

Letter from Caroline Russell following up TfL plenary on collision investigation

Key information

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Dear Mayor,

Collision investigation and Vision Zero

I'd like to thank you and the Commissioner of Transport for London for your supportive and helpful responses to my questions today on the need for more work to investigate the causes and ensure successful prosecutions for the victims of road collisions in London.

One of the problems in scrutinising progress on Vision Zero is understanding what work is undertaken by which part of the police service, and what is funded by Transport for London (TfL) directly, for example in the Road and Transport Policing Command (RTPC). I very much valued my time with the RTPC earlier this year when I rode along with them, and I know they are keen to make a difference on Vision Zero, along with colleagues in the Met Police.

You said you would provide responses to some detailed questions that I raised, and to help you in this I have set out those questions below.

1. Could you provide a list of the responsibilities of the Road and Transport Policing Command – the police that TfL fund – on Vision Zero?

In the original Vision Zero Action Plan, published in 2018 there was a commitment (Action 12) to “Enhance and drive excellence in collision investigation and learning by: a. The MPS providing enhanced scene management and evidence-gathering training and equipment to MPS Roads and

Transport Policing Command first responders, b. TfL working with the police and other delivery partners such as bus operators, to embed a new framework for improved, systematic information sharing and post-collision learning. [1]

2. Could you provide an update on the progress of Action 12 from the 2018 Vision Zero Action Plan?

Last year there were nearly four thousand serious injuries. The most serious collisions need proper investigations – campaigners think there’s about 1,000 of those a year. People involved in collisions and those supporting them find it hard to understand how the decisions are currently made about which collisions receive further investigation.

3. Could you explain how crashes are prioritised for detailed investigation - including numbers, and how that is communicated with victims of road collisions?

I would also like to understand what goes to the Serious Collision Investigation Unit, and what is done by borough teams – including the level of detail each of them would achieve in an investigation.

4. Could you explain how the difference between investigations in these teams works, and what sort of detail their investigations typically involve?

One of the concerns I heard from victims of road collisions is that many collisions investigated by borough teams can result in No Further Action being taken. The question is – is that because there is nothing further to investigate, or because of a lack of resource.

5. Could you give figures on the number of collision investigations resulting in No Further Action from the past five years, and the criteria applied in the decision to stop the investigation?

Finally, I just wanted to thank you for acknowledging that victims of road collisions need support in challenging the police to ensure an investigation is thorough and fair. This will help support the overall goal of Vision Zero – ensuring we learn from collisions on London streets, and that victims get justice.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Russell
Green Party Member of the London Assembly

[\[1\] Vision Zero Action Plan](#), TfL, 2018

1. Response from the Mayor - 22 December 2023

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter following the Transport Plenary meeting about the investigation of road traffic collisions. Please accept my apology for the delay in responding to you.

Alongside Transport for London (TfL) and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), I am committed to the delivery of Vision Zero, bringing to an end the avoidable loss of life and serious injury on the capital's roads. It is our ethical duty to tackle the urgent and ongoing public health crisis on our roads, and I am grateful to you for your ongoing support in this area. Policing, enforcement, and collision investigation are essential elements of this.

As you are aware, responsibility for collision investigation is predominantly shared between the MPS's Serious Collision Investigation Unit (part of the Roads and Transport Policing Command (RTPC), the Basic Command Units (BCUs), and the MPS Prosecutions Team). I have provided below initial responses to your questions, but given your interest in this area, I would recommend a meeting with TfL and MPS to discuss this in more detail.

Could you provide a list of the responsibilities of the Road and Transport Policing Command (RTPC), the police that TfL funds – on Vision Zero?

TfL part funds the MPS RTPC and works to improve the safety, security, and reliability of travel on the bus and road networks. The Command has lead policing responsibility for road danger reduction in London and focuses its efforts on tackling the vehicles, drivers, and road user behaviour that cause the greatest risk on the roads.

London benefits from the unique partnership between the MPS and TfL. The range and scale of the RTPC's road danger reduction policing and enforcement activity are unparalleled. In line with my Vision Zero commitment, the MPS is intensifying its efforts to reduce road danger.

The RTPC's key responsibilities in relation to Vision Zero can be summarised as:

- Work with Vision Zero delivery partners to reduce road danger through traffic enforcement, education and engagement, problem-solving, and preventative action.
- Highly targeted enforcement action against high-risk offenders.
- Intelligence-led operations and enforcement activity focussed on known problems.
- Visible presence to deter and detect criminal and antisocial driving and road use.
- Collision response (e.g., scene/traffic management) and investigation.
- Provide traffic management and road safety expertise to highway authorities.

TfL also funds safety camera enforcement in the MPS, which is undertaken by the MPS Prosecutions Team (MO10). This team plays a critical role in delivering Vision Zero, building the capacity to enforce up to 1 million offences in 2024/25.

Appendix A includes a description of the RTPC/MPS Prosecution teams that have a key role in delivering Vision Zero activity.

It should be noted that the MPS Basic Command Units also play a valuable role in Vision Zero, but that activity is not covered by the Special Services Agreement between MPS and TfL.

Could you provide an update on the progress of Action 12 from the 2018 Vision Zero Action Plan?

Action 12 of the Action Plan commits (a) the MPS to providing enhanced scene management and evidence gathering training and equipment to MPS Roads and Transport Policing Command first responders; and (b) TfL to work with the police and other delivery partners, such as bus operators, to embed a new framework for improved, systematic information sharing and post-collision learning.

Action 12a is complete and is now part of ongoing training for the RTPC's road policing teams. The MPS began rolling out enhanced scene management training to RTPC road policing teams in 2020. It's an ongoing commitment to ensure that officers in road policing teams have the knowledge, skills, and equipment to effectively manage the scenes of collisions and gather critical evidence for collision investigation. Training is kept under review.

In terms of TfL's activities, its bus safety team has a well-established collision investigation process known as "NIMI" (Notification and Investigation of Major Incidents). Information is already shared with key stakeholders, and lessons learned are gleaned. This links with the "Go, Look, See" process, which has been revised and now includes participation from all relevant stakeholders, including local boroughs that take part in a Vision Zero Road Risk Review (RRR). TfL has also launched a Road Danger Dashboard, which enables members of the public, local boroughs, and media to easily analyse collision statistics.

Could you explain how crashes are prioritised for detailed investigation, including numbers, and how that is communicated to victims of road collisions?

There were 2,999 serious collisions attended and investigated between 1 June 2022 and 1 June 2023. Serious collisions reported by the public online tool and attended by MPS officers stood at 624, and the number of serious collisions where police officers did not attend is recorded as 124. While each of these 124 cases would have reasons why police officers would not attend a collision scene, it is not possible to determine those reasons in each of these cases. The MPS advises that this would likely arise in instances where the call to the police was cancelled because no injury was apparent at the time, and it became evident later.

The MPS has advised that investigative governance is determined by three main factors: the severity of injuries sustained, the complexity of the incident, and whether there are criminal offences suspected. In summary, the SCIU would take primacy in fatal and catastrophic injuries that are life-threatening or changing; the BCU if there are criminal offences, including drink/drug driving; or serious injuries for those cases falling just below the threshold for the SCIU. MO10 takes on all other cases for a secondary investigation.

The SCIU investigates collisions resulting in fatalities, although not those where a medical professional has confirmed a medical episode gave rise to the collision or where it is clear, and beyond any doubt, the actions of the deceased were taken purposefully to end their life. There will always be SCIU consideration of the above to identify complexities and protracted enquiries.

The SCIU also investigates collisions that give rise to Serious Personal Injury (SPI). Those resulting in paralysis, loss of limb, or a permanent loss of the ability to live independently.

BCUs carry out initial on-scene collision investigations, with the responding officer assessing the incident and deciding what, if any, additional police action is needed. For example, evidence of very poor driving or a criminal offence, including drink/drug driving, or serious injuries in those cases falls just below the threshold for the Serious Collision Investigation Unit (SCIU). In these cases, the responding officer will investigate those offences.

The MPS Prosecutions (Traffic) Team progresses investigations for all other injury collisions that fall outside the remit or scope of the SCIU and BCUs. MO10 also investigates when serious damage to vehicles results or when one or more parties do not remain at the collision scene.

Collisions within MO10's remit but which have aggravating factors such as drink or drug driving or where the manner of driving giving rise to the collision is considered dangerous (as per the Road Traffic Act definition), are progressed by traffic officers or BCU officers. MO10 will progress collisions where the manner of driving is considered to be careless.

You also ask about communication with the victims of RTCs. In fatal cases, SCIU detectives contact the next of kin as a priority, and a Family Liaison Officer is appointed. There is ongoing contact between the family, the Family Liaison Officer and the appointed Investigating Officer during the investigation until its conclusion - whether that be judicial or coronial processes.

In cases of Serious Personal Injury, there is contact with the next of kin or representative as a priority as the casualty is invariably in receipt of extensive medical treatment and unable to engage. When a casualty is sufficiently recovered, the Investigating Officer commences and maintains contact throughout the course of the investigation, as above.

Within MO10 investigations, injured parties receive contact within five days of notification of the collision, and this is in the form of a letter or phone call. Thereafter, updates are provided every 28 days. 'Damage only' collisions require parties to be contacted by letter; the letter is generated as soon as MO10 receives notification of the collision.

Could you explain the difference in how investigations between these teams work, and what sort of detail their investigations typically involve?

Detectives within the SCIU are experienced investigators. While collision outcomes have commonality, the circumstances of each differ and consequently determine investigative activity.

The SCIU and FCU investigate fatal, life-threatening and life-changing accidents in line with the College of Policing's authorised professional practice for the investigation of fatal and serious injury road collisions.

In general terms, enquiries can include, but are not limited to:

- Obtaining victim accounts
- Identification of witnesses and accounts obtained
- Identification, collection and review of CCTV footage
- Obtaining medical evidence
- Suspect interviews
- Laboratory submissions
- Enquires of external agencies, i.e., DVLA
- Media engagement
- Forensic Collision Investigation: Vehicle Examinations and Reconstruction Reports

While investigations undertaken by BCUs are generally not as extensive as SCIU investigations, BCU officers/detectives will undertake proportionate enquiries in line with NPCC and College of Policing standards and guidance. MO10 investigations are progressed by personnel who conduct witness and CCTV enquiries.

Drivers not reported for offence(s) at collision scenes are later subject to reporting processes completed by MO10's enquiry officers.

Neither the SCIU nor MO10 conclude investigations for injury collisions because of a lack of resources. Investigations conclude that when all lines of enquiry have progressed, it does not meet the evidential threshold to substantiate a charge, or indeed, the detail provided to police was insufficient to enable an investigation to progress.

TfL and the MPS recognise that the investigation of road traffic collisions is a vital element of achieving Vision Zero. Robust collision investigation helps establish criminal culpability and can also provide learnings to help prevent future collisions from happening. There is a commitment from the MPS to ensure that best practices in collision investigation, proportionate to the level of injury, are shared across the relevant teams. MO10 also undertakes a collision investigation assurance role, undertaking additional review and scrutiny of the evidence and standard of reporting. Where necessary, feedback and learning are discussed with the investigating officer and their supervisor. MO10 provides guidance to collision investigation teams on expectations and standards. TfL and the MPS will continue to work together to make improvements in this area, with the support and constructive challenge of Vision Zero stakeholders and victim support charities.

Could you give figures on the number of collision investigations resulting in No Further Action from the past 5 years and the criteria applied in the decision to stop the investigation?

This information is not readily available, but TfL is working with the MPS to access this data and will provide you with an update in due course.

Thank you again for your letter.

Yours sincerely,

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

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