



# BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 38 (February 2006)

## In This Issue

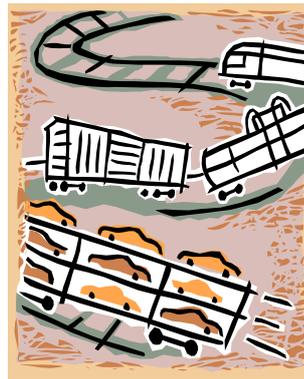
- *Transport Spending Priorities Wrong Again*
- *The 4x4 Debate*
- *Under Reporting of Road Accidents and The Old Hill Incident*
- *The Risks of Driving and Policy Initiatives Without Facts*
- *Stockholm Congestion Tax*
- *A New Bridge for Petts Wood?*
- *New Train Operator Appointed*
- *Mottingham Traffic Calming Scheme*
- *Bromley Parking Revenues*
- *Bromley's Transport Plan*
- *Speed Humps Planned for Catford*
- *More Speed Hump Dangers Revealed*
- *City of Anaheim Spells it Out*
- *News Snapshots*
- *B.B.R.A.G. Information and Contacts*

## Editorial

*This edition of our Newsletter could be a depressing read for some - it reveals yet again the persistence with transport policies in Bromley that do not work, and expenditure wasted on the wrong things. With council elections coming up in May, you may want to quiz the candidates as to what they are going to do to change this. We also cover the fate of revenues from car parking and the associated fines, which are also frittered away on programmes that are of no benefit to the people who pay these charges.*

*As always, let us have your opinions on the contents of this Newsletter (whether they are the same as mine or otherwise). We'll print anything that's legal!*  
*Roger Lawson, Editor*

## Transport Spending Priorities Wrong Again



Bromley Council recently announced the results of the TfL grant awards for the coming year. Bromley was awarded just over £5 million which is 17% up on the previous year. It was also more successful than many other London boroughs.

Most of the funding in Bromley for transport schemes comes from Ken Livingstone's Transport for London, and all London boroughs compete by "bidding" for the limited funds available.

Mayor Ken Livingstone said " *This investment will benefit everyone who travels in Bromley whether by car, on foot, on a bus or on a bike*", although how it will improve the lot of the car user is not at all clear.

A breakdown of where it will be spent is as follows:

Item	Budget £	%
Road renewal/maintenance	1,748,000	35
Bus priority & accessibility	1,514,000	30
Local road safety schemes	420,000	8
20 mph zones	390,000	8
London cycle net & cycling	409,000	8
School Travel Plans	353,000	7
Education, Training & Publicity	80,000	2
Walking	50,000	1
Travel Awareness	49,000	1
Local area accessibility	20,000	0

### ***Why the Spending Priorities are Wrong***

Now clearly essential road and bridge maintenance, which is the first item in the list, is something few people will argue about. But why should bus schemes get 30% of the budget? Bus usage is pretty much a minority interest in Bromley, and probably represent about 10% of all trips taken in the borough (according to a street survey taken in Bromley town centre only 27% of shoppers travelled by bus which is about half of those who came via car, and it's not unreasonable to surmise that many car users went elsewhere such as Bluewater – see the recently published Bromley AAP document). Why should bus users, get more money spent on them than other road users? And of course a lot of it goes into providing “bus priority schemes”, ie. namely bus lanes that enable bus users to jump the queues.

Of course, one major omission from this list, which nobody seems to want to mention, is the lack of any expenditure on the road network whatsoever. This is yet another year where there has been no money spent on this area so the car user is once again suffering. There is no attempt to reduce traffic congestion by spending even a single penny on improving the existing roads or building new ones. Car users basically get nothing, and yet have to subsidise bus users.

### ***Expenditure on Cycling Also Wasted***

Cycling is going to take £409,000, mostly on the London Cycle Network, when it is even less used as a means of routine transport in Bromley than even buses (according to the ILP/BSP document published in 2001, cycle “traffic” is less than 0.5% of all traffic). In fact it's getting to be so small that it's even difficult to measure. The only saving grace is that Bromley actually bid to spend £838,000 on cycling schemes altogether but ended up with less than half that. *(Editors Don't ask me what the rest was for – I can't imagine).*

### ***Policies are the Problem***

Of course the basic problem is highlighted by a recent council briefing document which says that the council's main policy objectives for transport are as follows:

1. Promotion of other forms of transport to achieve less congestion at peak times.
2. Improve the road network for bus services.
3. etc.

And so it goes on, with no reference to improving the road network which is the main transport system in the borough.

*(Editors Comments: To summarise, the policies followed are surely wrong, and would not be the wishes of the vast majority of the population in Bromley if they were asked. So you get a combination of a failure of local democracy where councillors permit council staff to make up policies that they would never approve themselves, reinforced by the inept and dictatorial policies embedded in Ken Livingstone's London Transport Strategy. Why do councillors who are supposedly there to represent the wishes of the people put up with this garbage? I do not know. But you can of course call them to account at the forthcoming council elections in May.*

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### **The 4x4 Debate**



There has been an active debate of late about the merits of driving large four-wheel drive vehicles (SUVs) in town centres. Some people would like to see them banned, or an additional “congestion tax” imposed. For example, Ken Livingstone has said in the past that people who drive such vehicles are idiots and that “these are not cars which people should be using in London”.

The other view is taken by people such as Edmund King, executive director of the RAC Foundation who said: “These suggestions are ludicrous. It is not the job of politicians to dictate what vehicles people should drive.”

*Of course motorists should choose vehicles that are the most suitable for the types of journeys and the goods or people that they carry. But there is great diversity within the range of 4x4's".*

Just to stir the pot, here are some comments from your editor on this subject (but feel free to send in your own views for publication).

If you take the classic examples of such vehicles such as the Range Rover, Jeep Grand Cherokee or Mitsubishi Shogun, do people buy them as status symbols or for practical benefits? In reality it is clear that most "off-road" capable vehicles that are sold are never driven off the road. This particularly applies to the models that are too expensive to damage, or not really built to drive across country. An example is the BMW X5 shown in the photograph above which is not the kind of vehicle typically driven by farmers.

So why do so many people buy these vehicles? It seems to be pure ignorance as it is very obvious if you look at the comparative price, cost of ownership and such matters as comfort and driveability that they simply do not compare well with equivalent "saloon" cars. Even in terms of the space available for occupants or goods, they do not stand up well against people carriers (minivans) or the traditional estate car.

The weight and size of most 4x4s means that the petrol consumption is generally poor in comparison with similarly powered saloons – trying to move a body shaped like a brick through air is never easy. And the showroom price is typically higher – in fact motor manufacturers usually make higher profits on such vehicles than ordinary models (which is why General Motors has fallen on hard times of late as the sales of SUVs have dropped with higher gasoline prices in the USA). In addition the high centre of gravity and often crude suspension design can make them more prone to certain types of accidents, and they are often claimed to be dangerous for pedestrians (although that may be debatable).

### ***Claimed Safety is a Myth***

In fact the users of these vehicles claim they are safer for the occupants (see the recent letter in the Newsshopper for example).

But that is only true to the extent that they protect the occupants in a crash better, as all big vehicles tend to do. And a recent US study showed that this reduced risk is more than offset by the higher risks caused by the tendency of these vehicles to topple over, either during an accident or before.

Drivers of these vehicles also claim they can avoid accidents because they have a better view of the road ahead but of course they get that at the disadvantage of those people driving behind them whose view is blocked. Are they surprised when people try to overtake them all the time, and jump in front?

### ***Clever but Expensive Engineering***

Anyone who has driven a variety of vehicles would also prefer to drive a conventional car than a large 4x4 on most roads. The former are faster, easier to drive, with more sensitive handling and steering and in general terms, safer at any given speed. A lot of clever, and typically expensive engineering, can get around some of these problems but it often adds even further to the weight – an example is the Porsche Cayenne. And more weight means even worse fuel consumption which costs the driver money. The ultimate result is such a vehicle as the Lexus RX400 which is now available in a "hybrid" version to cut the fuel consumption. But one does not have to be an environmental fanatic to realise that the basic design is simply a bad solution for most peoples personal transport needs. And of course the smaller the vehicle, the easier it is to get through city traffic, so they fall down on that criteria also.

Only in ice and snow does a 4x4 have any advantage, but when do we see that in London? Maybe one day a year on average in recent years. Although four wheel drive has advantages in terms of road holding in any conditions, it does add weight to the vehicle and hence tends to increase fuel consumption.

So even if four wheel drive is a good thing in general and useful on "sports" market vehicles, adding it to a "brick" on the premise that the vehicle may be driven off road at some time is a pretty bad idea.

### ***Are the Drivers Fashion Victims?***

So it is plain to me that most drivers of such vehicles are “fashion victims”, i.e. people who suffer because they have used their hearts rather than their heads when choosing to buy a vehicle. But we should educate such people, not try to impose our views by law or regulation. Perhaps we should ridicule them, but regrettably there is too much interference in people’s freedom of late, and using taxation or legislation to fix this social problem would not seem to me to be appropriate.

### ***Mr Livingstone Only Has Himself to Blame***

One thing worth pointing out however that the rise in the sales of large SUVs in London may simply be because they ride over speed humps much better. The long wheelbase of a large vehicle and the long suspension travel of an off-road vehicle smooth out the humps, and the high ground clearance avoids damage. In addition the wide track makes them perfect for driving over speed cushions as you won’t feel the slightest disturbance.

So is it surprising that the policy of Ken Livingstone’s TfL to encourage the use of speed humps everywhere, has similarly encouraged the sales of such vehicles?

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### **Under Reporting of Road Accidents and the Old Hill Incident**

We reported in our last issue on the accident involving Anja Szkodowski on Old Hill – a serious accident solely caused by the presence of a badly placed and wrongly sized speed hump. It seems that Miss Szkodowski twice attempted to report this accident to the police, but was rebuffed on both occasions.

We previously reported on the subject of under recording of road accidents in December 2003 (No. 25) soon after TfL produced a report on the subject. All personal injury accidents should be reported to the police and then be recorded on the STATS19 form system. But obviously they are not in many cases. It is astonishing that the local police station refused to take down information on this accident which means it will simply not appear in the official statistics. Such under reporting of accidents clearly distorts the

statistics on which road safety decisions are made. *(Editors Comments: It reiterates the point that the only really accurate road accident data relates to fatalities as few dead bodies can be overlooked, but unsurprisingly the numbers there show much less reduction over the last few years than other types of accidents).*

### ***Old Hill Review Decision Postponed***

Please note also that the report on the Old Hill scheme that was to be considered by Councillor George Taylor on the 18<sup>th</sup> January has been postponed until the 2<sup>nd</sup> March. However Mr Taylor advised that the council would certainly not accept legal liability for the incident and it seems unlikely that Miss Szkodowski will even receive an apology.

*(Editors Comments: I can see no good reason why this matter has yet again been deferred, and publication of the results of the public consultation exercise delayed as a result of course. Bromley Council will look pretty silly if another accident of the kind mentioned above took place in the meantime. Is there an attempt to postpone a difficult political decision until after the May council elections one wonders?).*

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### **The Risks of Driving and Policy Initiatives Without Considering Facts**

Many of our articles cover road safety matters. One interesting point was made in a recently published book entitled “Freakonomics” by American authors Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner. The former is a well known economist and the book is primarily about how the economics of “incentives” affect everyday life. It’s well worth a read.

One subject covered is the fear induced by flying versus driving. They point out that many people have a great fear of flying when they have little fear of driving. They also argue that the best way to consider the risk is on a “per hour” basis. And if you do the calculations, it transpires that in the USA the risk of dying per hour of travel by airplane is pretty much the same as the risk of dying per hour while driving.

Not many people die in airplane accidents in the USA, whereas 40,000 die in motor vehicle accidents, but the hours spent driving are so

much higher than the relative rate per hour is similar.

For UK residents, as our death rate is about 3,000 per year, whereas our population is about 20% of the USA, in reality we are relatively much safer. About twice as safe in fact. But clearly even so we might want to make sure we wear a seat belt.

### ***The Education Debate and its Effect on the "School Run"***

Another matter the authors consider is the question of the effect of good schools on children. This is particularly topical in the UK at present where the ability of all schools to select pupils is now under active consideration. Most parents think that if they can get their child into a good school, then he or she will do better. But Levitt and Dubner report on a study of the Chicago public school system when parental choice of schools was introduced. As expected, there was "oversubscription" for the good schools, so they introduced a lottery to decide who got the places. This effectively provided a good scientific basis for showing whether those pupils who got a place at a good school, performed better than those who didn't. And what was the result? Not much difference in reality.

But of course parental choice of schools has been a popular policy in the UK in recent years, which is why we now have the "school run" problem where the roads are clogged up with parents taking their offspring to distant schools by car because they think they may be better.

For our overseas readers, it's worth pointing out that we do not have that wonderful device that they no doubt have in Chicago – namely the school bus. No our children do not have the benefit of the safe and reliable transport that Bart and Lisa Simpson take to school each morning.

Of course education is a fertile field, like road safety policies, for those who wish to promote an agenda based on their preconceived prejudices and notions rather than the facts.

Also for our overseas readers, you may be astonished to learn that in the UK we have just

decided to abandon the teaching of reading by "modern" methods and return to the "phonic" approach. In the latter case, children are taught the way to pronounce letters and groups of letters to decide how a word is read. The "modern" approach was to use a "holistic" system where they primarily studied the shape of the whole word. Well at least that's a short exposition so far as the amateur can understand it. Of course the modern approach proved after more than 10 years of widespread use to be worse than what had gone before.

### ***Does the Name of Your Child Matter?***

Another interesting social aspect the authors report on is the effect of naming a child. Does a "good" name help? They even reported one parent who helped this inquiry by naming one of his offspring "Winner" and the next "Loser" (the latter's friends did call him "Lou" though). I won't spoil the fun for anyone who wants to read the book as to the outcome of that experiment.

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### **Stockholm Congestion Tax**



The city of Stockholm (picture above) has become another major city to introduce a road tax (otherwise known as a "congestion charge"). There are two major differences from the scheme introduced in London however:

Firstly, there will be a referendum on the system after a seven month trial. This of course is very unlike London where even public consultation results that were opposed to the scheme were ignored and there was certainly no public vote. It seems likely that the scheme will be voted down though as even before it has started some 69% of people are opposed to it according to a recent poll by consultancy Sifo.

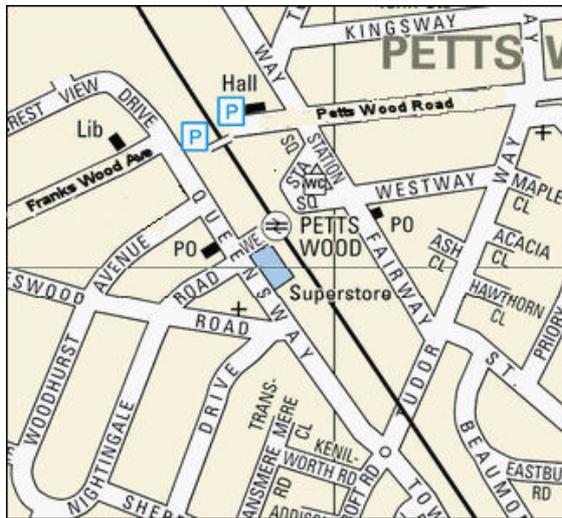
Secondly, the proposed toll charge is less than £1.50 each time they enter the charged zone, although it seems they may pay more if they enter it repeatedly. This is not only cheaper of course than the London charge, in a city where other things are more expensive, but is also a lot fairer as you pay the full amount in London irrespective of how many times you visit the centre or how long you drive around within it.

The short trial will cost SKr 3.8 billion and local residents are complaining that it would be better to spend it on a ring road, which the city does not have.

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### A New Bridge for Petts Wood?

The local press has published several letters recently from residents of Petts Wood suggesting that it's time to build a new bridge across the railway line in Petts Wood. There is only one existing crossing point south of the station which causes much traffic congestion, and through traffic has to take a route down Queensway (it is well known that this is an accident black spot).



If you examine the local road layout shown above, it is obvious that there was an intention originally to put a bridge across the line between Petts Wood Road and Franks Wood Avenue. The railway line at this point is in a cutting so bridging it would be straightforward and the land either side is clear at present. A footbridge exists where this road bridge might be built as you can see from the photo below. This picture (taken from Petts Wood station) shows where the crossing would be positioned.



*(Editors Comments: What's the chance of this being built? Not much in my view. It is an exceedingly good idea but with the current attitude of Bromley Council and TfL to any investment in the road network, I doubt it will even be considered. This is of course a great shame but typical of the problems that current policies create. Of course if some of the £3.6 million annual surplus on parking revenue – see later article – was actually used on this project instead of being frittered away on fanciful projects then it would be no difficulty whatsoever. Perhaps members who live in Petts Wood might like to take this up with their local councillors so that it gets on the political agenda).*

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### New Train Operator Appointed

The franchise to operate train services in Kent from April 2006 has been awarded to GoVia. In the last three years these services have been operated by South Eastern Trains, which is part of the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA). In effect control of this network was regained by the Government after the previous franchisee, Connex South Eastern, was sacked by the SRA in November 2003. See photograph in previous article for a picture of one of the current South Eastern Trains services.

The new contract is for an 8 year period, and will involve a subsidy of £585 million pounds over that period. *(Editor: No the Government does not expect them to be able to run the service without consistently losing money, even with ever rising fares – in fact the Government has already agreed that they can raise fares by 3% more than inflation for five years after 2007).*

GoVia has committed to invest £76 million in passenger and staff facilities, improve train reliability, provide more services from

Beckenham Junction to Victoria and run more evening services. Note that GoVia is 65% owned by Go-Ahead Group, a quoted UK transport company.

### ***How Did South Eastern Trains Perform?***

Passengers on South Eastern Trains (SET) certainly saw some improvements over the service provided by Connex South Eastern. The National Audit Office (NAO) reported that SET provided 260 extra staff. Train reliability improved and even such things as the painting of stations improved.

Advocates for “renationalisation” of the railways have pointed out that South Eastern Trains, one of the few parts of the UK railway network directly operated by the Government, showed a remarkable improvement, so would it not be a good idea to take the whole railway network back into public ownership? Of course as regards the track network itself, the Government effectively already did this by forcing Railtrack into administration.

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### **Mottingham Traffic Calming Scheme**

Approval has been given by Councillor George Taylor for extension of the 20 mph zone and associated traffic calming schemes on the Mottingham Estate (to the area south of Dunkery Road).

A consultation leaflet on this proposed extension was sent to residents, emergency services and residents in August 2005. This only mentioned road narrowing, chicanes, mini-roundabouts, surface treatments and gateways – no mention of humps at all.

When the report on the scheme and the associated public consultation was presented to Mr Taylor however, it actually talked about three options, two of which included speed cushions. It did not even mention that the comments from the public consultation were based on only one of the options now being considered.

This is clearly an inappropriate way to present information to executive councillors, and is also a breach of the regulations laid down in law

because no public consultation has been undertaken on the humps. And Mr Taylor chose the cheapest of the three options which includes a number of speed cushions.

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### **Bromley Parking Revenues**

On the latest projections for parking revenue, Bromley expects to make a surplus of £3.6 million for the 2005/2006 financial year. That figure represents the surplus of revenue from council owned car parks, on-street parking fees, parking penalty notices, and also bus lane enforcement revenue, over the costs of operating them.

That surplus equates to about £12 per head of population in Bromley, or as much as £24 per household, and is typically applied to the funding of other transport schemes, particularly public transport.

Parking income is less than forecast for the year because “The Hill” car park is underutilised following the closure of Alders and the Shortlands bridge works also affected that car park.

But a lot of the shortfall is being made up from the large numbers of penalty notices issued by the new bus lane camera in St. Mary Cray, and the Widmore Road camera.

### ***Bus Lane Cameras***

Was the new camera on Sevenoaks Way installed to prevent abuse of the bus lane, or as a revenue generating mechanism? Clearly one writer to the Newsshopper thought the latter after he received a penalty notice when he declared that he was not blocking any bus and was clearing the traffic queue by turning left. He also complained about the excessive size of the penalty and the lack of natural justice as there was no way to appeal against the fine.

Note that even more bus lane CCTV cameras are now being planned by the council.

*(Editor's Comments: You can see the motivation for siting such cameras in locations where they can generate large sums of money to support council budgets. As much as £100,000 per year can be*

*obtained from one camera site alone. This kind of penal fine for minor infringements is unjust to my mind, and stopping such infringements does not justify this approach. Personally I see no reason why buses should obtain priority over other vehicles in any case – why should some people who happen to be on a bus gain precedence over other road users? Surely this is queue jumping? Send your letters to the Editor if you think otherwise).*

### ***New Camera in Market Square***

And if you have been in the habit of stopping in the loading bay in Market Square, Bromley to use the nearby cash machines, think again in future because there is now a camera there also. Over 300 warning notices were issued to infringers in a recent three week period so this may well be another money spinning camera for the council.

### ***Parking Charges to Rise***

Perhaps because of the shortfall in budgeted income mentioned above, it is proposed to increase parking charges in certain car parks in Bromley. But as it states in the report to councillors on this subject, parking policy in Bromley is “to provide public parking facilities to assist traffic management, with the financial burden of provision and operation borne entirely by the users of the parking facilities. The parking operation must therefore be self-financing as a minimum requirement and maximum usage of facilities to achieve an economic return on resources deployed”.

*(Editor: So why are proposals being made to increase charges? Clearly parking provision in Bromley makes a very substantial surplus so increasing charges further is obviously not about recovering costs. It's simply about generating revenue from motorists that can then be applied to any other things that the council fancies. This seems to me to be unreasonable and not what the public would vote for if they were consulted).*

### ***The Details of the Increases***

The charges in the Westmoreland Road, South Street, Palace Grove, Station Road and Churchill Way parks will increase. For most of those and many on street “pay-and-display” bays, it is proposed to increase the charges by 10p per

hour. Costs will therefore rise to 80p or 90p per hour.

Chislehurst High Street car park will rise to 30p per hour, and the all-day charge will rise to £1.50 from £1.00 (it is obvious that the car park is now often totally full up, with many of them “all-day” users so it is hoped this will deter them and make more space for shoppers).

Similar increases are planned for Coney Hall, West Wickham, Dunbar Ave, Beckenham, Lebanon Gardens and Biggin Hill car parks.

*(Editors Comments: Some increases are no doubt justified as in some cases the charges have not increased since 2001. However, in total charges seem to consistently rise at greater than the general rate of inflation).*

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## **Bromley's Transport Plan**

The “Local Implementation Plan” (LIP) for Bromley of the London Mayor's transport strategy is having to be significantly revised. Transport for London (TfL) were slow in commenting on the draft with the result that it went to public consultation without their input.

But they have now caused a substantial rewrite to be done – for example they pointed out that only one of the 83 “must-do” requirements of their Guidance had been met.

As a result a new LIP plan is to be prepared and resubmitted to public consultation. And the council is also complaining that the requirements of TfL may lead to new or expanded expenditure programmes when there is no more funding being provided to cover them. *(Editor's Comments: More wasted expenditure that can be blamed on TfL and no doubt even more of TfL dictating the content of local transport plans.)*

It was interesting to note from the results of the public consultation, that many respondents complained about the cost of car parking in Bromley, and the difficulties of on-street parking for casual visitors or for people who need to park outside their homes.

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## Speed Humps Planned for Catford



Over 370 speed humps are planned for Catford South. The London Borough of Lewisham is continuing to pursue a policy of introducing speed humps and is now proposing a 20 mph zone enforced by speed humps in the Bellingham area of Catford (just north of Bromley). A local activist has set up a web site to enable debate on this subject – see [www.roadhumpcampaign.org](http://www.roadhumpcampaign.org) or contact Lewisham Council for more information and a copy of their consultation notice. Two of the roads affected, Hazelbank Road and Minard Road are shown in the photographs above and below. As you can see these do not look particularly dangerous roads.



### ***Failure to Consult as Legally Required***

Note that despite the fact that B.B.R.A.G. made it clear in writing to Lewisham Council when the Blackheath traffic calming scheme was being discussed in 2004 that the council had a legal

obligation to consult us, they did not do so. We will be submitting a complaint to the council and to other people also as this is a breach of the law. Councils have a legal obligation under the Highways (Road Humps) Regulations to consult "in all cases, organisations appearing to them to represent persons who use the highway to which the proposal related, or to represent persons who are otherwise likely to be affected by the road hump". In addition they must consult local fire and ambulance services. Organisations such as B.B.R.A.G. who represent road users must clearly therefore be consulted.

Incidentally former Bromley Councillor Chris Maines who has recently moved to Blackheath is standing for Mayor or Lewisham in the forthcoming council elections on behalf of the Liberal Democrats. Chris claims to have been responsible for allowing members of the public to ask questions of councillors at council meetings in Bromley when he was council leader some years ago. Let us hope that if he gets elected in Lewisham that he introduces a similar measure as it certainly contributes positively to local democracy.

*(Editor's Comments: Perhaps if Chris Maines and the Liberal Democrats want to oust the well entrenched Labour support in Lewisham, they might consider a review of speed hump policies in the borough. As reported in previous articles, Lewisham wastes an enormous amount of taxpayers' money on ineffective road safety schemes, typically of the "humps everywhere" variety. In comparison with Bromley, their record of reducing accidents is worse. Maybe they could learn a lesson from the Conservatives who ousted Mr Maine from control of Bromley council by adopting a simple "no more humps" policy.*

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## More Speed Hump Dangers Revealed

Your editor was somewhat surprised recently to find that when he accelerated away from one of the speed humps in Watts Lane, Chislehurst (see picture on next page), his car ended up going sideways.

It also happened after the next hump, so his immediate conclusion was that he must have a flat tyre. But no he did not. It was only later when he walked past the humps concerned that it was clear that there was a layer of oil on the

road immediately after the humps. Obviously the sump of some car had been damaged on one of the humps with the result that it deposited oil on the road after each hump.

Clearly yet another example of how speed humps actually make the roads more dangerous, not less.



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## City of Anaheim Spells it Out

The web site of the City of Anaheim, south of Los Angeles, contains the following statements on traffic matters:

### **SPEED LIMIT MISCONCEPTIONS**

When traffic problems occur concerned citizens frequently ask why we don't lower the speed limit. There are widely held misconceptions that speed limit signs will slow the speed of traffic, reduce accidents and increase safety. Most drivers drive at a speed which they consider to be appropriate, regardless of the posted speed limit. "Before and after" studies have shown that there are no significant changes in average vehicle speeds following the posting of new or revised speed limits.

Furthermore, research has found no direct relationship between speed limits and accident frequency.

### **ARE SPEED HUMPS EFFECTIVE?**

Speed humps are still considered experimental roadway features. Several tests throughout the world on speed humps have raised questions about their effectiveness. Test results indicate:

- Speed humps do not significantly reduce vehicle speeds once the vehicle has left the speed hump. In fact, the discomfort

and shock sometimes decrease as vehicle speeds increase.

- Speed humps cannot be designed to meet the specifications for all types of light-weight and heavy-weight vehicles successfully.
- Traffic volumes on streets adjacent to streets where the humps are located increase if drivers try to avoid the speed humps.
- Speed humps increase noise levels when wheels hit the pavement. Increased noise is particularly bothersome in residential areas.

For more information go to <http://www.anaheim.net/article.asp?id=605>

*(Editor's Comments: Well at least they are talking sense which is more than you get from most city traffic departments.)*

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## News Snapshots

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

+ Who said "only a ghastly dehumanised moron would want to get rid of the Routemaster"? Well it was of course the guy who finally did so - namely Ken Livingstone. December saw the final retirement of the vehicle, to be replaced by such new fangled devices as the "bendy bus".

+ In London last year, over 300,000 bus lane and parking fines were issued to foreign vehicles and were not paid. That amounts to £30 million and in addition there were £10 million of unpaid congestion "tax" fines.

+ There will be special "VIP" lanes reserved for athletes and officials on roads serving the 2012 Olympics. Drivers who use them in error face fines of up to £5,000 according to the London Olympics Bill currently going through Parliament. *(Editor: Either the authorities think that inflation will make a big come-back by 2012 and £5000 will not be worth much by then, or this is yet another draconian measure to penalise what might be accidental infringements. It's a shame Londoners have to put up with the cost and disruption that will*

*ensue from the Olympics, and we can certainly do without this kind of legislation).*

+ It seems that some, but not all, London boroughs have given up penalising drivers who "feed" parking meters, i.e. pay again when the initial period has expired. Technically they are overstaying the "maximum period" limit but boroughs such as Westminster and Wandsworth are waiving the penalties for this offence. It seems that Westminster have suffered such a drop in revenue of late from parking that they are encouraging cars to stay longer. However other boroughs are still enforcing this rule. The attitude of Bromley is unknown. *(Editor: With parking meter costs rising, more vigorous enforcement, and the final straw of the "congestion tax", many parts of central London now have masses of free parking bays during the day. Of course you would need to carry a large bag of pound coins around with you to feed these machines so it's not surprising that demand has fallen away. Note that this and the above two stories were obtained from "OTR" – a newsletter published by the Association of British Drivers, which is always worth a read).*

+ Nick Herbert, who lives near the Waldo Road rubbish disposal site in Bromley, has created a web site specifically about it – go to: [www.waldoroadtip.co.uk](http://www.waldoroadtip.co.uk). This facility has been the cause of much traffic congestion from queues back onto Holmesdale Road although matters seem to have improved since the site was reorganised. But the local residents still have some complaints.

+ Alan Gordon, vice chairman of the Police Federation, recently dismissed Government policy on roads policing as "naive in the extreme" after claims any officer can enforce traffic legislation. He also said: "The irresponsible siting of speed cameras for income generation has been a highly effective means of eroding public support for the police. Their benefits are strictly limited to speeding offences and do nothing to tackle the array of other dangerous driving offences." He added that the revenue should be ploughed back into policing and not more cameras.

+ Subsequent to the above, the Government announced a change of policy on road safety and speed cameras. A press release said that "safety cameras will cease to be funded through netting-

off", but that central Government will allocate an additional £110 million per year to road safety. Editor: I think this means that the government is going to collect all the money from fines as in the past, and spend some of it on road safety.

They also promised that all local authorities will review speed limits on their A and B roads by 2011. The press release says inappropriately high speed limits may be lowered and inappropriately low speed limits may be raised. Editor: but don't bet on seeing many of the latter because the new recommended approach for setting speed limits throws out common sense or science and allows any traffic engineer to set the limit based on what he thinks drivers should be driving at – see our past article on that subject.

+ A joint CBI/KPMG survey of London businesses that was published recently showed widespread dissatisfaction with the capital's roads. Some 75 per cent of businesses viewed them as "poor or patchy, with little change". Also the increase in the congestion charge was seen as a mixed blessing with 49% of businesses reporting it as adding to their costs, and some also reported lost business as a result.

+ We reported in our last edition about complaints from osteoporosis sufferers as regards many of the new speed "cushions" in Edinburgh. Well it seems the council have responded by blaming the contractors for building many of them with "too steep" gradients. The contractor is being asked to replace some humps at their own expense. Whether that will mollify the complaints of residents remains to be seen.

+ The BBC and other sources have reported on the invention of an "Electro-Kinetic Road Ramp" that generates electricity as vehicles drive over it. Inventor Peter Hughes is attempting to sell it to local councils to power traffic lights and road signs. They cost £25,000 each but can generate up to 50kw per vehicle. *(Editor: regardless of the environmental credentials of this device, I am absolutely not in favour as it looks like a road hump in many ways, and disrupting the road surface will create a hazard for road users, particularly cyclists and motorcyclists).*

+ Superintendent Matt Bell reported to the Newsshopper that over 300 number plates had

been reported stolen in Bromley since February 2005. But they suspect these are not just people stealing plates to "replate" their own vehicles and hence avoid prosecution for infringements of the congestion tax and other offences. It seems that one possibility is that people are reporting plates as stolen so they claim it was not them that drove into the congestion charge zone.

+ The Newssshopper is also running a campaign to bring in permanent "summertime" under the headline "Bring me Sunshine". Very appropriate bearing in mind that their head office is in Petts Wood, where William Willett, the inventor of "daylight saving" which became British Summer Time apparently formed the idea. *(Editor: I am all in favour of this idea as it might well cut road accidents and there are other advantages of bringing our times more in line with the rest of Europe – but let us know if you have any opinions on this).*

+ Another Newssshopper item was a complaint from letter writer Tony Grey about the new lane markings on the Hewitts Farm roundabout (where the A21/A224 roads connect to the link road to the M25). *(Editor: Well although I am aware that this roundabout is the scene of numerous accidents, I certainly don't think the new markings help as they seem to contradict the natural paths taken by traffic and the shape of the central roundabout. And the hatched areas pretend to stop people from driving in the most direct and safest paths also which they will no doubt soon begin to ignore. It really looks like more thought should have been given to the design.)*

+ According to a report in the Daily Telegraph, your editor had his human rights infringed some years ago when his car was towed away by Camden Council for slightly overstaying on a parking meter bay. It seems a lawyer who works for the National Parking Adjudication Service has advised this is likely to be a breach of Article 1 of the Human Rights Act.

+ Biggin Hill Airport have issued another glossy leaflet promoting their revised plans for expansion (the "Master Plan"). They claim their new proposals have been developed after taking into account comments from the public, and they claim that an independent study "shows how small and barely noticeable any change" in noise levels would be. The Airport also suggests "it is unfair on residents that they live near the airport

## 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

This Newsletter is published by the Bromley Borough Roads Action Group (B.B.R.A.G.), PO Box 62, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5YB. All material contained herein is Copyright of B.B.R.A.G. and may only be reproduced with permission. Any opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author of the article or that of the Editor which do not necessarily represent the official policies of B.B.R.A.G.

B.B.R.A.G. Chairman and Newsletter Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, fax: 020-8295-0378, Email: [roger.lawson@btclick.com](mailto:roger.lawson@btclick.com)). Contact 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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