

## **Mayor's Draft Transport Strategy**

### ***Response from the London Liberal Democrats***

The Liberal Democrat group at the London Assembly and Liberal Democrat London spokesperson Tom Brake MP welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy. The document contains welcome and useful proposals, some of which need strengthening. Regrettably, important issues that need to be addressed are neglected or omitted.

There are contradictions in the document – measures to promote walking and cycling sit uncomfortably with plans to smooth traffic flow and an absence of plans for pedestrian precincts. The document lacks interim measures of success for the Mayor's projects: this will make it very difficult for Londoners to hold him to account. To secure new infrastructure investment takes many years of hard work and campaigning. If valuable projects are excluded on the grounds that funding is not currently available, they will never be delivered.

Most important, the document does not face up to setting out priorities in a tight financial climate or in explaining the Mayor's thinking on the difficult choices he and his successors will have to make. It is not enough merely to present a menu.

The key transport challenges for London in the next decade really turn on what the Mayor's administration, London business and the London taxpayer can afford.

#### ***The Tube upgrades***

The first and most important challenge is the funding gap between what it will cost to upgrade the Tube network and what funds London Underground has to ensure all this work is completed in a timely fashion.

The PPP Arbiter has provisionally stated, (17 December 2009, the final decision is 4 March 2010), that an efficient and economic infraco would need to spend £4.4 billion over the next 7.5 year review period (2010-17). This is £400 million more than London Underground's submission. We are alarmed to note that TfL's Business Plan contains no contingency to cover this shortfall, and that the Tube Lines infraco has £727 million of claims against London Underground currently being considered and a further £515 million claims in the pipeline. If any of these claims have to be paid they deepen a very considerable 'black hole' in the financing of vital Tube upgrades, and unless the Mayor can find a solution to this, he risks putting significant elements of his Transport Strategy in jeopardy.

For the rest of the Tube network (the BCV and SLL contracts) London Underground needs to demonstrate that its management of the "Metronet" contracts is cost-efficient and that this vital work can be delivered within the funding available. There is much wasted time to make up.

The London Assembly Transport Committee in a recent report rightly called for a new approach to managing line closures during the upgrades, with either well-advertised longer block closures to get the work done, and/or adopting the practice

of the Madrid Metro of carrying out some of the work while running some of the Tube services.

Liberal Democrats find it alarming that some step-free access projects at Tube stations have been started and then abandoned before completion, which argues very poor project planning and a significant waste of public money.

We note that the more ambitious projects to cool the Tube appear to have been dropped, and that there are no specific plans to rebuild Camden Town station, which is key to improving the Northern Line. We question whether private funding will be available for the proposed extension of the Northern Line. We note that the Bakerloo extension is heavily hedged about with qualifications and that there are no plans to extend any Tube line to Streatham. We would like to see the Bakerloo line extended to Camberwell and beyond if funding can be secured.

### ***Rail upgrades and Crossrail***

We are concerned that funding earmarked for Tube upgrades should not be used for work on the Crossrail project. There needs to be clear and open transparency on this.

Liberal Democrats support the Crossrail project. We believe it will contribute significantly to the economic welfare of the whole of Greater London. However we deplore the failure to require financial support from districts beyond the Greater London boundary (in Essex and Berkshire) that will benefit greatly from Crossrail.

The £5.5billion Thameslink Programme crucial for north-south commuter rail services in London is in some disarray and the Mayor should be working with Network Rail to overcome this. We are strongly committed to the continuation of the important local South London Line rail link (Victoria to London Bridge via Denmark Hill) and if possible the introduction of a rail service between Victoria and Bellingham.

### ***The bus network***

TfL's Business Plan to 2017 plans to reduce the bus subsidy by one quarter (from somewhat over £600million a year to around £475million) without reducing service levels and frequency by 25%. We doubt whether this is a credible position.

At the core of Liberal Democrat policies nationally and in London is our commitment to fairness. London's bus services are vital to poorer and more disadvantaged Londoners whose incomes are on average 30/40% lower than Tube passengers. Yet the Mayor's policies impose a 12.7% increase on bus fares and only a 3.9% increase in Tube fares.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the most disadvantaged Londoners are being required to pay higher bus fares and accept a reduced level of bus service to help finance the very expensive and poorly managed improvements in the Tube network. There will be little or no improvement in responding to serious requests by local communities for new or enhanced bus services.

The draft Strategy does not make clear whether new incentives will be introduced into bus contracts. At present bus operators do just as well financially if buses run empty. We believe there is an opportunity to give bus companies financial incentives to carry more passengers without moving to a system where the private operators take the fare box.

### ***Reducing the need to travel***

In our response to both *Way To Go* and the Mayor's Statement of Intent, Liberal Democrats strongly urged the Mayor to place reducing the need to travel in London at the heart of his strategies. We are pleased to see in the draft Transport Strategy many indications that this important element of strategic planning has been taken on board.

The Mayor must ensure that "joined-up" strategic planning involves spatial plans that make it more likely that Londoners can live closer to their place of work. Every effort must be made to keep services local: post offices, GP practices, police stations and high-performing schools. Liberal Democrats advocate a "mileage check" against every decision to re-locate public services to ensure that the distance people *have* to travel to reach vital services is kept to a minimum. This is not just a matter of convenience for Londoners – it is absolutely key to reducing congestion on roads and public transport.

### ***Priority for pedestrians***

Another way of reducing congestion is for more people to walk more often. This has health benefits for London's population as well as reducing car use and making more space on buses, Tube and trains. The Mayor must ensure that London is "legible" to those on foot – that there is excellent signage and map displays and above all that people are advised how many minutes it will take them to reach key destinations.

The Mayor's strategy shows very little commitment to pedestrianisation, World Squares or precincts. There are no proposals for shared space schemes like those being developed by Kensington and Chelsea Council. There is no solution proposed for over 400 signal-controlled pedestrian crossings that do not comply with DfT regulations. Those on foot must feel confident that they have time to cross the road safely, and that the Mayor is not grovelling to the motor vehicle lobby.

There are splendid opportunities to make some of our London squares pleasant and usable for pedestrians: the Mayor should return to a plan to enable those on foot to enjoy the central green space in Parliament Square. The pedestrian precinct of Chinatown has been a great success, and by negotiation with Westminster City Council, traders and residents, perhaps this style of street management could be extended throughout Soho.

The Mayor needs to solve the problem of Oxford Street. Poor air quality, an alarming accident rate, a wall of slowly grinding red buses and overcrowded pavements spoil

what should be one of the world's premier shopping streets. More imaginative solutions – where shoppers and those on foot can feel more comfortable – must be found. For example, TfL have implemented long term bus diversions affecting the eastern end of Oxford Street to allow construction work at Tottenham Court Road station to begin, until 2017. This proves that the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street, in parts or in full is possible, with buses able to use neighbouring streets. This is the time for the Mayor to look seriously at improving the air quality, safety and overall shopping experience for pedestrians on Oxford Street.

We support the interest in removing street clutter – for example railings and pens – and all those moves which enhance London's streetscape and encourage people to walk.

### ***Congestion charging and road-user charging***

The draft Strategy reveals [fig.63 p252] that even if all the Mayor's projects and policies are achieved – Crossrail, the Tube upgrades, the Thameslink programme, the DLR and Tramlink extensions, increased rail capacity, better management of the road network, and the planned increase in cycling – there will be a 14% increase in road congestion by 2031. This is not acceptable or sustainable.

The draft Strategy concedes, in a low-key and half-hearted manner, that the only tool left to a future Mayor to mitigate this potential disaster is to introduce road pricing across Greater London.

The current Mayor, having agreed to include this policy in the Mayor's draft Strategy, moved swiftly to close down further discussion of the issue by insisting that road pricing would not be introduced while he was Mayor.

Liberal Democrats believe that a 14% rise in congestion in London is unacceptable, and that you should task TfL with developing a workable scheme for road-pricing in consultation with the Boroughs, and determine a timescale over the lifetime of the Strategy (to 2031) in which road-pricing can be introduced.

At a national level, Liberal Democrats are proposing road pricing for all HGVs on motorways and dual carriageways enforced by 'tag and beacon' technology (as in the Czech Republic where the scheme has covered its set-up costs in seven months).

Liberal Democrats at the London Assembly would encourage TfL to explore the possibility of developing relatively simple "taxi-meter" style technology which, when installed in a vehicle would measure both distance travelled and journey time, thus charging significantly more when the vehicle was stuck in a stationary or slow-moving traffic. This would encourage drivers to avoid congested areas and avoid the need for "zones" or costly on-street monitoring equipment. Charges could be automatically deducted from OysterCard or a nominated bank account.

We believe that a more vigorous approach to supporting policies would also mitigate congestion.

'Smarter Travel' schemes where TfL staff visit car users in their homes to work with them to devise personalised travel plans making use of public transport have been shown to deliver 10-15% reduction in car use (similar to the effect of congestion charging and at much lower cost). Schemes in Sutton and Richmond have been successful – though they need to be coordinated with “hard” infrastructure improvements – and should be rolled out in other boroughs much more rapidly.

Deliveries to retail outlets in central London or outer London town centres should be by electric vans working off-peak from out-of-town consolidation centres thus avoiding huge HGVs being used in crowded streets, particularly given that there were 212 accidents in 2008 and 111 accidents between January and July of 2009.

We welcome the introduction of “lane rentals” to put pressure on utilities such as Thames Water to reduce the impact of road works which in recent years have caused a significant rise in congestion on London’s streets. Road works can and should be managed much more smartly, with all utilities and Borough councils actively involved in cooperating to deliver low-impact plans for road works.

We salute the intention to remove the remaining major one-way gyratories in London though we question whether the resources exist to do much more during the life of the current TfL Business Plan (to 2017).

The draft Strategy proposes the introduction of Park-and-Ride schemes. This also appeared in Mayor Livingstone’s strategy, but no scheme was ever implemented. We would support a feasibility study by TfL into a scheme at the M25 boundary where motorists using a motorway to drive into Greater London were incentivised to park up and take a train, Tube or express bus into central London.

Mayor Johnson’s pre-election commitment to reintroduce the morning contra flow in the Blackwall Tunnel has, probably wisely, been dropped. However, surely when there is an emergency closure of one of the tunnels, it should be temporarily available under close police supervision and with a 20mph speed limit. Congestion in the boroughs surrounding the tunnel entrances is otherwise intolerable.

The vulnerability of the Blackwall Tunnel demonstrates very clearly the urgent need for an additional river crossing in East London. We support proposals for a new road tunnel crossing from Silvertown to the area between the O2 and the Greenwich Millennium village. Work should be undertaken to prepare a viable plan for such a crossing.

The historic Greenwich and Woolwich foot tunnels provide a route to work for many hundreds of cyclists and pedestrians who might otherwise crowd public transport or use the car. These are major strategic cycle routes serving several boroughs and

must be under the direct management and control of the Mayor and TfL, not Greenwich Borough Council.

Congestion could be further reduced by a policy of actively encouraging the movement of non-perishable bulk freight and waste by river and canal.

### ***Reducing harmful emissions: improving air quality***

Several thousand Londoners die prematurely, and many more suffer adverse affects on their health such as an increase in the number of asthma sufferers and a greater risk of heart attacks and strokes because of the levels of harmful emissions on our streets and from London's poor air quality.

Reducing congestion, and traffic entering central London, is also key to reducing harmful emissions and improving air quality. As explained in *Priority for Pedestrians*, the creation of more pedestrianised squares and pedestrian precincts (such as Oxford Street) would help where emission levels are alarmingly high.

The political posturing over the previous Mayor's Low Emission Zone scheme is unhelpful; there is no proposal for an inner London LEZ scheme involving all vehicles. We recommend a look at the relatively simple enforcement scheme in Berlin where vehicles with acceptably low emissions carry a windscreen sticker allowing them to enter the Low Emission Zone. The drivers of all other vehicles receive penalties.

We note that the draft Strategy effectively endorses Liberal Democrat Richmond Council's emissions-related parking scheme, which has indeed now been copied by several other London boroughs.

The Mayor talks enthusiastically about measures to widen the use of electric and hybrid vehicles. Liberal Democrats believe progress is unacceptably slow.

While it is good to see a large roll-out of on-street electric recharging points by 2015, many owners of electric car owners need in practice to run batteries quite low before recharging and to do this at home overnight. There is clearly a case for hotel car parks and for on-street charging where residents don't have garages or driveways.

The Mayor needs to move much more rapidly to "green the fleet" of London buses, black cabs and other vehicles directly under the control of TfL and the Metropolitan Police. The draft Strategy is shockingly unspecific about the timeframe to achieve this.

By 2011 fewer than 400 buses out of a fleet of 8,000 will be hybrid-engined. If half the political energy devoted to getting rid of "bendy" buses had been given instead to getting rid of older more polluting double-deckers, the fleet would now be greener. "Bendy" buses are modern vehicles with relatively low emission levels and

the Mayor is replacing them with many smaller buses, which are not even hybrid-engined. On some routes it would be sensible to retain them.

The urgent need for LTI Manganese Bronze Holdings to introduce a hybrid-engined black cab is not being addressed swiftly enough. Likewise a new and higher emissions standard for registered private hire cars (minicabs) needs to be introduced. We note that there is no cross-referencing to the Mayor's Air Quality Strategy about phasing out old cabs.

Car clubs have made excellent progress in persuading Londoners to give up their own cars and use their hire service at many thousands of on-street locations. Car clubs must be encouraged to introduce electric and hybrid-engined vehicles much more widely: if necessary at the price of being allowed to use dedicated parking bays on London's streets.

### ***A cycling revolution?***

Getting many more Londoners to cycle has been iconic for Mayor Johnson. We support his pro-cycling policies though we doubt he really has the political will to give cyclists priority over motor vehicles in the use of road space. It is all very well to talk of a "cycling revolution" but such a term is meaningless legally.

We are of course delighted that at long last our 2001 proposal to the then Mayor of London for a "Velib-style" bike hire scheme will actually be introduced. We deplore the failure not to provide bike-hire docking stations at main rail termini, and hope that the rollout of Mayor Johnson's scheme will be the success that has been advertised.

We support in principle the proposal for Cycle Super-highways, but fear that without enforced priority for bikes, let alone physical protection of key cycle lanes (e.g. with raised kerbs) they are likely to prove disappointing. Painting cycle lanes blue is not likely to be an effective defense against predatory car or HGV drivers, especially at congested "pinch points". There is no mention of completing the London Cycle Network Plus, which needs to be finished not abandoned.

Improving secure cycle parking is vital to encouraging more people to ride bikes, and we are pleased to note that the Mayor wants to "retrofit existing developments, including public buildings (e.g. hospitals) and major trip attractors, such as entertainment venues".

While we have no problem with the Mayor allowing cyclists in appropriate locations to cycle legally both ways along one-way streets, we share the view of many Londoners that much more effective enforcement of existing legislation would be welcome (e.g. obeying red lights and not cycling on pavements).

### ***An integrated transport system for London***

TfL's constrained finances must not be made an excuse for rowing back on the aim of creating a truly integrated transport system for London. While much lip service is paid to this aim in the Mayor's draft strategy, we have little confidence that TfL's "silos" will really join up to deliver an integrated transport system.

Certainly the draft Strategy should state unequivocally that it is the aim of the Mayor and TfL to establish a London Regional Rail Authority, as proposed in 2005 by TfL themselves in their published document *"London's Railways: the case for a London Regional Rail Authority"*.

We strongly believe that the Mayor and TfL should have direct oversight of all regional rail routes in the London area, and, ideally, be allowed by the Department for Transport to move from the current rail franchise model to TfL's own successful "concession" model as used for London buses, the DLR and the London Overground rail network. Clearly there would be a need to negotiate with local authorities outside the GLA boundary about commuter rail services serving their areas. The opportunity offered by the DfT to electrify the Barking-Gospel Oak rail line should be seized by the Mayor on both operational and environmental grounds.

However, common standards in fares, ticketing, zones, station staffing and maintenance, and the policing of trains and stations are long overdue so that national rail services in London match Tube, bus, tram and DLR. There is some evidence that the DfT is interested in handing more power to the Mayor of London over rail services in the region, but the current Mayor needs to make it clear what London's long-term aims are in this regard. We would support a review to look at the anomalies in the zone structure, especially for Bermondsey, Kennington, Kingston and Surbiton stations.

Boris Johnson was elected on a promise to introduce new (i.e. additional) express "coach-style" services to provide quicker travel between outer London town centres. This would be a valuable addition to integrated transport – see for instance our suggestion for high speed bus services in to London from just inside the M25- and it is high time that routes were piloted (there is a ready-made scheme promoted by stakeholders connecting Ealing with Wembley). We are confident there would be a ready market for such services.

We believe your decision to omit a Cross River Tram proposal from his draft Strategy is a strategic error, which in time will come to be seen as seriously shortsighted. Crossrail has arguably taken forty years to deliver; it would not have happened at all if its promoters had only been willing to prepare a scheme once funding had been guaranteed. We welcome proposals to extend the existing Croydon Tramlink.

An integrated fares structure is also key to an integrated transport system. Oystercard has been a success, but its technology has limitations and needs to be upgraded, (e.g.: it cannot handle return rail fares. You should introduce a One Hour Bus Ticket enabling bus passengers to change buses without paying twice in the same way that Tube passengers can change trains.



The Oyster Extension Permit proposition is farcical and must be resolved speedily resolved. The Mayor needs to ensure that journeys on rail cost the same as the comparable journey by Tube by exerting far greater pressure on the Secretary of State for Transport and the Association of Train Operating Companies to ensure that this happens.

The 24-hour Freedom Pass on all TfL modes is very much to be welcomed, but in fairness to elderly and disabled passengers living out of reach of Tube services, it needs to be extended to national rail. Many need to travel by rail to keep hospital appointments by 9am. It is regrettable that the Mayor has not delivered on this promise.

An integrated transport system needs to serve all Londoners including disabled people. Great strides have been made on the bus network, but a great many Tube stations, including key stations for tourist destinations, still await step-free access. Personalised transport for vulnerable passengers is a confused mixture of provision involving Dial-A-Ride, Taxicard and local authority and community services. The Mayor must work to resolve these complications. In the meantime he and TfL must ensure a complete overhaul of Dial-A-Ride, which is failing people in desperate need of a reliable service.

Integrated transport for the UK's capital city also involves air flights and airports. The need to rebuild Farringdon Station – which will have direct rail connections to Gatwick, Luton and Heathrow, and potentially to Stansted – should be used to provide secure baggage check-in at the station for all these airports.

Liberal Democrats oppose all expansion of airports in London and the Southeast. There is considerable anger at the rise in overflying with its attendant noise and pollution. This has been a long-term problem in West London but boroughs in East London are now experiencing serious problems too. These are compounded by an increasing number of flights out of City Airport.

We strongly support the further development of High Speed Rail, both to the north and Scotland, and to more continental cities in Germany and the Netherlands. We would support High Speed Two to the north starting from Euston, with links to the Heathrow Express and safe passenger access to High Speed One at St Pancras.

While we share your opposition to a third runway at Heathrow, we are perplexed that work and expense continues into working up plans for a new airport in the Thames estuary. This is extraordinary since the proposal does not appear in the draft Transport Strategy. If, as the Mayor has said, he has no intention of building a Thames estuary airport, he should order this work to cease instead of giving comfort to its promoters.

In conclusion, while there are many very worthwhile elements in the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy that would win our unqualified support, there are contradictions

and false starts, which make the Strategy less than coherent. We hope that some of our own suggestions will be taken on board, along with recommendations of the London Assembly Transport Committee.

**Submitted by Caroline Pidgeon AM on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**On behalf of the London Assembly Liberal Democrat Group and Tom Brake MP.**