



BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 44 (Jan 2007)

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Editorial

Best wishes for Xmas and the New Year to all our readers. I hope you have enjoyed the newsletter in the last year, but if you have any suggestions for improvements please let me know. The only thing I can't easily do is draw cartoons but any contributions of that ilk would be welcomed.

Planning to spend your time over Christmas reading the Eddington report, or the TfL Report entitled "Transport 2025"? Don't bother – simply read the summaries contained herein. Plus there's all the other London transport news that is of interest.

Roger Lawson, Editor

Croydon Tramlink Extension



The extension of the Croydon Tramlink system to Crystal Palace was covered in our last newsletter. Transport for London (TfL) have now issued a consultation document on this proposal – see the following web address:
www.tfl.gov.uk/trams/initiatives/tep/consultation.shtml

The consultation only refers to the choice of possible routes, not to the overall viability or wisdom of the scheme. It seems that Transport for London and the Mayor have taken a new approach to consultation on trams following failure to get any public agreement to the West London tram – namely that they will not be consulting us at all as we don't give the right answers.

Of the three route options, BBRAG supports only Option 2 which minimises the impact on road traffic by avoiding Anerley Road.

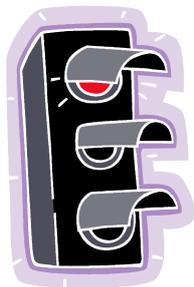
Why the Elderly Prefer Trams

The reason why many elderly people like trams became apparent at a recent U3A meeting that your editor attended. It seems that elderly and disabled people have problems with the abrupt starting, stopping and change of direction of buses – quite a number of elderly people are injured by being thrown about inside buses.

They also have more space inside and are easier to get off and on than buses.

Arguments about the cost of tram schemes also tend to have little impact on the elderly as they typically do not pay the full economic costs of the schemes at present – for example the Tralink scheme was heavily subsidised in regard to construction costs out of central Government funds and operating costs are also subsidised by TfL. In fact of course the elderly pay nothing for most of their public transport journeys in London now by using their “Freedom Passes” which means that they have no interest in the economics of different transport modes whatsoever (one of the distortions that happens if you give something to people for free). Whether they would continue to hold this opinion if they had to pay economic tram fares (which would be several times the cost of a bus fare for the same trip) remains to be seen.

More Red Lights and Slower Traffic



The number of traffic lights in London has been growing rapidly. According to a press release from the Conservative GLA group, not only have they risen by 1,000 since Ken Livingstone took over, but there are plans for another 1,719 in the Transport for

London works programme. That's on top of the existing 5,827 already present.

Roger Evans, Conservative GLA spokesman on Transport said “ *These new figures reveal the true extent of the Mayor's road blocking plans. He has presided over a gridlock London, making the lives of millions of commuters a misery through ill-thought out plans, and a constant anti-car agenda.*”

Traffic is slowing down in London

One can see the impact on traffic speeds in London of the various measures that Livingstone has promoted by looking at the trends within the congestion charge zone. Average traffic speed increased from 14.6 to 16.7 km/hr when the charge was introduced but has declined ever since.

On current trends traffic speed will be back to where it was before the introduction of the congestion tax by 2009.

What has caused this? Increases in traffic signals is one cause, but measures that reduce road space such as bus lanes, cycle lanes, bus stop build-outs and general road narrowing are some others.

In addition the increased number of buses, particularly “bendy-buses” that obstruct traffic is another problem. Traffic lights have also been rephased to give more time to pedestrians and there have been innumerable road closures – a typical example of damage to road traffic routes was the redevelopment of Trafalgar Square and the wholesale closure of roads in Bloomsbury.

Ravensbourne Avenue Parking



Above is a recently taken picture of Ravensbourne Avenue which is immediately opposite to Shortlands train station.

The right hand side used to be a favourite spot for commuters to park, but has recently had pay-and-display bays installed. The result is an empty road apart from a very few occupied bays at the far end.

Why was this scheme installed? Because apparently shopkeepers claimed they were losing trade as there was no adequate short-term parking provision.

But it seems that there was very little real demand for paid parking, and it is obvious the scheme should be reconsidered.

There has been more than one irate correspondent to the local newspapers on this subject including a Mr Chadwick in the Newsshopper who said: " *The borough has not only discouraged commuters from using the rail services from Shortlands but also incurred extra expense in installing and servicing the ticket machines and patrolling the road for illegal parking. Where is the sense in all this?*"

Another resident of Ravensbourne Avenue has complained that vehicles have just moved further down the road, and wants the restricted parking zone increased to cover his home.

(Editor's Comments: there is a simple answer to these complaints – revert to the arrangement as it was, with perhaps a very few pay and display bays at the end closest to the station to meet what demand there exists for short term parking).

Cray Avenue Bus Lane Cameras



The Cray Avenue Bus Lane cameras story which has been covered in previous editions of this newsletter continues to remain unresolved. People issued with penalty notices when they turned through the bus lane into Station Approach are still complaining. Although another appeal case was heard by PATAS, and rejected, the complaints are not dying down with more than one sufferer threatening to apply for a judicial review.

Cray Avenue in the top ten for fines

The Daily Telegraph recently reported on the roads in Britain that generated the most revenue in parking fines and bus lane offences in 2005-6 (figures originally obtained by Channel 4 News). Almost all of them are in London, and the top ten in London are as follows:

Location	Revenue £
Lordship Lane, Haringey	3.2 million
Vine St, Hillingdon	1.9 million
King St, Hammersmith & Fulham	1.1 million
Newington Green Rd, Camden	1.0 million
Kentish Town Road, Camden	825,000
Cray Avenue, Orpington	753,000
Green Street, Newham	587,000
Hoe Street, Waltham Forest	426,000
High Street, Ealing	386,000
Green Lane, Enfield	364,000

Yes Cray Avenue is 6th, and just shows how vicious the enforcement on this road is as almost all that revenue will have come from the single original camera (nobody is likely to have been penalised for parking on this road). The above revenue figure is the value of the penalty notices issued, so the actual amount paid will be less in most cases, assuming people paid promptly.

Senior Council Officer Intervenes

The desperation of council staff to maximise revenue from the bus lane cameras is possibly reflected in the comments of Gordon Hayward in response to my letter in the Newsshopper (my letter is given below). Mr Hayward is the Director of Environment and Leisure Services for the London Borough of Bromley, and he wrote at the start of his letter: " *It is unusual in any newspaper to read of an exhortation motorists should break the law, but this is what Mr Lawson advocated.*". As you can see below, this statement is completely unjustified and my letter actually warned people against running down the bus lane.

Of course exhorting people to break the law is itself a criminal offence so why did he not simply report me to the police instead of making such patently misleading statements? Perhaps because encouraging people to seek justice is a somewhat different matter. The rest of his letter exhorted motorists to obey the rules. Why should Mr Hayward be so aggressive on this matter? No doubt readers can guess why, but it shows the general attitude of council staff to any public criticism of their actions. And there is no way that this unfair automated fine collection system can be justified.

To remind you, at least 30% of the fines were issued to people turning left off the road and who were not impeding buses in any way whatsoever. And in addition the legal position is unclear as different PATAS adjudications have given conflicting decisions, and there are clearly good legal grounds for disputing any penalty fines issued in such cases.

Drivers must argue fines, published 25/9/2006

Bromley Council is still incorrectly issuing penalty notices for infringement of the Cray Avenue Bus Lane. Council staff do not seem to want to admit defeat when they are clearly in the wrong. I would encourage anyone who is the victim of this "fund raising" activity to go to appeal. All they have to do is say that the Traffic Management Order that created the bus lane clearly says that one of the permitted exemptions for crossing a bus lane is "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". Council staff simply do not have a leg to stand on, even though they seem to be persisting in saying black is white.

That does not mean to say that you can drive down the whole length of the bus lane on the pretence you are turning off at some point, but you can certainly act in a reasonable manner to do so, even if it means one infringes the solid white line. That is clearly the interpretation that was put on the case taken to appeal by Roy Swift, and where the adjudicator correctly ruled in his favour. So all those people who have accidentally infringed the bus lane demarcation should take it to appeal, and those people who have previously paid such a fine should ask the council to refund the fine.

Roger Lawson, BBAG

Bromley Parking Charges & Budgets

The Annual Review of parking charges in Bromley has taken place. Overall revenue will rise by £130,000 which is not a large amount on the total revenue forecast for the current year of £9.7 million (but that includes bus lane fines). However individual rates in some car parks will rise substantially – for example from 30p to 40p as the minimum in Hornbrook House, Chislehurst, or from £1.50 to £2.00 for all day.

Note that parking revenue was forecast to generate a surplus of £3.7 million for the current year (2006/2007) but that is now forecast to be only £3.5 million. Much of the shortfall is due to lower usage of Bromley town centre car parks – shoppers are obviously going elsewhere. Is this due to the decline in the centre's retail attractions following the closure of some stores, or the unwillingness of residents to fight the traffic to get into Bromley or pay the high parking charges when they can get to Bluewater easily? Probably a combination of all three.

Bus lane contraventions are also falling below budget as residents learn how to avoid getting stung on the Cray Avenue Bus Lane – that just leaves unwary visitors to the borough to provide this unjustified source of revenue.

Dartford Crossing Toll Changes



The Department for Transport (DfT) are proposing to change the tolls on the Dartford Crossing from January 2008 (picture above).

The standard toll for cars will rise from £1 to £1.50 but users of Dart-Tag will only pay £1 (they presently pay 93p). Dart-Tag is an electronic tag that is purchased in advance – it expedites travel through all the toll barriers, and there is sometimes a reserved lane for tag users although that now seems to be generally kept open for all users.

They are also examining the possibility of making the toll free from 10 pm to 6 am so as to encourage lorries to use it at quieter times – these typically congest the area leading up to the toll booths as they can't use the automatic toll booths.

Dartford MP Howard Stoaite says the increase should be scrapped, and in fact he wants the tolls scrapped altogether. They clearly cause needless congestion on this stretch of motorway, and readers are reminded that the Government promised to remove the tolls once the bridge had been paid for, which it was by 2003. It also appears to contravene European law in that the tolls are higher than they need to be to cover the operating costs.

A consultation document has been published on the internet at: www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_roads/documents/page/dft_roads_613833.hcsp. Readers who use this crossing should make sure they respond.

(Editor's Comments: making it free at certain times to reduce congestion is certainly a step forward. And encouraging Dart-Tag use is also a good idea as vehicles using them pass through much more quickly – the previous price differentiation was not enough to encourage take-up. But the increase in the basic charge is too much, and I think the Government should still stick to its original promise and remove the tolls altogether).

Richmond Permit Parking Scheme



The London Borough of Richmond have recently announced major increases in parking charges (they expect to collect at least £1million more). One additional element in their proposals is to charge permit parking scheme users based on the CO2 emissions of their vehicles. This could result in some residents paying as much as £300 per year, instead of £100.

The press release issued by the Association of British Drivers said the following:

"Richmond's New Parking Charges Miss the Point, says drivers' group

Richmond council has hit the headlines today by announcing they will charge residents more to park outside their homes if they own 'gas guzzling' cars. The new tax is an attempt to reduce CO2 emissions.

The Association of British Drivers (ABD) suggests that Richmond Council has missed the point. "We believe that charging people for the privilege of parking outside their houses is wrong in any case. To charge them more simply for owning a larger car is doubly so," says Mark McArthur-Christie, the ABD's Director of Policy. The ABD goes on to explain that the most energy is used when a car is manufactured and when it is scrapped, not when it is driven or parked. If Richmond's proposal is implemented, people are more likely to get rid of larger, older cars with many years life left – causing more pollution than if the cars had simply been driven.

In any case, targeting a small minority of car users will not make any significant impact on CO2 emissions. One of the most interesting recent statements from Transport for London in their submissions on the Thames Gateway Bridge inquiry was the following statement: "Private cars constitute only 10% of total UK CO2 emissions, and the position appears to be both under control and improving, largely due to technology". If you assume only 10% of cars are "gas guzzlers" and their owners all moved to smaller cars (with about half the CO2 emissions), then the net impact will be 0.5% of CO2 emitted in Richmond. But of course most of them will not, and many cars are parked off the street so the net impact will clearly be imperceptible.

These charges are obviously not about improving emissions, but simply about raising more money for hard pressed council budgets from local residents."

More details of this proposal and the council's consultation document (which provides little information on the likely impact of these proposals which in reality are likely to reduce CO2 emissions by less than 0.25%), can be seen at: www.richmond.gov.uk. A copy of the full response by the ABD to this consultation can be seen in the News section of the BBRAG web site at: www.bromleytransport.org.uk/News.htm

New London Traffic Web Site

Transport for London (TfL) have launched a new web site which attempts to show real time details of traffic conditions in London. The web site is: www.tfl.gov.uk/trafficnews. It specifically attempts to show road works, public events, accidents and other things that may affect traffic flows and is based on a feed from the London Traffic Control Centre run by TfL.

It seems this may be the first of other similar services to help improve traffic flows in London.

(Editor's Comments: there was hardly anything on the map for Bromley when I looked at it, but the service is experimental I gather. At least it shows that TfL is making some efforts to help drivers).

LEZ Consultation



Transport for London (TfL) published the results of its consultation on a Low Emission Zone (LEZ). This would primarily impact LGV and HGV vehicles entering the zone within the M25, and is aimed to reduce air pollution to bring it down to within national and EU standards. See Newsletter number 39 for more details.

The general public, who get most of the benefit but don't suffer the cost, were 89% in favour of the proposals. Business respondents were evenly split (41% for, 41% against).

There were a number of comments submitted by BBRAG included in the report, such as:

"In other words, this enormously expensive project will only expedite improved air quality by about 5 years, because it would improve anyway as older vehicles are replaced. New vehicles must conform to much tighter emission standard so the problem will be much reduced over time."

And: *"In summary, there are several much cheaper ways of achieving the intended objectives, if the benefits are justifiable at all for the relatively short period of time for which they will apply."*

And: *"the cost of the scheme, which all Londoners will have to pay for, is simply excessive when Londoners are fed up with above-inflation increases in their council taxes."* Congratulations to TfL for publishing these remarks. I would have given a web site reference to the whole report but it seems to have disappeared already (I trust there is no suspicious coincidence there) so if anyone is desperate to read it please telephone me for a paper copy or contact TfL.

Bus Build-Outs



Our last but one edition covered the issue of "bus boarders" and other kerb build-outs on bus stops. A number of "bus priority" schemes were recently under consideration which included them, such as at Belmont Parade, Chislehurst. Following a review and on-site visits by Portfolio Holder, Councillor Colin Smith a decision was made that *"no further bus build-outs should be permitted in Bromley until such time as their impact has been thoroughly assessed"*. The immediate schemes under consideration were agreed only subject to the kerb build-outs being removed.

At a subsequent council meeting regular bus user Councillor Bennett said that even people riding on the buses she uses complain about these build-outs – they don't just block other traffic but even block buses behind.

Bickley Traffic Calming



As readers will no doubt know, there were numerous objections to the proposed traffic calming scheme for a wide area of Bickley. Two streets within the area got up their own petitions against the proposals, before they even received the leaflet that BBRAG circulated (which incidentally generated 244 submissions to the council of which 90% objected to any of the proposed measures – those are figures from the council consultation report). The local ward councillors also said it was a waste of money and that there should be more measures on Southborough Road, including a zebra crossing near Bickley station.

What were the results from the council's own consultation leaflet? Widespread opposition is the answer. Even the question "Do you support the traffic calming scheme in principal?" scored 291 "against" versus 234 "in favour", with 113 undecided, which is unusual as most people support some kind of traffic calming measures in residential streets. Opposition to individual measures was even higher, and the residents of Oldfield Road, Hawthorne Road and Blackbrook Lane all voted against the measures proposed for their own roads by a majority. The closure of Highfield Road was opposed by 376 votes to 85, and only the measures in Southborough Road received majority support.

Following consultation with ward councillors and consideration by Councillor Colin Smith, it was decided to consult on revised measures, which include:

- A zebra crossing in Southborough Road.
- A mini-roundabout at the junction of Blackbrook Lane and Hawthorne Road.
- Widening of The Fairway (although this was immediately questioned).
- Vehicle activated signs in Blackbrook Lane and Southborough Road
- Reduced numbers of "throttles" in Hawthorne Road, Oldfield Road and Homemead Road.

Unless further changes are made in the meantime, this will go to another round of public consultation. There was a general feeling from councillors that more money should be spent on Southborough Road and that it was being wasted on other measures. However the latest news is that the scheme has been called in for scrutiny by the Environment Policy Development and

Scrutiny Committee so yet more deliberations will be taking place.

(Editor's Comments: Fortunately residents of Bickley have the experienced Councillor Gordon Jenkins representing their interests who usually seems to promote sensible policies. BBRAG is likely to support the suggested changes except for the continuing inclusion of "throttles" in the scheme which in our view are an anathema and positively dangerous).

Bickley Park Road Junction Improvements

In addition to contributing towards the cost of the traffic calming scheme in Bickley, the developers of the Aquila site also paid £205,000 to cover the possible need to improve the Bickley Park Road, Blackbrook Lane junction. Installation of traffic lights and widening of the junction were originally thought necessary to cope with the extra traffic volumes on what is already a heavily congested junction during rush hours. These works are still under consideration (and if not proceeded with the cash will have to be returned to the developer), but Councillor Colin Smith apparently believes that too many traffic lights are a bad thing in terms of contributing to congestion and will ask for other proposals to be devised.

Southborough Lane Traffic Calming

A scheme for the adjacent Southborough Lane was considered by Colin Smith at the same time, and most of it approved. Although ward councillors suggested that the number of signs and complexity of the scheme might distract drivers (BBRAG made similar comments on the scheme design).

The Latest Attack on Car Owners



Mayor Ken Livingstone recently announced his latest attack on car owners. The man who has allegedly said "I hate cars" demonstrated exactly how he plans to impose his views on the rest of us by announcing that the London Congestion Tax will soon be £25 for many car owners.

All vehicles that emit more than 225g of CO₂ per km (ie. those in band G for vehicle licensing purposes) will have to pay that amount to enter the Congestion Charge zone from 2009/10.

But these are not just "gas-guzzling" 4x4s that will be affected. Almost all luxury cars will be, and even such mundane vehicles as the Fiat Croma 2.2, Ford Mondeo 2.0i/2.5, Ford Galaxy, Mazda 6 2.3, Renault Espace and Seat Alhambra models will incur such charges.

The claim is that "these new proposals will tackle pollution from private vehicles, and ensure that London is leading the way in the fight against catastrophic climate change", but this is nonsense.

As with the Richmond proposals, the impact on CO₂ levels is likely to be imperceptible. And why should someone whose car emits 226gm/km pay over three times as much as one that emits 225 gm/kg – it's simply irrational.

The most energy is used when a car is manufactured and when it is scrapped, not when it is driven or parked. If this proposal is implemented, people are more likely to get rid of larger, older cars with many years life left – causing more pollution than if the cars had simply been driven.

These charges are obviously not about improving emissions, but simply about raising more money for the bureaucracy spawned by Ken Livingstone. BBRAG supports measures to reduce air pollution in London, but this proposal will not achieve it, and air pollution is not just about reducing CO₂ emissions. In fact CO₂ is one of the more benign gases and this measure might simply encourage more use of vehicles with higher emissions of known carcinogens, such as diesel powered cars. In any case there are strong tax incentives already from fuel tax and vehicle excise duty for car owners to buy lower fuel consumption vehicles, so this measure is totally unnecessary. And why should someone who owns a vehicle that generates 226g CO₂ pay more than three times that of the owner of a vehicle that generates 225g CO₂ per kilometer? It's simply irrational.

Many people justified the introduction of the London Congestion Tax partly on the basis that it would reduce pollution, but in reality air pollution in the zone has gone up – this was the basis of a complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority by your editor which is still being investigated (ask for a copy of the full submission if you want one).

Note: we call the Congestion Charge a tax because we agree with the US Embassy that this is simply what it is – an excuse to raise revenue for other purposes.

For further information, see the Mayor of London's Press Release at:
www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release.jsp?releaseid=9871

Figures Demonstrate Road Safety Policy is Wrong



What do you do when the statistics undermine your rhetoric? Well ignore them of course. This is what Mayor Ken Livingstone did recently when "announcing" the latest London road casualty figures.

His press release talked about the positive trends in child and cyclist "KSIs" in the last few years, when in fact the latest six monthly figures show that overall fatalities rose by 17% and serious injuries by 23%. Even though slight injuries fell, this is a pretty horrific outcome, particularly as it is known that the "slight" figures are particularly prone to under-reporting.

Although these figures were so unexpected (at least to the Mayor) that an investigation of the statistics is underway, the Association of British Drivers says that it is simply a reversion to the mean after a couple of statistically "lucky" years. In reality fatalities are not falling much at all, despite improved in-car safety and better medical treatment.

But the over-emphasis on speed cameras, speed humps and other such measures didn't stop Jenny Jones, the Mayor's Road Safety Ambassador and member of the Green Party, from proclaiming that "There are hundreds of Londoners alive today because of the extra investment in road safety". That simply is not true if you examine the data - the figure for the last 12 months is about 20 deaths per year less than in the period 1994-1998.

In other words an enormous amount of money has been spent (£42 million in the last year) to only achieve a reduction of a very small percentage each year over the period since 1998. This is probably all down to the reasons mentioned above, and has nothing at all to do with what Transport for London has been spending our money on. Meanwhile, boroughs such as Bromley and Barnet, where speed humps and speed cameras are abhorred, produce better figures than other boroughs.

The Association of British Drivers called once again for a total rethink of road safety policy based on this data. The Mayor's press release which includes the quote from Jenny Jones can be seen at:

www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/press-centre/press-releases/press-releases-content.asp?prID=932

Old Hill Speed Humps

Readers may be wondering what is happening on the replacement of the two single humps on Old Hill, Chislehurst. This was promised by Councillor George Taylor nine months ago but still has not been implemented.

Apparently the delay has been because of a possible redevelopment of 35/37 Old Hill which might have affected the position of the new "tables", but as that is now almost certainly not going to take place the humps should be changed soon.

Road Usage Charging

Charging car drivers so much per mile on all roads has been much in the news of late, following publication of the Eddington Report.

The Association of British Drivers (ABD – see www.abd.org.uk) seems to be one of the few organisations who are opposing it. They are asking members to write to their MPs and you might care to do the same – below is a copy of what your editor sent to Bob Neill which puts the arguments quite cogently.

"Following the publication of the Eddington Report, it is clear that the Government is to push ahead with a general scheme for road usage charging. I hope that you will oppose any such scheme most vigorously as the Eddington study provides no proper justification for it.

At first glance, it may make sense to ration limited road space by a pricing mechanism, but the practical difficulties of collecting such a tax to my mind rule it out. It would also be regressive (ie. fall more heavily on the poor than the wealthy), and be enormously more expensive to collect the tax than the existing fuel tax system.

Road tolls of any form are an anathema to anyone interested in the freedom of the individual. Freedom to travel seems to me to be one of the basic rights that we should encourage and stimulate, not make it more difficult for people.

All we are likely to end up with is a system like the London Congestion Charge which is enormously unpopular with the public, a grossly inefficient tax collection system and is also not achieving the objectives that were originally planned.

People already have an £8 billion incentive to avoid jams — this is what government advisors claim that congestion costs. If £8 billion does not work at reducing jams, and is such a bad thing for the economy, then only a fool would suggest increasing this burden by charging people even more to sit in the same jams. It's a nonsense.

Varying prices according to time doesn't work on the railways — trains are still packed at peak times and transporting fresh air at other times.

Worst of all, road pricing is an excuse for the government to do nothing positive about transport for the next ten years.

All recent surveys of the public have shown a widespread hostility to congestion and road usage charging and yet the Government persists. I am glad to see that the Association of British Drivers, of which I am a member, is one of the few responsible organizations that has spoken out against this excuse for yet more taxes on motorists.

Please oppose any general road usage charging scheme, and any local schemes also, and let us return to sanity in the provision of adequate road transport infrastructure."

Sign a Petition Against Road Usage Charging

One of the ways you can oppose road usage charging is to sign an on-line petition that has been set up by the Prime Minister – go to <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/traveltax/> . When last reviewed this was the most popular of all the petitions that have been created in this new experimental system of electronic petitions to Number 10.

The Eddington Report

The "Eddington Transport Study" is yet another report on the transport problems of the UK – there have been a number in the last ten years with a strategic plan which has now quietly been forgotten about (the FT even suggested it was the eighth major report in nine years). One could say that many of the UK's transport problems are down to too many plans and not enough action, particularly in respect of road transport.

The Eddington report was nominally prepared by Sir Rod Eddington, a former chief executive of British Airways but it clearly looks like it has been written by the usual civil servants.

The full report (or a 62 page "summary") can be seen on the internet at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/eddington_transport_study/eddington_index.cfm

What are the key points it makes after you have waded through all the verbiage? These are:

1. There is not a lot wrong with the UK transport network except that there is congestion at certain points at certain times. For example he estimates congestion on the road network currently costs us about £8 billion per year. This congestion could best be tackled by point solutions where the benefits can far exceed the cost.
2. The above applies just as much to roads as other forms of transport, so there is a preference for smaller scale projects rather than grandiose new road or rail routes.
3. Decisions on transport investment should be made on the basis of costs versus benefits and be blind to the form of transport. (*Editor: this might be a final stake in the heart of those evil tram schemes where the economics are so poor*).
4. Pricing of transport should reflect congestion and environmental costs – so yes he is in favour of road usage charging, although he does not suggest that it would cure congestion altogether of course
5. Planning systems should be changed so that big transport projects can be reviewed and approved more quickly.

The "cost" of congestion charging

It is interesting to note as regards congestion charging that he quotes Transport for London on this point – he says that TfL estimate that the London congestion tax reduced car travel by 15% within the charging zone, and that between 50% and 60% of traffic was displaced to public transport. However, there is no explanation of what happened to the rest – did they stop travelling, change to walking or cycling or what? Or more likely they simply gave up travelling into London – so much for the wonders of the congestion tax.

Why road usage charging won't cure congestion

Following the publication of the Eddington report there was a very interesting letter published in the Financial Times from A. Lennard of Chislehurst (*Editor: who he I wonder?*). The writer argued that as wasted time is already valuable to road users, they already have a strong incentive to avoid it. But as they don't then clearly they value the ability to drive at congested times very highly. This implies that the total return from building new roads would be very high. The more roads we build, the more people can make journeys they value highly. But he did describe this view as "unfashionable".

Transport 2025 for London

Transport for London have recently published a report entitled "Transport 2025". This seems to be more a PR document for Ken Livingstone's Transport Strategy than anything else. But it attempts to discuss the policy options facing London's transport network in the long term. It can be read on the internet at:

www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/downloads/pdf/T2025.pdf

As with the Eddington report, although it's somewhat more readable, it talks about "managing demand" and there is also talk of "new capacity" – unfortunately this is only in regard to buses, trams and railways with plugs for such economically unjustifiable projects as Crossrail. And of course there is the obligatory encouragement of walking and cycling as in the Eddington report to prevent all those short car trips.

There is the usual nod towards the need to control CO2 levels and other air pollutants, but as CO2 emissions are directly related to the number of people and the level of business activity, it is surprising that there is no criticism of the Mayor's plans to increase both population and employment in London substantially in the next 20 years. (*Editor's Comments: nobody seems to want to link CO2 emissions to population levels and then come to the obvious conclusion – if you really want to reduce CO2 levels the simplest and most direct approach is to reduce the population by discouraging procreation and immigration. This would no doubt be almost as unpopular as solving it*

the other way by building nuclear power stations, but I think a combination of both would be the best answer and a lot more effective than politicians making marginal gestures as is happening in Richmond).

The report says "recent trends indicate that the rate of car ownership in London is not increasing. But with a rising population, even if the current level of car ownership remained constant, there would be an additional 400,000 cars in London by 2025". (*Editor: Again an obvious conclusion there perhaps*). It seems TfL have been studying the current performance of the road network, and their work is "showing that traffic levels overall have been stable on the strategic network over the last five years. At the same time, recent evidence suggests congestion levels have been increasing..."

(Editor's Comments: Well it's good for them to admit this. And what are the reasons given for the increased congestion? Restriction of the "capacity available for motor vehicles" by road safety measures, traffic calming, bus lanes, etc. Plus there has been a four fold increase in street works from 1993 to 2002.)

The report ends by discussing "Soft Travel Demand Management (TDM)" versus "Hard". Soft TDM is stuff such as personal travel plans, car clubs, car sharing and encouraging teleworking. Hard TDM is based on pricing, regulation and physical restraints. Needless to say the report supports road usage charging, but the next time you feel that someone is telling you how to live your life, or taxing you unreasonably, you will know you have just been bitten by the latest euphemism for unpopular policies – "Hard TDM".

News Snapshots

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

+ London Mayor Livingstone has announced plans for a fleet of hybrid buses – these use a combination of diesel and electric power. Six single-decker hybrid buses are already operating on the 360 route, and the world's first double-decker has just been revealed which will go into service on the 141 route. Emissions will be cut by up to 40% it is claimed.

(Editor's Comments: I fully support these proposals, although it would have been nice to see some figures on the costs of these buses in comparison with conventional diesel ones in the press release).

+ Fares for surface trains in London are to be based on a "zonal" structure similar to the underground from January 2007. It seems that this will involve substantial rises, particularly for occasional users rather than season ticket holders. For example it has been alleged that fares from Hayes to London might rise by 74%. Bearing in mind that a lot of the fares are actually paid for by Bromley Council (and hence come from your council taxes) because of subsidies for "Freedom" passes, this could have a potentially devastating impact on council budgets.

+ The US Embassy now owes more than £1 million in unpaid Congestion Charge fines – that's 10,486 unpaid fines to be exact. They continue to refuse to pay it as they consider it a tax from which they are exempt.

+ Councillor Nicholas Bennett asked a very pointed question at a recent Bromley council meeting: "As there seemed to be no objective measures of success for workplace travel plans, how do we know the cost is justified?" *(Editor: Note that one full time member of council staff is employed on preparing them, so the cost is quite significant, and I think Cllr Bennett was suggesting they may be a waste of money.)*

+ Policy on parking on "crossovers" in Bromley has now been resolved. Parking on crossovers will be exempt on certain roads in the borough – but only those where the footpath is in front of the verge.

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.