

LONDON ASSEMBLY

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

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

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen' Walk
London
SE1 2AA

12 March 2019

Dear Sadiq,

The healthy streets approach

I am writing to you on behalf of the Transport Committee to share findings from our recent investigation into your healthy streets approach. In this letter we set out a number of recommendations to help ensure the healthy streets approach is embedded across TfL and the boroughs and that high quality healthy streets schemes are delivered at pace across the capital.

Your healthy streets approach is a welcome development in principle. In practice, we need to see this approach delivered more widely, at greater pace, and for schemes to be of consistently high quality. We support the healthy streets principles and welcome this public health informed approach to improving walking, cycling and public transport in the capital.¹ We are pleased to see that the healthy streets approach is integral to many of your key strategy documents, including your Transport Strategy and your Vision Zero, Walking and Cycling Action Plans. In our investigation we have focused on how these healthy streets principles are being applied in practice across London.

Walking and cycling stakeholders told us that they are largely supportive of the healthy streets approach.² While there is widespread support for the approach, stakeholders did raise issues with its delivery. Joe Irvin, Chief Executive at Living Streets, said "I am not going to criticise it for its ambition" but also emphasised "I would like to see a good thing done sooner, better and more."³ Fran Graham, Campaigns Coordinator at London Cycling Campaign (LCC), equally commended the approach, but raised concerns about how it is delivered on the ground:

¹ The Brexit Alliance Group notes: The Mayor should ensure that his Healthy Streets approach does not have a negative impact on motor vehicles which are part of the public transport system including buses and taxis, as well as private hire vehicles, emergency vehicles, service vehicles and delivery vehicles. It is also important that cycling infrastructure does not narrow or decrease road space for these classes of vehicles, as this increases journey times, congestion and vehicle emissions.

² London Assembly Transport Committee, roundtable with walking and cycling groups, 16 November 2018

³ Joe Irvin, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

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“What we have is a brilliant set of policies and approaches that are moving us in the right direction and what we see quite often is that it falls down when it gets to the ground level, therefore we still need to push forward with that.”⁴

Recommendation 1: TfL should improve its reporting on healthy streets schemes by ensuring that comprehensive details about progress, timelines and budgets are shared for individual schemes on a quarterly basis.

The healthy streets approach is a big change in thinking for TfL. TfL’s senior management team needs to show leadership to embed healthy streets as a priority across the organisation. The healthy streets approach is a holistic way to look at how people move around London’s streets and we recognise that this is a very different approach to traditional transport planning. Lucy Saunders, Consultant in Public Health at the GLA and TfL, described the challenge:

“We have to break down decades of ‘this is just the way it is done’ and go back to thinking about why we are doing it this way, how can we do it differently and how we can make sure that we are getting the outcomes that we want.”⁵

Both Gareth Powell, Managing Director of Surface Transport at TfL, and Will Norman, Walking and Cycling Commissioner, outlined that it is taking time for the healthy streets principles to be embedded across TfL’s work. Gareth Powell acknowledged that the healthy streets priority “requires the organisation to think quite differently and to work together in a very different way”.⁶ Equally Will Norman acknowledged that it takes time to implement this kind of change in a large organisation like TfL.⁷ We welcome the commitment to develop organisational understanding and expertise around the healthy streets principles across TfL. We would expect to see continued progress over the coming months driven by a strong commitment to the healthy streets approach across TfL’s senior management team, and also ongoing training and performance target setting to reflect the importance of this priority.

Recommendation 2: TfL should write to the committee in six months’ time to provide an update on how the healthy streets approach is being embedded throughout TfL via initiatives such as training and performance targets.

Both TfL and yourself need to challenge the boroughs to propose and develop high quality healthy streets schemes. As TfL is only responsible for five per cent of London’s roads, the boroughs are clearly critical delivery partners for healthy streets schemes across the capital. During our investigation, we heard about the different challenges facing boroughs across the city, such as variable levels of car use and access to public transport. We also heard about the support and training TfL is providing to boroughs. However, stakeholders noted that while some boroughs are developing excellent healthy streets proposals, other

⁴ Fran Graham, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

⁵ Lucy Saunders, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

⁶ Gareth Powell, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

⁷ Will Norman, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

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proposals are not so robust.⁸ Fran Graham told us that there are schemes that are “badged as healthy streets” that do not “meet the aims and objectives” of healthy streets.⁹ We heard from Lucy Saunders that there is flexibility within the healthy streets approach for boroughs to “take the principles and then do it their way”.¹⁰ While this flexibility is positive and can allow for boroughs to adapt healthy streets schemes to meet their needs and contexts, training and support is important to ensure the healthy streets approach is successfully delivered in all London boroughs.

TfL needs to work with boroughs to ensure that only high quality schemes are provided with funding, and where schemes are weak, boroughs are provided with support to strengthen them. We welcome your commitment in the Cycling Action Plan to “not support – or provide funding for – schemes that do not address the fundamental reasons why people don’t currently cycle, or are not underwritten with genuine political commitment for cycling”.¹¹ On Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding, Will Norman highlighted that you can ask boroughs to submit “a revised proposal”.¹² We would suggest this option is fully explored, where LIP proposals do not adequately incorporate the healthy streets principles. On Liveable Neighbourhoods projects, Fran Graham argued that where projects are weak, TfL should work with boroughs to bring these up to a higher standard.¹³

Recommendation 3: We recommend that you and TfL challenge the boroughs to propose and develop high quality healthy streets schemes. Funding should not be provided to schemes that do not adequately meet the healthy streets objectives. TfL should work with boroughs, where necessary, to bring schemes up to a higher standard.

TfL needs to ensure that all the schemes it delivers within the healthy streets portfolio are high quality, ambitious and will contribute towards 2041 targets. At our roundtable with walking and cycling stakeholders, we heard particular concerns about the Safer Junctions Programme. Stakeholders raised concerns that not all junctions were upgraded to a high-enough standard.¹⁴ During our investigation, we also heard that the process for identifying junctions to improve still does not incorporate a measure for “perceptions of safety”. We have previously recommended that TfL looks beyond collision data when selecting junctions to improve, to ensure that the junctions that pedestrians and cyclists are too nervous to use are also being improved.¹⁵ Will Norman explained that there is work ongoing at TfL to incorporate “perceptions of safety” into the measurement for identifying dangerous junctions.¹⁶ We encourage TfL to prioritise this work, and ensure this new measure is incorporated into the Safer Junctions Programme as soon as possible.

⁸ Fran Graham and Joe Irvin, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

⁹ Fran Graham, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

¹⁰ Lucy Saunders, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

¹¹ The Mayor’s Cycling Action Plan, December 2018

¹² Will Norman, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

¹³ Fran Graham, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

¹⁴ London Assembly Transport Committee, roundtable with walking and cycling groups, 16 November 2018

¹⁵ London Assembly Transport Committee, Outer London Junctions. 4 December 2017

¹⁶ Will Norman, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

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We heard from stakeholders that the quality of healthy streets schemes was varied. Joe Irvin suggested that there are some very good TfL schemes coming forward, but also some schemes that could be stronger. In particular, both LCC and Living Streets highlighted that they want to see schemes that are “future-proofed” – meaning schemes that are good enough to contribute towards 2041 objectives such as Vision Zero. Stakeholders also wanted clarity on the timescales for schemes to be reviewed.¹⁷ TfL did outline some of the processes for reviewing healthy streets projects, but we would like further clarity on this. We would also like clarity on how schemes that began before the healthy streets approach was adopted will be assessed against the healthy streets indicators.

Recommendation 4: We recommend TfL’s Safer Junctions Programme expands to include junctions in areas of high walking and cycling potential or that pedestrians and cyclists avoid because they perceive them to be too dangerous to use.

Recommendation 5: TfL needs to ensure that its healthy streets schemes are of a high enough quality to support 2041 Mayoral targets. TfL should write to the committee outlining its approach to applying the healthy streets indicators to all projects already in development, and its approach to reviewing schemes after their completion.

More work is needed to ensure cycling infrastructure is consistently high quality and accessible to all Londoners. We welcome a number of commitments in your new Cycling Action Plan. We previously recommended that you change the name of the Cycle Superhighways to a more inclusive term.¹⁸ We were therefore pleased to see your commitment in the Cycling Action Plan to develop a single brand for cycling routes in London.¹⁹ It is vital that the new single brand cycle routes are clearly signposted, high quality and accessible to all Londoners. The new quality criteria for cycle routes is another important development. These quality criteria need to be applied consistently by TfL and the boroughs across London to ensure high quality cycle infrastructure that all Londoners are confident to use.

The quality of existing cycling infrastructure is variable. Will Norman acknowledged that the quality of the current cycling infrastructure is not consistent – “are all of the Quietway routes good enough? Absolutely not”.²⁰ The new quality criteria should improve the standard of cycling infrastructure going forward, but we are concerned about the quality of existing infrastructure and how this is going to be addressed. TfL should look to reassess current cycling infrastructure against this new quality criteria.

¹⁷ Fran Graham, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

¹⁸ London Assembly Transport Committee, London’s Cycling Infrastructure, 23 March 2018

¹⁹ The Mayor’s Cycling Action Plan, December 2018

²⁰ Will Norman, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

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Recommendation 6: TfL needs to ensure that the new single brand cycle routes are clearly signposted and consistently high-quality, ensuring all Londoners are confident to use them.

Recommendation 7: TfL should provide further information to the committee on its plans to retrospectively assess the quality of cycle infrastructure already in place across the capital and outline plans to address issues identified.

TfL, the boroughs and yourself need to work with local communities to ensure there is widespread buy-in to healthy streets schemes. During our committee meeting, Will Norman talked about the need to “[bring] people with us along on this journey”.²¹ Similarly, we heard from stakeholders that the wider benefits of walking and cycling schemes need to be communicated.²² These schemes need to be talked about in relation to walking and cycling, but also in relation to other issues such as air quality, noise, and developing spaces for people to sit and children to play. Joe Irvin emphasised that the healthy streets approach needs to be “taken to heart at a local level”.²³ Many of the stakeholders we met with talked about engagement approaches to help build local buy-in for healthy streets schemes. Fran Graham highlighted the importance of “a lot more conversation started with communities much earlier”, as well as deeper engagement.²⁴ In addition to formal consultation and community drop-in sessions, TfL should actively engage with different groups within local communities. Stakeholders highlighted that there is some good practice within TfL and the boroughs, but this needs to be more widespread. TfL should further develop its community engagement practices, ensure these are embedded across TfL and share best practice with boroughs.

Recommendation 8: We recommend that TfL further develops its practices around active consultation and community engagement. TfL needs to ensure these practices are embedded across the organisation and that best practice is shared with boroughs.

We welcome the healthy streets approach as a positive means to make streets more pleasant to spend time on and to make it easier for Londoners to walk, cycle and access public transport. In order for the healthy streets approach to be a success across London, you must ensure there is expertise in TfL and across the boroughs to deliver these improvements. The healthy streets schemes being delivered must be ambitious and high quality if London is to achieve the 2041 targets set out in your Transport Strategy. Finally, TfL, the boroughs and yourself must work to ensure communities understand, support and feel included in the development of healthy streets schemes across the capital.

I would like to request a formal response to our recommendations before Friday 10 May 2019. When providing your response please copy in the committee’s Assistant Scrutiny Manager, Grace Pollard (grace.pollard@london.gov.uk).

²¹ Will Norman, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

²² London Assembly Transport Committee, roundtable with walking and cycling groups, 16 November 2018

²³ Joe Irvin, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

²⁴ Fran Graham, meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee, 5 December 2018

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Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', written in a cursive style.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

Chair of the Transport Committee