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## Smoothing Traffic Flow in London

Further to Peter Hendy's letter to my colleagues Irving Yass and Jo Valentine on 3<sup>rd</sup> November regarding smoothing traffic flow in London, I am pleased to respond with our initial comments. We would be delighted to work with TfL and other key stakeholders as this initiative moves forward and I would be the lead contact in this instance.

### TLRN

The TLRN carries over 30% of London's traffic. The first priority should be to ensure it operates as smoothly and reliably as possible, 24/7. This requires looking at each corridor holistically. This was last done when red routes were introduced about 10 years ago. Since then, more often than not, their operational effectiveness has been eroded by piecemeal initiatives. TfL should set clear objectives for the network and monitor its performance against them. Signal timings, bus priority and pedestrian and cycling measures should be integrated into the overall management programme, with a balanced assessment of priorities for each link in the network. The TLRN should be managed by a Traffic Director at senior level in TfL, with a dedicated budget.

On the specific point of review cycles for traffic signal timings, we note that TfL is targeting an average cycle of six years. In 2006, TfL confirmed that they were targeting a review frequency of three years by 2008, so we would welcome action to raise the bar on this issue.

TfL should review major junctions between TLRN corridors, e.g. A1/A406 and A1/A503, to improve their operation through adjustment of signal timings and modification of road layout where necessary. It should identify the worst congestion 'black-spots' and improve 10 each year.

TfL should also take forward construction schemes that are currently stalled, e.g. on A40 and A406, and consider whether new construction schemes could alleviate problems elsewhere. The objective would be not to increase the capacity of the corridor, but to ease bottlenecks and improve reliability.

### **Strategic Network**

TfL should use its powers under the Traffic Management Act 2004 to ensure that boroughs do not reduce the capacity of the strategic network. Where changes are desirable to improve the public realm or conditions for cycling and walking, there should be compensating changes to ensure no net loss of capacity.

TfL should work with the boroughs to identify the most congested locations on the strategic road network and institute a programme to improve their operation.

TfL should also work with boroughs to encourage them to employ best practice real time management on the SRN, e.g. collision teams, emergency tow vehicles and enforcement regimes which encourage traffic flow.

### **Congestion Charging Zone**

Since drivers have to pay £8 to drive in the zone, TfL has a particular responsibility to improve traffic flow within it. We welcome the steps TfL is taking to improve traffic signal performance, which is particularly important within the CCZ. It should review the need for 'all-red' pedestrian phases at all times of day.

### **West End**

In addition to CCZ measures, there should be particular concentration on the most congested locations, including review of traffic signal timing: this would be the most suitable area for experiment with pedestrian countdown as a means of reducing the delay between signal phases. Buses comprise a high proportion of the traffic in this area and the renewal of bus contracts should be used as an opportunity to review routes and reduce the number of buses. The phasing out of articulated buses will also help to reduce congestion. As a minimum, there should not be more than one route served by articulated buses along any one street, as a procession of them tends to block cross-streets.

### **WEZ**

An increase in traffic following the removal of the Western Extension charging zone is likely to cause an increase in congestion unless measures are taken to offset it. The measures required in the CCZ and West End are relevant here also. The junction of Grosvenor Place and Hobart Place and of Knightsbridge and Brompton Road have been identified as major black-spots and TfL should work with Westminster City Council to improve their operation.

### **Road works**

We welcome the proposal for a London-wide permitting scheme for road and street works. We shall be happy to work with utilities to identify the issues they have with the introduction of a permitting scheme and try to resolve them. We plan to undertake a major piece of work in 2009 to look at how regulation and working practices can be improved still further to reduce the impact of road works, while providing a fair operational regime for essential utility works. Clearly we would be happy to invite a suitable TfL representative on to our working groups.

One of the major causes of traffic disruption in central London over the next decade will be construction works for Crossrail. With further road capacity losses likely and major disruption due to onshore work associated with the Thames Tideway project, it is essential that this is effectively managed. Due to the complexity of the stakeholder

environment and the fact that much of the disruption will occur on borough roads, we believe that a senior co-ordinator is required within the Crossrail Programme Partner to tackle this issue as part of their 'day job'.

### **Traffic Reduction**

The promotion of alternative modes of transport and travel plans for schools and work places have a significant part to play in reducing car use. We welcome the initiatives by TfL and boroughs to help people make more sustainable travel choices. We note with interest the proposal by Camden Council to introduce school buses to reduce school run congestion which, if successful, should be adopted more widely.

We believe that there is also more scope for journeys to be made by bus rather than car in outer London. We look to the forthcoming bus network review to identify possible new initiatives that will help to meet potential demand. Lack of knowledge of and confidence in bus services may be a factor in decisions to use car rather than bus. Better information about bus services, both in advance and in real time, could be important in encouraging people away from their cars.

Delivery vans form a high proportion of traffic in some areas, particularly in central London. TfL should promote consolidation centres to reduce the number of movements required to service an area.

### **Bus Lanes**

Bus lanes are important in helping to speed up buses and make them a more attractive option. Lanes are most effective where they operate continuously over a whole route. However there are cases where traffic tails back at the start of a bus lane with the result that buses are also delayed. If the bus lane is relatively short the gain to buses from using it is outweighed by the delay in reaching it. There are also instances where bus lanes extend close to junctions with the result that traffic going straight ahead is trapped behind traffic waiting to turn right. If this causes long tail-backs it may again be counter-productive for buses, as well as causing congestion to other traffic. TfL should review bus lanes with boroughs and remove those that cause undue congestion.

### **Real Time Management**

We welcome the work of the London Traffic Control Centre and the Roads Response Team to deal with traffic incidents. Timely intervention can help to prevent the rapid build-up of congestion and welcome any additional focus that can be created to help general traffic flow more effectively. We would also like to see better real-time information for drivers so that they can avoid traffic jams, through better use of variable messaging signs and increasing their number. TfL should also explore the possibility of a traffic channel on the radio that gives much more frequent updates than BBC Radio London or commercial stations, and using the opportunities for real time downloads increasingly available on the most popular GPS navigation systems.

*Best regards*



**Tim Hockney**  
Executive Director of Transport