



BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 26 (February 2004)

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Do you wonder why road accident figures do not fall, despite enormous expenditure on road safety measures such as speed humps and speed cameras? The answer is on page 6.

We have a topical story on the dangers of using mobile phones combined with speed humps starting on page 5. Or for more bad news, read how London is a dangerous place on page 3. Altogether this is not an issue that will cheer you up unfortunately.

However, you may have seen the good local newspaper coverage we got for our new speed hump policy and you can read the full story herein (with no editorial simplifications).

Roger Lawson, Editor

BBRAG Adopts New Hump Policy

We all have New Year resolutions, and BBRAG is no different. Our objective is to encourage the council to move from its current stance of "no more speed humps" to the actual removal of existing ones.

But deciding when, and in what circumstances this should be done, and how to finance it, is not easy. For this reason, we have adopted a formal policy which is now recommended to all councillors and council staff. This is given on the last page of this Newsletter (it's also available on our web site for future reference).

In essence we are proposing that speed humps are removed when roads are resurfaced, or when there is clear public demand for their removal.

To counter the objection that the council may not have funds to remove humps, we have proposed that donations may be received from the public to fund this. (*Editor: the former is a common excuse, although it was interesting to note that TfL did not rule out funding such removal at the recent GLA Meeting*).

Removing Humps When Roads Are Resurfaced



Among the borough roads that are planned to be resurfaced in the current year are Knoll Rise in Orpington and the nearby Crofton Lane (see picture on front cover). Both of these roads have speed humps installed, and the surface of the latter road in particular seems to have been worsened as a result with potholes appearing before and after the humps. Crofton Lane is also an interesting example of a road where there is no easy alternative route, and where it is clear that there was absolutely no road safety benefit as the accident numbers actually went up after the humps were installed (usually they fall slightly due to traffic diversion).

So are the humps going to be removed? No. The current policy from comments made by Executive Portfolio Holder George Taylor appears to be to resurface by filling in the road between the humps. This will have the effect of reducing the height of course, a small concession to comfort demands at least.

(Editor's Comments: A golden opportunity to remove these silly humps at nil cost may be lost. It would be much better to follow the policy we advocate elsewhere in this document. We suggest you send your views to Councillor Taylor).

Old Hill Speed Humps

Complaints still rumble on about the recently installed speed humps in Old Hill, Chislehurst. Residents complain that the speed "cushions", particularly the single ones in the middle of the road on the lower part of the hill, are dangerous, noisy and particularly uncomfortable.

A group of local residents recently met with council staff, asking them to do something about the bad design, but to no avail. BBRAG has circulated a leaflet in the local area and will continue to pursue a better solution with the residents (responses to the leaflet to date are overwhelming against the scheme, particularly the single cushions).

Note that BBRAG believes that the single cushions also contravene government guidelines for the width and placing of cushions which should be no more than 2 metres wide.

Speed Humps Strongly Criticised by Ambulance Service at GLA Inquiry



On the 11th December 2003, the Greater London Assembly Transport Committee began their inquiry into the "Impact of Speed Humps". They had

already taken written evidence from a number of organisations including BBRAG, but they invited the London Ambulance Service (LAS), the Metropolitan Police and the Slower Speeds Initiative to appear as witnesses in person.

Sigurd Reinton, Chairman of the LAS, and Peter Bradley, Chief Executive, spoke strongly against humps and other traffic calming measures that delay ambulances. The LAS answers about one million calls a year, of which up to a third are potentially life threatening. This includes 8,000 that are later diagnosed as cardiac arrests. It is critical to reach such victims as soon as possible as it is known that even a minute's delay adversely affects survival rates. They also mentioned a recent medical research study that had shown that a one minute delay on treatment of such cases results on average in a life that is subsequently shortened by 11 days (damage to the heart muscles if treatment is delayed causes long term difficulties, even if the patient survives).

They claimed that delays of more than one minute were regularly occurring in London as that might result from as few as 10 humps traversed, and other devices such as road closures or "gate" narrowing could result in even higher delays. In addition from a recent survey it was found that ambulance crews added typically 5 minutes to outbound journey times so as to avoid humps, and 10 minutes on the return journey when they were carrying patients.

Heart Attacks Not Only the Problem

Sigurd Reinton said the analysis was primarily related to heart attacks (myocardial infarction) but there were many other life threatening conditions where delays also reduced survival and he hadn't even taken those into account.

Mr Reinton's full report can be seen on the BBRAG web site:
http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk/LAS_Report.pdf.
The LAS were opposed to all forms of humps, including "cushions" and tables, but also opposed pinch points, gates, and horizontal deflections.

Ambulance driver John Mullin said he strongly objected to causing as much as two weeks shortening of his patients lives because of the delays caused by speed humps, and treatment of patients in ambulances was severely impeded when traversing humps (trying to insert a drip or give an injection was particularly difficult).

Police Also Have Concerns

The Metropolitan Police also criticised speed humps, but mainly on the grounds that they caused damage to vehicles. They complained that "strategic routes" were not being kept clear, that the design of traffic calming schemes was often poor and they were frequently not consulted by local authorities. The first time they learned about a new scheme was often when they tried to drive through it.

Slower Speeds Group Raises Some Smiles

The spokesperson for the Slower Speeds Initiative, Ms Paige Mitchell, did not have a great deal to say but suggested pedal cycle paramedics as an alternative to ambulances (this raised some smiles among members of the committee, but Reinton pointed out that one or two were already in use in central London). At that point Brian Coleman from Barnet jokingly suggested that cycling fire fighters be introduced. Mitchell also suggested that everyone should have a defibrillator at home and be trained to use it (*Editor: cost is about £2,500 excluding training*).

The Moving Bus Speed Regulator

Another traffic calming measure Mitchell recommended, to avoid the necessity for road humps, was to get the agreement of bus services that they would not drive faster than 20 mph irrespective of the speed limit - this would slow all other traffic as a result. Incidentally Ms Mitchell lives in Hereford, a small country town with very different problems to that of London, so it is not clear why she was invited to speak as she did not seem to have much useful to contribute.

Who are the Slower Speeds Initiative? They appear to be a front organisation for such groups as the Pedestrians Association, RoadPeace and Transport 2000 who are typically anti-car, but their web site interestingly says nothing about their constitution, sources of funds or even who their leaders are.

The Committee has not yet reached any conclusions and there will be a further meeting on the 5th February 2004, when representations from Local Authorities in London will be heard.

Some of the written submissions to the GLA Committee can be seen on the GLA web site <http://www.london.gov.uk> or go to: <http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk/Humps.htm> for the BBRAG submission.

(Editor's Comments: Don't expect much to result from this inquiry. Transport for London, and the GLA in general are basically a dictatorship, with Mr Livingstone as dictator. What the London Assembly as a consultation body says to the Mayor may have little impact).

Accidental Deaths in London

Some interesting statistics were disclosed by the London Ambulance Service in their recent review of traffic calming. Apparently there are 7,500 accidental deaths a year in London, of which about 2,000 are from external causes and 5,500 from medical incidents (eg. heart attacks). However within the first 2,000 are about 300 deaths from road accidents but there are of course numerous other reasons such as falls, fires, poisonings and drowning that make up the other 1,700 (*Editor: Yes it's a dangerous world*).

To put it bluntly, you are much more likely to die from other accidental causes than from a road traffic accident. This data hardly supports the contention that road deaths are extraordinarily excessive as some people have alleged, or that they can necessarily be easily reduced, as they are clearly as rare as other accidents. Obviously the weight of expenditure and effort put into reducing road accidents has to be balanced against the effort put into reducing other causes of premature death.

Car Clamping Comes to Bromley



The services of AngleGrinderMan (see last Newsletter) may soon be in demand in Bromley. The council have decided to introduce clamping of persistent parking

offenders. Anyone with more than five unpaid penalty notices is likely to be clamped.

Last year the council failed to collect almost £700,000 in parking penalty charges from people who simply don't pay, or cannot be traced. That's about 1,400 persistent offenders, and the unpaid amount is by no means trivial in terms of council budgets. The council expects to collect at least another £200,000 per annum from forcing these people to pay normal parking charges.

(Editor's Comments: A regrettable move in some ways but probably justified, and possibly inconvenient if you are the victim of having your number plate cloned).

Car Parking Charges to Rise

The council generally tries to recoup all the costs of running car parks and for "enforcement" of parking fees by charging rates that cover them. However there has been a shortfall in income recently. The number of Penalty Charge Notices has been below budget. Are Bromley residents becoming more law abiding one wonders? But it seems other reasons were the hot summer deterring shoppers and the fact that parking around the old Bromley Hospital has declined (Tip: if you want to find a parking space, apparently there are many available in that area).

As a result some parking fees are being increased (*Editor's Comments: Including my favourite one at Red Hill, Chislehurst which cost only 10p for an hour*). But many of the car parks affected have not changed in price since as long ago as 1992.

Penge High Street and Station Approach, Hayes - Parking Charges

Penge High Street currently has free, but time limited parking. This is to change to a "Pay & Display" system because there is much abuse of the current free spaces (apparently some people stay there all day as enforcement is poor). Similarly for Station Approach, Hayes which currently has mostly free parking after 9.30 am.

Chips With Everything?



At least that's the way Bromley might smell in future. Civitas is a European Union (EU) Programme to support clean and better urban transport - see their web site at: <http://www.civitas-initiative.org/civitas/home.cfm>. Bromley is jointly bidding with the Spanish city of Malaga for funds to support a "biodiesel" project which will involve converting used cooking oil into fuel to power the council's vehicle fleet.

The capital cost is expected to be 770,000 Euros (£550,000) which won't cost Bromley anything in theory, but will in practice be funded by all European taxpayers (Bromley residents included of course). Running costs are hoped to break-even. (*Editor's Comments: If anyone would like to volunteer to have the "conversion" plant sited next to them, please contact the council*).

There are also other proposals by Bromley for funding totalling £3 million Euros (£2.1 million) under the same programme. These funds would be used to promote safe night travel via bus or taxis, to promote lift-sharing, to develop a home merchandise delivery project for shoppers, the provision of a travel advice kiosk in the town centre with other educational measures, and an intermodal (ie. bus/train) information system.

Burnt Ash Lane and Shortlands CPZs

As reported in a previous Newsletter, the Burnt Ash Lane area has been the subject of extensive consultation on proposals for a Controlled Parking Zone (ie. permit parking scheme and/or other parking limitations). This partly became necessary because Lewisham introduced a very

extensive scheme on their side of Grove Park Station. This was without consulting Bromley first, much to the annoyance of Councillor George Taylor. The result was that commuters moved into Bromley streets and caused problems for residents.



Another ground for complaint was the activities of McCarthy's garage at the southern end of the zone - a Toyota and Lexus dealer who often park customer's cars on the street temporarily (see picture above of the lower end of Ridgeway Drive). So although this has been going on for many years, Councillor Bloom complained about their "antisocial behaviour" at a recent council meeting.

McCarthy's would very much like to redevelop their site, or find another alternative site in Bromley, so that they have more on-site parking. Using on-street parking is also a security risk for them, so they have also tried to identify other nearby off street facilities. The problem has been compounded of late due to the much shorter service times of modern vehicles, so instead of having a few vehicles on the premises all day, they have many more for only an hour or two. *(Editor's Comments: Bromley Council seems to have done little to help resolve this problem).*

Anyway, the council have decided to implement much of the proposed scheme, but not in every road as many residents voted against the proposals in the public consultation. Ridgeway Drive will only be partly covered (one resident who lives there was particularly opposed). The cost will be £9,000. However, the rest of the roads will also be done later if vehicles migrate.

(Editor's Comments:: BBRAG was opposed to this scheme as with most such schemes - they don't solve the problems and simply incur needless costs for everyone. What was really required was the provision of adequate car parking near Grove Park Station).

Shortlands CPZ



Another CPZ has been proposed for the area west of Shortlands station (Mays Hill Road, Park Hill Road, Shortlands Road and Beckenham Grove - see picture above of the last road). It is not at all clear why this has been put forward as most of the properties in those roads have off street parking provision.

(Editor's Comments:: BBRAG has sent in objections to this scheme to the council, and we suggest you do the same. It looks like yet another attack on people parking in public roads near stations, for no good reason).

Man Breaks Back over Speed Hump



Now here's a topical story as it combines the dangers of speed humps and mobile phones (*Editor: for our overseas readers, you need to be aware that the UK has just banned the use of hand-held mobile phones, something that is still common practice in Scandinavia by bus drivers in my personal experience*).

Ericsson director, Kare Bergum, broke his back when the bus he was riding home on from the airport went over a speed hump in Arendal, Norway. Apparently he was at the back of the bus, hit the ceiling and then rolled down the aisle. Bergum did not blame the bus driver but the state roads authority for putting speed humps on a main National road.

Bus driver, Freddy Olsen, said: *"I was only using the telephone to say I was driving and could not talk. Unfortunately that happened right in front of the speed hump and unhappily Bergum sat in the middle seat of the back row, where there is no seat in front. Furthermore the road was covered with new snow and it was impossible to see the speed humps."*

Ericsson are of course one of the world's largest mobile phone manufacturers, but it is worth pointing out that your editor has previously pointed out the difficulty of not being able to see speed humps when snow covers the ground.

For the full story in Norwegian, go to: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/97/50/html/14brakk.html>, or ask the editor for an English translation. The picture above shows Bergum in hospital with the bus driver. And what's the Norwegian for speed hump? "Fartsdump" of course, which seems very apt.

The Quest for the Holy Grail

Incidentally a Swedish research scientist, Johan Granlund, is working on designing a new form of speed hump which is less painful. He reports a number of broken backs and other injuries (particularly to ambulance riders) from riding over speed humps in Sweden, which he would like to avoid. For example, there was a case in 2001 when a Mrs Siri Johanssen was sitting in a commuter bus when it passed over a hump. She was thrown into the roof and injured her back. As a result she was unable to return to work at all.

Also he says the original "Watts" hump design from the UK was misconceived as it was designed around vertical acceleration limits which are not the key comfort or injury factor. (*Editor: a fruitless search for the holy grail of traffic calming - a speed hump that doesn't cause any pain or discomfort - but go to the following if you want to read more: <http://www.ride-quality.tk>*).

Why Accidents Don't Fall

It is puzzling to many people, that despite the massive expenditure on speed humps, speed cameras and other traffic calming measures in the last few years, accident numbers do not fall as expected.

As shown in our previous Newsletter, road traffic fatalities in London actually rose by 20% between 1995 and 2002, and slight injuries only show a slight fall. This is despite the fact that many millions of pounds have been spent on road safety schemes in London in that period (expenditure is running at over £20 million per year in London at present).

It's also worth bearing in mind also that every single scheme has also been judged to show a very substantial return on investment, using calculations promoted by ROSPA and other bodies. These are based on reported historic before and after accident rates from the Molasses database maintained by local authorities. Robert Gifford of PACTS recently claimed that Local Authorities can save one life by spending £100,000 on such measures, but clearly they do not in reality.

Why do the expected accident reductions disappear when wide area accident figures are examined?

An interesting light was thrown on this in a study published in 1999 by the US Federal Highway Administration called "Research, Development and Implementation of Pedestrian Safety Facilities in the UK". This said:

"Pedestrian accidents have declined sharply over the past 5 years. However, establishing causes and effects is not easy. As noted earlier, the amount of pedestrian activity had also declined sharply.

In addition, the evaluation of the accident reduction effects from specific countermeasures has rarely been rigorous, partly because of practical difficulties. The typical method consists of a comparison of reported accidents (or casualties) for 3 years before and after the scheme. It rarely includes the known confounding factors such as changes in traffic flow, changes in traffic composition (particularly pedestrian flows), background trends in accident numbers, regression to mean effects, adaptive behaviour by vulnerable road users or more controversial aspects such as accident migration.

Elvik (1997), reviewing United Kingdom and other accident studies, found that very few allowed for these factors.

He also found that when they were taken into account, little or no accident reduction benefit could be directly attributed to the countermeasure.

To compound the problem of evaluation, no work appears to have been done to show how the (claimed) accident savings from particular schemes or programs relate to the overall changes in accident numbers.”

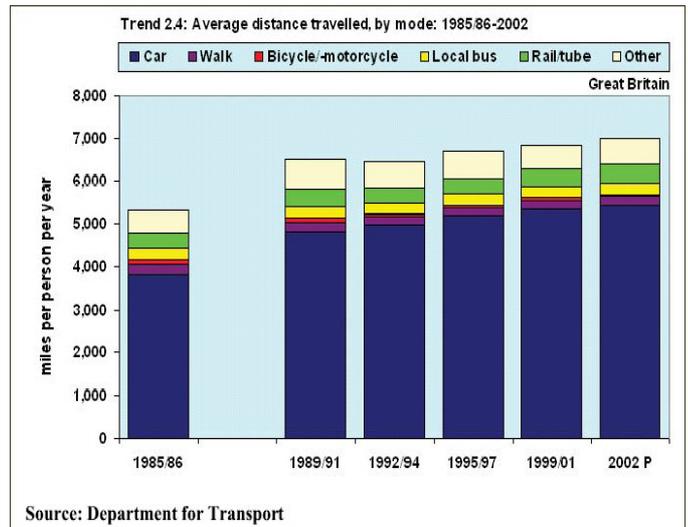
The last two paragraphs have been highlighted because they are the key points. They show that the accident benefits are often a mirage.

As a simple example of this, the ROSPA figures for the expected benefit of a road hump scheme is a reduction in accidents of 68%. However this does not take into account the actual traffic diversion which we know from other studies can be very high. In addition it ignores the other effects mentioned above, and the data is based on subjective reports by the same council staff who devised the schemes in the first place. This is not science, it's not even magic, it's just slight of hand.

Pedestrian Accident Trends - The Truth

Pedestrian accidents particularly demonstrate the fallacy of many road accident claims as this is one of the few areas where accidents are going down. The number of pedestrian fatalities in the UK was at a peak of 3,153 in 1966, and declined thereafter. Each year since 1990 has seen a new record low for pedestrian fatalities - in 2002 it

was 775. Total pedestrian casualties have also declined substantially.



But when pedestrian activity rates are examined, there has in fact been a similar decline (see chart above for trends in travel modes). From 1985/86 (the earliest data known) to 2002 the distance walked fell by 21%. There has been a particularly marked decline in walking by children, one of the pedestrian groups with the highest casualty rate (even more so after dark due to security concerns). In fact, according to a DETR report in 1997, they suggested that real accident rates for that group might actually be increasing!

These pedestrians have often switched to using car transport, which as we reported in Issue 22, is safer per mile travelled, if not as healthy otherwise.

So when you next hear a politician or local authority staff member claiming success for reducing child accidents by traffic calming measures, take it with a pinch of salt.

The Speed Camera Debate



The national press have been running a series of articles recently criticising speed cameras for simply being revenue raising devices.

Typically they point out that speed fines are now running at more than one million per year, which is likely to rise to two million soon, with little apparent effect on overall accident rates.

The local Newsshopper paper in Bromley has also run a campaign under the banner "Stop the Stealth Tax on Motorists". They had road safety expert Kevin Delaney from the RAC pointing out that a speed camera on Glebe Way in West Wickham (the A232) was pointing away from a danger spot and was apparently sited more to catch motorists out rather than for safety reasons.

Councillor George Taylor then wrote a letter to the Newsshopper saying that Glebe Way was the site of a fatal pedestrian accident and "we were not going to stand by and do nothing". He also said that the "cameras we installed have cut accidents at sites in this borough".

So what is the truth? Have speed cameras reduced accidents in Bromley? There was some data published by Bromley Council in the ILIP/BSP report in 2001. It gives 3 year "before" and "after" accident counts for the 8 fixed camera sites in the borough (total cost £130,000). The figures were 69 before and 63 after, ie. a reduction of 9%. Is this statistically significant (in other words unlikely to be other than random variation) - basically the answer is no. Is it better than you would get from simply putting up a few warnings signs? Again the answer is no. Is there any reason to believe that this shows anything different to the general trend in reduction in road accidents in UK (due to such factors as improved in-car safety and fewer pedestrians on the streets)? Also no. Is it a cost effective way to reduce accidents? Definitely not.

Speed Advisors are More Effective

Note that George Taylor should be complimented on introducing speed advisor units in Bromley, which are more effective at cutting speeds than cameras according to research from the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL). But he has clearly been misinformed on the benefits of speed cameras.

5500 Deaths from Speed Cameras?

The Association of British Drivers have even argued recently that the excessive emphasis on speed cameras has actually meant that accidents figures have not been falling as they otherwise would have done.

Before speed cameras were introduced in large numbers, road deaths showed a consistent downward trend in the UK over many years. This has now halted. Their claimed figure of 5500 deaths is simply the difference between what would have been expected if other road safety measures had been continued to be used since about 1993, and what we now have.

They argue that the wasteful expenditure on speed cameras has meant a cut in expenditure on other measures such as police traffic patrols, road improvement schemes, and driver education. An over reliance on speed cameras as a "cure-all" solution has also removed intelligent examination of accident blackspots (as in the Limehouse Link example in our last Newsletter).

This argument is more fully explored in the original article by Dr Alan Buckingham in which this argument was raised which is entitled "Saving Lives or Raising Revenue?" - it can be seen in full on the Safe Speed web site at: <http://www.safespeed.org.uk/buckingham.html>

Less Road Rage in Bromley?

According to US researchers, drivers are less angry if they drive on streets which are lined with trees, as in much of Bromley.

Researchers at Ohio State University showed videos of urban and tree-lined roads to drivers and then tested their anger levels. The latter included setting them unsolvable anagrams (how long people persist with attempts to solve them is apparently a good measure of frustration and temper!). Those people who watched the tree lined videos showed significantly decreased stress levels.

(Editor's Comments: This could be one explanation for the lower accident rates than those experienced in some other London boroughs, but the benefit may be somewhat offset by the risk of running into the trees. Planting trees clearly though has other benefits than the purely environmental - perhaps we could persuade TfL, the holders of the London transport purse strings, to fund some tree planting programmes on road safety grounds?).

Safer Pedestrian Refuges



You are probably aware that pedestrian refuges are “a la mode” at present. With the current emphasis on reducing pedestrian accidents, these are often incorporated into new road safety schemes. Also, they can partially slow traffic, particularly if combined with kerb build-outs to narrow the road.

To protect pedestrians even better, recent refuges have been made wider and higher, with solid concrete in a vertical steel border. These are apparently called “Southwark” refuges after the borough where they were first introduced.

But little attention seems to have been paid to the possible disadvantages of these devices, or their design aspects. On a search of the road safety literature, your editor could find no scientific reports on the accident savings that resulted, or on the best design or location of refuges (in fact the “Southwark” refuge seems to have been adopted without any evidence of its effects, whether good or bad).

In reality, pedestrian refuges do have some dangers. For example, motorcyclists are particularly vulnerable to injury from them. If they hit one of the new refuges due to minor inattention, it can be fatal, as recently demonstrated in Perry Street, Chislehurst.

Cyclists are also vulnerable to being squeezed between the kerb and vehicles alongside a refuge, particularly when the road has been deliberately narrowed.

You can read more about this problem at the web site “The Bike Zone” which is an interesting site for all keen cyclists. The picture above is from their site which is located at:

<http://www.thebikezone.org.uk> (look under “cycle campaigning” and “central traffic islands” for discussion on this particular issue).

In addition the Southwark type of refuge is particularly dangerous to motorcyclists and car users. Although the latter may simply end up with a very large bill for damage to their vehicle, the former may be ejected from the bike. The older lower and narrow type of refuge was much less likely to create such an accident.

Councillor George Taylor has called for a review of pedestrian refuges by council staff which is probably a good idea. It is possible that over zealous use, and poor design, have saved pedestrian lives and injuries, but caused more in other categories of road users.

(Editor’s Comments: Certainly from the road accident data, this at first sight might be the case, as motorcycle fatalities are rapidly rising, while pedestrian accidents fall - in fact the former more than offsets the latter. More analysis and a lot more proper research on this subject needs to be done to determine the facts. As it is, policy in this area seems to be driven by dogma rather than data, as with many other road safety issues).

News Snapshots

Sundry news in the last few weeks that is worth a mention is as follows:

+ There has been a proposal made to change the roundabouts at the junctions of Crystal Palace Parade, Westwood Hill, Sydenham Hill and Fountain Drive to be traffic light controlled junctions. At present long queues of traffic form on the approaches and it is expected the change will improve capacity. This will be funded from the “Bus Plus” programme via TfL as buses are also significantly delayed at present.

+ Bromley Council is trying to get tough with utilities that dig up our roads, and either take too long, or don’t replace the surface properly. Street works are a major cause of traffic congestion in London now that there are so many people allowed to dig up the roads. Bromley Council has recently successfully prosecuted BT Group (British Telecom) for 24 cases with total fines and costs of £32,000.

+ The proposed 20 mph zone for the Marlow Road area of Penge is to go ahead (see Newsletter 23). It will consist of 20 mph signs, mini-roundabouts and kerb build-outs at a total cost of £117,000, but no humps. However residents are apparently unhappy with the scheme. They claim up to 40 parking spaces will be removed forcing people to park a long distance from their homes.

+ The proposed 20 mph zone in the Magpie Hall Lane area is also to go ahead. BBRAG has no objections to the scheme except that we think imposing such a speed limit on Magpie Hall Lane itself is not realistic. Traffic tends not to adhere to the existing 30 mph limit so reducing it even further (ie. below the 85th percentile level) will just cause it to be ignored.

+ A planned Controlled Parking Zone (ie. permit parking etc) around Crystal Palace, Anerley, and Penge Stations resulted in a clear majority against it from the public consultation. It will therefore not be proceeded with. See Newsletter 22 for more background. (*Editor's Comments: A good result as we previously pointed out it was totally unnecessary. Yet another silly proposal prompted by TfL to waste taxpayer's money.*)

+ More parking restrictions are likely in Mayfield Avenue, Orpington following long standing demands by residents and claims that parking on both sides of the road were a hazard. Residents voted for restrictions on both sides of the road but implementation may be delayed until after the Station Road Multi-Storey car park is redeveloped (presumably on the grounds that absolute chaos may reign in a large area around while it is being rebuilt).

+ As a complementary piece of information to our article in the last Newsletter on council budgets, the "core" budget for the councils own direct employee costs (i.e. wages) on Transportation Planning & Parking in 2003/2005 is almost exactly £1.5 million. Other costs to support them (premises, etc) are another £1.5 million.

+ A driver in Biggin Hill was outraged apparently when he was given a fixed penalty fine for having his fog lights on when it was not foggy. Like many people he appears not to be aware that

this is illegal, apart from being an inconvenience to other drivers as they cause glare.

+ Brian Souter, head of Stagecoach, who run many of London's buses, said recently that "We light candles for Ken Livingstone every morning". Otherwise he was very grateful for the Mayor's policies but denied that running buses in London was a license to print money.

+ Ken Livingstone is likely to be the Labour candidate for Mayor of London following his readmission to the party (he stood as an independent last time, much to the annoyance of many labour politicians). This is unlikely to have much impact on his policies for London, particularly in the transport area, even though he has apparently promised to stick to the party line. Commentators are divided on whether this move will improve his chances of re-election, but possibly an apt quote from Graham Tope, a Liberal Democrat GLA Member, was "Usually rats flee sinking ships but now we have witnessed the opposite...".

+ Builder Ian Beesley, who dug up a road hump in Oxford, was found guilty of causing criminal damage. He was given a one year conditional discharge and fined £753 including costs. He had apparently complained multiple times to his local council about the noise from the hump without any response. When Home Secretary David Blunkett expressed sympathy with Mr Beesley during the case, he was told to "butt out" by the judge. The hump has apparently now been replaced by a quieter version.

+ As previously reported, many Camden residents are strongly opposed to the new wide-area road hump scheme in the Primrose Hill area. Despite numerous representations to the local council, and public meetings that were clearly strongly opposed to the measures, the council is refusing to reconsider. Residents have now petitioned the Greater London Assembly on the basis that TfL fund these schemes.

+ London Transport Commissioner, Bob Kiley, recently criticised the operators of the Congestion Charge scheme (Capita). He said the customer service was poor and "We are now getting real experience of the contractor and it's been a little unpleasant". (*Editor's Comment: They*

certainly make numerous mistakes in my experience).

+ Orpington Hospital visitors are complaining about the closure of a 200 space car park (leaving only 40) which has been sold off for housing development. The nearest public car park is over a mile away in Station Road. (*Editor's Comment: Another example of inadequate parking provision at hospitals which is primarily the result of central government anti-car policies*).

Quiz Competition Answers

The answers to our Christmas prize competition were "the City of Nottingham" and option 2. Yes they are installing a new tram service, much of which will run on existing streets, at a cost of £200 million for 15 trams. Despite replacing trams by trolley buses over 50 years ago (a big improvement at the time), and subsequently scrapping the trolley buses on economic grounds, this is seen to be a good idea by councillors. As George Santayana said "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it".

Trolley buses are still worth considering as a public transport solution, and in the opinion of your editor are superior in many ways to trams. A picture of a modern trolley bus is given below.



A recent report on tram schemes in the Financial Times gave a bleak picture on the economics of most of them. Almost all of the schemes grossly overrun on construction costs and timescales. For example the Nottingham scheme opening has been delayed by six months due to teething troubles, and Carillion, part of the PFI consortium building it, has promised never to touch another light rail project "with a

bargepole" after going over budget by £10 million.

Other troubled tram projects are Croydon Tramlink (losing money), West Midlands Metro and Sheffield Supertram. The last one is way below the forecast traffic volumes because "aggressive, deregulated bus competition" proved too good!

It was interesting to read a recent article in the Newshopper on trams in Dartford which were replaced by trolley buses in 1935. It seems that when the tram system was built in the early 1900s, there was strong opposition to the cost with objectors saying things like "No company in the world will make such an undertaking pay". A prophetic statement indeed.

An interesting letter to the FT by Lewis Lesley suggested that more public benefit would be obtained by improving walking and cycling facilities than subsidising light rail systems. In fact he went so far as to suggest that subsidising corner food shops, so people can walk to the shops rather than drive, would be a more sensible use of taxpayers money.

(Editor's comment: A sound idea. In my own case, since the local sub-post office closed off Royal Parade, I now drive to the next nearest one instead of walking - even though I have to now cross 17 sets of speed humps to get there).

BBRAG Speed Hump Policies - the Full Text

The following are the policies on speed humps adopted by BBRAG in December 2003:

- A) That a preference for alternative road safety measures to using speed humps be adopted by the local authority for all new "traffic calming" proposals, i.e no more speed humps will be installed unless there are no viable alternatives.
- B) Note that BBRAG does not consider that speed tables or split humps (also known as cushions) have any significant advantages to simple humps and therefore are similarly covered by the above policy.

C) That where existing speed humps (including tables and split humps) are removed for road resurfacing or for other reasons, that such humps are not replaced, unless the following conditions are met: (i) that there is clear justification in the historic accident statistics that road safety measures are required for the road (specifically that accidents rates are higher than average for similar roads in the borough); (ii) that there are no alternative road safety or traffic engineering measures that could be used to reduce accidents in the road, and; (iii) that local residents and road users show a strong preference for reinstating the humps (residents and road users are to be specifically consulted so far as is practical in this respect)..

D) Where existing speed humps are disliked by the public as a whole (i.e. by both residents and road users) such that there is a general demand to have them removed (as demonstrated for example by petitions, or by consultation processes that involve all affected parties), then the council will consider the removal of such humps and where there are no monies available from council funds to perform such removal, will accept donations from anyone willing to fund the costs.



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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B.B.R.A.G. Treasurer and Newsletter Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, fax: 020-8295-0378, Email: roger.lawson@btclick.com), Chairman: Peter Appleby. Contact either of the above for information on the aims and objectives of B.B.R.A.G. or for membership information (membership costs £9.50 per annum for individuals, or £7.50 if you opt to receive our Newsletter via email, or £50 for corporate membership). 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.

Our internet web address is:

<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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