



BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 21 (April 2003)

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Editorial

Included in this edition is the news that many of our members have no doubt been waiting and hoping for. Namely the rejection of speed humps on through routes in several parts of Bromley (see first article). Other articles cover the recent calls by ambulance staff to stop delaying emergency calls, a look at the economics of the Croydon Tramlink (hardly the success it has been claimed to be), and the cost of bus subsidies, plus the latest local news.

Some readers may have recently noticed a letter published in the News Shopper from a Celia Knight. It commenced "Roger Lawson is a member of that Chislehurst clique of BMW owners who resent being made to drive within the speed limit".

Very amusing, but I would like to advise you that I have never owned a BMW and most of what she said in the rest of her letter was also factually incorrect. Clearly Ms Knight feels she has to make up fallacies when she cannot provide a good argument for speed humps.

Roger Lawson, Editor

No Speed Bumps in Road Safety Plans



Most of our readers will be aware of the proposed traffic calming schemes for Elmstead Lane, Poverest Road, Queensway, Maple Road and Leasons Hill. Council Environment Portfolio Holder George Taylor (see picture left) recently decided that these schemes will not

use "vertical deflections". They will still go ahead, subject to funding by TfL in the next financial year, but will use other traffic calming measures such as signage and "speed visors" which you may have seen elsewhere in the borough (these display vehicle speeds and have been effective at cutting speeds).

The proposed "throttle point" on Leasons Hill is also being dropped (almost nobody seemed to like it) and is to be replaced by two pedestrian refuges. There will also be a zebra crossing added to the plans for Elmstead Lane (near the station), but only one zebra or pelican crossing outside Safeway will be installed in Queensway.

Although council staff still argued that the hump schemes were more cost effective, the result of the public consultation exercise was very clear cut.

The following figures show the percentages voting for each option from local residents (“No Humps” means “alternative non-vertical deflection option proposals”):

Road	Humps	No Humps	Do Nothing
Elmstead Lane	30%	53%	17%
Maple Rd	54%	37%	9%
Queensway	13%	58%	29%
Poverest Rd	41%	41%	18%
Leesons Hill	N/A	59%	41%

Clearly a decisive victory for those opposed to speed humps. And note that the response rates were between 40% and 65%, except in Maple Road, when they are normally more like 25%, so you can see that the activities of BBRAG in stimulating debate on this subject (and the hard work done by your executive committee in circulating leaflets) were well rewarded.

There were also surveys of road users done in Elmstead Lane and Queensway and here the results were even more decisive. The questions put in this case were different as they were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the use of speed humps, cushions, tables or chicanes as a way of making the road safer. *(Editors Comment: Sounds like the usual loaded questions but never mind as the result was still clear cut).*

Between 50% and 80% of drivers disagreed with all these methods of traffic calming. There was particularly strong opposition to all of them in Queensway, and to the Chicane option in either road. Speed humps were in disfavour in 67% and 79% of responses for Elmstead Lane and Queensway respectively, but tables and cushions were only slightly better received.

(Editors Comment: Hopefully that will firmly kill off any support for the idea that the general public want speed humps everywhere. Clearly even the street residents, when fully informed, are against such traffic calming measures.)

Council staff have said that future road safety measures in Bromley are likely to concentrate more on reducing the killed and seriously injured (KSI) so such schemes as those mentioned above, or one for Southborough Road, where

the accidents are mainly slight, are unlikely to be considered in future.

New schemes are therefore likely to be targeted at such roads as Hastings Road, High St Beckenham, Beckenham Road, High St Penge, Anerley Road, Anerley Hill, Mottingham Road, Widmore Road and Croydon Road. Many of these are “A” roads of course which are controlled by Transport for London and hence may depend on action by them.

(Editors Comment: This new emphasis seems sensible because it is clear from the relative costs of road safety accidents covered in our last newsletter that it is generally more cost effective to target more serious accidents).

Patients Killed by Speed Humps



The Chairman of the London Ambulance Service, Sigurd Reinton, recently claimed that speed humps are killing hundreds of Londoners by delaying 999 crews. He said “For every life saved through traffic calming, more are lost because of ambulance delays.”

There are about 8,000 heart attack victims in London every year, and London has a particularly poor survival rate. One reason is no doubt because even a small delay increases the death rate enormously. For example 90% of victims survive if treated within 2 minutes, but it falls to 10% if treatment is delayed for 6 minutes.

So for every additional minute of delay caused, up to an extra 800 victims of cardiac arrest could die. This compares with a total of 300 people who die from traffic accidents.

Mr Reinton complained that the increasing number of anti-car measures such as speed humps, road closures, road narrowing and throttle points caused significant delays in responding to emergencies. Ambulances had to go even slower if carrying a critically ill patient.

Note that Kevin Knight, who is responsible for local London Ambulance services, also spoke against speed bumps using the same arguments at the recent council Environment Portfolio holders meeting. He said they were now meeting the government target of reaching 75% of life threatening calls within 8 minutes (*Editor: which is not good enough to save most heart attack victims - see above*), but it was getting more and more difficult to do so and even a few seconds delay could impact the chance of survival for heart attack victims. Traffic calming features caused significant delays - for example 50% of the ambulances from one station would have had to go through the proposed Leasons Hill "throttle" where there would be queuing traffic.

Research in the USA supports these claims. One report from Boulder, Colorado suggests that for every life saved by traffic calming, as many as 85 people may die because emergency vehicles are delayed. It found response times are typically extended by 14% by speed-reduction measures.

Another study conducted by the fire department in Austin, Texas showed an increase in the travel time of ambulances when transporting victims of up to 100%.

Note that Kathleen Calongne who lives in Boulder, Colorado has produced a note that gives more details on the opposition to speed humps in the USA and includes detail references to the above mentioned research - please contact the editor if you would like a copy, which is a summary of a 400 page report on the subject of speed humps.

(Editors Comment: it has been a well known fact for many years that the place to have a heart attack is anywhere other than London. Ambulance response times in the capital have always been bad, but more speed humps certainly do not help.)

If you think that failure to get to you in time when you do have a heart attack will be the end of your worries, think again. In Liverpool hearses have apparently been getting stuck when going over humps due to their lower axles. Overweight mourners have to be asked to get out so that the vehicles can negotiate the speed humps, much to the embarrassment of the undertakers.

Liverpool City Council have agreed to reduce the humps size by 25mm over the next 15 years.

Note that enclosed with this issue of our Newsletter is a leaflet recently published by the Association of British Drivers (A.B.D.) on the subject of speed humps. It covers many of the arguments against them. The A.B.D. campaigns against speed humps and other anti-car legislation in the UK on a national basis. They have taken over the historic role in many respects of the AA and RAC since the latter appear to have lost interest in contentious issues since being acquired by commercial businesses.

Croydon Tramlink - Is it a Success?



An interesting recent report in the Financial Times was headlined "Croydon Trams Facing Cash Crisis". This was based on the fact that in the financial

statements recently filed at Companies House, it was stated that "At the time of preparation of these accounts, the company did not have sufficient funds to continue trading beyond March 25th 2003". Restructuring or further funding was clearly necessary .

Tramlink was built under a PFI scheme and is operated by a joint venture between Amey and an offshore company. Amey was reported as saying that there was a "shortfall in revenue" (presumably actual as against budget). The operating company, Tramtrack Croydon, in fact made a loss of £9.5million on a turnover of £13.4million in the year to March 2002. That's ignoring any operating subsidies they received (probably similar to those of buses - see next article). That's equivalent to a loss of 55p on every passenger trip.

But presumably that calculation ignores the capital funding provided by the government, which if they had paid an economic interest rate on it would have increased the annual losses by about £9million so the real loss per trip is probably more like £1.



Croydon Tramlink Map

Now oddly enough, the Croydon Tramlink is often mentioned as an example of how successful a light rail or tram system can be. Ken Livingstone is pushing ahead with proposals for trams in other areas such as West London (where it would run down a main road and occupy normal road space for part of the way, much to the annoyance of local residents and businesses). Trams are seen as quieter and less polluting than either buses or railways, but the costs are rarely mentioned.

A study of the impact of the Croydon Tramlink scheme was published last year which can be read in full on the TfL web site at: http://www.tfl.gov.uk/trams/press/pr_2september2002.shtml

The following is an interesting table from the report, based on a survey of Tramlink passengers:

Mode previously used	%
Bus	69
Car	19
Rail	7
Walk	4
Other	1

In other words, the vast majority of previous users were bus passengers, and it even persuaded some walkers to stop doing so.

Of course the above figures don't tell you how many current car users stopped using public transport! There are always going to be some people moving from one mode to another.

Although some car users were clearly persuaded to change to public transport, other information in the report tells you that car journeys only fell by 4% which is barely perceptible and could be due to random annual variations.

The users of the trams were generally very satisfied, as they might well be bearing in mind the massive cost subsidy on their fares. But they also thought the trams were more comfortable and more reliable than buses.

Incidentally there have been 2 fatalities so far associated with these trams so it would be wrong to assume that they are safer than other transport modes such as buses.

The Croydon Tramlink operates mainly on old rail lines or new private rights of way, but part of it also operates on the street and it is seen to contribute to congestion in South Croydon (tram breakdowns can also cause major traffic difficulties, and it certainly created many problems during the period of construction).

What did this wonderful system cost? Well here's a quotation from a web site that is enthusiastic about the scheme and also supplies lots of other useful background information (<http://www.croydon-tramlink.co.uk>): "The total capital cost was estimated to be £200m of which £125m was provided by Central Government in recognition of the benefit to other road users and the easing of congestion." (this statement was made to the House of Commons by the Secretary of State).

(Editors Comments: Effectively 125 million pounds of taxpayers money was spent to provide minor improvements to the comfort of former bus passengers, and we will probably have to bale out the business also in due course. There has been negligible reduction in car use which was the original justification for government funding, and no obvious benefit to anyone else (nowhere is any information supplied indicating that some people are travelling who were not doing so before).

Are the running costs of light rail systems likely to be better than buses? From other surveys the answer is definitely no, and as you can see this scheme already has major operating losses. Surely the money invested in the Tramlink would have been much better spent on improving the existing road, rail and

bus networks. If buses were subsidised to the same level as trams are in this scheme, and had the same level of capital investment, then they would be a paragon of comfort and reliability. Buses are also a lot more flexible in routing and timing to cope with changes in demand. Anyone who advocates the widespread re-establishment of trams simply has not taken notice of the facts).

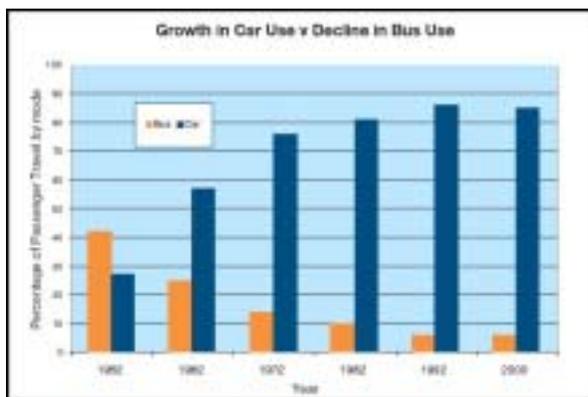
Bus Subsidies

The Commission for Integrated Transport (CfiT - see web site <http://www.cfit.gov.uk>) have recently published a report on Public Subsidy of the Bus Industry. Some interesting data is contained therein. For example, the actual revenue from bus passengers in 2000/2001 was £1.5 billion, but the total operating subsidy was £1.0 billion. In other words, they got two thirds of their operating costs from public funds. They also got £100 million in capital expenditure from public funds.

Subsidies come from such sources of funding as concessionary fares for the young, elderly and disabled, school transport, secured route funding, fuel duty rebate, and local community funds. If you exclude the concessionary fares and school transport then operating funding was still £511 million.

However they did manage to make a profit of 9% of turnover after all the above subsidies, which is more than you can say for the Croydon Tramlink covered in the previous article.

As has been pointed out in previous Newsletters, nationally bus usage has been falling. While motoring costs have been declining in real terms, bus fares have been rising over the last few years. See diagram below for the trends.



Only in London has bus usage been rising, probably because subsidies there are even larger and alternatives even fewer (it's difficult to determine exactly comparable figures but for example most of the anticipated net £130m per annum from the London Congestion Charging scheme is going into buses which were already highly subsidised).

So what did the CfiT recommend? That subsidies be further increased to try and halt the decline in usage.

(Editors Comment: Another attempt at behaving like King Canute and using taxpayers money to try and halt the inexorable trend of history.)

More Cars But Less Car Usage



The results of the 2001 census have recently been published (details can be seen on the Bromley Council web site). Interesting points in comparison with the results 10 years ago are as follows:

- The population of Bromley was almost unchanged. Clearly the extra housebuilding is mainly taken by people moving to larger houses or the formation of more households resulting from divorce and other social changes.

- In Bromley car ownership rose only very slightly (77% now have one or more vehicles when it was 76% ten years ago). However in London as a whole it rose from 59% to 63% and in England it rose from 67% to 73%).

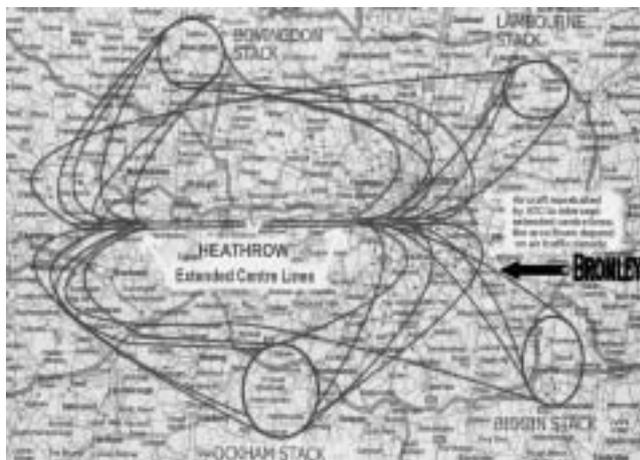
- The number of people using a car as the main mode of travel to work fell from 50% to 45%, and public transport use rose from 33% to 36%. This probably stems from more commuting into central London due to the loss of local employment, but it is not totally clear from the raw data. The number walking or cycling to work continued to fall.

Airport Consultation

Following the Government losing its legal case on including Gatwick in the South-East Airport Consultation process, the consultation document has been reissued. As BBRAG members had varied opinions on this subject in our last member survey, we suggest you obtain a copy yourself if you want to express opinions on this matter. These can be obtained from DfT Free Literature, PO Box 236, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7NB, or look at web site <http://www.airconsult.gov.uk>.

(Editors Comment: I still think the plan put forward many years ago to put a new airport on Maplin Sands off the Essex coast should be reconsidered, but it doesn't rate a mention in the consultation document).

Incidentally, HACAN Clearskies, the objectors to aircraft noise, recently published a map of landing flight paths for Heathrow which is given below.



You can probably see that Bromley is clearly under several possible flight paths (if anyone would like a higher resolution copy of this map please contact the editor). It seems the reason why noise in parts of Bromley has risen in recent years is that the position of the aircraft stacks have not changed, but the flight paths have moved slightly to use more direct paths which is why some people are more affected by noise (the volume of aircraft has probably gone up over the years also of course).

Green Lane Cycle Lane

A decision was recently made to retain the cycle lane on Green Lane, Chislehurst, despite the opposition of local residents. The latter raised a petition against the design of this scheme when it was first installed two years ago, and recently voted by 24 to 9 against it in a final consultation exercise, but council staff still recommended it remain. BBRAG also opposed it on safety grounds.

(Editors Comment: As so often in the past, council staff think they know better than local residents and refuse to admit making a mistake. The road is simply not wide enough to support a cycle lane.)

The YQ Campaign

The latest wheeze to get us out of our cars is the "YQ" campaign to be run by the council (*Editor: I think that stands for "Why Queue"*).

This will consist of lamppost banners placed on congested roads with slogans such as "Give a Lift", "Ever Heard of Bike Rage", "Ever Been Delayed Walking" and "Do It Once A Week" (*Editor: not sure what that last one means*).

This will be funded by SELTRANS as part of the Don't Choke London Campaign (see web site <http://www.seltrans.co.uk> and web site <http://www.dontchokolondon.co.uk>). The cost will be £22,000 all funded by Seltrans, which is itself funded by London Boroughs including Bromley (*Editor: so I guess we are paying for it after all*).

Old Hill Speed Humps

Despite the policy of a preference for "non-vertical deflections", it seems that we may still get speed humps in Old Hill, Chislehurst. There is a housing development taking place in the road, where the exit is concealed by a bend on the hill. Planning permission was agreed only on condition that the developer agreed to pay for traffic calming measures (a Section 106 Agreement). This he agreed to do and it was to be speed humps. Council staff seem to be arguing that this means humps must be put in,

although it is quite possible that other measures could be agreed. News is still awaited on this subject.

(Editors Comment: The proposed "split humps" would not slow all traffic so would not remove all the dangers and alternative traffic calming measures are also possible. But it is a pity that this development was agreed in the first place - another planning system failure).

Congestion, Congestion



To quote Terry Wogan in a recent radio programme, "I don't know what it is about this country, but everywhere you go, you don't".

With Ken Livingstone's London congestion charging scheme now in operation, initial reports are mixed. In central London, TfL report that traffic was down by over 17% at the time of writing, and that is certainly borne out by anecdotal evidence. Even taking into account the alleged removal of road works and rephasing of traffic lights, it does appear that many people are avoiding driving into the centre.

However, on routes outside the charging zone, Trafficmaster reported more congestion. One exception was the A20 though and certainly traffic in south-east London seems very light of late. Perhaps the reopening of the A2 in Blackheath has had some beneficial impact in that regard.

(Editors Comment: Even traffic in Bromley seems lighter than normal recently, and such routes as the Blackwall Tunnel are much less congested - that might be used by some vehicles as a route into central London though).

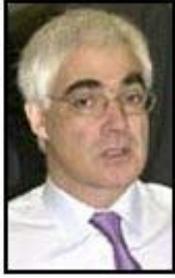
Note that one has to be careful with interpreting traffic data because it has also been reported by TfL that traffic in London fell by 18% in the last two years, before the congestion charge came in. This is probably more a symptom of reduced traffic flow from congestion than a fall in demand (average traffic speeds fell from 9.4 mph to 8.6 mph).

Ken Livingstone has already said that he wants to extend the congestion charging zone to other parts of London. For example, the rest of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Tower Hamlets. He plans to do that very soon, having jumped to the conclusion that the scheme is already a success.

Meanwhile, government advisor, Professor David Begg has advocated extending it to outer London. Bromley may well be considered for such an extension according to other press reports. He said "There's a big growth in traffic and congestion in outer London and we need to look at tackling that. It can't be tackled just by improving public transport."

(Editors Comment: He's certainly right on the last point. Unfortunately congestion charging schemes are like permit parking schemes, it's better to live within the zone rather than outside once you have them. Personally I think the congestion charging zone boundary should be set at the natural boundary of the M25, just to discourage the provincials from clogging up our streets (I'm only joking), but this shows how difficult it is to draw a natural dividing point which is not going to inconvenience some people. The major sufferers from the London congestion charge are those who live on the boundary, and the low paid shift workers, rather than the comparatively wealthy city business workers. I think it is a bit early to jump to conclusions on the effectiveness of the scheme in reducing congestion, but on balance I am still opposed to it. Enforcement also does not seem to be very effective from my personal experience of driving in and out of the zone without being fined. Car park operators in central London are also undermining the scheme by offering £5 discounts, and if traffic continues to be so light then more people will find it attractive to drive into the City or West End).

Incidentally, the extra subsidy for buses in London since Ken Livingstone took charge is reported as being £250 million per annum, whereas the congestion charge net contribution was only forecast to be £130 million (it could be even less if traffic volumes remain so low), so the congestion charge is not solely paying for improved public transport - you and I as London tax payers are.



Meanwhile in the nation as a whole, congestion is likely to get worse, despite the government announcing a £5.5 billion road widening plan (none of this is in the South East incidentally). This will come out of the £180 billion for transport earmarked in the 10 year

Transport Strategy published in 2000. Alastair Darling, Transport Secretary (picture left), has admitted however in a recent interview for the Economist that the congestion problem could get worse. At best the expenditure would hold things steady, but it is unlikely to improve matters.

(Editors Comment: Does £5.5 billion sound a lot of money to you? Well it's just a small fraction of the taxation raised from motorists which is £45 billion per year whereas the expenditure of £5.5 billion will be spread over several years. The Confederation of British Industry reckons that congestion costs the economy £20 billion per year.)

Note that rail "modernisation" may cost £73 billion, equivalent to £1000 for every man, woman and child in the country when most people in the UK rarely use a train (on average only 13 journeys per head per year go by rail, compared with 16 by bicycle). Meanwhile passenger rail uses two to three times the fuel required by express buses capable of doing the same job at a quarter of the cost (these figures come from Paul Withrington of Transwatch).

Interesting Web Sites

The following web sites have been added to the "Links" page of our web site (which is of course <http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk>) - that page is always worth visiting if you are looking for information on transport or political matters:

Mayorwatch (<http://www.mayorwatch.org.uk>) - this site covers news related to the GLA and London Mayor.

Parking Tickets (<http://www.parkingticket.co.uk>) - covers regulations on parking tickets, particularly in London and the South East.

Powershift (<http://www.powershift.org.uk>) - covers alternative fuel vehicles and associated conversions - essential reading if you want to avoid paying the London congestion charge.

Change of Address

We have a new postal address which is as follows: BBRAG, PO Box 62, Chislehurst, BR7 5YB. The change is purely for administrative convenience and you can continue to use the old address for the time being although it would be preferable that future communications use the new address.

Letters

From B.B. of Southborough Lane, Bromley:

"We had a speed hump outside our house in New Cross and it turned a quiet street into a nightmare of noise. Loads shift going over humps then traffic accelerates away, dropping a gear and adding to pollution. Personally I have a brain cyst and going over humps hurts. We don't need more humps."

(Editors Comment: yet another person who finds speed humps exceedingly painful.)

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



Note that this is a continuation of the article that appeared in our previous Newsletter. The previous parts gave an overview of transport in Bromley and covered how to reduce traffic congestion, improve road safety, reduce pollution and improve bus services. The full article can be viewed on our web site.

Trains, Underground, Light Rail and Trams

Train services suffer from the same problems as bus services to a large extent, which were covered in a previous edition, but they have also experienced problems recently with growth of use but inability to expand capacity, and the debacle of privatisation.

Expanding and improving train services, or the extension of underground or "light rail" systems such as the DLR into Bromley, would appear to be a good idea, but is unfortunately outside local control. In addition, introducing new lines would create major conflicts with existing land use.



A Typical Connex South-East Train

Some people have suggested introducing trams such as has allegedly been successful in Croydon. But in Croydon most of the route ran on disused rail lines or existing park land. Running them down the centre of roads, such as is currently proposed in west London, creates major objections from local residents and businesses. The writer is old enough to remember trams and electric trolley buses before they were widely dismantled, and although they had many advantages, at the end of the day they proved inflexible and costly. One can reroute a bus, or put on new bus services in a matter of weeks, or even days, but building a new tram line takes years and incurs enormous capital costs. If population or business movements occur, as they tend to, you are often left with an unprofitable service, and you can't easily meet the needs of new developments.

In summary, the author does not think that new train, light rail, tram or other similar services are going to be the answer to most of our problems. It is more likely that expanding the capacity of existing routes, and making them more accessible to the public is the way forward. So for example, improving interchanges between public services, and providing more car parking at train stations to encourage public transport use.

Regretfully, since Railtrack took over the former British Rail station car parks, the charges have risen enormously and the provision has often got worse. In addition, land that could have been used for additional parking provision has been sold off. Bromley Council's policies even appear to have been to discourage long term car parking at stations or nearby, thus discouraging the use of public transport for the majority of the journey. For example, they have removed on-street parking by the use of permit parking schemes, changed the pricing structure in public car parks to discourage long term commuter use, set in place planning policies to discourage new long term car parks, and even proposed demolishing the Orpington Station Road Car Park that is used to some extent by commuters. These policies are short sighted and misguided.

Encouraging Cycling and Walking



Cycling has been in decline for many years. Reasons are perceived safety risks, a climate that makes it uncomfortable in winter and the simple fact that with more wealth, people can generally afford quicker, more comfortable transport. Incidentally Bromley Council have an objective to increase cycling as a "journey to work" means from 2.1% as it was in 1991 to 8% in 2011, but the 2001 census results clearly show they are failing. As with other parts of their adopted transport policies, it may be a great ideal to aim for, but it is not likely to be practically achievable.

Confusing aspirations for a perfect world with realistic objectives bedevils transport policies in Bromley, as it does in the rest of the UK.

In fact, in 1999 cyclists fell to 0.5% of all recorded traffic in Bromley, so if it falls any further it will be difficult to measure.

In Bromley there are the particular problems that many of our roads are quite narrow, increasing the risk, and there are a number of steep hills, particularly around Chislehurst. This is always going to mean that cycling is a minority interest. Establishing cycle paths on the wider roads is also not always a good idea. There seems to be little evidence that they improve cyclist safety. Much better to establish them on

the verge or as part of the pavement (so long as they can be clearly separated from pedestrians), or where possible as a separate route.

Incidentally Bromley is supporting the London Cycle Network (LCN) as part of the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy - the cost of this will total £60 million so it's a pretty generous level of expenditure on very few users.

Encouraging walking is surely more of an educational problem, although providing footpaths away from congested and polluted roads may be of some help. Anyway Bromley has a "Pedestrian Strategy" document if you really want to learn more.

Planning Policies



The UK planning system, and the way it is operated in Bromley, is a major impediment to the establishment of an efficient transport network.

In the past, planning restrictions have actually resulted in more travel than is necessary, as offices and industrial developments had to be in zones that were separate to housing. In fact, this approach is even being perpetuated in the new GLA policies where commercial developments are targeted for the city and west end, with just a few minor spots in the suburbs, such as existing business parks in the south west of London. This might have been logical when industrial enterprises were typically very polluting, and commercial operations needed to be physically contiguous for good communications, but it no longer makes any sense.

The end result of these policies is that people commute further and spend longer doing so - in fact the average Londoner wastes more time commuting, whether by train, car or other modes, than almost anybody else in the world. Much better would be to have mixed developments in local centres, so that people could live relatively close to their workplace. Commercial, retail, industrial and leisure developments should be distributed to encourage this approach. At present, the policy

is almost the exact opposite - new commercial developments have to have good transport provision (and with restricted parking policies that typically means public transport). The result is that development tends to be concentrated in central Bromley, adjacent to train stations, where it is already congested and where land is very expensive.

One only has to look at Aquila, an ex-MOD site, in Bickley to see what currently happens. Although this site is already developed, with redundant light industrial buildings, which would make it suitable for almost anything, the proposal as it stands is for high density housing on all of the site. Little regard has been taken of the major additional traffic congestion that would be created by this development and even though in theory the negative impact on traffic could be a reason for rejection, the planning department are unlikely to complain on that issue, or the relevant planning committee reject it. If they did, a Planning Inspector would probably overrule them anyway. This site would possibly be suitable for a mixed commercial, retail and housing development to form a self contained community, but it is unlikely to happen, and the provision of good access routes is also unlikely.

There is in fact hardly any co-ordination of planning matters with transport and traffic issues, even though lip-service is paid to the concept. There is certainly no strategic plan to improve the road network in Bromley, on which most of our transport relies.

How can the situation be improved? Planning needs to take a much more proactive role in developing improved transport infrastructure and encouraging development that is consistent with such plans.

Car Parking Policies



Parking policies in Bromley are currently designed to deter cars, rather than provide for demand. To quote from a council policy

document: "Parking - to adopt policies and

standards for parking provision as a means of influencing transport choice and discouraging indiscriminate car use" - in other words they will discourage car use by cutting out parking. Parking provision is being reduced, rather than expanded, charges are being raised and permit parking schemes introduced to deter long term parking.

The Mayor of London is trying to introduce work place parking taxation also, although apparently he is having some legal difficulty in formulating suitable legislation. New building developments have more restricted car parking provision imposed. So instead of having a minimum provision set which can be devised to remove on-street parking, they have a maximum set which simply encourages it. These limits have been reduced further recently.

The results of these policies can be easily seen in Locksbottom where the new Farnborough Hospital is being built. Parking has always been difficult in this area, and in fact has become unbearable for local residents since hospital construction workers started parking there. However this will not get better when the hospital is finished because it has totally inadequate parking provision, either for staff or visitors. This will make life even more miserable than it is for local residents, businesses and people wishing to visit the shops.

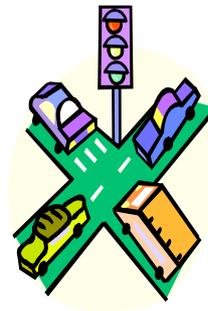
Generally such parking policies simply make matters worse because unless you remove the need for parking (which is like cutting traffic - almost impossible to do), the remaining spaces just get fought over more aggressively, or the traffic moves around in circles looking for a space. The latter is clearly seen in Bromley around Christmas when gridlock is quite common as the result of too many shoppers looking for too few spaces.

I would suggest such policies be totally changed. The council should have a policy of providing new off street parking facilities, or of encouraging other people to do so. So for example, where permit parking schemes have been introduced, or are being contemplated, because of complaints from residents, then extra off street provision should be looked at. Permit parking schemes are an example of introducing a bureaucratic system, that tends to

please neither residents (who now have to pay to park outside their houses), nor visitors (who can't find a parking space they can use even when there is a lot of vacant space). The only people who benefit are local council staff who get employed and paid for this unproductive work - perhaps that is why they support such schemes.

Any new building development should not be permitted unless adequate parking provision is made (I realise that such provision is determined by central government or GLA policies but there may be ways around them, and certainly representations should be made that the guidelines be changed).

To Summarise



In this article I have hopefully given you a quick overview of transport problems and policies in Bromley, and shown you where they are going wrong. It also contains some specific suggestions on how these problems could be tackled.

Some of these proposals do not involve expenditure, but more a commitment to do something. Others require expenditure, and with budgets being severely limited, and a general desire that local taxes do not increase, this inevitably means that reallocation of existing budgets may be necessary. In reality, the existing allocation is severely distorted with massive expenditure on cycle paths, and bus lanes, when these are used only via a very small minority of the population in Bromley. I am not arguing that there should not be some expenditure on improving bus and cycle services and usage, but there is a clear imbalance when no money is spent on reducing traffic congestion for the car user.

Regretfully the three layers of central government, the GLA and the local council, all of whom have some say in transport policies and expenditure, does not help to develop a clear strategy that is accountable to the electorate. This situation is made worse because there is no

clear, dedicated responsibility for transport matters at the local level. For example in Bromley it comes under the "Environment" portfolio as if nobody wanted to take responsibility for traffic and transport. It suggests that the sole objective of transport policy should be as an element in environmental management which is clearly absurd. Certainly few people in the general public know who has responsibility for transport matters. A change of job title would be a good starting point.

In the GLA, the only clear elected figurehead is the mayor himself, and the best of luck with trying to communicate directly with him (most of the public who sent in consultation responses about the congestion charging scheme were opposed to it but he didn't take any notice). In theory it clearly makes sense for there to be a central London co-ordinating body for transport, but all we have seen so far from it is an emphasis on boosting bus services at enormous cost.

Obviously the political structure has a significant impact on activity and accountability. If people could vote directly for someone with the specific responsibility for transport, they may pay more attention to what their policies are and what gets achieved. So political reform would be my final suggestion.

To conclude, improving transport in Bromley is not an impossible task. But it does require a stronger commitment to tackle the problems, and some changes of policies.



Contact Information

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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.