London Cycling Campaign

30 January 2017

Proposed changes to buses in Central London

https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/buses/west-end-bus-changes/consult_view/

This consultation response is on behalf of the London Cycling Campaign, the capital's leading cycling organisation with more than 12,000 members and 40,000 supporters. The LCC welcomes the opportunity to comment on plans. The response was developed with input from the co-chairs of LCC's Infrastructure Review Group and from the Chair of LCC's Policy forum.

The proposals should come as part of a far more strategic and wide-ranging process regarding the role of buses in central London, their routing and their interaction with other transport modes. To whit:

- LCC policy is that cycling flows should be separated from motor vehicle traffic (or motor vehicle traffic should be reduced) where motor vehicle traffic flows exceed 2,000 PCUs daily. In other words, cycling routes either work on streets where cycle flows are physically segregated from motor vehicle traffic, or on streets where motor vehicle traffic volumes and speeds are low. Many bus lanes in central London exceed 2,000 PCUs motor vehicle volumes daily some solely through the sheer volume of bus movements, some that allow taxis and/or motorcycles in them and therefore cross the 2,000 PCU threshold, some both.
- Bus lanes do have some value for many people who currently cycle in London as they are
 often quieter and less aggressive to ride in than the main roads next to them. But LCC policy
 is there because above 2,000PCUs, bus lanes and streets become a barrier to much broader
 adoption of cycling they are not suitable for children, the elderly and for many others to
 cycle in. In other words, they offer some benefits to those who currently cycle, but little
 benefit in increasing cycling numbers and diversity.
- In a similar vein, it is not just Oxford Street where the sheer weight of bus movements (with or without a lane) dominates the street scene, reduces the attraction of walking and causes large amounts of pollution. This has reduced the vitality of many iconic central London streets.
- Therefore LCC proposes that TfL urgently carries out a far wider and more systemic review of its bus network that not only seeks to reduce buses on Oxford Street, but holistically considers areas of central London such as the west end, assessing:
 - Where bus routes should go considering current and potential other public transport routes, interchanges and networks (Underground, Crossrail etc.), current and potential walking and cycling routes, "desire lines" for key routes and future mode shares for them, splitting short journeys from long etc. and likely shifts in journeys, populations etc.
 - Where likely high-quality cycle routes, and where separately private motor vehicle routes should go, again on the basis of the above information.

- How bus lanes and bus priority schemes should be configured in relation to cycling infrastructure and PCU counts – and therefore which bus lanes will offer any significant amenity to those cycling and which won't.
- Most bus lanes (busy, and on main roads) do not represent good quality cycling infrastructure. Nor does putting taxis, motorbikes, PHVs or even those cycling in bus lanes represent the best quality space for bus passengers. The default should be either cycle tracks provided separate to bus lanes, or bus and cycle routing should be separated onto different streets entirely. (On some routes, the removal of motor vehicle traffic may be sufficient to create both a high-quality bus priority scheme and cycling scheme on one bus/cycle road, where total motor vehicle numbers fall below the 2,000PCUs threshold and bus speeds are low).
- Where rerouting is to take place, the LCDS demonstrates how quickly cycling gains are removed by deflection of a route. Therefore, the assumption should be that of parallel cycling and bus routes, on separate streets, the cycle route should be the more direct.
- Rerouting of bus networks should not have the effect of decreasing amenity for cycling and walking – including by introducing large bus "stacking" areas or creating street designs that lock in bus schemes and lock out future cycling and walking improvements.
- Rerouting of buses also represents an opportunity to redesign the road network for private hire, taxi and private motor vehicle movements – and restrictions to these modes by location, to create streets more suitable for cycling and walking and to provide bus priority should be considered.
- The aim for any cycling route should be that it is not just direct and high-quality, but joins often (e.g. every 250m) to other routes to create a high-quality network of routes where those cycling do not face complex or fraught interactions with motor vehicle traffic travelling from origin to destination – this network is vital to enable all-ages, all-abilities cycling and a far higher "modal share".
- Another point of interaction between those cycling and buses is at stops often current designs of bus lanes ensure that buses stopped in a "bus cage" force those cycling out into the next lane, or to squeeze between the bus and traffic, or to wait. Bus stop "bypasses", "boarders" or other designs that maintain physical separation between buses and cycle tracks are to be encouraged throughout any replanned network.
- Given this, it is likely a fairly radical redesign of the bus network is appropriate. And now, given the successful introduction of the "Hopper Ticket", would be an appropriate time to consider this. Options include creating a grid of low pollution buses in central London with outer London buses terminating and returning at the edge of this grid rather than going directly through central London. This could encourage more walking and potentially cycling (via Hire Cycle etc.) and could be integrated with "Hopper Ticket" etc. payment approaches. This review of the bus routes provides an opportunity to ensure buses and cycling, the two most efficient and sustainable modes, are catered for in unison.

 In the short term, it's vital the proposed reroutings take into full account current proposed major Highways schemes – such as Baker Street Two Way, The West End Project, CS11 – as well as likely and potential near-future schemes such as the "Clerkenwell Boulevard" idea of improving the route from Old Street to Tottenham Court Road stations for walking and cycling (including Old Street, Clerkenwell Road, Theobalds Road and New Oxford Street) etc.

General points about cycling schemes:

- LCC requires schemes to be designed to accommodate growth in cycling. Providing space for cycling is a more efficient use of road space than providing space for driving private motor vehicles, particularly for journeys of 5km or less. In terms of providing maximum efficiency for space and energy use, walking, cycling, then public transport are key.
- As demonstrated by the success of recent Cycle Superhighways and mini-Holland projects etc., people cycle when they feel safe. For cycling to become mainstream, a network of high-quality, direct routes separate from high volumes and/or speeds of motor vehicle traffic is required to/from all key destinations and residential areas in an area. Schemes should be planned, designed and implemented to maximise potential to increase journeys with links to nearby amenities, residential centres, transport hubs considered from the outset.
- Spending money on cycling infrastructure has been shown to dramatically boost health outcomes in an area. Spending on cycling schemes outranks all other transport mode for return on investment according to a DfT study. Schemes which promote cycling meet TfL's "Healthy Streets" checklist. A healthy street is one where people choose to cycle.
- LCC wants, as a condition of funding, all highway development designed to London Cycling Design Standards (LCDS), with an aim for a Cycling Level of Service (CLoS) rating of 70 or above, with all "Critical Fails" eliminated.