Introduction

Cycling is one of the healthiest and greenest ways to get around London. More and more people are choosing to travel by bike as an attractive alternative to the car or public transport. Since 2000 the number of cyclists on the capital’s major roads has more than doubled. But Outer London residents only make around 166,600 cycling trips each weekday, while inner London residents make 214,600 trips.

The Mayor’s focus has been on two large scale schemes: the Central London cycle hire and the largely Inner London Cycle Superhighways. Unfortunately the cycling basics have too often been ignored. As a result there are significant problems across London that prevent or discourage people from cycling. This report describes these common issues, along with specific examples provided by individual cyclists, and sets out a number of recommendations to ensure that basic cycling requirements are met.

“Over the past year I have visited every London borough to meet cyclists. These visits have provided an opportunity for cyclists to raise issues they felt were important and suggest ways they thought the situation could be improved. Using the feedback from cyclists I have outlined a set of basic recommendations.

The bulk of London hasn’t even benefited from the launch of the London cycle hire or the Cycle Superhighways. Outer London has a huge cycling potential. I want cycling to be a desirable and pleasant experience everywhere they live, work and play. Most importantly it should be safe for people to cycle around our city.”

Jenny Jones
**Common cycling issues**

1. **Signs**

   Signs for cyclists around London are sometimes misleading, confusing, incorrect, in inappropriate locations or non-existent in some cases. Cyclists in at least five boroughs have problems with signs including Harrow, Tower Hamlets, Richmond, Barking and Dagenham, and Redbridge.

2. **Cycle parking**

   There is a lack of cycle parking facilities at many railway stations and town centres, in places where they are needed most. Where parking facilities are provided, they are often insecure and theft is common. In Kingston, for example, Norbiton railway station had the ninth highest theft rate of all London stations in 2009/10, even though there are parking facilities. Cyclists in Enfield, Wandsworth, Richmond, Waltham Forest and Harrow also reported cycle parking problems.

3. **Disjointed cycle routes**

   A lack of continuity of cycle routes presents huge problems for cyclists. Disjointed routes are an issue with cyclists in Westminster, Harrow, Richmond, Havering, Redbridge, Wandsworth, Newham and Croydon. They can force cyclists to dismount and mount a number of times in order to reach their destination, or move into fast traffic. One way streets without “contraflow” rules also mean that cyclists often have to travel longer distances.

4. **Maintenance**

   Inadequate maintenance of cycle routes is a common issue. This ranges from overgrown vegetation, accumulation of debris, broken or subsiding slabs and faded paintwork. Cyclists in Barking and Dagenham, Richmond, Westminster, Redbridge, Southwark and Havering all say maintenance is a problem.
5. Support from authorities

Some cyclists felt their local council or Transport for London was unsupportive, not being available for direct contact and not enforcing facilities and rules they put in place. It was also noted that cyclists are not widely consulted in policy or planning proposals, so their opinions are not taken into account, even though they are key road users. Cyclists in one borough said communication with TfL is difficult, for example they fail to acknowledge receipt of emails and leave long delays in responding to enquiries. Often the contact point is a junior officer who gets overruled by senior officers. Cyclists in around a third of London boroughs had similar problems.

6. Cycle safety

This is a huge issue for the majority of cyclists and those that wish to start cycling. In 2010 less than half of Londoners (46%) agreed with the statement that ‘Cycling is a safe way of getting around’. Narrow cycle lanes and Superhighways, cars parked in cycle lanes, fast moving traffic, inconsiderate motorists and dangerous crossings and underpasses were all mentioned. Too many cyclists share the opinion that their lives are put at risk each time they use London’s roads.

A bad day cycling

(Fictional account describing a journey to work for a cyclist in London)

Trying to open the front door without the bike falling over is the first difficult task of the day. There is nowhere to store the bike outside overnight, so it is kept inside the house. Outside, the cycle lane runs parallel to the houses, which makes it easy to start the journey. But this is the only easy part.

After just ten metres there are several cars parked in the cycle lane, so there are two options: either mount and dismount a number of times, or carefully move out onto the main part of the road, where a car could be. Neither is desirable and both make cycling so much more difficult than it should be. The cycle lane eventually becomes free of parked cars. The cycling continues without further problems until one car comes too close, passing over the solid white line. This happens a number of times until the junction, where there is no advance stop line.

Passing the junction, the cycle lane reappears then disappears just as quickly, forcing the bike onto the main road. Overtaking cars drive too close and too fast, making the situation unsafe and unpleasant.

Finally the station is here and the bike is locked onto a bike stand. Returning to the same bike stand after a long day at the office, the bike has been stolen.
**Recommendations to the Mayor and the boroughs**

The following recommendations outline a series of relatively simple steps which address the common cycling issues listed above. They take into account solutions suggested by the cyclists I talked to.

1. Establish a direct point of contact between cyclists and TfL or the local council. This would allow authorities to work with cyclists in order to improve the cycle network and ensure further issues can be resolved.

2. Give cyclists a high priority in policy planning documents and where redevelopment takes place, as they are key road users.

3. Change planning rules to ensure there is sufficient cycle parking in newly built workplaces and flats.

4. Install secure cycle parking, including card-access facilities, in places where cycle theft from Sheffield or Camden stands is prevalent, at every railway station and in all town centres.

5. Increase the number of road signs for cyclists and ensure existing directions are easy to see and in appropriate locations.

6. Ensure cycle routes are uninterrupted and continuous, in order to improve connectivity, and restore funding to complete the London Cycle Network (LCN+).

7. Ensure cycle lanes are 2m wide, providing safe, dedicated road space for cyclists, reducing road space available to motorists if necessary.

8. Make it illegal for cars to park in cycle lanes, especially Cycle Superhighways, so that these are kept clear for cyclists to use.

9. Ensure local councils maintain cycle routes at least every quarter by cutting back vegetation and refreshing faded paintwork.

10. Introduce a 20mph default speed limit on roads with cycle routes, and more broadly on all roads where people live, work and shop.

11. Ensure all London boroughs provide an interactive service where cyclists can report maintenance problems.

“Let’s get cycling facilities on TfL and council roads right from the start, and fix the problems cyclists face today. I honestly think that I could fix a third of these problem with the help of two people, a good screwdriver, a hacksaw, a pot of paint and two brushes.”

*Jenny Jones*
Summary

What do you think about these recommendations? Do they go far enough to improve the cycling experience, or do we need more far-reaching steps to make cycling better for Londoners?

The report and feedback on it will be followed up by a letter to the Mayor of London. This will be an opportunity to ask him what exactly he is going to do to improve cycling in London. The information will also be used to assess future mayoral cycling plans.

“Cycling is a great way to get around. But if the Mayor wants more people to get on a bike, these basic requirements need to be rolled out across the whole of London. The majority of cycling issues can be solved by simply using resources more effectively and where they are actually needed. Until we get the basics right, London will not be able to compete with other European cities such as Amsterdam or Paris when it comes to cycling. The Mayor needs to take note of the problems, understand the solutions and make changes, if he really wants to make London a ‘cyclised’ city.”

Jenny Jones

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Appendix A - Specific examples

This is not a comprehensive list of every comment received from cyclists, but a selection of specific examples.

Signs
- Lack of directional signs at junction of Cambridge road/ George street with Linton Road (Barking and Dagenham)
- Need better signs such as those in Cambridge e.g. ‘Do not overtake cyclists’ (Tower Hamlets)
- No route signing the way to and from Richmond station entrance (Richmond)
- Unsigned, poorly lit route from Station Road/Havelock Road (Redbridge)
- Inconspicuous signs along shared pavement at Seven Sisters and Tottenham from West Green Road to Town Hall Approach Road (Haringey)
- Temple Mills Lane is now closed but a diversion for the LCN has never been properly signposted despite cyclists complaining (Waltham Forest)
- Hindes Road: worn out signage (Harrow)

Cycle parking facilities
- Cycling parking removed from useful locations at Enfield town centre (Enfield)
- Inadequate provision of even unsecured cycle parking (Kingston)
- Lack of residential cycle parking (Wandsworth)
- Cycle parking at the Olympics (northern spectator mall) will not be accessible from Ruckholt Road (Waltham Forest)
- Long gap between removal of street furniture and installation of bike racks (Harrow)

Disjointed cycle routes
- Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) on Pickering Road is full of parked cars, so the cycle track is useless (Barking and Dagenham)
- Cyclists in Enfield Town must negotiate a one way system and cross multiple lanes (Enfield)
- Botloph Street/ Whitechapel High Street/ Commercial Road – varying number of lanes over a short distance creates a high risk, high stress layout for all users especially cyclists (Tower Hamlets)
- Breaks in continuity: between Richmond Circus and Chiswick Bridge, where cycle path is continually broken up by requirement to give way at side roads and then requirement to dismount at Manor Circus, Chalkers Corner and Mortlake Road (Richmond)
- Many one way streets including Westbourne Terrace Road to Warwick Avenue, Delamere Terrace, and Wilton Road to Guildhouse Street (Westminster)
- Prohibited movement of cyclists between Davies Street to Oxford Street and Shaftsbury Avenue to Piccadilly (Westminster)
- Philpot shared use path is short and abruptly switches modes from right to left (Redbridge)
- Cycling from West Croydon to High Street involves unnecessary diversions because of one way streets (Croydon)
- A125 Rush Green Road/Hornchurch Road/ Upminster Road: intermittent route (Havering)
- Crownfield Road cycle lanes have disappeared because extra car parking has been provided (Waltham Forest)
- Incomprehensible routes through College Road, Pinner Road, Lowlands Road, Bessborough Road junction (Harrow)
- Lack of permeability of many streets – one way streets major barrier to cycling (Wandsworth)
- Lack of permeability on Phillimore Walk (Kensington and Chelsea)

**Maintenance**
- Slabbed area where Wakering Road crosses under the Northern Relief Road, is in poor condition with rocking and broken slabs (Barking and Dagenham)
- Shrubs need cutting back from Fleet Road to the barrier across the river (Barking and Dagenham)
- Paintwork needs renewing along shared segregated path through St Margaret’s to St Paul’s Road (Barking and Dagenham)
- Subsided pavement slabs dangerous for cyclists (Westminster)
- Loose grit on path at Isleworth is very dangerous (Richmond)
- Surface markings have disappeared at Mill Lane junction (Redbridge)
- Remove ridiculous lane markings by pedestrian refuge in Elm Park Avenue (Havering)

**Support from authorities**
- Cycling forbidden in Victoria Road at its junction with Loxford Road, so isn’t cycle friendly (Barking and Dagenham)
- London Cycle Network (LCN+) route along Green Lanes never progressed past Cycle Route Inspection Meeting (CRIM) stage because the Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Street Scene was opposed to any measures that would take away road space from cars (Enfield)
- Redevelopment of Enfield Town centre missed opportunity to make it more cycle friendly as planners considered at the time that contra flow cycle lanes would have been a step too far (Enfield)
- Councillors protective of motorists despite much talk of ‘green’ policies (Hillingdon)
- Council proposed removing cycle lane at Richmond Circus in favour of poorly signed, longer route (Richmond)
- Difficult to communicate with TfL, failure to acknowledge receipt of emails, long delays in responding and reluctance to attend out of hours meetings (Richmond)
- Borough had underbid and underspent money for LCN+ scheme (Croydon)
- Local cycling representatives were not consulted (Havering)
- Olympic money has been spent on Ruckholt road gyratory to keep high motor volume traffic and speeds (Waltham Forest)
- No contra flow has yet been allowed at the ‘Ladder’ roads (Haringey)
- Lack of enforcement of parking restrictions in cycle lanes and 20/30mph zones (Hammersmith & Fulham)
- Planned Cycle Superhighway through Hammersmith gyratory doesn’t meet LCDS (London Cycling Design Standards) (Hammersmith & Fulham)

**Cycling safety**
- No formal facilities for crossing St Paul’s Road (Barking and Dagenham)
- Cycle Superhighway 3 along Cable Street is raised – when you cycle parallel to something such as a wall or fence there is an amount of space that is unusable (Tower Hamlets)
- Traffic on red routes too high for drivers to tolerate cyclists e.g. Whitechapel High Street/ Whitechapel Road/ Commercial Road/ Limehouse Road (Tower Hamlets)
- Kew Road cycle lane ends at roundabout forcing cyclists to go straight onto middle lane, exposing them to overtaking drivers and fast moving traffic (Richmond)
- Stolen bikes, need to stop Brick Lane traders buying stolen bikes (Richmond)
• Narrow pavements as shared use paths on A316 between Ailsa Road and St George’s Road (Richmond)
• Drivers crossing solid white line into a cycle lane which is illegal (Richmond)
• Drivers overtaking cyclists in dangerous blind corners or over hump back bridges and passing at high speeds within inches of cyclists (Richmond)
• Arterial roads challenging for cyclists (Kingston)
• Aggressive and inconsiderate motorists (Kingston)
• No lit cycle access from east on A236 Roman Way (Croydon)
• No protection for cyclists from vehicles turning left into Rectory Grove and Factory Lane (Croydon)
• No Advance Stop Lines (ASLs) at A232 Fairfield Road/A2039 Addiscombe Grove traffic light junction (Croydon)
• Marsh Lane bridge leads onto the unlit Hackney Marshes (Waltham Forest)
• Narrow, shared use pavement, which drops onto the carriageway after the brow of the bridge (Waltham Forest)
• Narrow bike lanes (Harrow)
• High speed traffic on Broad Lane (Haringey)
• Scary crossing on Hammersmith Bridge and Hammersmith gyratory not cycle friendly (Hammersmith & Fulham)
• Narrow traffic lanes along Trafalgar Square approaches including Whitehall, Northumberland Ave, Strand, St Martin’s Place and Cockspur Street (Westminster)
• Parliament Square gyratory system dangerous for cyclists (Westminster)
• Hyde Park Corner unable to handle the large volume of cyclists (Westminster)
• Fast high traffic flow at Shepherd’s Bush roundabout (Kensington and Chelsea)
• Lack of quiet/safe crossing points for cyclists at West London railway line (Kensington & Chelsea)

These examples illustrate a wide distribution of similar problems across London.

References

1 Cycling Revolution London p.3, Tfl (May 2010)  
2 Delivering the benefits of cycling in Outer London, p.10, Tfl (Feb 2010)  
3 Delivering the benefits of cycling in Outer London, p.6, Tfl (Feb 2010)  
4 Cycle Security Plan, p.18, Tfl (2010)  
5 Cycle Safety Action Plan p.8 , Tfl (Mar 2010)  