



BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 43 (Nov 2006)

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Editorial

Our lead story covers a major new bridge in Kent, and there is also a report on the public inquiry into the Thames Gateway bridge.

Members may recall why BBRAG was founded – because of a speed hump scheme in Chislehurst – and there is an analysis of what effect that had on road traffic casualties – effectively none!

There is also an update on the Cray Avenue Bus Lane scandal, a note on the Croydon Tramlink extension to Crystal Palace (and how poor the economics of the existing scheme are), and the usual antics of Transport of London in respect of public access to information and consultation.

Plus there is a topical analysis of air pollution issues.

Roger Lawson, Editor

Sheppey Bridge Opens



The new bridge to the Isle of Sheppey in Kent opened recently – pictured above with the old bridge still alongside where it will remain. To quote from the Kent County Council web site: "The bridge is 1.27 kilometres long and 34.7 metres high. The route of the new road crosses areas of international significance for birds, and includes areas classified as sites of special scientific interest (SSSI). A number of design features have been included in the scheme to reduce the bridge's effect on the environment". It does not say what the latter features are, but it's nice to know that it's all "politically correct" and a snip at only £100 million – and there is not even a toll on it. It seems that funding was provided by central Government as it is seen as part of the "Thames Gateway" regeneration area.

There is no speed limit on the bridge but Chief Constable Mike Fuller of Kent Police has already voiced his concerns over the lack of lighting, hard shoulders and emergency phones, the height of handrails and the danger this poses to emergency services personnel responding to incidents on the bridge.

He said: "The national speed limit of 70mph applies on the bridge, so people are often driving at speeds normally used on a motorway, but with no lighting and no hard shoulder to use if they get into difficulty. This makes it very dangerous not only for motorists, but for emergency services personnel.

Visibility on the approach to the bridge can be difficult, particularly at night. If there is an accident or breakdown vehicles and their occupants would be vulnerable and there would be a clear risk to other road users."

(Editors Comments: it seemed safe enough to me, and I think we should wait and see before jumping to any conclusions about safety – after all the road that it resides on is a typical trunk road, i.e. not built to motorway standards, and similar complaints could be made about that but I have no knowledge of it being particularly dangerous).

Thames Gateway Bridge



Readers may be wondering what has been happening on the other Thames Gateway Bridge (TGB) – the one proposed for Becton to Thamesmead. Well it has been going through the consultation and public inquiry process. A decision is not expected until spring 2007.

More details of the consultation process and evidence submitted to the inquiry can be seen at: www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/thames-gateway/tgw-bridge . Here are some brief notes from TfL's final submission to the inquiry:

- The proposed toll is now £3 in peak periods and £2 at non-peak times. However nearby residents will get a discount making the charge only £1 at all times. It is clear that the toll is being set not to recoup the costs of building the bridge, but so as to reduce the level of traffic. This is necessary to ensure that access roads can cope and to minimise air pollution.

- Bexley residents have complained that the bridge will be so attractive as an alternative route to the Dartford crossing or the Blackwall Tunnel that traffic will divert. But TfL argue that the journey times via the TGB will be such as to

deter that. This is mainly because the access roads are so poor (by design) that it will be difficult to get to the bridge.

- TfL claim there will be no adverse health impacts of the bridge and refuted evidence given by Professor McCarthy and other critics on that issue.

- TfL's comments on Transport2000s evidence was "T2000's witnesses agreed that their stance was one of standing back, thinking of the vision, and scrapping the TGB". In addition they say about Transport2000 that "Such is its concern to reduce travel, that it is even concerned about Crossrail on that basis".

- Friends of the Earth (FOE) apparently presented little expert evidence. However in relation to noise their main claim was that some residents would have to sleep with their windows closed to meet WHO guidelines; and that in parks and leisure spaces traffic noise may make "dozing off difficult". TfL said that "Limited weight can be given to FOE's claims of serious environmental effects since their witness, Miss Bates, agreed that she regarded even a moderate adverse effect as being very serious". TfL also referred to a leaflet distributed by FOE in 2003 which they say "is a thoroughly misleading document, describing and depicting a bridge carrying six lanes of cars, with no separate provision for public transport, or cycles, or pedestrians, and allegedly costing half a billion pounds of public funds that would be better used for other purposes – whereas FOE well knew in 2003 that a multi-modal bridge was planned and that tolling would pay for part of its construction. The enthusiasm and commitment of their campaign coordinator is unquestionable, but her approach was the opposite of objective, and her understanding of the details of the scheme, and the relevant planning factors, was materially deficient." See also the comments in the next article about FOE's opposition to the use of the bridge by private cars.

- The London Cycling Campaign (LCC) complained that they thought only fit cyclists would be able to cycle over the bridge. TfL argued that only regular cyclists are likely to use the bridge and therefore they would be fit enough to get up the slopes.

- Bob Neill (the recently elected MP for Chislehurst) raised a number of issues about the reliability of the traffic model, and mitigation measures in Bexley. There were also a large number of other individual objectors or people making representations, although most of their points seem to be repetitions of the main arguments mentioned above.

Cars and Air Pollution in the UK

One of most interesting statements in the Thames Gateway Bridge report from TfL is the following statement: "*Private cars (at which FOE's hostility seems to be focussed) constitute only 10% of total UK CO2 emissions, and the position appears to be both under control and improving, largely due to technology*".

The percentage of CO2 emissions generated by road transport of the total emissions of 170 million tonnes in 2004 was 20%. Roughly about half of that is generated by cars, with a quarter produced by HGVs, a smaller amount by LGVs and a minor fraction by buses. However the proportion generated by buses and taxis in London is probably relatively higher although exact figures are difficult to locate.

Although new cars are relatively less polluting, as they are more fuel efficient and have better filters, the total amount of pollution generated by them is not falling as there are more cars on the road.

However, the pollution from goods vehicles has been rising, and that from air transport has been rocketing upwards.

Incidentally the largest coal fired power station in the UK (Drax) generates more CO2 than all the passenger cars combined (21 million tonnes versus 19 million tonnes).

What to Do About It?

Here are your editor's comments on the problem of air pollution:

Global warming may or may not be happening – I am one of the sceptics. But reducing air pollution, particularly of those pollutants that are known to affect health, is surely a sensible thing to do so long as it can be done at reasonable

cost. Improving the air quality in cities such as London will make life much pleasanter and most people would be willing to pay something for that.

But clearly, tinkering at the fringes by making minor adjustment to the rates of car vehicle tax, or introducing a higher London congestion charge for more polluting vehicles is not going to make a real difference. We don't need "gesture politics" – what we need is some real steps to cut pollutants in total.

Therefore the really big polluters such as power stations and industrial processes must be tackled. At the same time, transport emissions must also be improved, and that should not be done by simply stopping people from travelling, or attempting to move them all to public transport (the latter would not make much difference anyway) but by much more aggressive encouragement of technological solutions. Cars, LGVs, HGVs, buses and taxis can all be made a lot more efficient and cleaner than they are at present – in fact some cars are already remarkably improved. Even people who like to buy high performance or larger vehicles could have their needs satisfied – just look at the Lexus GS450h reviewed in a previous edition – but they need strong, but reasonable, financial incentives to make the change.

Clearly a high fuel cost would help but it is probably not sufficient and causes problems for rural communities who have fewer pollution problems anyway. Perhaps better to have a more aggressive car license duty in terms of higher rates for more polluting vehicles. But both of these approaches are very blunt instruments and cause problems for people who have recently bought vehicles unless they are phased in gradually or only applied to new vehicles.

In addition they are unselective about the type of pollution being generated. Carbon dioxide is not nearly as detrimental to health as other pollutants such as particulates or NO2 so the wrong incentives may actually make matters worse – for example they might encourage the use of more diesel engines which may be more "economical" but are a lot worse for certain pollutants

An alternative approach is simply to direct that cars must meet certain improved standards over time, if they are to be sold at all. Or you can have a "manufacturer overall average" target that they have to meet, as they have to in the USA. Such targets can be made pollutant specific of course, not just based on CO2 emissions. Such targets would probably require much more specific commitment from the European Union however and would take some years to implement.

Another thing that would help would be to encourage the removal of older vehicles from our roads by suitable financial incentives. Expediting the renewal of the vehicle fleet, particularly of older HGVs, LGVs and taxis, would have a significant impact because older vehicles are significantly worse than modern ones in respect to pollution.

At present, the measures being taken are in my view too weak and too mixed up with illogical emotions to really achieve much. You cannot cut air pollution significantly by simply reducing car usage, as has been well demonstrated by the London congestion tax. You need to encourage technological improvements much more forcefully such as using electric or hybrid powered buses and delivery vehicles. Note that the EU set a target of 120g CO2/km for 2010 for cars, but that target is unlikely to be met unless more vigorous action is taken at an international level.

But any such steps should not just target private vehicles but even more importantly goods vehicles, buses and taxis. There should be no separate attack on the private motorist and the reductions should apply across all vehicle types.

Permit Parking and "Carer Permits"



One of the big problems that occur with permit parking schemes is the difficulty of visiting residents on an occasional basis.

For example, a resident may be incapacitated or elderly, and either require regular visits from social services staff, or from relatives. Although in some "Controlled Parking Zones", visitors can buy a pay and display ticket when authorised by a resident, in others there is no such provision and particularly when there

are "no parking by non-residents in certain hours" kind of limitations, this can cause a problem.

In general, permit parking schemes are just annoying if you want to visit an elderly relative or friend, at a time to suit you and not that of the vagaries of the local parking regulations.

But Bromley is to try a new experiment where both formal and informal carers can register for a special permit for a fee of £25. This will permit them to park in specific bays near the "cared" person.

(Editors Comments: Of course this is just one type of visitor that is inconvenienced, so it does not really counter my objections to such schemes. In addition, it would seem possible that it might be open to abuse, and of course involves substantial administrative effort that could be removed by simply scrapping most such schemes to start with).

Croydon Tramlink Extension



At a meeting held at Bromley council on the 31st August, staff from Transport for London (TfL) presented their proposals for an extension of the Croydon Tramlink to Crystal Palace. The presentation was given to Councillor Colin Smith, Environment Portfolio Holder and other councillors with members of the public also present. Luke Albanese of TfL gave a glowing report on the existing tram system, with 20% of riders claimed to be former car users (*Editor: that does not seem a very high number to me and I know that most of the rest are former bus users from past reports*).

He suggested that it would be difficult to justify extending the system to Beckenham on economic grounds, and that bearing in mind the recent scrutiny of tram schemes, which have tended to be over budget on costs, and under budget on passenger revenue, he considered that the extension to Crystal Palace alone was a scheme that TfL could justify. But when a member of the public asked him how much it would cost, he refused to say.

It also transpired during his presentation that there were going to be a number of contentious issues on the route of the tram. Some of it would undoubtedly be alongside a rail track, i.e. on existing Network Rail land, but the rest would involve running on part of Anerley Road, or on part of Crystal Palace Park. The former is always problematic on roads with heavy traffic, and the latter is not going to please any lovers of the park. In addition a number of properties would need to be compulsorily purchased and demolished. The proposal is quite modest in some ways, but even so would not be due for completion until 2013.

TfL and the Freedom of Information Act

At the end of the meeting a member of the public asked if he could have a copy of the presentation, but it was suggested that this would only be possible in "due course". After the meeting your editor rang TfL to ask for one but that was also refused, so I submitted a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) - it seems astonishing to me that TfL staff can give a public presentation and then refuse to release the document they have just presented. The file could of course have been emailed within a matter of seconds as it was readily available. They seem to have no understanding of the concept of open government or the principles of the FOI Act. Such behaviour has of course already offended some of the likely opposition to this scheme, such as the Crystal Palace Campaign who are not going to be happy with any infringement of the park.

Note that the FOI Act says that information requested should be disclosed "promptly", but TfL deliberately delayed releasing the presentation document although they did finally supply it three weeks later.

This decision to ignore the specific wording of the Act was even backed up by a letter from Commissioner Peter Hendy. This seems to be typical of the general attitude of TfL to public consultation and involvement. If they think you may not agree with their proposals, they seem to obstruct you in every way they can – even down to ignoring the wording of an Act of Parliament.

And what was the reason for the delay in sending the presentation document? Simply that TfL apparently wanted to manage the release of the information to a selected group of people first before it became widely available. Is that a valid reason for delay under the FOI Act? No.

More Information on the Tramlink Extension

As more information was obtained as a result of the FOI request, it can now be stated that the capital cost of the proposed extension will be approximately £60 million, with operating costs likely to run at about £1 million per year. TfL expects to be able to justify those figures by demonstrating that the benefits of the scheme including "non-financial" and "economic regeneration" benefits will exceed those costs, but the details are still being worked on. If anyone requires more information on the route options, then they should contact the editor.

The Economics of Tramlink



The last accounts for Tramtrack Croydon Ltd, who are the Tramlink operator, were filed for the period ending March 2005. They show a loss of £5.9 million pounds for the year, on revenue of £19 million.

The loss was primarily caused as a result of the payment of interest of £8.3 million on the outstanding loans of £120 million used to finance construction (the total cost was about £200 million but central Government funded the difference).

The revenue figure includes income from TfL to cover fares for "freedom passes" and other concessionary fares that taxpayers effectively subsidise. In the 2005/2006 financial year, TfL made payments of £6.7 million in total to TfL to cover such "fares compensation" and for "outstanding construction grant" plus "competing buses compensation" – yes the last is a special payment agreed with Tramlink to cover unexpected competition from buses apparently.

The owners of Tramtrack Croydon Ltd are Amey Tramlink Ltd, Sir Robert McAlpine (Holdings) Ltd, Royal Bank Project Investments Ltd, Bombardier Prorail Ltd, CentreWest Ltd and 3i Group Ltd – these organisations have also provided the above mentioned loans.

(Editors Comments: Would you invest in this business? I certainly wouldn't. In fact it is technically insolvent with negative shareholders equity of £21.6 million, and how it is ever likely to turn a profit is not at all clear. In reality the only thing that keeps it afloat is subsidies from TfL. The justification for maintaining this light rail system is apparently that people might use their cars instead if it was not there, but in reality most of them would simply use local buses, as they did before – and the latter would be enormously cheaper to operate.

Whether it is economically sensible to extend the system I will leave judgement on until a later date when more information has been published, but at first glance it does not look promising. To recoup the capital cost requires a very substantial income to be generated which appears quite unlikely to be achieved).

Bus Lanes and the Conservatives



Conservatives on the Greater London Assembly have launched a "five point plan to give back road space to drivers". They claim the Mayor is causing congestion by his anti-car policies, and they want all 24-hour bus lanes to be scrapped.

In addition they suggest drivers should be reminded that they can use bus lanes outside their operating hours. It seems motorists don't use them when they can for fear of getting fines. *(Editor: not sure this last one is a good idea as I really enjoy using a bus lane when everyone else is queuing up unnecessarily in the other lane. But removing unnecessary 24-hour bus lanes that have worsened congestion as on Jamaica Road, Southwark, is certainly a good idea.)*

The Arguments Against Queue Jumping

An interesting letter was sent to Private Eye on the subject of bus lanes by Richard Austen-Baker of Lancaster. Among other things he said: *"Dr B.Ching is wrong to attack scrapping of bus lanes. It is simple economics. Just as people generally use state schools because they can't afford private schools and get NHS treatment because they can't afford private medicine, so they use public transport because they can't afford private transport. On average, bus passengers who are employed at all (many are pensioners, students, schoolchildren or the unemployed) earn far less than car users. This is because their time is less valuable to the economy. It therefore makes no sense whatever to give them priority over people in cars".*

(Editor: On that argument, cars should get priority over buses not the other way around. But personally I don't think anyone should get priority over anyone else – there should be no queue jumping. I have always felt this was true also of airport check-in operations where I can see no justification for "fast-track" lines for higher fare payers. Everyone should surely be equal in the eyes of transport operators – but send your letters in if you disagree with that hypothesis)

Cray Avenue Bus Lane



Following on from the article in our last edition, the reasons why the Adjudicator allowed the appeal by Roy Swift is now clearer. Bus lanes are established by a "Traffic Management Order". The one issued by Bromley Council (the "The Bromley (Bus Lanes)(No.1) Order 1998") gives a number of exemptions for infringement. For example, you will be pleased to hear that it is legal to enter a bus lane "so as to avoid an accident".

But it also says "a vehicle crossing a bus lane in order to get to or from any road adjacent to the bus lane or any vehicular access to premises adjacent to the bus lane" is an exemption.

Therefore the manoeuvre by Roy Swift (see photo above), and by hundreds of other people, where they moved into the bus lane a short distance before turning left is clearly legal.

It seems that council staff still do not agree with this interpretation though and have raised the issue with the Association of London Government as in their view it sets a bad precedent.

Councillor Julian Grainger has been pushing to get an answer to his question on how many of the Penalty Charge Notices issued to drivers in the Cray Avenue Bus Lane were issued to people who were turning left into a side road. At an Environment & Leisure PDS Committee meeting on the 25th September he finally got some kind of answer. It seems that in a 2 week period in August 2006, the answer was over 30% - but it may have been even higher when the lane was first introduced and when people were not aware of how vicious the enforcement regime would be.

(Editor: As I said in my letter which was published in the Newsshopper, I don't think the Council has a legal leg to stand on, and anyone who receives a Penalty Notice when crossing the bus lane into an adjacent road should go to appeal. In addition anyone who received such a Penalty Notice in the past and paid it without complaint should ask for their money back. This is a typical example of excessive and unreasonable enforcement practices and none of the thousands of drivers who received these penalties were likely to have been obstructing or impeding buses, and they were clearly not breaking the regulations either. What is the motivation for council staff to pretend that the regulations are otherwise? Simply their greed to raise money it seems to me as there does not seem to be any other possible motive. Pressure on council budgets is always intense, and nobody wants to see general taxes raised unnecessarily, but collecting money in this manner from innocent motorists is not fair and not reasonable).

The Congestion Charge & Congestion

It was reported in our last newsletter that the Congestion Charge Tax has not improved air pollution – in fact just the opposite. But according to the last TfL report on this subject, it also has not done much for congestion either. The average speed of traffic in London is now 10 mph which is only 0.5 mph better than it was before the charge was introduced. In addition the report also showed that the observed "excess delays" have risen since 2003/2004 from 1.6 minutes per kilometre to 1.8 minutes.

(Editor: So this enormously expensive scheme is not producing the intended benefits, either in reducing congestion or improving the environment. It must be time to scrap it and to consider other alternatives.)

Stockholm Vote on Congestion Charge

The city of Stockholm in Sweden have recently completed a trial of a more sophisticated congestion charging system than that in London. After 6 months, the trial has ceased and residents had a vote at the same time as they elected a new Government.

The result in the central Stockholm districts was a vote of 52% to 46% in favour, but the surrounding 14 municipalities where many

commuters live all voted against. The plan apparently invoked anger in many suburban opponents. Leif Bergmark, a Moderate Party councillor in Solna said "the way it was introduced was the least democratic event in Sweden's history."

With a new right wing central Government who have vowed to listen to the municipalities, it seemed unlikely the scheme would go ahead. But the new "Alliance" government subsequently said that they would go ahead with a congestion charge but use the money raised to finance a ring road.

London Buses & Air Pollution



Our previous editions have reported on how the London Congestion Tax has not improved air pollution, and in fact pollution appears to have got worse in central

London in the last few years. One of the causes might well be the increased number of buses.

Transport for London have recently admitted that their programme to fit all London buses with particulate traps might well have had unforeseen consequences. They have discovered that the traps have actually caused an increase in NO₂ (nitrous dioxide) and this is indeed reflected in the actual pollution data.

They are experimenting with a solution to the problem and will have to refit all 8,000 London buses accordingly.

Oxford Street Buses

One of the worst streets for pollution from buses is of course Oxford Street in the West End, where buses are often nose-to-tail. Mayor Livingstone plans to solve this problem by replacing them all with a tram that would run down the centre of the street. He also wants to scrap the Marble Arch roundabout and replace it with a bus terminus.

All traffic would be removed from Oxford Street (only buses and taxis are currently permitted), although he does not say where the buses will now run. It seems that 40% of London bus

routes go down the street and this is often just a short segment of their overall route, so it is not clear exactly how this will work.

(Editor: As usual, Mr Livingstone is long on rhetoric and short on practical details. I also have great fears that the rehash of Marble Arch will result in the same destruction of major road routes as happened in Trafalgar Square. This has resulted in major additional congestion and difficulties for anyone driving in that part of London, including taxi drivers.)

Bickley Traffic Calming



Bromley Council have recently put some proposals for a wide area traffic calming scheme in Bickley out to public consultation. The main elements of the scheme are:

- Numerous kerb build-outs and "throttles" on Hawthorne Road, Oldfield Road, Homestead Road and The Fairway. ("throttles" are build outs that narrow the road to a single carriageway with "one-way" working).
- The closure of Highfield Road where it adjoins The Fairway presumably based on allegations that it is a "rat-run". Alternately making it one way only.
- A 20 mph speed limit on Blackbrook Lane and a 20 mph zone over the whole area within the Blackbrook Lane, Southborough Road, Southborough Lane, Bickley Park Road square.
- A Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) for Hawthorne Road which consists simply of parking restrictions.

The total cost of the scheme would be £250,000 of which £60,000 is coming from the developers of the Aquila site, and the rest from TfL (ie. from your taxes).

BBRAG has objected to these measures as have many residents. We have also circulated a leaflet encouraging residents to object. Our full objections and more details of the proposals can be seen in the News section of our web site, but the following is a summary:

- The "throttles" on Hawthorne Road, Oldfield Road and others are dangerous for drivers. In fact they were used extensively in Finchley a few years ago but subsequently had to be removed at enormous expense because of the number of accidents and road rage incidents they caused. They will also cause needless additional traffic congestion.

- The allegation that Highfield Road/The Fairway is a "rat run" is simply false. Your editor has spent a long time walking these roads, both during the rush hours and at other times, and the traffic is minimal. In fact these are probably some of the quietest roads in Bromley (a photograph of Highfield Road is present at the start of this article – as you can see this is a relatively wide, quiet and probably safe street). Any traffic that is present is obviously mainly local residents. Introducing this unnecessary road closure will simply worsen congestion, divert traffic onto Southborough Road which is known to be more dangerous and it inconveniences residents to no benefit.

- The proposed 20 mph speed limit on Blackbrook Lane is unnecessary (traffic speed has already been reduced by the speed tables), and will simply not be adhered to. This is a major distributor route for vehicles travelling from the Chislehurst/Sidcup area towards Locksbottom and Biggin Hill and it is wrong to try to restrict its use in this way. Again traffic may simply divert onto Southborough Road which is more dangerous.

(Editor: it seems that yet again we have a scheme designed by external consultants who are not familiar with the roads and have no local knowledge. Neither did they seem to bother asking local residents about their views before coming up with these plans.

And the council has put them out to public consultation – at considerable expense – without much thought. There must be a better way to devise road safety schemes than this.).

What Happened to Junction Improvement?

Note that the above scheme is part funded under a "Section 106 Agreement" by the Aquila developers. Under the original planning application and approval for the development, there were also proposals to widen and improve the junction between Bickley Park Road and Blackbrook Lane. This was intended to reduce the additional congestion caused by the extra traffic from the development. But your editor is having some difficulty finding out what happened to that part of the proposal.

Road Reopened in Barnet

While Bromley attempts to close roads because of alleged "rat-running", Barnet is reopening a road that was closed for that exact reason. Partingdale Lane will be reopened according to a recent decision of Barnet Council after it was originally closed in 1998. But "mitigation" measures will be introduced including a 20 mph speed limit, chicanes and a new footway. Residents of the road have threatened to seek compensation under the Land Compensation Act but the council believes the mitigation measures will thwart any such legal action.

(Editor's Comments: "Rat-running" is a derogatory term invented by residents to describe vehicles who are using the public highway. Public roads are open to everyone and I see no reason to criticise drivers who are making the most of the road space that is available and trying to avoid congestion.).

Speed Humps Have No Effect!



Above is a picture of Manor Park Road, Chislehurst where speed humps were installed in 1999. The traffic calming scheme for this road (and its continuation, Watts Lane) was the reason for the formation of BBRAG in 1998. We opposed the installation of the speed humps because we said the cost of £40,000 was a waste of money and would be better spent elsewhere. We also questioned whether the humps would prevent the kinds of accidents that took place in the road, which were relatively few anyway. Well it is now seven years since the scheme was installed so what are the subsequent statistics for road accidents?

Taking information from reports produced by Bromley Council staff back in 1998, and another similar report obtained recently, the figures are:

For the three years prior to August 1998: 14 injuries. For the seven years prior to May 2006: 27 injuries. There were no fatalities in either period. In other words there were 4.7 injuries per year before the installation of the humps, and 3.8 injuries per year after the installation of the humps. Assuming that the reporting of injuries has been consistent (which is certainly questionable from other reports recently published), then there are two issues here:

1. Is this difference statistically significant against a control group (so that other changes in accident trends can be excluded)?
2. Is the difference likely to be accounted for by reduced traffic volumes due to traffic diversion?

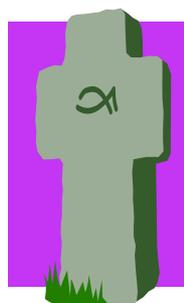
The 19% apparent reduction is only slightly better than the 14% reduction in road traffic accidents in the same period in the Borough of Bromley as a whole (and this was almost the last speed hump scheme installed in Bromley). The 5% difference is certainly not statistically significant.

In practice that 5% improvement is almost certainly the result of traffic diversion as usually there would be more than 10% diversion of traffic as a result of speed humps (there is an easy diversionary route in this case). In conclusion therefore, this speed hump scheme has not cut accidents and it was a waste of money as BBRAG originally claimed.

A full analysis of the data can be seen in a report on our web site at: www.bromleytransport.org.uk/Speed_humps_effect.htm (or ask your editor for a copy).

Of course what is not mentioned in the report is the pain and suffering these humps have inflicted on residents over the last few years, the damage to vehicles, the extra road maintenance cost, the delays to emergency service vehicles and other adverse effects which we have repeatedly pointed out.

UK Road Casualty Statistics



The statistics for road accidents during 2005 in the UK were recently published by the Department of Transport (DfT). Total fatalities were 3,201 which are only down by 0.6% on the previous year – an exceedingly disappointing result.

Pedestrian fatalities were the same as last year, pedal cyclist deaths actually went up by 10%, car users were basically unchanged, and the only bright spot was a slight fall (3%) in motorcyclists' deaths which have been rising in recent years. These numbers reinforce the general trend in recent years – despite much improved in-car safety measures, enormous amounts spent on road safety (including traffic calming schemes, speed humps, speed cameras, etc), the fatal accident figures are barely falling at all.

Overall casualties (fatal accidents plus serious and slight injuries) did fall by 3% over the year, but there is now great uncertainty about how accurate the figures for injuries are. The DfT when publishing the report suggests that the actual numbers of serious injuries may be 2.7 times those reported, and the slight injuries 1.7 times – the Department is undertaking further research to investigate the level and trends in under-reporting.

For full details go to this web site page:
http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_transstats/documents/page/dft_transstats_611922.hcsp

(Editor's Comments: Yet again the road safety policies pursued in the UK have been shown to be ineffective and it is very clear that enormous sums of money are being wasted. But while road safety is a political football kicked around by prejudiced people who have simplistic ideas on how to solve the problem, then it is likely to remain an unresolved issue).

Causation Data Published

For the first time for many years, the latest data also includes information on the causes on accidents. This has generated a lot of public correspondence on whether it debunks the arguments for speed cameras or not, ie. whether speed was the cause of one one-third of road accidents as previously claimed by the DfT or not.

The full report can be seen on the link below, but a few extracts are as follows:

For all accidents, the number where "exceeding the speed limit" was a contributory factor was 5%. The number where "going too fast for the conditions" was a contributory factor was 12%. Bearing in mind that more than one factor can be recorded by the police for any accident (up to 6 in fact), the above two factors are not necessarily mutually exclusive and in fact the combined figure for both is only 15% according to the preface to the report.

So clearly the previous DfT claims have been debunked by their own data. In addition, it is now obvious that there are many other factors that are more common than excessive speed.

For example "failing to look properly" scored 32%.

Even if speed cameras and speed humps were effective at forcing people to adhere to speed limits at all times, it is also clear from the data that they might at most prevent 5% of accidents – and in reality probably a lot less as being a contributory factor does not mean that the accident would be avoided if that factor was removed – there are likely to be other factors that still result in some of these accidents occurring.

Paul Smith of Safespeed (www.safespeed.org.uk) has also pointed out that for some unexplained reason the report ignores the "confidence factors" that the police record against the causation factors. In reality, there may be quite low confidence in attribution of causation and it is all too easy when an accident is unexplained or unexplainable on the available evidence to attribute it to excessive speed.

(Editor's Comments: This report explains exactly why road safety policy as promoted by the Government in recent years does not have the expected result. To quote from the Association of British Drivers (www.abd.org.uk): "the Accident Causation Analysis means the end of the road for the 'One-Third Lie'").

The full report is at:
http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_transstats/documents/downloadable/dft_transstats_612594.pdfv

Crossover Parking

Another issue that is taxing the minds of Councillors and Council Officers in recent weeks is the subject of parking on "crossovers". A crossover is where a driveway crosses over the pavement or grass verge to reach a property, and parking on crossovers is contrary to regulations, ie. it is an offence for which a Penalty Charge Notice may be issued. That is not unreasonable in most cases – after all nobody likes the pavement obstructed unnecessarily, and usually people can park on the road instead.

But there are some situations where traditionally people have parked on crossovers without causing any obstruction (eg. where there is a wide verge), and it is either impractical or impossible to park on the road for safety reasons or due to parking restrictions. Spur Road in Orpington is just such an example.

Recent moves to enforce the regulations and without discretion have resulted in a lot of unnecessary complaints. But the issue is still being considered by Councillors – let us hope more common sense prevails.

News Snapshots

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

+ Our last newsletter covered the issue of under-reporting of road accidents. According to the Financial Times, Karen Dunnell, the National Statistician, had “expressed her concern” over the matter – in essence the figures on casualties reported by police have been declining, while hospital data suggests they are not. It seems the Department for Transport is still examining the issue.

+ The Association of London Government (ALG) have come out against Mayor Livingstone’s plan for a Low Emission Zone in London. The ALG’s director of transport, environment and planning, Nick Lester has said: “*We believe that the marginal benefits offered, compared with the improvements that Transport for London predict will occur without an LEZ, make it difficult to justify the significant costs to vehicle operators*”. (Editor’s Comments: *Yes it’s clearly yet another of Livingstone’s financially unwise schemes*).

Contact Information

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B.B.R.A.G. Chairman and Newsletter Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, fax: 020-8295-0378, Email: 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 £11.00 per annum for individuals, or £8.50 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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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.