

Transport Committee response to the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy

The Committee submitted its statutory response on behalf of the Assembly to the Mayor's transport Statement of Intent in July 2009. We welcome the fact that a number of the recommendations in our response have been reflected in the draft Transport Strategy, and make the following further points.

Unresolved challenges

Although times are tough financially, the benefits of a substantial investment programme should become apparent as the Tube upgrades, Thameslink and Crossrail are gradually completed in the coming years. Nonetheless, the Strategy paints a stark picture of the persisting transport challenges facing London. In our response to the Statement of Intent we described TfL's projections of increasing congestion and overcrowding as an "alarming prospect" and called for the Mayor to set out specific proposals for schemes to increase transport capacity in the longer term, as well as options for managing demand for travel.¹

The Transport Strategy includes existing infrastructure projects as well as unfunded aspirations for schemes beyond the current Business Plan period – for example, Crossrail 2 and extensions to the DLR and Tramlink. The Strategy also describes measures to make more efficient use of road space and encourage a modal shift towards cycling and walking.

However, the Strategy forecasts that rising population and employment levels will result in a greater demand for travel – at least 3 million more trips each day by 2031.² Consequently, as the Strategy predicts, overcrowding on public transport will remain a problem in many areas and there will be a considerable increase in road congestion.³ Indeed, the strategy projects a 14 per cent increase in peak hour road congestion by 2031. This is the case after measures to smooth traffic flow and encourage cycling and walking have been accounted for, and assuming the implementation of all the infrastructure schemes in the Strategy – both funded and aspirational.⁴ It does not include the potential for other initiatives which might reduce long-term demand, such as increases in flexible working.

The Strategy reveals a similar 'policy gap' in relation to CO₂ emissions from ground-based transport. In addition to current plans further emissions reductions of approximately two million tonnes of CO₂ would be required to meet the Mayor's overarching target for London's carbon footprint in 2025.⁵ The Strategy notes that this gap would be equivalent to increasing the uptake of electric vehicles from the projected eight per cent to more than 50 per cent.⁶ According to the Strategy, achieving the

¹ Transport Committee response to the Mayor's transport Statement of Intent, p. 8

² Draft Transport Strategy, para 113

³ Figures 20 and 22 in the Strategy show projected crowding levels on the Tube and National Rail networks in 2031 and it can be seen that there will still be significant sections where there are more than four people per square metre on trains at peak times. Overcrowding will persist in particular on the broad northeast-southwest and north-south corridors and in the vicinity of the City (para 130).

⁴ Draft Transport Strategy, Figure 63, p. 252

⁵ Draft Transport Strategy, Figure 58, p. 222

⁶ Mayor of London, Electric Vehicle Delivery Plan for London, May 2009

target will require “further strong incentivisation” to bring about both use of the most CO₂ efficient road vehicles and a shift away from car travel.⁷

Because additional public transport capacity and efforts to encourage people to walk and cycle will not prevent increased car use as the population rises, the Strategy proposes to keep under review the option of wider road user charging to manage both congestion and emissions.⁸ However, since the publication of his Strategy, the Mayor has told the Committee in no uncertain terms that he does not intend to implement such a scheme.⁹

Given that the Mayor is not prepared to consider road user charging, the Transport Strategy needs to set out what alternatives are proposed to meet the objectives set out for containing congestion and emissions. The difficult decisions needed to deal with these problems should not be put off for the future. There needs to be a full and robust debate about all of the available options.

In relation to CO₂ emissions, the Mayor has made the point that rather than making the required reductions from ground-based transport, additional cuts could be made in other sectors – for example, domestic property.¹⁰ If it will not now be possible to achieve the scale of cuts from ground-based transport which had previously been hoped for, the Mayor should clearly set out how other sectors can bridge the gap.

Interim measures of success

In the context of problematic levels of congestion and emissions, we welcome the inclusion in the Strategy of a target for the future mode share for public transport, walking and cycling of 64 per cent by 2031 – up from 58 percent currently. This incorporates an increase in cycling from 2 per cent to 5 per cent of the total number of daily trips, and an increase in the share of walking trips from 24 to 25 per cent. In total, achieving the Strategy’s modal shift aim would mean 3.5-4.5 million extra trips each day by public transport, walking and cycling.¹¹

The Strategy does not indicate the contribution of specific schemes to bringing about these increases, or the anticipated trajectory of mode share between now and 2031. To achieve the Mayor’s aspiration for cycling, for example, will require the current number of daily trips – half a million – to be more than doubled in just over 20 years. However, there is no indication in the Strategy of where we will need to be by, say, the end of the current Mayoral term or the TFL Business Plan period. The Mayor indicated to the Committee that he was not minded to introduce interim mode share targets.¹²

The Committee is of the view that the Mayor should establish interim targets for mode share or develop an alternative way of showing the trajectory towards 2031 levels of public transport usage, walking and cycling. This would

⁷ Draft Transport Strategy, para 624

⁸ Draft Transport Strategy, Proposals 108 & 129

⁹ London Assembly Transport Committee, 20 October 2009, transcript p. 10

¹⁰ See, for example, London Assembly Transport Committee, 20 October 2009, transcript p. 17

¹¹ Draft Transport Strategy, para 159

¹² London Assembly Transport Committee, 20 October 2009, transcript p. 16

enable progress to be measured along the way and further action to be taken if progress is not sufficient to meet long-term goals. The Strategy should also set out the contributions to modal shift of its major schemes, which would help to demonstrate the likelihood that the Mayor will achieve his goals.

Progression of long-term projects

Looking beyond TfL's current Business Plan, there is a requirement to develop schemes ahead of time for implementation after the current work is completed. While the Strategy identifies a number of such projects, it does not include detail about how they will be progressed or potential approaches to funding. The extent to which plans for each scheme have been developed remains unclear.

Experience has shown that new infrastructure investment takes many years of hard work and campaigning to bring about. The final Transport Strategy should include more information about next steps in progressing feasibility and design work, as well as securing funding for the proposed schemes.

There is further scope for the Transport Strategy to consider, for example, bringing back into use unused or little used railway lines particularly in south London which has often been the 'poor relation' of transport provision in the capital.¹³ We also believe the case for the Croydon Tramlink could be emphasised more strongly in the Strategy. Forthcoming work by the Committee will address other areas where long-term solutions to congestion might be sought, for example, in the Oxford Street area.

Although feasibility work on the project has been ongoing for some time, no specific mention of the Mayor's proposal for an airport in the Thames Estuary is made. The long-term strategy for airport capacity in the South East, whether or not it is within the Greater London boundary, has a considerable bearing on transport requirements within the city. While we recognise that development of the Mayor's ambitions for a Thames Estuary airport are at an early stage, and that a final decision remains outside his control, if it were to be taken forward it would have a significant impact on transport within, and to and from, the capital.

A project as potentially important as the Thames Estuary Airport needs to be discussed, at least in principle, to enable the wide range of views on its desirability and feasibility to be aired.

Implementing the Mayor's Transport Strategy

Finding the money to pay for transport improvements is clearly going to be a challenge in the years ahead. Increasing costs and reduced fares income – principally in relation to London Underground – mean that TfL's latest Business Plan represents a reduced programme to 2017/18 from that which had been anticipated even a year ago. This reduction in scope sits alongside an increase in fares for 2010, assumed above-inflation fares rises in the following years and a requirement for considerable organisational cost

¹³ Specific examples might include the Sutton loop joining up with the Northern Line at Morden and further SWELTRAK development from Heathrow through the south London boroughs to join up with Gatwick

savings. Furthermore, the costs of the PPP contract with Tube Lines, like those of the Metronet contract before it, have the potential to rise. We have consistently supported the position of both the previous and current Mayor that any additional costs related to the PPP should be met by central government which introduced the PPP in London.

Alongside Crossrail, the Mayor intends to protect the capacity enhancements at the core of the Underground upgrades. However, the programmes to modernise stations and provide step-free access to the network have been scaled back. And it is now not only investment in the Underground which is being affected by cuts; TfL plans to reduce the bus network by 8 million kilometres by 2017/18, even though population and demand for bus travel are projected to increase.

As expectations in relation to both the capital programme and service levels are scaled down, the Mayor's Transport Strategy and TfL's Business Plan are becoming increasingly divergent documents. The Business Plan describes how the Mayor intends to allocate transport funding to 2017/18 and the Strategy describes the range of transport options available to the Mayor in the longer term. However, priorities for the period beyond the current Business Plan, for which difficult choices are sure to be required, are unclear.

The Transport Strategy should address the challenges of providing a world-class transport system in the capital. In the reality of restricted resources – principally in this case funding and road space – the Strategy should set out the Mayor's thinking in relation to the difficult decisions he and his successors will face. For example:

- **Beyond 2017/18, the relative priority of the stalled station modernisation and step-free access programmes, compared to that of schemes to provide additional transport capacity.**
- **The Mayor's strategy for future fares decisions – i.e. the basis on which fares will be set in the future.**
- **The balance between improving the flow of cars and delivery vehicles and the movement and safety of bus passengers and pedestrians.**
- **When, and the extent to which, financial incentivisation would be appropriate to bring about behavioural change.**

The Strategy needs to be clearer about the Mayor's priorities where, as is so often the case, the interests of different groups collide. Such a framework would promote rational and consistent decision-making and give the Transport Strategy a purpose beyond acting merely as a list of all the potential schemes the Mayor could consider for implementation.