

Cycling in London

Summary of discussion on 12th July

July 2012



Introduction

The Transport Committee held a meeting with expert guests and members of the public on 12th July 2012. This was the first of two meetings for the Committee's investigation into cycling in London. This is a summary of the issues raised during the discussion, which we have published and sent to the Mayor, Transport for London (TfL) and other stakeholders for feedback and comments ahead of our second meeting in September. We would welcome comments on this summary by 20th August; please send your feedback to: transportcommittee@london.gov.uk

At the meeting the Committee put questions to a guest panel comprising:

- Chris Bainbridge (Chair, Borough Cycling Officers Group);
- German Dector-Vega (London Director, Sustrans);
- Martin Gibbs (Policy and Legal Affairs Director, British Cycling);
- Chris Peck (Policy Co-ordinator, Cyclists' Touring Club); and
- Ashok Sinha (Chief Executive, London Cycling Campaign).

Cyclists' groups and members of the public were also invited to contribute to the discussion. Representatives from TfL and the Freight Transport Association observed the meeting. In addition, the Committee sought views from the public through email and social media channels; these comments informed our questions to the panel, and many of the issues received in writing are also reflected in this summary.

The summary is organised by the main topics coming out of the session, structured under six headings as follows:

- There could be a range of reasons for the recent increase in cycling casualties in London
- The TfL junction review presents opportunities for wider safety improvements
- Further work is needed to reduce the risks posed by HGVs to cyclists in London
- Encouraging more cyclists may require rethinking road space for cyclists and others, including pedestrians
- Cycling policy needs to be designed for all Londoners
- More political and financial support may be needed to boost cycling

This is not an exhaustive account of all the issues raised in the meeting, and it does not represent our conclusions on cycling. A full transcript of the meeting is attached in Annex A, and Annex B contains the written submissions and tweets we have received to date. The issues outlined in this paper will form the basis of discussion at our second session on cycling on 11th September 2012. Our second meeting will focus on what TfL and the Mayor are doing to improve cycle safety and encourage greater cycling in London, and we will also consider international good practice.

Following our second meeting we will publish our full report containing conclusions and recommendations along with all the evidence we have received.

There could be a range of reasons for the recent increase in cycling casualties in London

The meeting opened with discussion on TfL's recently published cyclist casualty figures for 2011. These showed a rise in slight, serious, and fatal injuries in the last year, although TfL and others note that these should be viewed in the context of increases in cyclists over recent years.¹ The Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) and guests at our meeting believe these rises are disproportionate to increases in the number of cyclists in London.² TfL is analysing these figures in order to understand the reasons for these rises. Our panel discussed a number of possible explanations for the increases including policies to smooth traffic flow, Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) driver behaviour, and lack of enforcement against dangerous behaviour on the roads by both drivers and cyclists.

Increased casualty statistics could be related to the introduction of TfL's policy to ease traffic congestion. Cyclists surveyed by London Cycling Campaign (LCC) are concerned that efforts to enable motor traffic to move more easily around London pose a threat to cyclists' safety.³ Ashok Sinha noted that many people continue to cycle despite fear of heavy traffic. Fear about the volume and speed of traffic, nonetheless presents a concern to other groups, such as non-commuters who cycle during the day, and pedestrians.⁴

Others are concerned that rises in cycling casualties are linked to driver behaviour. We heard that traffic congestion can lead to driver frustration, resulting in motorists breaking highway rules and endangering cyclists.⁵ We also heard that drivers whose behaviour endangers cyclists – such as speeding – can sometimes take diversionary courses instead of incurring licence penalties, which may result in those with poor motoring behaviour remaining on the roads.⁶

A lack of road safety enforcement could be partly responsible for a rise in cycling casualties. A member of the public reported that infringements – for example, mobile phone usage by drivers, which is one of TfL's lines of enquiry into casualty increases – is taken more seriously in other countries such as Holland.⁷ German Dector-Vega commented that in Denmark, drivers of vehicles that injure cyclists are held responsible for cyclists' safety, yet in the UK the law does not act in cyclists' favour. Chris Peck suggested a fall in police numbers may also be linked to fewer penalty notices being issued.⁸

Chris Peck said cyclists would welcome greater enforcement against common infringements, including misuse of cycle Advanced Stop Lines (ASLs) by all types of motor vehicles, and speeding, to help them feel safer on London's roads.⁹ Many feel there is little respect for safety

¹ Chris Bainbridge, meeting transcript, p. 5

² Chris Peck, meeting transcript, p. 7

³ Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript, p. 4-5;

⁴ Ruth Mayorcas (member of the public from Chiswick), meeting transcript, p. 41; Richard Bourn, (Campaign for Better Transport), meeting transcript p. 26

⁵ Dave Suttle (member of the public from Greenwich), meeting transcript, p. 20

⁶ Chris Peck, meeting transcript, p. 6

⁷ Ruth Mayorcas (member of the public from Chiswick), meeting transcript, p. 41

⁸ Chris Peck, meeting transcript, p. 6

⁹ Chris Peck, meeting transcript, p. 15

measures such as Advanced Stop Lines – including by the police – giving cyclists’ little confidence that measures designed to protect them will be enforced.¹⁰ One way enforcement could be improved is by installing cameras to enforce traffic regulations at junctions where motorists jump red lights.¹¹ Some Londoners also want better enforcement against dangerous cycling.¹²

The TfL junction review presents opportunities for wider safety improvements

Our panelists welcomed TfL’s decision to review dangerous junctions, but noted a number of issues with the review. Several panel members told us that what cyclists and potential cyclists fear most is fast-moving traffic, especially at junctions. Busy junctions and gyratories with little provision for cyclists can act as a barrier to cyclists using nearby routes.¹³

The panel warned that the decision to review 500 junctions would mean that resources were spread too thinly. TfL has received £15m from central government for the junction review. Chris Peck and Chris Bainbridge expressed concern that this meant too little money would be spread too thinly, because the budget could be absorbed by significant improvements to a small number of junctions. Cycling improvements to Tottenham Hale gyratory alone cost £3m.¹⁴ Tackling too many junctions could also result in an un-focused approach, rather than improving the worst junctions. LCC – which is engaged with the junction review process – wanted greater clarity on the process TfL would use to prioritise junction improvements, the timetable, and the criteria for allocating resources to each junction.¹⁵

The junction review presents wider opportunities to introduce new technology aimed at improving cyclists’ safety. TfL could explore measures such as provisions for cyclists to turn left at red lights;¹⁶ and cycle-specific traffic lights. However, legislative barriers may block the introduction of new infrastructure or technology. This means that TfL currently has limited flexibility to improve cycling safety. German Dector-Vega cited the example of a 3-year wait for the Department for Transport to authorise TfL to introduce ‘Trixi’ mirrors which are now being introduced on the Transport for London Road Network.¹⁷

UK legislation for wider cycling safety improvements lags behind other countries. Cyclist groups are calling on the Department for Transport to consider changes to traffic regulations to allow TfL to trial cycling safety measures.¹⁸ A member of the public called for cycling provision to be built into all regeneration and development proposals.¹⁹

¹⁰ Annex B – Document containing written submissions and tweets

¹¹ Dave Suttle (member of the public from Greenwich), meeting transcript, p. 20

¹² Annex B – Document containing written submissions and tweets

¹³ Chris Peck, Ashok Sinha, Chris Bainbridge, meeting transcript, pages 7-9

¹⁴ Chris Bainbridge, meeting transcript, p. 9

¹⁵ Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript, p. 3

¹⁶ Chris Peck, meeting transcript, p. 7

¹⁷ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 9

¹⁸ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 9

¹⁹ Donnachadh McCarthy (member of the public from Southwark), meeting transcript, p. 19

Further work is needed to reduce the risks posed by HGVs to cyclists in London

There was widespread agreement about the risks that Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) pose to London cyclists. Chris Bainbridge and Ashok Sinha highlighted that collisions involving HGVs accounted for around half of cyclist deaths.²⁰

HGVs pose a risk to London cyclists for a number of reasons. London's road network contains many arterial routes which allow HGVs and other large vehicles to pass through central areas, spaces which are often shared with cyclists and other vulnerable road users.²¹ At times, HGVs also have to use quieter roads, and Martin Gibbs noted that some HGV drivers and their employers are paid by the deliveries they make and are therefore incentivised to drive faster to maximise deliveries, which in turn makes roads more dangerous for cyclists.²²

HGV training programmes can benefit efforts to improve cyclists' safety. Boroughs run programmes including 'exchanging places' events, whereby drivers and cyclists experience being in the other's position, yet these schemes reach only a minority of drivers.²³ Cyclists' groups and the freight industry are working collaboratively on moves to improve mutual awareness (such as through the Freight Operators Recognition Scheme). Ashok Sinha warned that transport authorities needed to address the wider issue of whether road design that brings together cyclists and HGVs is appropriate, particularly if under-represented groups are to be encouraged to cycle.²⁴

Encouraging more cyclists may require rethinking road space for cyclists and others, including pedestrians

Many cyclists are fearful of high volumes of motor traffic on London's roads and they feel that London's road culture favours motorists.²⁵ Decisions about the physical space allocated for cycling are central to policies encouraging more people to cycle.

Guests told us repeatedly that London must re-balance the physical road space given to cyclists. There is strong support for more segregated cycle provision; both to make cyclists feel safer, and to encourage non-cyclists to start cycling. A member of the public commented that cycling was higher in areas such as Kingston where segregated routes exist.²⁶ While segregated routes may be appropriate in places, Ashok Sinha and German Dector-Vega suggested that London should aim for cyclists and other road users to mix where possible, and to use segregated routes where necessary.²⁷ Other suggestions to increase space for cyclists included making one-way streets into two-way streets for cyclists, especially in congested areas such as Zone 1.²⁸

²⁰ Chris Bainbridge, meeting transcript, p. 3; Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript p. 13

²¹ Annex B - Document containing written submissions and tweets

²² Martin Gibbs, meeting transcript, p. 14

²³ Chris Bainbridge, meeting transcript, p. 13

²⁴ Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript, p. 14

²⁵ Annex B - Document containing written submissions and tweets

²⁶ Rik Andrew (founder member and current board member of LCC), meeting transcript, p. 44

²⁷ Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript, p. 33; German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript p. 34

²⁸ Rik Andrew (founder member and current board member of LCC), meeting transcript, p. 23

Several panelists and members of the public thought that the design of the Mayor's Cycle Superhighways may have little impact on encouraging non-cyclists onto the roads. The Cycle Superhighways often follow busy arterial routes; but, alongside physical considerations, decisions to segregate cycle routes or not are affected by political and budgetary constraints.²⁹ TfL could address the needs of less confident cyclists by selecting quieter routes running parallel to the Cycle Superhighways and introducing more segregation.³⁰ Comments from the public gallery and views we have received in writing have highlighted concerns around conflict with other road users³¹ – such as taxis and buses³² – and obstacles such as parked cars,³³ which can aggravate fear among cyclists.

We heard that decision-making about cycling facilities can be constrained by concerns surrounding the impact they could have on motorised traffic. German Dector-Vega described how attempts to introduce cycle-specific infrastructure are sometimes rejected due to concerns about traffic congestion. He stated that TfL's junction modelling on the Cycle Superhighways was used to justify decisions not to alter junctions in favour of cyclists. While this modelling was used to reject some cycle-specific measures, German argued that it is not fit for purpose and that this line of argument is flawed because evidence shows that, in practice, motorists adjust their behaviour to traffic flow. In his view, traffic would be dissuaded from entering areas modified for cyclists if drivers knew their journeys would take longer; an analysis that is supported by others.³⁴

We also heard that TfL and the boroughs could do more to reduce conflict between cyclists and pedestrians. Consultation and decisions about road design should involve both cyclists groups and organisations such as Living Streets, to ensure the needs of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users are taken into consideration.³⁵ Ashok Sinha noted that in some boroughs, like Hackney, cyclists' groups engage in constant dialogue with the council about proposed developments. This reassures local residents that appropriate consultation processes are being used, and allows the council to explain the reasons behind decisions that affect cyclists.³⁶

Cycling policy needs to be designed for all Londoners

London needs a cycling policy for the large proportion of residents who want to cycle but who do not. Cycling in London currently attracts only a very small proportion of Londoners. For example, 40 per cent of people in Southwark want to cycle, but only 3 per cent currently cycle, according to a local cycling campaigner.³⁷

²⁹ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 30

³⁰ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 30

³¹ Miranda Housden (member of the public from Tower Hamlets), meeting transcript, p. 21

³² Rik Andrew (founder member and current board member of LCC), meeting transcript, p. 44

³³ Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript, p. 28

³⁴ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 9; Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript p. 10; Charlie Lloyd (works for LCC), meeting transcript p. 25

³⁵ Susan Hoffman (campaigner for Living Streets), meeting transcript, p. 19

³⁶ Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript, p. 33

³⁷ Donnachadh McCarthy (member of the public from Southwark), meeting transcript, p. 18

Comments from the guest panel and the public suggested that cycling policy has historically been designed for a minority of confident cyclists, meaning that uptake of cycling remains limited among some groups, including the elderly, women, and children. Low uptake among the elderly in London was put in contrast with cities such as Tokyo where cycling is popular among older people, and is recognised for its health benefits.³⁸ German Dector-Vega said that, as a city: *‘we need to attract everyone into cycling, so the more men, women, children, old, young, confident, nervous, casual, the more the better.’*³⁹

Members of the panel and the public alike emphasised that London’s cycling environment can be hostile for new and inexperienced cyclists. In order to broaden the appeal of cycling to these groups, they suggested that the Mayor and TfL need to design a cycling policy for all Londoners. The Cycle Hire scheme has had some success in encouraging cycling as a ‘normal activity’, helped by the fact that users do not need any special cycling equipment to use the scheme.⁴⁰ Yet others pointed out that despite campaigns by TfL which encourage people to cycle small distances, they are unlikely to change their behaviour and swap their car for a bicycle due to negative perceptions of cycle safety.⁴¹

It was suggested that currently around a third of London school children are driven to school.⁴² Parents would like their children to cycle to school, but they do not because of a myriad of reasons. These include busy roads, restrictions prohibiting adults accompanying children cycling on pavements, and other vehicles obstructing cycle lanes.⁴³ We heard about efforts to encourage competitive cycling in schools.⁴⁴ Others stressed that a lack of safe roads for children to cycle to and from school prevented some from taking part.⁴⁵

Efforts to make cycling attractive for the most vulnerable groups are likely to encourage all groups to cycle more,⁴⁶ as described by a member of the public: *‘When London starts building facilities for my daughter to peacefully cycle to school with me, then you will start seeing the other people, who all of these surveys tell us are too scared to get on a bicycle in our city, actually get out and bicycle.’*⁴⁷

We heard that the design of the local cycling environment can influence Londoners’ choices about cycling. Boroughs are working to provide one-to-one cycle training and bicycle maintenance and advice, which are helping to reach those groups that cycle less. Slower traffic speeds (such as default 20mph speed limits in residential areas),⁴⁸ and segregated cycling infrastructure would help achieve this. Ashok Sinha stressed that cycling needs to be made an

³⁸ Donnachadh McCarthy (member of the public from Southwark), meeting transcript, p. 47

³⁹ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 3

⁴⁰ Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript, p. 16-7

⁴¹ David Arditti (Co-ordinator of Brent Cyclists), meeting transcript, p. 43

⁴² Francesca Leadlay (works for Sustrans), meeting transcript, p. 47

⁴³ Tim Lennon (member of the public from Richmond and representative of Cycling Embassy of Great Britain), meeting transcript, p. 27

⁴⁴ Katherine Harborne (Councillor and Cycling Czar, LB Richmond), meeting transcript, p. 42

⁴⁵ Geoff Stello (member of the public from Lambeth), meeting transcript, p. 45

⁴⁶ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 34

⁴⁷ Tim Lennon (member of the public from Richmond and representative of Cycling Embassy of Great Britain), meeting transcript, p. 27

⁴⁸ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 34-5

attractive door-to-door experience for non-cyclists, which should include addressing concerns about secure cycle parking.⁴⁹

We also heard that public services and local communities can benefit from policies designed to encourage more people to cycle.⁵⁰ A member of the public suggested that every pound spent on cycling generates £18 of economic benefit.⁵¹ We were told that evidence shows town centre retail businesses benefit from people who cycle and walk, because people travelling by bicycle spend more in local shops.⁵²

More political and financial support may be needed to boost cycling

Members of the panel suggested that the Mayor and TfL could do more to give cycling mainstream status.⁵³ One way cycling in London could gain more political recognition is through the appointment of a cycling representative on TfL's Board.⁵⁴ People told us that cycling also needs greater investment. A member of the public suggested that with current levels of funding it would take 3,000 years for cycling facilities in some areas of London to reach international standards.⁵⁵

Our discussion underlined the gap between London and other European cities where participation in cycling is much higher. Ashok Sinha pointed out that the scale of the Mayor's ambition for cycling will affect how motivated Londoners feel to engage with decisions about improving cycling.⁵⁶

In cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen, cycling has been made central to transport planning and design. Conversely, one member of the public stated that in London, '*cycling and non-motorised transport is seen as peripheral*'⁵⁷, while another described cycling as a '*second rate mode of transport*', adding that '*cycling has been seen as a nuisance*'.⁵⁸

Speakers noted that TfL often rejects comparisons with approaches adopted elsewhere, citing unique space constraints in London. There was consensus that this line of argument was inadequate, with guests suggesting instead that improving cycling in London will require political leadership. Martin Gibbs explained that '*there is no doubt we need to work with the physical constraints that we have, but if we want to transform this city we need to put cycling at the centre of it.*'⁵⁹

⁴⁹ Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript, p. 38-9

⁵⁰ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 36

⁵¹ Donnachadh McCarthy (member of the public from Southwark), meeting transcript, p. 47

⁵² German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 34

⁵³ For example, German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript p. 3, 33 and 35-6; Martin Gibbs, meeting transcript p. 36

⁵⁴ German Dector-Vega, meeting transcript, p. 40

⁵⁵ David Arditti (Co-ordinator of Brent Cyclists), meeting transcript, p. 22

⁵⁶ Ashok Sinha, meeting transcript, p. 39-40

⁵⁷ Ruth-Anna Macqueen (member of the public from Hackney), meeting transcript, p. 27

⁵⁸ Geoff Stello (member of the public from Lambeth), meeting transcript, p. 46

⁵⁹ Martin Gibbs, meeting transcript, p. 12

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