

# BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 11 (August 2001)

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Included in this edition are three articles on road accident statistics in Bromley, the UK and London which should prompt some thought.

Following those there is a major article on the new Mayor of London's Transport Strategy. Instead of reading all 450 pages of it, you can get the essence in our 4 pages, including some comments from your editor!

There are also three articles on speed cameras following our previous reports - this seems to be a hot national news subject at present. Your editor has to declare here that after some considerable thought, he has decided that he is not in favour of them at all. As a road safety measure there is no proof that they are at all effective longer term and the amount spent on their installation and use would be much better spent on other road safety measures. Traffic speed is not the major

cause of most road accidents and it would be better to spend the money on such matters as better signage, road redesign more vigilant conventional policing, better driver education and other processes. Your editor does not think that the invasion of personal privacy, and criminalisation of large swathes of the population is a positive contribution to English civilisation.

There are also a couple of articles on redevelopment of the ex-MOD Aquila site in Bickley, and the impact of road humps on the disabled.

For those of you who don't know what your editor looks like, I have included a picture in this edition.



Note that this edition is available in digital form as are back copies - simply email me at [roger.Lawson@btclick.com](mailto:roger.Lawson@btclick.com) for copies (PDF or Word versions can be supplied).

Roger Lawson, Editor

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## Bromley Accident Statistics

Here are some more details of the accident statistics for Bromley in the calendar year 2000 that were mentioned in our last newsletter. Note that these are collected by police and will only include those accidents reported to them, which is primarily those involving personal injury.

Deaths fell from 14 to 8, with no children being involved. However, you should bear in mind that deaths are a very small proportion of all accident injuries and tend to be "extreme" events that are not statistically significant because of the low numbers.

In the case of adults, serious injuries fell from 115 to 75 and slight injuries from 1161 to 1138.

For children, serious injuries fell from 21 to 9, and slight injuries from 146 to 81.

Breaking down the figures by the type of road user gives the following data for casualties:

	2000	1999
Pedestrians	168	199
Car Drivers	585	596
Car Passengers	215	230
Pedal Cyclists	67	89
Motor bikes	158	212
Bus Passengers	66	72
Goods Vehicles	23	26

Notice how the numbers have fallen in all the categories and particularly for children. However, it is not clear whether these changes are statistically significant, or whether there is any factor or factors to which the fall can be attributed. There was a bigger fall in overall accidents and casualties in 1999, and a fall in 1998, but a rise in 1997. However it does now look like there is an overall trend to a lower

incident rate when it had previously apparently hit a plateau. This is certainly a positive move in the right direction, but more information on traffic volumes is needed to confirm that view.

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## UK Accident Statistics

For comparison, here are some details of the accident statistics for the whole of the UK for the year 2000.

There were 320,283 road casualties in Great Britain, with 3,409 killed (this is only 14 fewer than 1999 and only 12 fewer than in 1998). Road accidents involving injury were down only 1% overall. Child casualties fell by 6%, which reflects the situation in Bromley, but motor bike casualties rose by 8% even though the volume of such traffic fell.

As usual, the UK accident statistics seem to be remarkably insensitive to political action measures such as heavy central government funding of traffic calming schemes, speed reduction campaigns, increased criminalisation of the general public for traffic offences and the like. It would appear to your editor that some changes to the strategy should be considered.

For example, the Department of Transport (DTLR) has just committed a further £30 million in support of traffic calming schemes by local councils, despite the recent evidence of increased traffic pollution from road humps.

Of course, one of the interesting questions is why did Bromley accident statistics improve so much more than the UK as a whole? Is Bromley's traffic engineering approach better than other local councils, or has traffic become so much more congested in Bromley that slower traffic has resulted in fewer accidents and injuries?

If any of our readers have an explanation for this perhaps they could let us know.

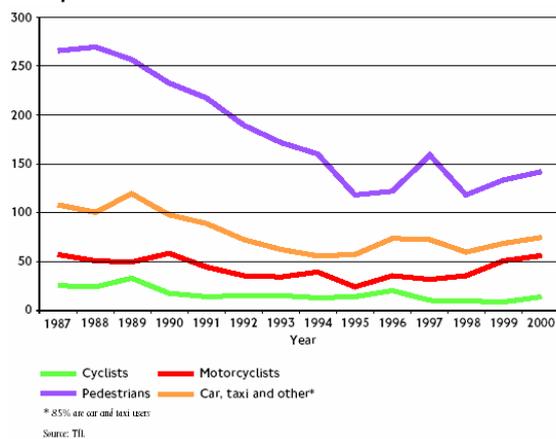
There was a change of policy a couple of years ago in Bromley, to concentrate on accident black spots rather than area traffic calming schemes, possibly prompted by pressure from BBRAG, but it would seem rather early for that to have had much effect.

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## London Accident Statistics

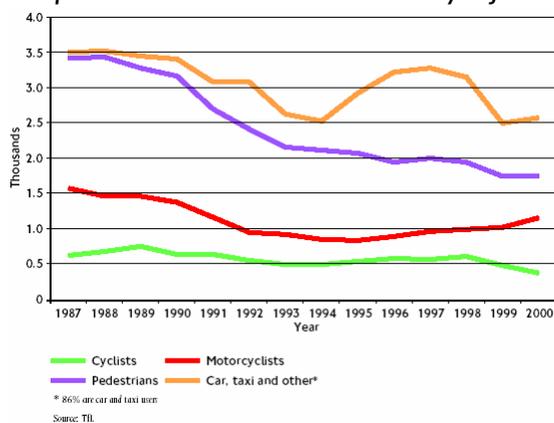
For comparison, the following graphs are taken from the Mayors Transport Strategy document discussed more fully in a later article.

*Graph 1 - London Casualties Killed*



The lines in the above chart, from the top, represent numbers of pedestrians, motor vehicle users, motorcyclists and cyclists.

*Graph 2 London Casualties Seriously Injured*



The lines in the above chart, from the top, represent numbers of motor vehicle users, pedestrians, motorcyclists and cyclists.

Note the large number of pedestrians killed in comparison with other road users. Also note the relatively static situation over the last few years in London as a whole, which again tends to suggest that either Bromley is doing something different or is suffering from a statistical aberration or fluke.

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## London Transport Strategy

The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, has recently published his Transport Strategy. This is a document of over 450 pages so this article is a very brief summary of some of the key points, with some appropriate comments. The full document can be downloaded from [www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies) or phone 020 7983 4323 to order a printed copy.

I think there is general agreement that transport in London has been getting worse rather than better over the years. Anyone who has lived and worked in London, whether they use rail, tube, bus or car, has probably experienced problems. Public transport has suffered from lack of investment with the result that for a major world city, London has now one of the worst public transport networks. It is unreliable, dirty, uncomfortable and expensive.

London also has one of the worst road networks, and even compares badly with other major UK cities such as Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. Where those cities have taken the opportunity to build both new public transport networks and road networks, London has consistently failed to do so. Note that the political complexion of the controlling councils in

other cities did not necessarily affect these decisions - good transport networks were seen to be of benefit to all social classes.

Whereas other towns took the opportunity to rebuild their infrastructure where it had become run down, London never took the opportunity to build a new environment, even after the second world war when many parts of London were devastated. As a result the London road network is still based on a layout established in the middle ages, and the train and tube network is predominantly Victorian.

One of the major reasons for this was the disjointed control of the London transport network. Following the disbanding of the old GLC for political reasons, control of the road network passed to local boroughs. The result was lack of co-ordination and inaction. No borough wanted a major road constructed through it, preferring that it went through a neighbouring one. The result was no improvement to the road network and resulting heavy traffic on local, residential streets with the associated congestion. South London was particularly badly affected with the South Circular remaining a major road in name only, which everyone avoids if at all possible. The A2 and A20, major roads into London, simply peter out into unimproved local roads in Greenwich and Lewisham primarily because of lack of any strategic vision.

These problems were compounded by the difficulty that Londoners often see themselves as residents of a local neighbourhood or "village" (poor transport links between adjacent parts of London contribute to this mentality). This happens even when the locality is run down and contains poor quality infrastructure and buildings. The resulting nimbyism tends to militate against any worthwhile transport infrastructure development. The outcome has been the costly transport

of goods, industry and commerce tending to move elsewhere, inefficient local transport networks, and massive noise and air pollution problems.

Similarly the London Underground suffered from political interference, lack of long term strategic planning and government underfunding.

Road and rail networks were unco-ordinated and have not adapted to new patterns of work and residential locations.

Note that the population of London is now growing again, leading to overcrowding on many train and tube lines. The previous drift of people from London to rural areas has been halted. However London's population is still about 600,000 below what it was in 1961.

Traffic growth in London has been constrained by the poor road network (there were 23,600 cars and taxis in central London each day in 1991 and this only increased slightly to 24,600 in 2001 with a matching slight reduction in average traffic speed). Similarly traffic growth in the outer London boroughs such as Bromley have tended to level off, even though car ownership continues to rise. Congestion is causing self regulation of traffic growth.

Well the above states some of the problems. The new Greater London Authority and the position of Mayor were designed to reverse the downward trend and provide a more positive strategic control and planning capability. The leadership of an elected mayor with a strong political mandate could hopefully force through some necessary changes, and get appropriate co-operation from central government. Unfortunately in respect of the last point, the electorate voted for Mr Livingstone standing as an independent, who is not exactly popular

with the ruling Labour party for reasons that readers may no doubt remember.

So what is the Mayor proposing? His ten *key transport priorities* are stated to be (I have condensed the excessive verbiage of the report - these take up a whole page in the "executive summary" alone):

1. Reducing traffic congestion.
2. Increasing investment in the Underground to increase capacity.
3. Improving bus services including increasing capacity.
4. Better integration of the national rail network with London's other transport systems.
5. Increasing overall capacity of the London transport system by promoting cross-London rail links, orbital rail links in central London and new Thames river crossings in East London.
6. Improving journey time reliability for car users, particularly in outer London, whilst reducing car dependency.
7. Supporting local transport initiatives including those that improve road safety.
8. Improving the efficiency of the distribution of goods whilst minimising environmental impact.
9. Improving access to transport for all people, including the disabled.
10. Improve transport integration.

Note that major new road schemes are ruled out on the basis that they would be "environmentally unacceptable" and "financially unaffordable". Therefore the strategy to reduce traffic congestion is by improvements to public transport, more enforcement of traffic regulations and the introduction of a congestion charging scheme.

Major investment in the London Underground and the proposed Public Private Partnership (PPP) takes up a lot of

space in the document, but as Bromley is not serviced significantly by the tube, only limited space has been devoted to it in this report.

Major improvements to the bus network are envisaged, and in the short term, these are seen as a means of relieving congestion on the rail and tube network (where improvements will take many years to implement). However as the report says "The greatest challenge for the bus service is to deliver a level of reliability and dependability that will attract new users from cars. Overall bus reliability has fallen over the recent years, principally due to traffic congestion. The problems have been exacerbated by streetworks, uncontrolled parking and bus driver shortages." (What the report does not say is that increasing the number of buses may well contribute further to congestion because buses are large vehicles that stop frequently, often block the carriageway and generally travel slower than the prevailing traffic flow).

#### *The Proposals*

The following are the suggested solutions:

- A central London congestion charging scheme.
- Additional rail services including "CrossRail" and Thameslink 2000 routes across London and a Hackney-SouthWest Line.
- New Thames river crossings including a rail crossing at Woolwich, a "multi-modal" crossing at Thamesmead and a third road crossing at Blackwall with public transport priority.
- Extensions to the Docklands Light Railway, Croydon Tramlink and East London Line and rail improvements in the Lee Valley area.
- Pedestrianisation of Trafalgar Square and other squares.
- Expansion of the bus network and extension of bus priorities (ie. bus lanes, etc) - with up to 40% more bus passengers.

- More traffic enforcement including new regulations.
- Public off street parking will be more heavily regulated to discourage car use.
- Particular traffic bottlenecks may be tackled (but without a programme of new roads).
- Existing road improvement schemes including the North Circular, A40 Western Ave, A23 Coulsdon and A205 Catford (South Circular) are to be reconsidered and probably replaced by "reduced scale" schemes.
- Integrating car use with other forms of transport such as improving parking facilities at rail stations in outer London

### Congestion Charging Scheme

The aim is to reduce traffic by 15% in Central London and this will be achieved by a congestion charging scheme. The charge will be £5 per day between 7.0 am to 7.0 pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays). The map below shows the extent of the scheme.



The net cost of this scheme over the first 2 years appears to be £130 million, but net revenue thereafter is about £200 million per annum.

Although there was a commitment that public transport would be improved before such a scheme was introduced, it seems likely that the only improvement

possible before then will be some extra buses.

### Overall cost of the proposals

Spending is assumed to be £3 billion per year for the next couple of years, excluding the Underground, from existing government commitments, rising by an extra £500 million from 2004 (of which £200 million would come from the net revenue from the congestion charging scheme). The difference, £300 million, has yet to be found so that is what the mayor is asking for in addition.

### Editors Comments

What a lost opportunity! Although the document contains many useful proposals, it is ultimately weak. Mr Livingstone seems to have tried to please everyone, but unfortunately you can't re-bake the London transport infrastructure without breaking some eggs.

The proposals to tackle traffic congestion will not work, because:

- There is no attempt to reform or make major improvements to the road network.
- The congestion charging scheme is not aggressive enough to make any difference to traffic congestion in central London (there is sufficient "unsatisfied demand" for road use that it is very unlikely to have any effect - all it will likely do is replace poorer people by the richer folks who can afford £5 per day - a peculiar attempt at social engineering).
- Adding more buses is unlikely to make them significantly more attractive to existing road or rail users.
- Improvements to the rail and underground network will be a long time coming and are not major enhancements- they are unlikely to tackle the key problems of commuters.

The additional investment being made is relatively minor and will not make a major difference to London's transport quality.

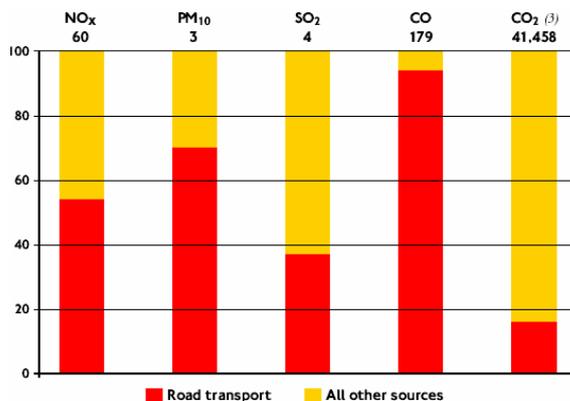
In essence this document proposes a lot of tactical approaches to the transport problems of London, but it is hardly a strategic, long-term vision of a better future.

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## Pollution in London

Following on from articles in previous editions of this newsletter, the interesting chart below is also from the Transport Strategy report. It shows the contribution of road transport versus other sources of the common pollutants in London. As you can see, motor vehicles contribute over 90% of carbon monoxide, but only 20% of carbon dioxide emissions - the rest are from other sources such as heating systems, electricity generation and industrial processes.

*Emissions in London '000s tonnes per year*



Note: (1) Source: GLA (2001)  
 (2) With the exception of CO<sub>2</sub>, shows primary emissions within London only  
 (3) Include all emissions from electricity consumption in London regardless of where the electricity is generated

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## Air Quality on the Underground

It has recently come to light that switching to public transport may not help you personally to avoid air pollution. According to Professor Nick Priest of Middlesex University, air pollution on the London Underground may be a major health risk. He alleges that air in the London Underground is up to 73 times

dirtier than the recommended limit for air pollution above ground.

He says "You have to question a transport policy which attempts to force people out of their cars into polluted, subterranean caverns. If people want to minimise their own personal exposure to air pollution, they're best off sitting in a car. The moment they go in a tube, they're much worse off."

The major problem seems to be dust particles which, for example, have been found to be 16 times higher inside Tottenham Court Road station than at street level.

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## Speed Camera Follow Up

Following on from the articles in the last Newsletter on speed cameras, you may be interested to hear that Chief Constable Ken Williams of Norfolk, who is chairman of the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers, has recently called for a more driver-friendly implementation of anti-speed policies. Asked if the hiding of speed cameras had been a mistake, he said "I think it has. We need to be very public about where the cameras are going to be, and make them bright and visible."

Subsequent to the above statement appearing in the press, it transpired that Norfolk had not actually had any film in any of their speed cameras for the last 8 months, due to "other policing priorities" - Norfolk is not yet one of the authorities that can divert speed fine revenues to police expenditure.

Clearly Mr Williams may have a different view on accident prevention priorities to the government.

However, the latest hidden speed camera can actually be mounted in a catseye.

Whether these will be deployed or not remains to be seen.

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### Speed Cameras - The Latest News

Since writing the above, the Government has announced that the experimental schemes to enable funding of more speed cameras from fines has been so successful that it is to be extended more widely - the Association of British Drivers (see [www.abd.org.uk](http://www.abd.org.uk) under "speed") disputes the statistics though. Note that it was argued that speed cameras have been successful in reducing accidents in London but as you can see from the statistics in the article above, this is not in fact the case.

The likely result will be up to 6,000 more speed cameras around the country, but the Government has conceded that they should be more obvious and be painted in bright colours. How that will enable them to be seen in the dark and/or rain is not clear, and neither will they be visible when following behind larger vehicles.

The intention is that they will only be positioned in locations known to have an above average accident record (but that was said before they were first introduced and ultimately the siting depends on the discretion of the local police force).

It is anticipated that the number of fines will grow by up to 3 times, i.e from over 1 million per year to over 3 million!

Note that each Gatso camera costs up to £40,000 so that would imply total expenditure of up to £250 million if they all had cameras in them, but that is probably unlikely.

John Spellar, Transport Minister, has said "The purpose is to modify behaviour to reduce accidents, not to catch motorists".

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### Speed Cameras - Public Opinion

Do the general public approve of speed cameras? According to a recent survey undertaken by Mori and funded by Direct Line Insurance, they do. Mori says that apparently half of all drivers would be happy to see more speed cameras on the roads (or to put it another way, half would not presumably). However 69% of drivers think that speed cameras should be obvious rather than hidden.

The wording of the survey seems to be somewhat open to suggestions that it was looking for a certain response - your editor is somewhat doubtful that the number of people in favour of speed cameras could be so high.

It also seems that 72% think that speeding in a 30 mph zone is very serious, compared to only 21% who think that speeding on a motorway is a very serious offence. An emphatic 96% of drivers think that speeding outside a school is a serious crime.

On the last point, it is interesting to look at the speed of traffic on roads in Bromley that have recently had the speed limit reduced from 40 to 30 mph, eg. Perry Street, Chislehurst and Sevenoaks Way, Orpington, which both have schools in them. The latest such proposal is for Oakley Road, Keston (the main Bromley to Biggin Hill road). Note that BBRAG objected to these proposals on the grounds that they appeared to be political gestures that would not have any practical effect. In reality has the traffic speed perceptibly reduced?

Clearly the answer is no, and on Perry Street, which your editor uses frequently, it is very obvious that most traffic breaks the new speed limit (except when there are school children around when it is typically so congested that you can't).

I guess the point here is that setting arbitrary limits and expecting people to adhere to them is not likely to be successful. In practice, most experienced drivers drive at an appropriate speed according to the road conditions and present hazards, and they are reluctant to concede that some bureaucrat knows better.

Your editor is not convinced that simply putting up a 30 mph speed limit sign will be effective in curbing inappropriate speed, even if it is a cheap solution. The experimental system of 20 mph temporary speed limits (on much larger, illuminated signs active during limited hours) as used in Chislehurst Road in Orpington outside a school seems a much more effective, if more expensive solution.

It also seems likely that the more extensive use of speed cameras will only be successful in turning more members of the general public into criminals. Any politician who thinks they can change human behaviour in this way is surely being over optimistic.

More information on the Mori survey can be found at [www.mori.com/polls/2001/dl-010720.shtml](http://www.mori.com/polls/2001/dl-010720.shtml)

If any readers have comments on the subject of speed cameras and speed limits then please send them to the editor for publication.

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### **Aquila Site Redevelopment**

One of our members has provided some information about the proposed redevelopment of the MOD site known as Aquila which is located in Golf Road, Bickley near Blackbrook Lane. This is a large site of 25 acres which is no longer used by the MOD and is "zoned" for housing development under the Bromley

Unitary Development Plan. The developer, Wilcon Homes, is proposing 275 houses. Clearly the new residents would generate a lot of extra road traffic. In conjunction with the church proposed for Thornet Wood Road mentioned in a previous letter, again a sizeable traffic generator, it looks like there could be major problems at the Barfield Road/Blackbrook Lane junction. In addition it would add to the traffic on the A222 Bromley Road which is already heavily congested during much of the day.

BBRAG is likely to be making representations concerning these proposals but it is suggested that members contact their local councillors to express their own views.

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### **Road Humps and the Disabled**

Unfortunately I have to report that one of our members recently died - Mrs Bidewell who lived in Chislehurst. She had been confined to a wheelchair for some time before, and was an active supporter of our objectives as she found speed bumps very uncomfortable. Several of our members have joined because of the impact of speed bumps on their medical conditions.

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### **Contact Information**

This Newsletter is published by the Bromley Borough Roads Action Group, 8 Prince Consort Drive, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5SB. Treasurer and Newsletter Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, fax: 020-8295-0378, Email: [roger.lawson@btclick.com](mailto:roger.lawson@btclick.com)), Chairman: John Nicholls (Tel: 020-8467-8284). Contact either of the above for information on the aims and objectives of B.B.R.A.G. or for membership information (membership costs £7.50 per annum). B.B.R.A.G. would be happy to advise or assist anyone who is

concerned about any traffic, transport or road safety issues in the borough.

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