

Valerie Shawcross AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

London Assembly
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Kulveer Ranger
Mayor's Transport Adviser

19 January 2011

Dear Kulveer

Transport Committee report – Pedal power: the cycle hire scheme and superhighways

I am writing in response to your letter of 10 January 2011 regarding the Transport Committee's report on the cycle hire scheme and cycle superhighways. I thought it would be helpful to respond to your general comments about the timing and scope of our report before addressing some of the specific issues you raise in relation to the Committee's online survey of users of the schemes; cycling demand along the cycle superhighways; and safety along the cycle superhighways.

The timing and scope of the investigation

You question the timing of the Committee's work arguing that "it would have been more appropriate and of greater use had the Committee undertaken its investigations once a reasonable period of time had passed from the start dates of the scheme".

When the Committee launched its review in September, it made clear that it was conducting a short investigation into the initial impact of the schemes and would produce its findings by December. These are, as you mention, flagship schemes, cost tens of millions of pounds to implement and there is a huge amount of interest in them. It is, therefore, perfectly appropriate for the Committee to have explored their initial impact a few months into their operation with a view to highlighting issues which had emerged and potential solutions to help inform their future development.

Throughout the course of its review, the Committee provided TfL with opportunities to share any relevant information including any preliminary findings from its own surveys. Prior to its meeting on 12 October, the Committee asked TfL for a detailed written submission that included the results of any market research conducted with users of both schemes. It also shared the findings from its own survey with TfL in October. TfL did, therefore, have an opportunity to offer any comments and/or highlight any information it had obtained at that stage about users' views and behaviour.

You also suggest the Committee's report "does not accurately represent the broad range of views expressed about the pilots since their launch".

I strongly reject this assertion. The Committee's review involved a number of stages so it was able to obtain a wide range of views and information. These included: an on-line survey which attracted 1,300 responses from users of the schemes; a request for written submissions which attracted over one hundred responses from members of the public and various organisations including the London Cycling Campaign, London Councils and nine London Boroughs; a discussion at a public meeting on 12 October with representatives of TfL, Serco, the London Cycling Campaign and the London Borough Officers' Cycling Group; and a site visit to Serco's

operations centre. It is on the basis of all this information that the Committee has produced its findings as set out in the report.

Many of the views expressed, particularly about the cycle hire scheme, were very positive and we reflect that throughout our report. Where a number of individuals or groups have expressed negative views or suggested improvements about a particular aspect of either scheme, we have reported them and suggested ways these concerns could be met.

The Transport Committee's online survey

You express concerns about the "impartiality, viability and statistical robustness" of the Committee's survey.

The Committee recognised the limitations of the fact its survey was self-selecting. It was just one of a wide range of sources as I set out above. Moreover, with over 1,300 respondents it provides, as you acknowledge in your letter, a good conduit of a large selection of views. It is worth noting that its findings on the profile of users of the cycle hire scheme, and their views of it, were very similar to the findings of TfL's commissioned research.

There is, as you point out, a difference in the views expressed to the Committee about the cycle superhighways and the results of TfL's commissioned research. I note that the only detail from TfL's research is what is contained in a press release and reproduced in your letter. Nevertheless, from what has been published it does seem as though there were some important differences in the Committee and TfL's work which suggest it is unsurprising that the results are different. For example, we invited views from any cyclists who had used the pilot cycle superhighways and over 700 users responded. TfL undertook two surveys. The first involving people living near the pilot cycle superhighways who made trips along the corridor by any mode. This attracted 904 respondents in the first wave before the superhighways were introduced and 506 respondents in the second wave after the superhighways were introduced. TfL also undertook a second survey involving cyclists using the superhighways who were recruited at the roadside and this involved 501 cyclists.

Your one specific criticism about the questions asked in our survey appears to be about how the results were reported in the press rather than the work of the Committee. For example, it is not the case, as you have suggested, that the Committee has presented the results of its survey to suggest cyclists feel less safe using the superhighways. At page 9 of the report and elsewhere the Committee states that its survey findings suggested users did not feel any safer using the superhighways. This was entirely supported by our survey. It is difficult to know what control you expect the Committee to have over how some journalists report its work beyond the press release we issue which accurately reflected the Committee's work.

We welcome the fact that TfL has commissioned some detailed research and we look forward to it publishing all its data and details of the surveys carried out. You may wish to note the Committee has put all the data it collected on the London Datastore and we expect TfL to do the same. Clearly, research commissioned by independent market research professionals should produce statistically robust results which will warrant further attention when they are published in full. Nevertheless, it is disappointing that you are so quick to dismiss the views of over 700 Londoners who have cycled on the superhighways and whose views, in many cases, were supported by other organisations which contacted the Committee such as cyclists' groups and London boroughs.

Specific comments about the Committee's work

You make a number of comments about the Committee's investigation and report which are misleading or simply incorrect. For the record I address each in turn below:

- You state that the Committee did not acknowledge the figure from TfL's snapshot summary noting a year on year increase in cycling numbers by 25% across both pilot superhighway routes. This 25% increase is cited at page 15 of the report.
- You state that the Committee has not acknowledged that the success of the cycle superhighways should also be measured by the benefits to existing cyclists such as smoother journeys, improving reliability of journeys and the provision of additional secure cycle parking. The Committee refers explicitly to these potential other benefits at page 15 of the report. Later, at page 32 of the report, it also sets out many organisations support for the additional "soft" measures such as more cycle parking.
- You question the source of the figure that 5,000 cyclists per day are using the superhighways. This figure was cited in TfL's press release of 19 July 2010 entitled 'Cycle Hire Membership to open on Friday 23 July'.

It is particularly disappointing that the Committee's work should elicit such a response from you when we remain broadly supportive of the Mayor's initiatives to increase cycling in London and are keen to help them be a success. A more measured and considered response to constructive criticism and suggestions for improvements would have been welcome. The Committee looks forward to receiving a formal response from TfL in due course. I hope this will more fully and accurately reflect the nature of the Committee's review and its subsequent report and recommendations. With this in mind I have copied my reply to Peter Hendy.

Yours sincerely

Valerie Shawcross AM

Chair of the Transport Committee

Cc: Peter Hendy, Commissioner, TfL