

Motorcycle safety in London: update report

March 2018

Key findings

- Despite a new focus on motorcycle safety in the Mayor's Transport Strategy, TfL has failed to implement key recommendations made by the Transport Committee in our 2016 report.
- A change in methodology makes it difficult to compare casualty statistics for recent years, but it is clear from the evidence we heard that riding a motorcycle in London today is not noticeably safer than it was in 2016.
- TfL needs to increase access to training for motorcyclists. A new accreditation scheme for courier firms could help achieve this, and TfL needs to find a way of including courier firms that do not employ riders directly.
- TfL's progress in persuading boroughs to allow motorcyclists access to bus lanes has been far too slow. No boroughs have made this change since our last report. A more proactive approach is needed.
- TfL needs to produce a new Motorcycle Safety Action Plan with a renewed set of priority actions with clear timings and outcome measures.



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Motorcyclists experience disproportionate risk in London

Motorcyclists face an unacceptable level of risk on London's roads. In 2016, 33 motorcyclists were killed in collisions on London's roads. A further 648 motorcyclists suffered serious injuries, and a further 4,574 suffered slight injuries.

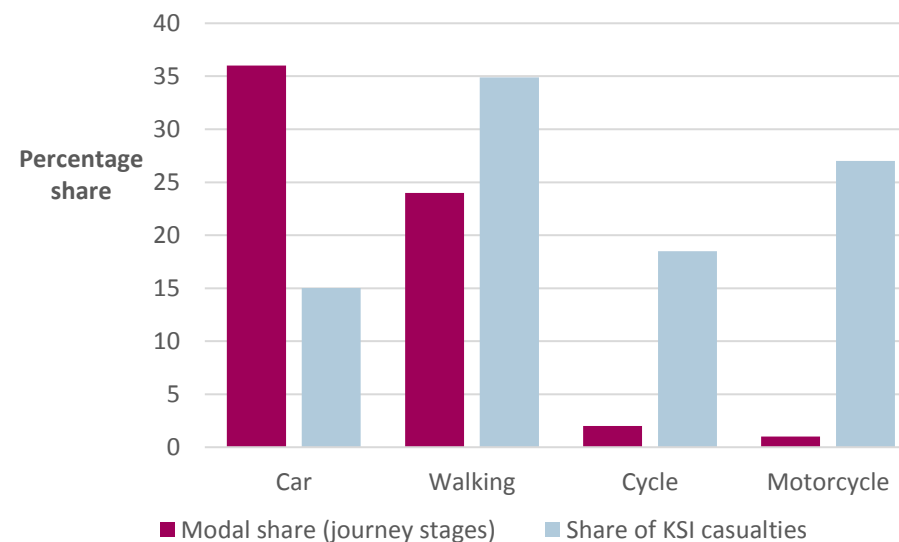
The rate at which motorcyclists are injured in road traffic collisions is disproportionately high. Despite motorcycles accounting for just one per cent of journeys made in London, 27 per cent of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on London's roads are motorcyclists (see Figure 1).¹ Pedestrians and cyclists also experience disproportionate risk, while car occupants have lower risk.

Motorcyclist casualties in London have not fallen since TfL published its Motorcycle Safety Action Plan in 2014. It is difficult to give a precise

The most important thing I can say about casualties for motorcyclists in London is that whereas we have seen a downward trend for almost every other road user, the trajectory for motorcyclists has been much more stubborn in coming down... We know that this is our number one vulnerable road casualty priority and that is why it stands out and is given its own section within the draft Mayor's Transport Strategy.

Lilli Matson, Director of Transport Strategy, Transport for London

Figure 1: Motorcyclists experience disproportionate risk on the road²



picture on the scale of increase, because in 2016 there was a change in how casualties are recorded. Officially, TfL data shows a 29 per cent rise in motorcyclist KSI in the past two years. It is likely, however, that the level of serious injuries in recent years has been under-estimated.

The Mayor's Transport Strategy includes new proposals for improving motorcycle safety. We welcome the renewed focus on this area from the Mayor. This is an urgent problem and often overlooked. TfL's previous Motorcycle Safety Action Plan is now outdated and needs to be renewed with new safety measures.

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Improving motorcyclist training

Improving motorcycle safety is the responsibility of all road users. For instance, TfL has targeted safety campaigns at car drivers, aiming to increase their awareness of motorcyclists on the road. Training motorcyclists themselves is also an important part of increasing safety. Although many motorcyclists opt to undertake advanced training, it remains possible to ride a motorcycle with relatively little formal instruction.

There are several forms of training for motorcyclists in London. This includes Compulsory Basic Training, a one-day course all riders must complete, and the Rider Intervention Developing Experience (RIDE), a course offered to those who have committed road offences. TfL funds BikeSafe and ScooterSafe, voluntary one-day practical courses delivered by Metropolitan Police officers. 1,599 riders took part in BikeSafe or ScooterSafe in 2015/16, increasing to 1,688 in 2016/17.

Engaging young riders is a particularly important objective. Despite TfL offering a discounted rate for BikeSafe and ScooterSafe, participation among young riders is low. In response to our 2016 report, TfL said that other forms of training may be more suitable than these courses. It has initiated trials of some pre-CBT courses delivered online.³

The Mayor's draft Transport Strategy, published in June 2017, proposed a 'London Standard' for motorcycle training. This standard would "go beyond the minimum required by law." Although TfL does

not have the formal power to enforce higher standards, the draft strategy proposed three elements to the London Standard highlighted in the draft strategy: encouraging training providers to be accredited by the Motorcycle Industry Association; promoting a suite of voluntary rider training courses; and training and accreditation for motorcycle courier businesses.

In the final version of the Mayor's Transport Strategy there was no reference to a 'London Standard' for training. There was no explanation from TfL in its consultation report of why this commitment was dropped, apart from a statement that the wording of the proposal had been 'clarified'.⁴ Measures outlined above have remained in the strategy, so this may be a branding issue, but this needs to be explained.

The proposal to accredit motorcycle courier firms is novel, and particularly welcome. However, it is not yet clear who would oversee the scheme or what standards would be required to achieve accreditation. For instance, we heard from Deliveroo—one of London's biggest courier firms—that they are ineligible to be accredited because their couriers are self-employed.⁵ If this type of firm is ineligible, many riders would not see the benefits of the accreditation scheme.

We are disappointed to see the Mayor change his previous proposal to improve safety training. The landmark commitment to a 'London Standard' for training should be reinstated. We also urge TfL to implement an accreditation regime that applies to all motorcycle courier firms regardless of their business model.

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Making roads safer for motorcyclists

Features of road design can exacerbate or mitigate the risks motorcyclists face on London's roads. We heard in our investigation that issues such as the placement of speed cushions affect safety. Subsequent to our report, TfL published the Urban Motorcycle Design Handbook, providing guidance on this and other issues. TfL told us that it will apply the guidance to its own road schemes, but that it depends on boroughs to do the same on their roads.

Lane width is very important for motorcycle safety. Motorcyclists can legitimately filter between lanes to make progress through traffic, helping them to avoid danger and to reduce congestion. TfL's design handbook notes the risks of narrowing lanes and recommends providing lanes wide enough to allow filtering.⁶

The condition of the road surface is crucial for safe riding. The design handbook says worn surfaces, sunken gullies and potholes create unpredictable conditions for motorcyclists. TfL has suspended elements of its road maintenance programme because of financial pressures, although it has pledged to continue to address safety critical issues.⁷

We welcome TfL's design handbook for motorcycle safety and urge London boroughs to implement its guidance. We are concerned, however, to see that TfL is not able to fund its previous road maintenance work and we will continue to monitor this.

Figure 2: Main causes of motorcycle collisions in London (TfL Urban Motorcycle Design Handbook)

Motorcycle Casualties in London 2014			
Conflict Rank	Indicative Diagram	Manoeuvre Description	KSI Collisions (% of total)
1		All single vehicle 'loss of control' conflicts	86 (17%)
2		Other vehicle turns right across path of motorcycle	79 (15%)
3		Other vehicle disobeys junction control and turns right into path of motorcycle	53 (10%)
4		Motorcycle runs into rear of other vehicle	38 (7%)
5		Other vehicle u-turns into path of motorcycle	36 (7%)

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Motorcyclist access to bus lanes

Motorcyclists are allowed to ride in bus lanes on the TfL Road Network (TLRN). This includes most of London's major roads, spanning almost all boroughs and comprising five per cent of the total road network. This policy was implemented in 2011 following several trials.⁸

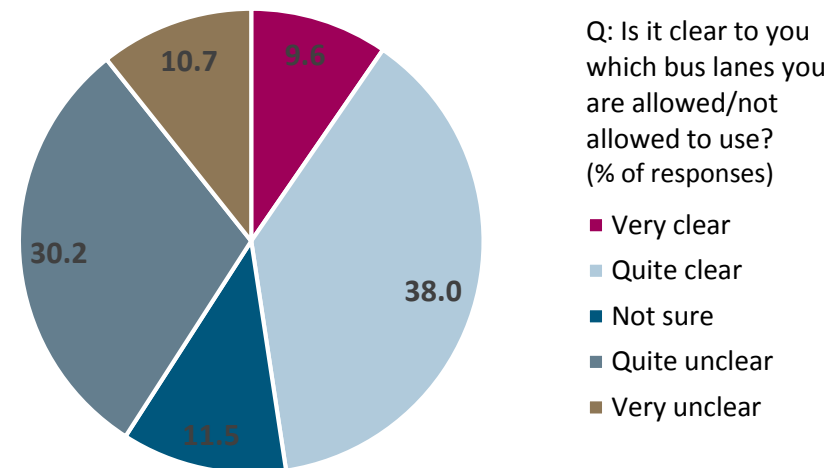
Some boroughs have adopted the same policy, and allow motorcycles to ride in bus lanes on roads they manage. However, this is inconsistent across London. At the time of our previous report, seven boroughs allowed motorcycle access to all bus lanes, while three boroughs allowed access to some (see Figure 4 overleaf). Motorcyclists told us in our 2016 survey that this inconsistency led to confusion, with many unsure which bus lanes they could and could not ride in (see Figure 3).

We recommended that TfL become more proactive in how it encourages boroughs to open bus lanes. There is little evidence that this has happened, however. Since our report, we have learned of just three additional boroughs actively considering implementing this policy. TfL reiterates that it continues to urge boroughs to allow bus lane

We do not have the legal power to require local boroughs to make their bus lanes available to motorcyclists... I would not want to threaten a borough wanting to do a good safety scheme that we would deny them money if they did not do what we wanted on this. It is an encouragement and an endorsement that they should do this.

Val Shawcross, Deputy Mayor for Transport, 18 July 2017

Figure 3: Motorcyclists are unsure which bus lanes they can ride in



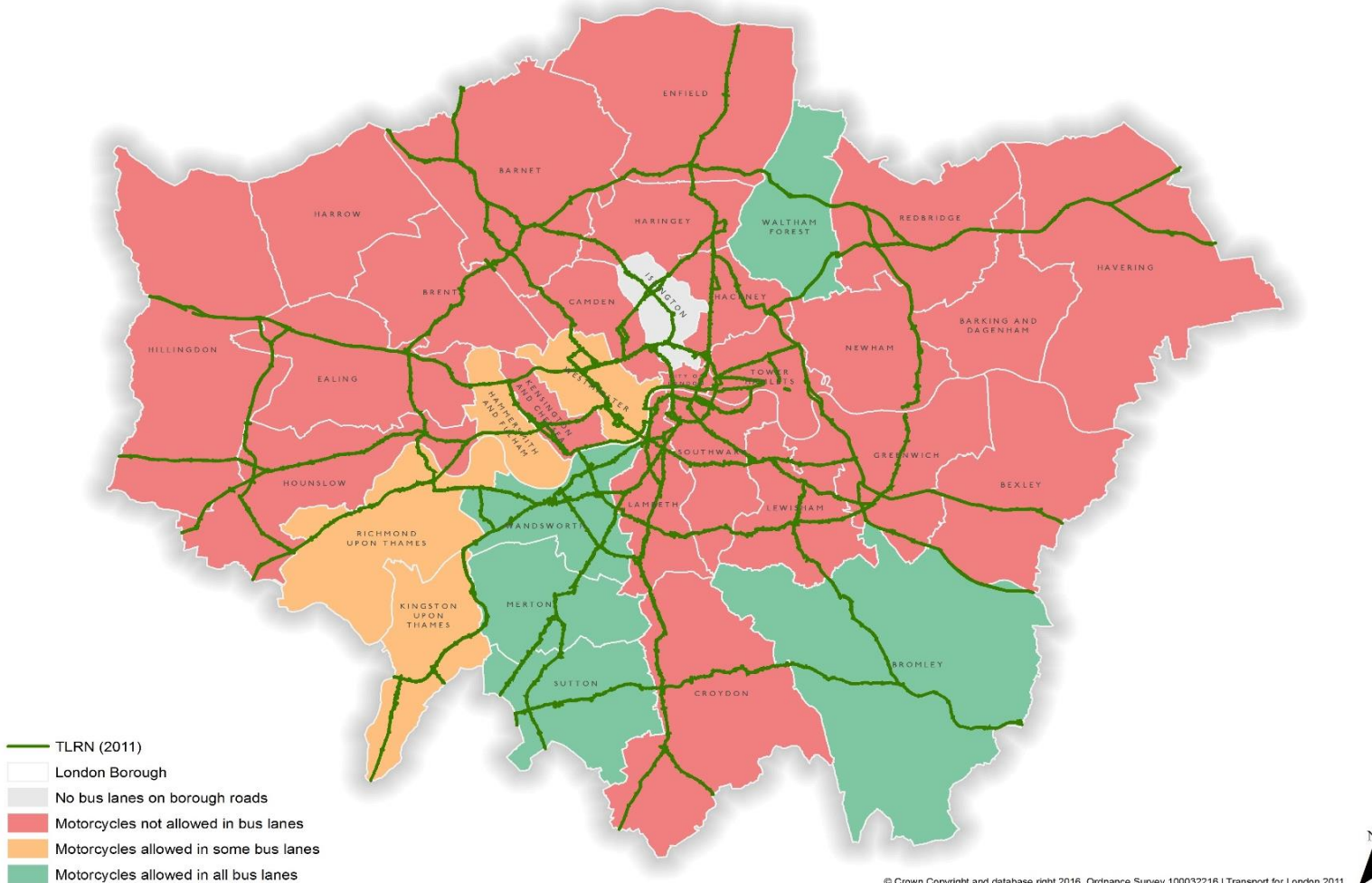
access, and this policy is listed as a 'possible initiative' for boroughs in the Local Implementation Plan guidance produced alongside the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy.⁹ However, the Deputy Mayor for Transport has confirmed that TfL will not be using any financial levers to insist on boroughs making this change.

The pace of change in this area is far too slow. The Mayor and TfL simply cannot continue to insist that motorcyclists need access to bus lanes, without taking any proactive steps to make sure this happens. The confusing application of different rules on different roads is in fact creating road danger for motorcyclists.¹⁰

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Figure 4: Motorcyclist access to bus lanes is uneven across London



Notes

Several boroughs have provided us with further information:

- Brent is conducting a trial allowing motorcyclist bus lane access on one major road.
- Tower Hamlets is conducting safety audits on each of its bus lanes.
- Lewisham is reviewing the suitability of its bus lanes for motorcyclist access.
- Westminster allows motorcyclist access to with-flow bus lanes.

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Conclusions

The new Mayor's Transport Strategy and other recent announcements suggest the Mayor recognises the unacceptably high level of risk motorcyclists face on London's roads. However, we need to see further tangible action to reduce this risk.

1. The Motorcycle Safety Action Plan needs to be updated. We are now beyond the implementation date for all the actions in the previous plan, and there is no evidence that riding a motorcycle is any safer. We need a fresh look at this from the Mayor and TfL, bringing together all planned measures with clear timings and outcome measures.

2. The Mayor and TfL should consider reinstating their plans to develop a 'London Standard' for motorcycle safety training. It is not clear why this commitment was removed from the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy. Quite rightly, the proposed London Standard raised expectations that motorcycle safety was a key priority for the Mayor. We are not wedded to any particular branding for the safety training programme, but for the Mayor to signal that his training initiatives are being watered down is inadvisable.

3. The Mayor and TfL need to clarify how their proposed accreditation scheme will work and make sure it is inclusive. In particular, it would be disappointing if motorcycle courier firms using self-employed riders were not eligible for accreditation. We accept that meaningful accreditation will require clear training standards that may be difficult

for these firms to meet in relation to riders they do not employ directly. However, a route to accreditation should be designed so potential customers and couriers can make an informed choice on the safety practices of firms they work with.

4. We welcome TfL's Urban Motorcycle Design Handbook as a major step forward for motorcycle safety. Its guidance must be followed, however. This applies to both TfL and borough road schemes. We support the ongoing changes to roads to create Healthy Streets across London and make cycling and walking safer – good design for safe motorcycling must be implemented in the delivery of these schemes.

5. Reductions in TfL's road maintenance budget are worrying. Motorcyclists are particularly susceptible to poor road surface conditions. We accept TfL's assurance that safety critical repairs will continue to be made. Any evidence that motorcyclists are at increased risk from damaged roads should be acted on immediately.

6. The Mayor and TfL need to get serious about ensuring motorcyclists can ride in all bus lanes. We are unconvinced that TfL is persuading boroughs to make this change with sufficient vigour. The rate of progress is far too slow and this is causing unnecessary risk for riders. TfL should provide whatever practical support boroughs need. Ultimately it might be necessary for the Mayor to use his financial leverage to make this change.

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Transport Committee



The Transport Committee holds the Mayor and Transport for London to account for their work delivering the capital's transport network. The committee examines all aspects of the transport network and presses for improvements on behalf of Londoners. We would welcome feedback on this report.

Recent publications

[Future Transport: How is London responding to technological innovation?](#)

[Hostile Streets: Walking and cycling at Outer London junctions](#)

[Door-to-door transport in London: Delivering a user-led experience](#)

[Driven to Distraction: Making London's buses safer](#)

[London Stalling: Reducing traffic congestion in London](#)

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Notes

¹ This data does not account for journey length. As motorcycles tend to be used for longer journeys than cycling or walking, this may be considered an under-estimate of the modal share of motorcyclists.

² TfL, [Travel in London – Report 10](#), 2017. Mode share is the proportion of trips with this method used as the main mode of travel.

³ [Letter to Transport Committee from Mike Brown MVO](#), TfL Commissioner, June 2016

⁴ [Draft Mayor's Transport Strategy: TfL's report to the Mayor on the statutory consultation](#), Transport for London, March 2018

⁵ Caroline Hazlehurst, Deliveroo, Transport Committee meeting, 8 November 2017

⁶ David Kurten AM of UKIP adds that Cycle Superhighways take up a lot of room on trunk routes which make things less safe for motorcyclists as lane width is reduced and they are squeezed into fewer lanes with other motorised vehicles.

⁷ Mike Brown MVO, TfL, Transport Committee meeting, 1 March 2018

⁸ David Kurten AM of UKIP adds that it would also improve safety for motorcycles if they could use Cycle Superhighways at less busy times of the day outside rush hours, when there are hardly any bicycles on them and they lie dormant and empty.

⁹ Mayor of London, Guidance on developing the third Local Implementation Plans [Part Two], June 2017

¹⁰ Caroline Russell AM is not convinced that Transport for London fully considered the evidence of safety issues at the time it made the decision to allow motorcyclists to ride in bus lanes. Caroline Russell AM is not convinced there was a compelling case for TfL to make this change and does not agree that London's boroughs should be urged to adopt TfL's policy of permitting motorcyclists to ride in bus lanes.