



# BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 20 (February 2003)

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## Editorial

Articles in this issue include a report on improving the M25 orbital route, the "throttling" of Leasons Hill (what an appropriate word that is!) and a look at how much accidents actually cost.

Unbelievably there were no entries for our Xmas prize competition (the answer was that the quotation by Winston Churchill referred to the prohibition era in the USA.). Guess I'll have to make it easier next year.

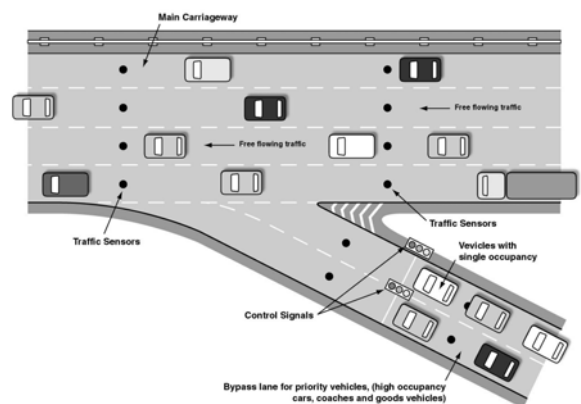
The second part of 3 articles on "Improving Transport in Bromley" is included in this issue - yes it may actually be possible but bear in mind that council budgets for the next financial year are currently being discussed, and as usual there is no mention in there of improving road transport. So don't expect much for the future.

Roger Lawson, Editor

## M25 Report Recommendations

The recent "Orbit" study of transport around London has been completed and the report issued (see [www.orbitproject.com](http://www.orbitproject.com) for the full report). One of its objectives was to produce solutions to congestion on the M25. To summarise, the recommendations were:

- Wide area road user charging, if possible.
- Irrespective of the above, widening of the M25 between junctions 1 to 3, 5 to 7, 16 to 23 and 27 to 31.
- No widening of other areas, or to more than 4 lanes, to avoid "over provision" (*Editors Comment: I think that means it would make the road so attractive, more people might use it.*)
- Review of land-use policies for land adjacent to the M25, to discourage growth of traffic.
- If no wide area road user charging is implemented, then contingency strategies would be to use motorway tolls and Ramp Metering (See diagram below).



Ramp Metering Example

Ramp metering basically means traffic lights on entry slip roads that limit the vehicles joining the motorway. The lights are timed so that the joining vehicles are staggered and the flow of traffic on the motorway is not disrupted.

Limiting the maximum number of vehicles also has a positive effect because traffic volumes are maximised if speed is maintained above a certain level. If there is no limitation on vehicles joining then traffic tends to become slower and slower, and traffic throughput is lower at 10 mph than it is at 40 mph.

It is used very effectively in parts of the USA such as California, and would deter a lot of short "on and off" trips that disrupt M25 traffic flows.

Note that they discounted improving public transport to reduce traffic as being both "impractical and unaffordable". Improvements to rail services would apparently have negligible impact on M25 traffic volumes and an orbital bus "park and ride" service was also not considered worthwhile.

The report will now be considered by the Government. *(Editors Comment: Wide area charging, as per the London congestion charging scheme, will clearly be very unpopular and has yet to be proven to work. However at least their other recommendations make some sense. The sooner something is done, the better, and ramp metering is a good technical solution to some problems).*

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## Car Sharing Initiative



Car sharing schemes, or car pools, are widely promoted in the USA. This could be because of the dearth of public transport facilities there -

if you can't find someone else to give you a lift you may be stranded. However, they have not been promoted much in the UK, even though they can relieve traffic congestion and provide a cheap means of transport.

Due to the initiative of a local Chislehurst resident, Bromley Council have looked at promoting such schemes for local schoolchildren. This would be one way of

tackling the "school run" problem where congestion around schools as individual parents bring their children to school tends to cause temporary gridlock. For example, the Department for Transport estimate that 18% of all traffic is involved in taking children to school.

The scheme would involve creating specific "pools" via an existing commercial service called Liftshare (see [www.liftshare.com](http://www.liftshare.com)). This organisation claims to be the largest car sharing operation in the UK and can of course be used by any individual looking for a lift or willing to provide one. Incidentally their web site also has some useful links to other transport web sites and is worth "surfing" just for the information on it.

In the case of schoolchildren there are of course security concerns so there would be special provisions required such as the need to register your identity as a parent, and actually get Criminal Records Bureau clearance and provide driving licences, VED, MOT and car insurance details. *(Editors Comment: This all seems exceedingly complex and the current paranoia about child safety is quite likely to put off many people from bothering, to get involved, particularly bearing in mind the effort required to get CRB certification and the recent delays in processing applications. It is quite likely that the "red tape" will make the scheme impractical).*

How the above actually operates in practice would be determined from a pilot scheme. Similar schemes may also be promoted to local businesses and other organisations and they could become part of "green" or "workplace" travel plans.

*(Editors Comment: B.B.R.A.G. supports this initiative as it could be a low cost way to reduce the impact of the school run and generally encourage more multi-person occupancy of cars).*

On a similar theme, the Association of British Drivers (see [www.abd.org.uk](http://www.abd.org.uk)) have recently suggested that any vehicle that has more than one occupant should be allowed to use the bus lane which seems a good suggestion to encourage car sharing, reduce congestion and maximise use of bus lane space.

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## Leesons Hill to be “Throttled”?



A “Throttle Point” in East London

Most readers will be aware of the proposals for traffic calming schemes in Poverest Road, Elmstead Lane, Queensway and Maple Road which now include new proposals for Leesons Hill. Consultation leaflets were distributed by the council some time ago and a final decision on these proposals will soon be made. Obviously BBRAG submitted our comments which in summary were that the speed bump options were clearly not preferable and we had some concerns about the overall cost/benefit of all the schemes. There were other detail comments and alternative proposals in addition. If anyone would like a copy of our submission to the council on this matter then please ask for one.



Location of proposed “throttle point” on Leesons Hill, looking uphill

Because Leesons Hill is a possible alternative route to Poverest Road it was included in the final proposals. Leesons Hill also has an accident problem, probably because of the relatively

steep hill, including bends on the hill which obscure the road.

The proposal is to construct a “throttle point” which is basically a narrowing of the road (effectively reducing it to one lane) so that traffic can only travel in one or other direction at a time. One direction is usually given priority, which in this case would probably be the downhill direction. The throttle point would be located at the bottom of the steepest part of Leesons Hill, just above the junction with Clarendon Way.

BBRAG opposes this proposal as we consider it positively dangerous to put such an obstruction at this point in the road. The location proposed is at the bottom of the steepest part of the hill and would be hidden by the preceding bend.

It also of course creates another possible source of traffic congestion which we have enough of in Bromley without artificially creating more of them.



Leesons Hill looking downhill, showing how location of “throttle point” is obscured.

Where such schemes have been implemented elsewhere they create a lot of minor accidents, including numerous road rage incidents where drivers from the two directions argue as to who arrived first or who has priority - for example it encourages drivers to accelerate through the pinch point if they see someone coming the other way. In areas such as Finchley in North London, they have subsequently been removed after installation at enormous cost, due to these kind of problems and their general hatred by road users.

*(Editors Comment: Altogether a bad idea and one that I would hate to see introduced into Bromley. Yet another badly designed and unsafe “road safety” scheme proposed by the consultants used by Bromley Council).*

## Making Speed Bumps Disappear

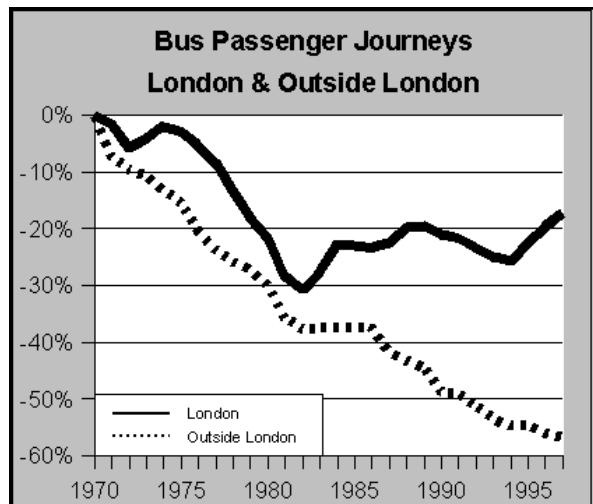


Make speed bumps disappear? Perhaps you wish you could! But the recent snow had the same effect, as you can see from the photograph of Manor Park Road, Chislehurst on the previous page (there is one just alongside the lamppost in the foreground, and more further along the road). The snow, ice and slush effectively conceal the hump very well.

At least one accident was caused when a scooter rider hit a bump, probably because he didn't see it, went into a skid and then fell off. Just another example of how dangerous speed bumps are to motorcyclists and pedal cyclists.

## Interesting Web Sites

In addition to the Liftshare web site mentioned above, another interesting web site your editor recently came across was “The Public Purpose” ([www.publicpurpose.com](http://www.publicpurpose.com)). This site is maintained by a US based transport consultant named Wendell Cox, but it also contains some interesting international data including historic information on London and UK public transport trends. For example the following diagram is taken from the site:



One of the things that Mr Cox has studied is the comparative cost of public transport versus private transport (ie. car usage). So for example in the case of new “light rail” systems in the USA (which are of course becoming popular in the UK, e.g. the Docklands system), US Dept of Transportation data indicate that the “cost per rider” of all but one of the 25 proposed new US light rail and metro systems exceeds the cost of leasing a car in perpetuity. In some cases, a luxury car such as a BMW 7-series or Jaguar XJ could be leased for less.



## Cheaper to Provide Jaguars than Build a Rail System?

*(Editors Comment: I think he is ignoring the cost of providing the required additional road space in this analogy, or the alternative of everyone being stuck in traffic jams as a result, but it gives you an idea of the cost of public transport provision. Other commentators on the investment in rail structure in the UK have made similar points, and the beneficiaries of new rail systems seem mainly to be the relatively wealthy city centre workers and long distance commuters.*

The governments 10 year transport plan showed a similar bias in that it budgeted for £6 billion to be spent on the railways, but only £2 billion on the motorways and trunk roads that carry more than five times as much passenger and goods traffic. Even most of the latter expenditure has been held up awaiting the results of "Multi-Modal" Studies).

Note that for all those readers who don't have their own internet connection, Bromley Libraries now provide free web access.

The BBRAG web site, which as you probably know is at [www.bromleytransport.org.uk](http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk) , now has the latest news on the home page so you can go directly to it (you may need to scroll down to see it if you are using a lower resolution screen size - or click on the new "News" tab).

### What Does a Road Accident Cost?

When new road safety schemes are being considered, the projected savings are usually calculated. Most such schemes show a very quick "payback" period, at least when being designed! But how are the costs of the accidents that are saved actually worked out?



A Recent Accident in Sundridge Ave, Chislehurst

Well the government publishes a regular report called the "Highways Economics Note No.1" which attempts to answer that question (available from the Department of Transport if you want to see the full details).

Research in the early 1990s was used to determine both the direct costs (medical

treatment costs, lost output due to absence from work, associated police and insurers costs and damage to property) and indirect costs. The latter, the "human" cost is somewhat of a subjective item as it is worked out on a "willingness to pay" basis. It represents the "pain, grief and suffering to the casualty, relatives and friends in the case of injuries" for example.

The values calculated in the year 2000 were as follows as an "average per accident":

| Accident Severity | Lost Output £ | Medical & Other Direct £ | "Human" £ | Total £   |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Fatal             | 438,860       | 14,240                   | 870,780   | 1,323,880 |
| Serious           | 17,880        | 14,610                   | 121,620   | 154,110   |
| Slight            | 2,130         | 3,120                    | 10,130    | 15,380    |

Note that a serious injury is defined in the UK by an overnight hospital stay, a slight injury is simply any accident involving an injury however trivial (such accidents should legally be reported to the police whereas non injury accidents don't need to be).

For all injuries therefore, the average total cost per accident is £52,070 of which 71% is the "human" cost and the rest are more direct costs.

There are different figures for urban, rural or motorway road accidents (the latter tend to cost more), so for Bromley roads the likely cost is £63,000 per accident, after including a cost estimate for non-injury accidents which are not in the figures shown above.

However one has to be exceedingly careful when using the average figures. For example, take the recently proposed road safety scheme for Elmstead Lane in Chislehurst. This road had an average of about 6 slight injury accidents per year in the last few years (there were no serious or fatal accidents). The proposals might save one accident per year at a cost of about £50,000 (for the speed bumps or alternative treatments as proposed). If you took the average cost of all injury accidents as £63,000 then it looks a "no-brainer" as the payback is less than one year. However, if the only accidents saved are "slight" ones, as is quite likely in this case, then the benefit is £15,000 for an expenditure of £50,000 which doesn't look nearly as good.

If you actually study the accidents that took place in Elmstead Lane, it also seems very difficult to justify an average cost of £15,000 each - many of them were very trivial. One explanation for the discrepancy is that most of the benefit is supposedly the intangible “human” cost, and the direct benefit is actually only £3000 for an expenditure of £50,000! In reality the extra “willingness to pay” cost of £12,000 for a slight accident probably grossly overestimates what people would actually do if given the choice between spending the money on that or other things - their “willingness to pay” may be a pollsters mirage.

Of course that is not to argue that such expenditure is unreasonable, but the difficulty is that it may be more sensible to spend that amount on other road safety measures, or other social services such as improving the NHS, where a better “payback” may be achieved.

One point that clearly comes out from the above figures is that the cost of a fatal accident is many times more than that of a serious accident which is itself much more costly than a slight accident. Therefore road safety remedial measures that concentrate on fatal or serious accidents are clearly the most cost effective.

However where there are clusters of slight accidents then this can be symptomatic that more serious accidents will occur (such as in Dunkery Road, Mottingham). On the other hand a wide spread of minor accidents as on the rest of the Mottingham Estate, does not necessarily indicate that more serious accidents will occur (and they haven't in this case) so it was difficult to justify the wide area road hump scheme on that estate on a cost/benefit basis.

The use of “willingness to pay” to evaluate accident costs does provide a good way of comparing the relative costs of slight or serious injuries, but it distorts the cost justification versus other expenditure. For example it is rarely taken into account when evaluating the cost of major road improvement schemes or other social expenditure such as NHS facilities. In these cases, even when the justification is clear and there is a clear “willingness to pay” by the electorate, the government typically says they can't afford the cost, or that there are other priorities. You can possibly see why UK

roads are some of the safest in the world, but we spend more time in traffic jams than almost anyone else, and have one of the worst health systems in the developed world.

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## Another Planning System Failure



The Tollgate Garage Site

Mention has been made before of how the existing planning system fails to take into account traffic or road safety issues (this was also mentioned in the “Orbit” M25 study report). A good recent example is the proposed redevelopment of the Tollgate Garage in Chislehurst Road, Chislehurst (at the bottom of Old Hill near Chislehurst railway station).

This site is to be redeveloped into a four storey residential block, comprising 13 two bedroom flats and one three bedroom flat. However there is to be parking provision for only 16 cars (18 if you include 2 “visitor” spaces). This is clearly inadequate for the likely residents with the result that on-street parking will considerably increase.

This area already has a problem with on-street parking in surrounding residential roads due to it's proximity to the station where there is inadequate parking provision. In addition there is a road safety problem in this area. It is hazardous for pedestrians crossing the road, or for vehicles exiting from Lower Camden, due to the blind corner under the railway bridge. (*Editors Comment: As my son could tell you from personal experience*). More on-street parking will simply make this worse. The proposal actually breached the UDP guidelines of 2 parking spaces per dwelling, but council staff still recommended that the proposal be approved.

Despite many objections from local residents on the parking issue, the loss of a useful local amenity and the overdevelopment in a conservation area, the proposal was passed by the Planning Committee with minimal discussion.

*(Editors Comment: Another lost opportunity to improve road safety in the borough and stop general degradation of the environment).*

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## London Accident Figures Improve, But Bromley is Worse



The London Accident Analysis Unit (part of the GLA Transport for London body) recently reported that in the 6 months to June 2002, road accident casualty figures were significantly down.

For example, the number killed in London were down by 4% over the previous year, the number seriously injured was down by 6% and the number of slight injuries down by 12%. These numbers are gratifying, but no reason for the sudden improvement was given. *(Editor's Comment: However it is interesting to note that inner London boroughs, particularly Camden, Islington, Tower Hamlets and Kensington & Chelsea, showed by far the largest improvements - perhaps it's simply from the reduced speed of traffic in those areas due to sharply increased traffic congestion in recent months).*

Unfortunately Bromley stood out as an exception with a rise of 0.7% in casualties making it one of the few boroughs where accident injuries actually increased.

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## Orpington Multi-Storey Car Park



The proposed demolition of the Orpington Station Road car park has been covered in a previous article.

It is likely that it will be replaced by a Tesco supermarket with inadequate provision for existing parking demand.

The possible high maintenance cost of this car park was mentioned, but in fact the budget for maintenance is only £14,000 per annum for the next five years. This is probably easily covered by the existing parking charges. It would seem a pity to remove this valuable facility for local residents and business users, for so little benefit.

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## Congestion Charging Latest



According to a report in the Investors Chronicle, the company chosen to run the London Congestion Charging scheme expects "it to generate free cash flow of around £60m next year". So in fact, a major proportion of the

revenues from the scheme are simply being used to generate a profit for a private company, rather than being used to improve the transport infrastructure (TfL only expect to net £130m).

*(Editors Recommendation: Buy Capita, although you should bear in mind that Private Eye call them Capita because of their poor record on public sector projects. Warning: share prices can go up, down or sideways, but mainly down in the recent past).*

Incidentally Transport for London (TfL) recently advertised for an IT Manager in the computing trade press, to manage the "congestion charge outsourced contracts and cutting edge systems that underpin the scheme". The headlines refer to the aim of "reducing congestion by enhancing alternatives to the car", which is a rather odd way to describe the scheme - it makes it sound more like a carrot than a stick to beat the motorist with, which is what it really is.

Meanwhile the residents of London are finally waking up to the impending charges. Several anti-congestion charge web sites have been launched (refer to the previously mentioned [www.sod-u-ken.com](http://www.sod-u-ken.com) for a complete list) and several public demonstrations are planned.

One of the best ways around the charge is the use of 'green' vehicles that are exempt. These

are any ultra-low emission Vehicles, hybrid-electric vehicles and those converted to run on Liquid Petroleum Gas. If you are looking to beat the congestion charge you may be interested to know that Government sponsored organisations are offering grants and tax incentives to individuals and companies to convert their vehicles to alternative fuel technology. Conversion of cars to run on LPG is relatively low cost and you can recoup the cost in lower running charges fairly rapidly. Volvo recently announced their new Model "S60 Bifuel" that runs on either petrol or LPG and other manufacturers are likely to follow this path.

Other possibilities are "hybrid" vehicles like the Toyota Prius and Honda Insight that combine a small petrol engine with electric power. The result is very good fuel economy. If you do a lot of mileage, then these cars are already very practical alternatives simply on cost grounds. General Motors have just announced that they will be manufacturing similar vehicles in the USA very soon.

If you drive into London regularly, the extra congestion charge saving would be an additional financial bonus on top of the other benefits of these kind of alternatives.

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## Air Quality in Bromley

You may have read some alarmist reports in the local press recently about air quality in Bromley, based on a report by the Environmental Research Group of King's College London (see [www.erg.kcl.ac.uk/london](http://www.erg.kcl.ac.uk/london) for background information). For example one article commenced with the statement "*Residents in Bromley are being exposed to dangerously high levels of pollution.....*" and continued with "*levels of fine particulate pollution - which are linked to respiratory disease - were worse in outer London than most areas of central London...*".

These statements are in fact simply misleading and unduly alarmist.

The basis of the above statements are pollution counts taken at a site near the junction of Widmore Road and Kentish Way, which is one of the worst locations in Bromley for heavy vehicles and queuing traffic. It is not typical of

the pollution experienced in most of Bromley! Even then the figures only exceeded government guidelines in 30 days of the year. As has been shown by reports produced by Bromley Council staff, it is unlikely that Bromley residents are suffering from any health risks from current pollution levels (which are getting better anyway as older vehicles are replaced).

Unlike central London boroughs, and those near Heathrow, which have very high levels of general air pollution, the problems in Bromley are very localised - and even then for only a few days in the year. This position was more fully explained in our Newsletters 10 and 12 published in 2001.

It might be a good idea to try and reduce the traffic congestion at this junction so as to avoid this local air pollution problem, but that would be a sensible move anyway simply on the grounds of transport efficiency.

Incidentally the last report produced by this group (otherwise known as the London Air Quality Network) was in December 2001 so it's not clear what prompted the recent press reports other than the anniversary of the great London smog of 1952. The 2001 report included such statements as "Annual mean concentrations of NOx and NO2 fell markedly.

This is heartening as it shows that national strategies - particularly for cleaner vehicles - are having an effect." and "The other pollutants CO, SO2 and PM10 (*ie. fine particulates*) also decreased further during 2000, which is good news for air quality.", and "During 2000 there were no major pollution incidents as seen in previous years.". Clearly a very different view.

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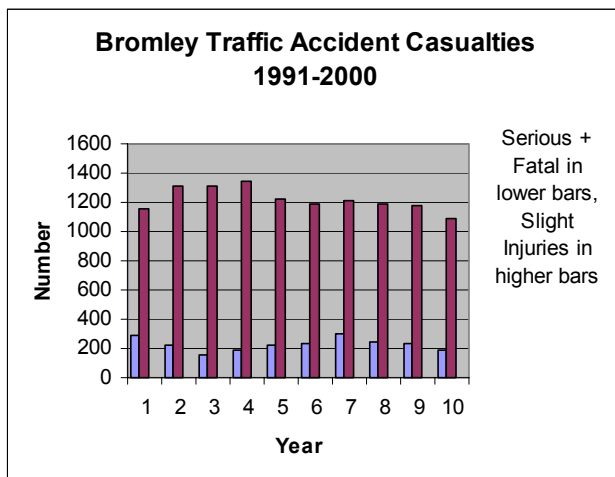
## Improving Transport in Bromley by Roger Lawson (Part 2 of 3)



Note that this is a continuation of the article that appeared in our previous Newsletter. The previous part gave an overview of transport in Bromley and covered how to reduce traffic congestion. The full article can be viewed on our web site.



## Improving Road Safety



Cutting the number of road accidents is clearly an important measure, and has widespread public support. In addition, if you measure the economic costs that arise from major road accidents then the payback from simple measures can be very good. The return on most road safety measures is in theory very quick (supposedly less than a year for many road engineering proposals), so the rate of implementation is more limited by available funds than by suitable targets. However, as you can see from the above chart, there has been only a slight improvement in injuries in Bromley over the last few years. So despite considerable expenditure on road hump and other schemes, the benefits seem to be a mirage in many cases. Moreover much of the improvement is probably accounted for by improved vehicle safety, rather than road engineering measures.

In general terms BBRAG agrees with the current policy to target those accident black spots that offer the best cost/benefit return. However, we think that the effectiveness of expenditure can be improved.

What has happened in the recent past is that many traffic calming schemes consisting of multiple speed bumps have been devised to tackle relatively simple problems. The main faults here are:

a - A preference for speed bumps as a road safety measure when in fact they are not particularly cost effective.

b - A failure to spend adequate time and money devising road safety schemes. In other words, there is too small a proportion of the budget spent on devising the scheme as opposed to actual construction. The result is often a poorly designed scheme, that relies on simplistic techniques (such as speed bumps) and which does not please anyone. These schemes are often more expensive to construct than more carefully thought out proposals would be. In fact the budget for such schemes have often been predicated on the use of a typical hump scheme before they are even designed, which is truly ridiculous.

c - The failure to use local knowledge and to consult with residents and other parties (such as BBRAG), before firm proposals are conceived. If you take the recent "60 speed bump" proposals for Poverest Road, Elmstead Lane and Queensway, proposals were developed by the council's consultants without talking first to local residents associations, street residents, BBRAG, local emergency services, bus companies, or anyone else. How they can do this simply astonishes me.

Lots of local knowledge about road conditions, the cause of accidents and how best to improve matters is simply not taken into account. Of course one of the reasons why this is not done is probably because the consultants do not have an adequate budget to give them the time to do this.

At present, there is a formal "consultation" process after the proposals have been reviewed by councillors, but it is very difficult to get significant changes made as a result. Council staff are like many civil servants in that they do not wish to be seen as having made a mistake and therefore will automatically tend to argue against revising their proposals. In reality, responsible people who submit objections are often ignored (eg. the police and ambulance services), and road users are likely not to be consulted anyway. There is no legal obligation to take into account any objections made, just to listen to what is said, so the existing consultation process is deeply flawed.

One of the problems that bedevils road safety policy is the curse of "gesture politics".

Concerned about the accident figures? Then propose a reduction of speed limits on all roads! Changing a few road signs won't cost much and, after all we know "speed kills" - the government tells us so.

Apart from the fact that the latter statement is not supported by the facts (excessive speed is a contributory factor in relatively few road accidents), there is no evidence either that cutting speed limits has any effect on road accident injury figures. Even anecdotal evidence in Bromley supports this view - for example there was a recent fatal accident to a motorcyclist in Perry Street (the A222 in Chislehurst) soon after the speed limit was reduced from 40 to 30 mph.

Look at the national accident figures - massive expenditure on speed camera and radar enforcement of speed limits has not reduced accident figures significantly.

You might say, well at worst such activities may be harmless. Unfortunately it detracts resources, both cash and management time, from more effective measures that could reduce accidents. It's a distraction because it suggests action is taking place when no useful action is accomplished. Accident reduction is a difficult problem, and there is no simplistic solution. So we would like to see less emphasis on simplistic speed reduction approaches, and more hard work on the nitty gritty of tackling problems in an appropriate manner. More thought, less action might be the slogan.

Note also that Bromley has a very successful educational programme for school children. Further expenditure on this, and on trying to cut the accidents to elderly people who haphazardly cross the road by appropriate education should also be considered.

### **Reducing Air Pollution**

Bromley has much less of a problem from road vehicle pollution than many other London boroughs, so I won't spend a lot of time on this issue. The problem is also like to resolve itself over the next few years as newer vehicles are much less polluting than older ones. However, there are particular "hot" spots at certain junctions and other heavily congested areas. For

example where there are a lot of HGVs or buses present such as in some parts of Sevenoaks Way and the High Street in Orpington.

The Mayor of London's strategy to improve matters was in fact generally quite sound (unlike some of his other policies). This included more encouragement for using alternative fuels, and particularly for switching public transport and public service vehicles.

Improving vehicle emissions is the most practical way to reduce pollution. For example, Ken Livingstone recently stated that 25% of particulates in the atmosphere of London came from black cabs (and the rest probably mainly comes from older buses and HGVs). Particulates are a major health hazard and aggravate such conditions as asthma. He promised to tackle the taxi problem, and that all bus engines will be replaced by 2005.



The Polluting London Taxi

Encouraging the use of low emission vehicles or alternative fuels in Bromley could be done by offering free parking as is done elsewhere. Similarly the establishment of an information and education policy in this area would be worthwhile.

Note also that removing traffic congestion and speed bumps would also make a positive contribution to air pollution. Incidentally the London congestion charging scheme was never designed to improve air pollution and will not do so, which shows that reducing traffic, particularly car traffic which is the easiest to reduce, has very little benefit in regard to air pollution.

Do you believe that public transport uses less energy, makes less contribution to global warming and should therefore be encouraged anyway? It's probably not so. Look at the following table which shows the fuel efficiency of public transport versus automobiles from a study made in the USA in 1999:

| Personal Vehicle                          | Passenger Miles | BTU    | BTU/Passenger Mile |
|---|-----------------|--------|--------------------|
| Automobile                                | 2.511           | 9,126  | 3,635              |
| Personal Truck                            | 1.042           | 4,702  | 4,511              |
| Total                                     | 3.553           | 13,828 | 3,892              |
| Bus                                       | 0.020           | 97.7   | 4,802              |
| Urban Rail                                | 0.014           | 44.7   | 3,168              |
| Commuter Rail                             | 0.009           | 25.7   | 2,932              |
| Total                                     | 0.043           | 168.1  | 3,889              |
| Transit Savings per Passenger Mile (BTUs) |                 |        | 2.7                |
| Percentage Saving                         |                 |        | 0.1%               |

In Trillions of Passenger Miles and BTUs

Source: Table 2.10 USDOE Transportation Energy Book 2001

Note the insignificant benefit of public transportation overall, and the advantage of automobiles over buses.

### **Improving Bus Services**

Ken Livingstone stated at the recent "London Conference" that bus passengers in London were up 25% this year, whereas they have previously shown a steady decline for many years. Apparently this has been done by reformation of services and significant extra funding - between £150 and £200 million per year (although some of that has gone in increased pay for bus drivers).

Some of this extra cost will be funded from the London Congestion Charge although that scheme is now only expected to generate about £100 million per annum of net revenue. However, the "displaced" road users are primarily expected to move to using buses.

It is certainly true that there are a lot more buses in central London - in fact from personal experience I would say that there are now so many that they have actually made traffic congestion worse in some roads. However people seem to still have major concerns about buses on two grounds: comfort and safety.

In respect of comfort, some of the newer buses seem worse than the old Routemaster type which were fine in their day but are now archaic. Some of the new ones have a very hot top deck in summer, few opening windows and otherwise are badly designed. In comparison with the modern motor car, buses seem to be crude. The former now almost all have air conditioning, with comfortable suspensions, well built seats, music or other entertainment as you desire, and of course your own choice of travelling companions. How can anyone expect a bus to compete with a private motor car unless it is of a comparable standard? Why would anyone wait for a bus, which may or may not arrive on time, in the typical cold, wet, English winter rather than step into their motor car?

To be attractive to the typical Bromley resident, particularly for more than a very short journey, buses need to be air conditioned, have decently sized and comfortable seats at lower densities, have better suspensions, have more powerful and quieter engines, have more security devices and have more polite and better trained drivers. There needs to be a minimum national standard for public buses, set by the government, because at present the economics of bus operation mean that the lowest quality, cheapest buses, will tend to be the norm.



A Typical "Uncomfortable" London Bus

By doing some of the things mentioned below, you may be able to encourage some people to move to using buses, and by using a big stick on others, such as penal road charges, you may get them to move, but let's not kid ourselves that the net transfer in Bromley is going to be very substantial unless bus quality is improved.

What can be done to encourage the use of existing bus services? Some of the possibilities are:

- a) Better reliability of bus timetables can be beneficial, and clearly providing dedicated bus lanes where there is space could be advantageous here. However such provision is costly and needs to be examined very carefully as to whether it actually provides significant benefits and does not simply cause a "dis-benefit" for other road users. Often bus lanes are underutilised.
- b) More indication of when buses are likely to arrive by electronic signing on bus shelters, or messages that can be picked up on your mobile phone. London Transport already have several initiatives in these areas. More comfortable bus shelters would also be a good idea.
- c) More attention to security. For example, TfL have started a trial scheme with the police to have them travel on buses. They not only target crime on the buses themselves, but can drop off to deal with bus lane and parking infringements that delay buses.
- d) More services, particularly for outer suburbs. One possibility already being looked at is to introduce "express" services with limited stopping points for long distance services.
- e) More "park & ride" services for shoppers and business staff could be introduced. Such services already operate for Christmas shoppers in Bromley and I believe their extension to other times is being looked at.

BBRAG supports many of these initiatives, but unfortunately they tend to be labour intensive and costly.



## BBRAG Background Information

The Bromley Borough Roads Action Group (B.B.R.A.G.) stands for a more democratic and more rational approach to the traffic management problems of the London Borough of Bromley. Our initial formation some years ago was based on opposition to the kind of traffic calming scheme that was being introduced in the borough that simply caused more traffic congestion, and general inconvenience to road users, without any significant benefit in terms of road accident reductions. In fact, the money wasted on such schemes could have been much better spent on actual improvements to road safety in other areas. We now take a more general interest in all transport and associated environmental issues in the borough of Bromley and the greater London area. This includes traffic management schemes, public transport, road safety, parking policies, air pollution, other transport environmental issues such as noise, and associated local and central government policies. Our prime objective is to promote improvements in the transport infrastructure while stopping wasted expenditure on unpopular, ineffective or inappropriate policies.

## Contact Information

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Our internet web address is: [www.bromleytransport.org.uk](http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk). This contains much useful information including articles extracted from our newsletters. It also contains a "News" page which is updated regularly with items of topical interest.

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