

LONDON ASSEMBLY

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London, SE1 2AA

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Boris Johnson
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Dear Boris,

Cycling in London

In December, the Transport Committee held a meeting about cycling in London. We discussed the design and progress of Transport for London cycling schemes, with your cycling commissioner, Andrew Gilligan, and a number of other experts and stakeholders.

Our meeting considered a number of your schemes, including Cycle Superhighways, Quietways, Mini-Hollands, the Central London Grid and Better Junctions. We strongly support these projects and hope to see significant progress in delivering them over the coming year. I would like to share with you some of the key findings and discussions from our meeting, and a number of steps you and TfL can take to further increase take-up of cycling in London.

Increasing cycling safety

The main purpose of cycling schemes should be to increase take-up of this mode among Londoners. To do this, improving safety - and the perception of safety - is paramount. This point was emphasised by our guest, Chris Boardman, Olympic cyclist and adviser to British Cycling:

"This is not for cyclists. That is what we need to be clear about. This is for people who do not cycle now and we want them to. This is for normal people in normal clothes doing normal things... All the surveys that we have done have said they will not take that up unless they have space to do so and unless they feel safe. It does not matter if the statistics say it is safe. It does not look it; it does not feel it."

This is particularly important if we are to achieve greater diversity among cyclists. TfL research has shown differences in cycling take-up by age, gender, social class and ethnicity.¹ For instance, while 18 per cent of men in London cycle, only six per cent of women do. Fourteen per cent of white Londoners cycle, compared with only six per cent of those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic

¹ *Attitudes toward cycling: Annual report 2013*, Transport for London, 2013

groups. Dr Rachel Aldred, of the University of Westminster and London Cycling Campaign, told the Committee that these under-represented groups have stronger preferences for segregated cycle routes.

Some concerns have been raised about cycling safety in outer London. We note recent figures from TfL which showed that in contrast to the trend of previous years, in 2013 the number of cyclist casualties increased more in outer London (five per cent) than in inner London (two per cent).² Andrew Gilligan has suggested that drivers in suburban areas are less aware of cyclists because there are fewer of them on the roads, which presents a particular risk for cyclists.

Clearly, a balance needs to be struck when deciding priority areas for new safety measures. In areas with a high volume of cyclists, a greater number of people will benefit from the investment. In low-volume areas fewer people will benefit initially but these individuals may be in greater need of increased protection. It is not clear how this balance is reflected in the Better Junctions programme, for instance, which is predominantly focused on inner London.

Cycling schemes must also take into account the safety of other road users. In the case of the proposed new Cycle Superhighways, waiting times for pedestrians at some crossings could be very long. A TfL-commissioned trial has suggested that 85 per cent of pedestrians seek to cross the road at a pedestrian crossing within 30 seconds of arriving, regardless of the signals shown.³ Waiting times are being reduced at some crossings on the Superhighways, but increased at others, with one crossing on the North-South Superhighway expected to have a waiting time for pedestrians of 120 seconds. As we heard from Joe Irvin, Chief Executive of Living Streets:

“There are certain specific places where there are crossing times being proposed that we think are unreasonable... When you are asking people to wait 120 seconds to cross, studies show that people actually will not wait that long and they will start to cross. That is just asking for accidents to happen. It is having reasonable and best-practice crossing times.”

Andrew Gilligan told the Committee that he would be willing to consider adjustments to proposed crossing times, so we would ask that this issue be examined in detail to find the best solution that balances the safety of all road users.

Planning and delivery of schemes

The Committee heard that the modelling of cycle schemes was often inaccurate, in that it failed to capture likely changes in road user behaviour. Dr Rachel Aldred cited the example of cyclist routing as something not included in existing models:

“There are many other things that have been excluded from the modelling that would be expected to reduce wait times, for example rerouting by cyclists. TfL’s modelling... cannot predict cyclist routing and so there is no attempt to say that cycles will no longer be on the busy motor routes that they currently take and will reroute to the Superhighways.”

Andrew Gilligan made clear that he was aware of the limitations of the modelling of cycling schemes. We would urge you and TfL to take this into account when determining priorities, and consider ways in which traffic modelling can be improved.

² *Casualties in Greater London during 2013*, Transport for London, June 2014

³ *Pedestrian Countdown at Traffic Signal Junctions (PCaTS) – Road Trial*, Transport Research Laboratory, May 2011

One concern we explored with regard to the delivery of your schemes is the capacity of London boroughs. Boroughs are receiving significant sums from TfL and are responsible for delivering key aspects of your vision. This is welcome, although we note that Andrew Gilligan raised concerns at the speed with which designs for the Central London Grid are being produced by boroughs, and boroughs' delivery of junction improvements. Cllr Julian Bell, Leader of Ealing Council, highlighted the capacity issues facing boroughs and suggested that joint working was one way to address these:

"Boroughs are experiencing unprecedented levels of cuts and it is an immense challenge financially for councils at the moment. We have been having discussions and working with TfL to look at ways in which we can pool some of those officers with the technical capabilities to deliver the mini-Hollands and the other cycling infrastructure projects that we are working on."

We would ask that TfL assess what support boroughs need to deliver these schemes according to the timetable you have set out, and to ensure that best practice is shared across London. The Committee also wrote to Andrew Gilligan on 22 December 2014 to request confirmation of the amount of money allocated from TfL to each borough for cycling schemes, and is still awaiting a response.

Finally, the issue of night-time access to parks was discussed at our meeting, particularly in relation to new cycle routes through the Royal Parks. London has 24-hour bus services and we will soon see the London Underground running throughout the night. Although views differ on whether all parks should be open at night, it is important that cyclists are given a clear message about the availability of routes they are using, and adequate alternatives if routes through parks are closed.

I hope that you will take these issues into account as you implement your cycling vision for London, and look forward to further discussions on this important topic.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM
Chair of the Transport Committee

