve the most severe overcrowding, or which support the Mayor's housing policies within Greater London. The Bakerloo line extension is a particularly attractive proposition. The Bakerloo line is the least heavily used central

London line. The most successful schemes across Britain are those which link across the city centre rather than terminating there. The value of land is highest in zone 1 so it makes no sense to have trains standing idle in zone 1 rather than further from the centre on less valuable land. Taking the southern terminus beyond Elephant & Castle would be more efficient in transport operating terms, as well as addressing unmet need for rail in south-east London. The Hainault – Wimbledon scheme addressed severe overcrowding on parts of the Central and Victoria lines, and on Great Northern electric train services into Moorgate, for which there are no longer any satisfactory proposals. Crossrail2 fails to address these issues and the Metro option should be revisited. London Travelwatch has reported on several more modest schemes such as restoring the Hall Farm Curve which would have a significant effect in reducing distances travelled and thus increasing the attractiveness of public transport. The Croyley Green scheme, although outside London, would open up orbital routes to direct travel instead of forcing people to go via zone 1 or use their own car. Under-used existing stations on the Chiltern Line could provide significant benefits at very little cost.

6. What innovative approaches should London be looking at to fund transport infrastructure?

As noted above, a sophisticated road pricing scheme is essential both to raise income and address congestion. Road pricing must be progressed alongside significant public transport improvements to ensure that those required to pay have a choice for their mode of travel. Orbital routes are particularly ill-served by public transport. But some improvements to road pricing could be introduced without waiting for significant further improvements in public transport, e.g. a distance-based charging system in central and inner London. A Land Value Tax could be more effective than CIL, although a way must first be found to allow high street shops to compete fairly with on line shopping, reflecting the environmental benefit of individuals carrying purchases home over having them delivered by private vehicle.

The congestion charge zone was successful in its time because it was preceded by improvements in the bus service (many of which have just been reversed). People travel by car because travelling the routes they need by public transport is either expensive, unreasonably time-consuming or even impossible. No-one in their right mind wants to sit for ages in a traffic jam if they don't have to. A public-funded injection of money into kick-starting a better circular transport system needs to be the first move, followed by an increasingly punitive road pricing regime once the system is in place. Penalising people for taking the only means open to them is not the right approach.

Road pricing should be in place well before the first driverless car. There should be no exemption for black cabs save for those conveying people with disabilities that buses are not equipped to be accessible.

7. In relation to transport, what should be London's key asks to central government?

There has to be some subsidy to buses reflecting the benefit to society of taking people out of their cars and into buses. Protecting high streets is likely to need legislation, as is the introduction of Driverless cars should that come about. More immediately, powers to operate all railways predominantly serving London are urgently needed.