

**Future Transport London** campaigns for sustainable solutions to London's transport problems favouring public transport, walking and cycling over private cars.

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The newsletter is edited by Chris Barker. Contributions are welcomed. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of Future Transport London.

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# FTL

Future Transport London

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# Creating safer, fairer streets without SUVs



photop Lindsay Grime

**The UK, like much of Europe and increasingly the world, has an SUV problem. Pushed by glossy advertising and enabled by weak regulation, Sports Utility Vehicles have surged from a rarity to over half of new car registrations.**

The need for such vehicles has always been questionable, especially in a city like London. Except for a few farmers and construction workers, who really needs to drive a two- or even three tonne car on a daily basis? But inappropriateness is not the end of it. Large SUVs are, because of their size, shape and weight, more dangerous to other road users and more polluting. In short, the rise of the SUV has a social cost ultimately measurable in lives.

Despite this seemingly obvious fact, SUVs are the elephant in the room, with policymakers almost entirely silent on the issue for two decades. A new alliance of organisations hopes to change that. The SUV Alliance is made

up of sustainable transport organisations, road safety campaigners and environmental groups. Together we have written a manifesto that, if implemented, could turn the tide on ever bigger, heavier, more polluting and more dangerous SUVs.

### **Our manifesto calls for five policy changes:**

- 1 reform Vehicle Excise Duty so that heavier and more polluting vehicles pay more (with exemptions for adapted vehicles). This would ensure SUVs are taxed in proportion to the damage they cause to roads and the risk they pose to other road users.
- 2 introduce a width limit for new car sales from 2030 so that carmakers cannot continue to sell passenger vehicles that are too big for a 2.4 x 4.8 metre UK parking space (with exemptions for adapted vehicles).
- 3 follow the lead of Edinburgh City Council and The Hague to

introduce a national tobacco-style ban on SUV advertising - including hybrid, plug-in hybrid and electric SUVs - on outdoor advertising spaces like billboards and bus stops.

- 4 mandate that carmakers must publish an "eco-score" for all new electric vehicles, combining engine efficiency and carbon footprint of the vehicle's production.

- 5 empower and encourage more local authorities to introduce progressive parking tariffs on heavier, bigger and more polluting passenger vehicles, as Bath and Islington councils have already done to some degree.

We all need to get from A to B, and we all want safer and fairer streets to travel on. The presence of SUVs make this impossible: such vehicles operate on a survival of the fittest, "might is right" philosophy, as is apparent from so much SUV advertising.

To get to the future of transport

we all want to see, we need to turn the tide on heavier, more dangerous vehicles. Implementing simple policies like the ones described above could start to make a meaningful difference in a relatively short period of time.

If you'd like to see changes where you live, share our manifesto with your MP, local councillors and the Mayor. There are opportunities at every level of government to tackle Britain's SUV problem and to put us on the right track to a future of safer and fairer transport for all.

**James Ward, Adfree Cities**

Listen to our latest podcast at <https://www.futuretransportlondon.org/>

Maggie Heraty OBE, FTL member and advisor on accessible transport, and Martin Barber OBE, former Director at the United Nations, discuss the challenges of improving access to transport for disabled and other groups.

# MORE AND SAFER CYCLING - A NEW APPROACH



Buses and cyclists

## Cycle infrastructure in London has negatively impacted bus services alongside a rise in serious cyclist injuries between 2017 and 2023.

Boris Johnson's prediction that cycling volumes would double within a decade has not materialised and recently the London Cycling Campaign revealed the once-celebrated Royal College Street cycle scheme is now among the most dangerous in London.

This all suggests the need for a new approach to streets policy—an holistic one that considers all the sustainable modes

In Hackney between Census years 2001 and 2011 cycling to work really did double alongside improvements to the other sustainable modes. Cycling's share of trips, according to TfL's household travel survey, rose to 9%. This was a result of several programmes of works by the council, but also a resistance from Hackney Cycling to cycle tracks because of the associated problems. Hackney has a better sustainable transport mix than either Amsterdam or Copenhagen.

Area wide interventions were an early priority

1. Slower Speeds Initiatives: Traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps and side road entry treatments, were implemented across residential and 'B' roads to enhance safety.
2. Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs): These limited private car use, removed pavement parking, and introduced double yellow lines at intersec-

tions, creating safer streets.

3. Traffic Restrictions on Minor Roads: Residential streets were closed to through traffic, providing safer, more appealing routes for cyclists.

Hackney enthusiastically embraced Ken Livingstone's bus revolution, installing bus and cycle lanes wherever it could, and was fortunate to benefit from being part of the central area congestion zone, albeit a small part.

Hackney adopted the ideas of Jan Gehl, the world's foremost urbanist, who was commissioned in 2004 by TfL and the Central London Partnership to set a strategy to develop London's streets—an initiative regrettably lost in the rush for cycle tracks.

The council adopted car-free development. Almost every development from 2004 onwards was car-free where on-street parking controls existed. This led to thousands of homes where car ownership was difficult or impossible; access to car-clubs was easy.

There were engineering schemes targeted at junctions with clusters of collisions, but these were done with business plans ensuring money was well spent. The notion of spending £17million at locations such as Lea Bridge roundabout where there was a good safety record would have seemed madness—more so when the result would be a confusing system of bike lanes and signals that very few cyclists use as designed, ruining the public realm and degrading the bus service.

And of course cycling advocacy

from the council consistently made the case for cycling, particularly amongst young people. This culminated in 2016 with over 1000 pupils smashing the Guinness Book of records for a cycle bus!

Things Hackney didn't do enough of included tackling the issue of parking on its main roads and the A10. It's bizarre that on bus routes where safe and efficient movement should be prioritised, squeezing in parking is still a persistent policy. On these streets there is often a legitimate demand for on-street loading and even short-term parking, but why residential parking is not removed to improve bus operation and general safety is incomprehensible.

And finally something highways authorities have been unable to influence: roads policing. To say there isn't enough roads policing is an understatement. It is nothing short of criminal that 30mph, let alone 20mph and other moving traffic offences go largely unenforced alongside the promotion of the vulnerable modes.

## Vincent Stops

*Vincent Stops spent 20 years as the Streets Policy Officer at London TravelWatch, London's statutory transport user watchdog. In that time he worked alongside TfL and represented London's transport users.*

*He also authored two reports on cycling in London. During that time he was sceptical of the new cycle activism. He was also a councillor and sometime lead member of Hackney Council, London's most successful cycling borough. Vincent now volunteers with the National Federation of the Blind UK, working on their active travel and access programme.*

## Silvertown Tunnel

The Silvertown Tunnel is scheduled to open in spring 2025. The tolls for it and the Blackwall Tunnel for cars will be £1.50 (£4 in the peak periods—morning going north and evenings going south).

There will be exemptions and discounts including reduced charges for residents in nearby boroughs. Greenwich Cllr David Gardner responded to the news by saying: 'The result is a travesty. Charges lower than a standard bus fare for cars, free for HGVs at night with the bonus of a dedicated HGV lane. No mention of the Mayor's objective of reducing London traffic by 25% by 2030.'

Initially there will be three bus routes: 108 continuing through Blackwall and 129 and SL4 through Silvertown. This will increase the number of buses crossing the Thames at this point from six to 21. Residents in local boroughs will be entitled to free bus travel for the first year. Also guaranteed for a year is free transport through Silvertown for cyclists.



## Down with the Lower Thames Crossing!

**Organisations should collaborate to campaign against the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, which would be a very costly mistake.**

The government has postponed until May a decision on the proposed road and tunnel between Essex and Kent, current cost estimate £9 bn. Business organisations hope the crossing will relieve congestion at the Dartford tunnel and bridge. However it would not open until 2032. As numerous studies have shown, providing additional roads merely generates more traffic. Potential journeys which had seemed too inconvenient when a road was congested are undertaken once a new road has been built. Two to three years after the M25 was widened, traffic had increased up to 23%, and speeds did not increase.

Cars constitute 58% of vehicles using the Dartford crossings. Congestion would be reduced far sooner, and much more effectively, by discouraging car mileage. This is vital; evidence that various carbon sinks are currently much less able to store carbon underlines the urgent need to protect our climate. Transport causes nearly 40% of the UK's total carbon emissions. The latest National Travel Survey shows that 45% of car miles driven are for leisure and higher income families drive four times further than poorer households. The government should take steps to reduce this mileage consid-

erably. A substantial majority of Britons support taxing pollution. The Climate Change Committee recommends a cut by 2035 of 72% in surface transport emissions. It pointed out that new sales of electric cars and vans are not increasing fast enough. Emissions have reduced much less than it expected as many more people are driving heavy SUVs. New roads like the Lower Thames Crossing would increase emissions and damage the government's pretensions to international climate leadership.

There is plenty of scope to discourage the amount of driving. Nearly 80% of drivers have said they would use public transport more if it was better. No less than 97% of drivers want cheaper rail fares. 88% have either taken steps to reduce the amount they spend on fuel, or plan to do so. Of these, three-quarters have reduced the amount they drive, while over half say they plan to do so in future. This underlines that it is important to make public transport a cheaper and more convenient option than driving. Fuel duty has not been increased in line with inflation since 2010! Yet the budget raised bus fares, while train and London Underground fares are to increase by 4.6%. It is much more cost-effective to invest in better public transport, and raise fuel duty, thus discouraging driving and reducing congestion. Rises in fuel duty should be balanced by reductions in

- a) income tax for people on low incomes, so they would not be worse off provided their mileage is not excessive, and
- b) council tax for rural areas, where public transport is less convenient.

At present only 7% of freight is transported by rail. The government must take account of the fact that rail freight has only about a quarter of the carbon emissions of the same weight of goods carried by lorry. One train can move the same weight of goods as up to 129 lorries, thus also reducing road congestion. For these reasons the previous govern-

ment's consultation of stakeholders led to adoption of the target to increase rail freight by 75%. In pursuing this target the government can build on the success of the Mode Shift Revenue Support scheme, which in financial year 2022-23 helped remove 900,000 lorry journeys from the roads.

The Lower Thames Crossing

proposal ignores the priority of tackling the climate emergency. If the government decided to build it using private finance, this would reduce the pool of available finance for effective decarbonisation, such as promptly upgrading the National Grid to accommodate as much renewable power as possible.

Tim Root

## TRAVELLING IN LONDON

Recent release of data by TfL reveals trends in population and travel habits which will have an impact on TfL's services.

It has been clear for some time that working from home has reduced rush hour travel leading to a reduced need for buses and trains retained solely for those times. Whilst there has also been an increase in demand for transport in the weekends, overall, the number of trips each person makes is on the decline. This could call into the question the need for more expensive rail lines such as Crossrail 2 and the Bakerloo line expansion.

Car ownership is declining in inner London but rising in outer London. In inner London 62 per cent of households have no access to a car, whereas in outer London the percentage is 33. Access to public transport is one factor but another is that fewer young people are driving – only 46 per cent or young people in their 20s hold a driving licence.

Despite the determined effort to increase the number of cycle lanes, cycling remains a niche mode of transport. In 2023 4.5 per cent of trips were made by bicycle and a large percentage of cyclists are teenagers who are short of cash and have no driving licence.

Finally, on a more optimistic note, the steady increase in the number of underground stations with step-free access is rising, although there is still a long way to go before mobility impaired passengers have the same freedom to travel as able-bodied people.



# New plans for Liverpool Street



**It is predicted that by 2050 passenger numbers at Liverpool Street, already the busiest station in the UK, will hit 140 million a year - a 75 per cent increase on last year's 80 million.**

To cope with this the station needs to be upgraded but this revamp is dependent on money from development. The scheme originally proposed involved building a skyscraper on top of the grade II\* listed Andaz Hotel (formerly the Great Eastern) but was widely condemned for wrecking the appearance of the station's 19th century building.

The new scheme is designed by Friedrich Ludewig of Acme, who said 'we will retain the sense of a tall and airy concourse, with a flexible workspace building above to fund the development of the station at street level'. He proposes a smaller new building with 16 instead of 21 storeys designed to be more sympathetic to the grade II listed station and the hotel.

The scheme would result in an increase in the circulation area for passengers. The concourse itself and the ticket hall would be enlarged with wider gatelines and links to Broadgate and Bishopsgate.

Changes would include doubling the number of escalators

from four to eight, new toilets, step free access across the station and seven new lifts. A new set of escalators would lead up to an expanded mezzanine level which would become a public route leading directly from the station's main entrance on Liverpool Street to Exchange

Square. This 230m long walkway would flank the entire length of the station's western wall, providing new views of the building's train shed.

The Victorian Society, however, has said that the revised proposal has not addressed objections raised by the previous plan.

## HS2 TO EUSTON

It is clear that the vision of an ultra-high speed rail network for Britain has bitten the dust. The 120 miles between Old Oak Common and Birmingham is being built for continental-size trains travelling at 360 kph but all the trains will be built to the restricted British loading gauge so that they are able to run beyond Birmingham on the existing railway.

Despite this the proposed tunnel between Old Oak Common and Euston is to be built to the same size as the rest of the line, perhaps in the vain hope that one day HS2 might link up with HS1. But, in the short term, is there any point in this if all trains are built to the smaller size? Would it not be possible to integrate this section with the existing railway instead of

building an entirely new line, thus saving a considerable sum of money?

A cheaper alternative to a totally new line was proposed in a blog by Lord Tony Berkeley in 2016. HS2 trains would join the fast line of the West Coast main line near Queen's Park. The West Coast fast trains remaining after HS2 has taken most of them could transfer to the slow lines and slow trains could transfer to the Lioness line (Euston to Watford Overground) which is lightly used after the Bakerloo line trains which share its tracks disappear underground. This would involve far less tunnelling and would make redundant much of the vast building site which currently disfigures Euston.

# Should Heathrow Express be absorbed into the Elizabeth Line?

**Direct services on the Elizabeth line between Heathrow, intermediate West London stations, Paddington, 22 other stations across Central London and beyond were introduced on 24th May 2022.**

Office of Road & Rail data shows 5.8 million passengers used HEX in Financial Year 2019-20 and 4.5 million (on average, only 82 passengers per train) during 2023-24, a drop of 22%, despite relentless marketing. By contrast, TfL now wishes to double its two trains per hour (tph) Elizabeth line service to Terminal 5 but cannot easily do so, for reasons explained below.

The current contract to operate the Heathrow Express (HEX) runs from 2018 to 2028. Should HEX then be absorbed into the Elizabeth line, to reduce the imbalance between its western and eastern branches, to grow demand and to increase the public transport share of Heathrow surface access above the current 39 per cent?

Since opening in 1998, HEX has provided a 15-minute journey time and a 15-minute frequency between the airport's central area and Paddington but serves only that one station in Central London. In the early years, it was possible to check in for your flight and to drop off your baggage at Paddington, but the facility was under-used and discontinued for cost reasons in 2003. The HEX service was extended to Terminal 5 when that opened in 2008.

The current HEX trains have a top speed of 110 mph and share the busy Great Western (GW) main line with Intercity trains between two dedicated platforms (6 and 7) at Paddington and Airport Junction.

The Elizabeth line shares the busy GW relief line with freight

trains and operates four tph to Terminal 4 (connecting with HEX) as well as two tph to Terminal 5. TfL now wishes to double the frequency but the necessary timetable 'paths' are elusive. Journey time between Paddington and the airport central area is around half an hour, depending on time of day and stopping pattern at intermediate stations.

Some of the many Elizabeth line services which currently reverse at Paddington are due to be extended to Old Oak Common station when it opens; additional trains are on order. HEX trains are also planned to call at Old Oak Common, so they would no longer be able to achieve their 15-minute journey times between Paddington and the airport Central area.

If it is decided to absorb HEX into the Elizabeth line, all trains destined for Heathrow, whether express or stopping, would then depart from the same Elizabeth line platform at Paddington and at the 22 stations east of it, giving passengers more frequency. If an express service survives, premium fares could still be charged (as is customary on railair links around the world) but first class and toilets would disappear. Elizabeth line trains have generous floorspace which can be used for standing, luggage, pushchairs and wheelchairs in any combination as required.

Two platforms at Brunel's magnificent London terminus would then be vacated: no doubt they could be put to excellent alternative use.

However, it is unclear whether it would be better to schedule the additional four Elizabeth line trains per hour on the GW relief line or on the main line to/from Heathrow (both operate near full capacity). If the latter, trains would have to cross over to/from the Relief Line and use their performance characteristics, including a top speed of over 100 mph, to avoid delaying Intercity services. The vicinity of Old Oak Common station might be the best location for crossing over 'on the flat' (to avoid the expense of grade separation) and the track layout there could be designed accordingly.

**Neil Roth**

## Heathrow's third runway

**Despite aviation's known disastrous effect on the climate, plans for a third runway at Heathrow are actively being revived.**

As Tracey Boles said in The Times on 24th September, 'The political mood seems to have tilted back towards economic growth and away from the green agenda'. Heathrow has unveiled plans to invest £2.3bn in upgrading the airport over the next two years

Heathrow is the world's busiest international airport with Amsterdam, Dubai and Paris not far behind, and the airport's owners are anxious to stay ahead. This is obviously important for their profits but they also say, and the govern-

ment appears to agree with them, that international trade depends on increased airline capacity.

However, 64 per cent of UK travellers are on holiday and only 12 per cent are travelling on business. Furthermore, the New Economics Foundation reckons that two thirds of flights from London City Airport could be made by train and Campaign for Better Transport thinks that the majority of domestic and European flights could be made by train. 15 percent of flyers make 70 per cent of flights. 57 per cent don't fly at all. Maybe a Frequent Flyer Levy would discourage some of those who fly a lot.

All this suggests that there could be far less flying whilst still maintaining air links for economic purposes. But the cost of train travel is another issue.

## TRAM-TRAIN FOR ROUTE 358

**It seems most people would like a tram but perhaps a bus which looks like a tram is the next best thing.**

The new buses, described as 'ieTram' (the ie stands for Irizar Electric), finally introduced on route 358 between Crystal Palace and Orpington, fits the bill.

Like most new buses in London it is all electric. The battery can be charged in six minutes at each end of its run. The buses incorporate a number of modern features including a safer front end design and cameras in place of mirrors to give drivers a better all-round view. There are audible warnings to alert pedestrians and other road users and a speed limiting device linked to speed limits.

When FTL visited recently a number of the buses were out of service apparently because of teething problems and were replaced by conventional vehicles.



ieTram takes power at Orpington.

Photo: Neil Roth



People and cars in Oxford Street.

## Northern line to Clapham Junction

**From its inception people asked why the Northern line extension stopped at Battersea Power Station. Why could it not be extended for two and a half kilometres to Clapham Junction?**

It would be an admirable exchange point for commuters travelling from the southwest and aiming for the City or the West End. It would also bring the underground to a new part of London and could unlock the development potential which Wandsworth council are angling for.

The first answer is to recall how the line got to Battersea Power Station. It was part funded by developers and there is no sign yet of developer interest in Clapham Junction. Where would the money come from?

There is another objection which was raised when the suggested extension was first mooted. The line would almost certainly be highly successful and attract so many passengers that trains would already be full when getting to Battersea Power Station and increase overcrowding on the Northern line right into central London.

There is another plan to increase connectivity from Clapham Junction and that is for Crossrail 2 which would also enable passengers to access the West End. Maybe that is a better plan for Clapham Junction, or maybe one day there will be room for both.

# Oxford Street again

**Sadiq Khan has resurrected the plan, first put forward by Simon Hughes in his manifesto for the mayoralty in 2004 and taken up by Ken Livingstone in 2006, to remove all traffic from Oxford Street.**

The original scheme was effectively killed by conservative controlled City of Westminster council which confined its plans to some minor pavement widening and the removal of

some bus routes.

Labour took over the council in 2022 and came up with a new plan, reported in this newsletter in January 2024, which included more and wider pavements, wider pedestrian crossings, longer green signals for pedestrians and more formal crossing points. They also proposed to remove the diamond crossing at Oxford Circus and replace it with longer crossing times over each road

facilitated by a ban on turning traffic. Some minor changes in bus routeing would be necessitated. The Mayor plans to establish a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC), similar to the one for Old Oak Common, that would have its own planning powers and be able to overrule Westminster council.

City of Westminster are aggrieved that Sadiq Khan has ridden over Westminster plans

by once again proposing full pedestrianisation and is demanding £20 million in compensation for the costs involved. Cllr Adam Hug, leader of the council, has written to the Mayor about a number of issues including provisions for cycling, the impact on older people, people with disabilities and families with young children, and alternative plans for the buses.

## FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

**The campaign to win free public transport fares for all was boosted by a public meeting organised by Fare Free London on 29th September.**

There is a powerful case for making travel free for all and not just for the elderly, the young and people with disability. It is a social justice measure, opening up London to all who live there, particularly low-income households. But it would

also help make public transport Londoners' first choice for getting around, boosting public transport use, reducing the number of cars on the roads and helping to meet our climate target.

It is not a new idea and examples of free public transport are becoming common around the world. Several cities in Brazil, in the United States and France offer free local public transport and in Britain there are several cities which run free inner-city shuttle services around the town.

The conference papers explained how such a service could be funded. First of all, the government could increase

its contribution to TfL. Currently 70 per cent of TfL's revenue comes from the fare box. By comparison, Paris gets 26 per cent, New York 38 per cent. Cities such as Paris and New York have 'mobility taxes' in which employers contribute to funding. Other methods of raising money include road user charging and land value capture (where the value of property increases because of nearby transport improvements).

There is evidence that in places where it has been introduced the introduction of free public transport has improved air quality, reduced the number of cars on the roads and contributed to general welfare.