

London Cycling Campaign response to the Transport Committee scrutiny of the Government's approach to road safety

12 April 2019

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/news-parliament-2017/road-safety-launch-17-19/>

About the London Cycling Campaign

1. London Cycling Campaign (LCC) is a charity with more than 20,000 supporters, of whom over 11,000 are fully paid-up members. We speak up on behalf of everyone who cycles or wants to cycle in Greater London; and we speak up for a greener, healthier, happier and better-connected capital.
2. LCC welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Transport Committee's scrutiny of the Government's approach to road safety.

Introduction

3. It is our central contention that in order to reduce road danger and perceived road danger (see below), the Government must focus on a "safe systems" (including "Vision Zero") approach. This means no death or serious injury on our highways is acceptable; that human beings are fallible and the design of the systems that surround us should take that into account; that the approach should seek to remove, reduce or restrict the largest sources of road danger as the priority; that safer roads, safer speeds, safer vehicles and safer road use are core components of a safer system.
4. **Within the context of those four central components, our contention is that the government should focus on the following as matters of urgency: creating networks of routes where those walking and cycling are separated fully from high volumes and/or speeds of motor traffic (by means of modal filtering and/or physically-protected cycle tracks), with budgets commensurate to that as a priority; reducing motor traffic volumes and speeds, including private motor traffic, but also freight and commercial traffic too, with budgets for road-building commensurate with this approach (i.e. reduced dramatically); a complete and long-promised overhaul of road traffic enforcement and road justice with the aim of dramatically reducing dangerous behaviours; rapid removal of the most dangerous vehicles on the road, and replacement with more sustainable modes wherever possible and safer vehicles (such as "Direct Vision" lorries) where not.**
5. More detail is given on all of these central issues below, but it must be noted that the Government has repeatedly been told by many including us and its own All-Party Parliamentary Cycling Group, and in many research studies, papers and formal submissions everything we will say here before. It is imperative that Government stops asking for evidence it already has and starts delivering on these issues instead.

Policy context

6. The Government's introduction to the Cycling and Walking Strategy (1.3) reads: "At a national level (England), [cycling has remained at 2% of all journeys for a number of years](#). However, in places that have consistently invested in cycling there have been significant increases in trips by bike. This is most obvious in London where [cycling stages increased by 154% in the period from 2000-2016](#)."
7. The growth in London, which has continued since 2016, is recognised by the Government as valuable and is worth investigating as a model for other parts of the UK. During this period of cycling growth the average number of cycling fatalities per year in London fell in absolute terms and the number of people seriously injured has remained little changed (when allowance is made for a change in reporting in 2016/17) despite the rapid increase in cycling trips.
8. If the government therefore wants to meet, and exceed, its target to double cycling levels in England by 2025, while reducing fatal and serious collisions, it must learn lessons from London.
9. As London's primary cycle campaigning organisation we have been lobbying for 40 years to secure investment in improving cycling conditions and we are pleased that London's previous and current Mayors have accepted our argument that it is necessary to adopt a Dutch-style approach to facilitating cycling and reducing road danger. This necessarily means prioritising walking and cycling – in time, space and funding – over motor traffic. The link between consequent results is very evident in the contrasting performance of London, the 'Cycling Cities' and other parts of England.
10. The Dutch approach to cycling and motor traffic, which provides cycling networks with extensive protected cycle tracks wherever there are medium or high volumes of motor traffic and/or significant differentials in speed between those cycling and driving; gives priority to cyclists and pedestrians over turning motor traffic; heavily restricts motor traffic from travelling through residential areas; and spends a significant proportion of the overall transport budget and per capita per annum, has delivered exceptional cycling levels of 25% of all trips and rate (per bn. kilometres travelled) for cycling fatalities rates that are half that in the UK.
11. Every survey of attitudes to cycling finds that fear of traffic is a primary barrier to cycle use¹. Reducing motor vehicle flows, enforcing and reducing speed limits and implementing high-quality cycling infrastructure across a dense network of routes has been clearly shown, in the UK and abroad, to address people's fears and to result in significantly increased cycling levels. Those increased cycling levels contribute to public health, longevity and help reduce fatality rates.

¹ <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/mts-challenges-and-opportunities-report.pdf> Page 54

12. It is also important to note that the current committee investigation is therefore missing a vital element around road danger – it is important not just to understand actual road danger (collision numbers, injuries etc.) but also perceived road danger – which suppresses walking and cycling modes. It is not enough to make roads safe – they also have to feel safe if the government wants to enable more people to walk and cycle, in line with policy.
13. We note that in London the current Mayoral Transport Strategy is explicit in seeking to significantly reduce car use, boost active modes and reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads to zero by 2041. These elements are linked in the same document. Joined-up policy on all of these issues in one document, propagated beyond the DfT to all government departments, is therefore vital.
14. An explicit policy of reducing car dependency in the UK, rather than a continuing investment in more motoring miles,² would enable local authorities to enable sustainable transport modes more effectively. Ultimately, if cycling or walking a journey is not safer-feeling, more comfortable and enjoyable, as well as more convenient than driving a journey, then that journey won't generally be walked or cycled. Therefore as well as improving provision for cycling, reducing unnecessary car journeys must be explicitly considered too in road danger and other policy discussions.
15. We would strongly advise any minister or MP who wishes to experience the benefits of the approach we recommend on road danger and other policy areas to visit and study walking, cycling and driving in Holland (or at the very least, do the same in Waltham Forest's "mini-Holland" areas in London).

Safer roads

16. As Dutch and London roads demonstrate, safer roads are roads where fewer motor vehicles are used and more sustainable modes are enabled as the default.
17. This means that government policy should explicitly be to design and plan roads and the roads network to a) reduce motor traffic volumes, with the specific aim of enabling mode shift to more sustainable modes, and a focus on those journeys identified as most easily done by other modes, b) enable (rather than "promote" or "encourage") walking, cycling and then public transport as the primary modes, c) to achieve that, provide separation and priority for walking and cycling wherever most needed as a priority (above medium levels of motor traffic and/or speeds of above 20mph) along roads (e.g. cycle tracks and pavements wide enough to fulfil potential) and at junctions (separate signals or signal time, crossings etc.).

² "More users, more happy with more journeys, leading to road user satisfaction levels of 95%" from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408514/ris-for-2015-16-road-period-web-version.pdf

18. DfT guidance on cycle infrastructure design (CID 2/08 - 2008) should be updated to bring it in-line with the draft guidance for the Strategic Road Network (195/16 - 2016), Welsh guidance (Design Guidance - 2014) and London guidance (London Cycle Design Standards - 2014). This guidance should be given status as a standard for all roads and highways schemes across the UK, rather than leaving it to individual regional authorities to decide whether to reduce road danger and/or adopt good practice standards.
19. As in London, cycle and pedestrian design should be taught as standard to all highways planners, engineers and designers.
20. The government should clarify the Highway Code and bring forward legislation to require vehicles to give way to “straight-on” pedestrian and cycle traffic. This “give way at turn” approach widely used across Europe has been championed by British Cycling in its paper on “Turning the Corner”³. Enactment of legislation around this would simplify cycle infrastructure design, reduce collisions and potentially improve signal timings for everyone, including drivers.
21. In the absence of the above legislation, or in addition, permission to use zebras and cycle crossings at the mouths of junctions, rather than set back a distance from the junction, would visually and legally clarify that pedestrians and cyclists crossing (including from the end of a section of cycle track) have priority over turning traffic. Again, this approach is common on the continent. Signalised crossings should be included in this improvement.
22. The DfT should take a more liberal attitude to junction and infrastructure design trials where proposed by forward-thinking local authorities – this would enable such authorities to establish a UK evidence base around European approaches to design currently not legal in the UK.
23. Road works often represent a serious hazard to those walking and cycling. In London specific road works guidance by TfL and specialist officers who consult with stakeholders, highway engineers and developers increasingly are helping ensure that not only are road works installed without increasing road danger but also that cycling and walking are enabled during the works. Schemes by Tideway and Midgard in central London are examples of good practice.
24. Government sites, local authorities and other public sector bodies (including hospitals, schools etc.) should have targets for car use reduction and mode shift to active travel among staff. We note that a large proportion of employment in many boroughs is in the state and health sectors.
25. Car parking provision in new, urban and suburban developments should be constrained, rather than encouraged, with maximum, rather than minimum, car parking provision specified. Public transport, walking and cycling should be considered as the default for development – with car ownership and use designed out in general. Even for new conurbations and commuter town developments, rail, bus and cycling transport should be considered before road building and car parking space provision.

Safer speeds

26. Local authorities should be directed to lower speed limits, especially on rural roads where most cycling fatalities occur, as well as on roads where people live, work and shop. 20 mph speed limits on such streets are a key way of reducing road danger.
27. 60 mph speed limits on narrow rural roads appear to result in high collision rates – we agree with our colleagues in Cycling UK that such limits should be reduced.
28. In urban conditions, such as London, though average speeds are low because of congestion, burst speeds can be high and hazardous.
29. Higher speeds lead to more severe collisions. Yet DfT data based on roadside measurements in 2016 found that 8 out of 10 motorists exceed speed limits.⁴ Speed limiters (Intelligent Speed Adaptation) are expected to become a requirement on new cars from 2022 making speed enforcement easier.
30. Other methods to reduce the endemic breaking of speed limits should be considered too, including both changing the enforcement regime (see below), allowing for concealed speed cameras and physically redesigning roads to reduce speeds (e.g. full-width sinusoidal speed humps, staggering parking, centre-line removal, narrowing lanes, breaking up sight lines etc.).

Safer vehicles

31. In London, the highest proportion of cyclist fatalities (50 -70%) involve an HGV, despite the fact that HGVs account for less than 5% of vehicle miles in the capital. HGVs are also involved in 20% of pedestrian fatalities.
32. This is frequently attributed, in court cases and industry comments, to the extensive 'blind spots' in HGVs. While mirrors can assist a driver with seeing pedestrians and cyclists, reaction times have been shown to be slower than far improved 'direct vision' through a larger windscreen and lower driving position. Lorries with good direct vision (including the Dennis Eagle Elite, Mercedes Benz Econic and Scania L series) are now the norm in refuse collection and airside transport.
33. This is why both London Cycling Campaign and the Mayor support replacing HGV designs with restricted vision for the driver as rapidly as possible with "Direct Vision" lorries instead.
34. Transport for London has created a Direct Vision Standard (zero to five stars) which will determine which vehicles are allowed to work in the capital as of October 2020. Initially operators with zero-rated vehicles will be allowed to work in London by fitting mitigating measures including camera systems as well as alert systems that detect and warn of vulnerable road users.
35. The DfT must support TfL in advocating, through appropriate procurement policies, the use of lorries with good 'direct vision'.

⁴ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/07/03/drivers-ignore-20mph-speed-limits-official-figures-show/>

36. An important step in making 'direct vision' lorries the norm are the forthcoming EU General Safety Regulations governing new trucks. These regulations will require all new lorries to have far improved direct vision as of 2023 (new lorry type) and 2027 (all new lorries). The DfT should assist in ensuring detailed requirements for direct vision are robust when the regulations are formally specified by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
37. We welcome the introduction of requirements, through traffic orders and procurement and planning policies, to install safety features on HGVs such as side guards, cameras, alert systems for driver and other road users, front underrun protection, rear underrun protection and a complete set of safety mirrors.
38. A contributor to the widespread use of off-road lorries (N3G type) which are over-represented in fatal collisions, are the conditions lorries need to navigate on some landfill and construction sites. Thames Tideway have shown this can be addressed by providing a hard surface for deliveries. TfL's guide to high-grade landfill sites should be extended to the whole of the UK and improvements encouraged or required through planning processes to ensure N3G lorries can be replaced where lorries are required to drive onto such sites.

Safer road use

39. Together with other cycling organisations we share the view that the entire system for investigating and prosecuting road incidents, judge and jury briefing, CPS case approach, sentencing guidelines and the actual offences that motorists can commit etc. need to be reviewed, not just those regarding cycling offences. Judgements and sentencing in cases of road crime do not appear consistent nor effective in reducing offending. We note that the Government agreed to a review in 2014, but has yet to bring this forward, despite finding time to study "dangerous cycling" laws after one high profile case.
40. 'Close passing' initiatives, similar to those run by the West Midlands police and the Met, should take place across the UK, backed by Government messaging. Close passes have been shown to be a key component in the perception of road danger. The West Midlands initiative appears to have had a dramatic effect on collisions since implementation. LCC has worked with the Metropolitan Police to inform them of locations where those who cycle consider close passing is a problem, which enables the police to target enforcement.
41. The outstanding, JAUPT-approved "Safer Urban Driving" programme aimed primarily at lorry drivers should become a compulsory element of a lorry drivers' Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) training. Drivers who have completed the course, which teaches how to avoid collisions with vulnerable road users, not only rate it highly, but many say they have taken up cycling as a consequence of the course. An important element of the programme is on-bike experience which helps drivers understand the movements and danger avoidance tactics of cycle users.

42. We would like to see all professional drivers, including driving instructors, take this course. We note the AA and BSM already provide cycle awareness training for all drivers.⁵
43. The Fleet Operators Recognition Scheme (FORS) helps ensure HGVs used in the UK meet a recognised safety standard. It requires graded companies to meet a range of vehicle safety measures and training processes. All Government procurement should follow TfL in requiring FORS Silver Grade (or equivalent) rating for all contractors.
44. The industry-led Construction Logistics and Community Safety (CLOCS) standard is designed to reduce work-related road risk. More than 500 developers and fleet operators have signed up to the CLOCS standard and regularly audit their work sites to ensure standards are met.
45. LCC is currently assisting London boroughs in progressing to CLOCS champion status. All relevant Government departments should also become CLOCS champions and specify CLOCS standards in procurement. The result where adopted in London (Camden, City of London) is more orderly arrival and departure of construction vehicles, all FORS graded, and trained marshalls.
46. Vehicle standards must be enforced to be effective in reducing collisions. The London Freight Enforcement Partnership (LFEP) has successfully intervened to deter the most frequent and grievous offenders from running unsafe vehicles on London roads. By 2017 LFEP had checked 33,000 vehicles, issued more than 9,000 FPNs and secured 12 licence revocations. LFEP work must be strengthened and replicated beyond London.
47. Pay per load reward systems or bonuses for additional trips made by drivers can lead to excessive speeds and more aggressive driving. Clear regulations to restrict any payment system that encourages unsafe driving would further help reduce casualties.
48. Most European countries have legislation generally called 'presumed liability' under which drivers of motor vehicles are held responsible for injuries to vulnerable users, unless otherwise proven, in civil and insurance terms. There is extensive literature on the topic. Lord Denning (1982) said: "Any civilised system of law should require, as a matter of principle, that the person who uses this dangerous instrument on the roads - dealing death and destruction all round - should be liable to make compensation to anyone who is killed or injured in consequence of the use of it... There should be liability without proof of fault. To require an injured person to prove fault results in the gravest injustice to many innocent persons who have not the wherewithal to prove it." We share the view with other cycling organisations that presumed liability, in conjunction with other measures, can contribute to a reduction in road casualties.
49. Devolution of road traffic enforcement to councils should be considered. London councils are currently calling for the ability to give out fixed penalty notices for drivers contravening traffic signals, with evidence gathered by camera, as the police do not have the resources to enforce such behaviour. Similarly, councils should be enabled to enforce driver encroachment beyond Advanced Stop Lines (ASLs).

⁵ <http://www.theaa.com/newsroom/news-2013/aa-driving-school-and-bsm-to-roll-out-cycle-awareness-module.html>

50. In the light of increasing inactivity among children, “Bikeability” cycle training should be made part of the school curriculum – with every school teaching every child to cycle. In the Netherlands virtually all schools teach on-road cycling skills. Similarly, as many adults who wish to learn to cycle should be enabled to with similar, including on-road, training.
51. Drivers and passengers opening car doors into the path of those cycling is one of the more common causes of injury. Drivers should be made aware of the hazard of opening their door without looking, and advised to reach for door handles with their left hand which would encourage them to look back for passing riders (this is called a ‘Dutch reach’).