



Faculty of Public Health

Of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Working to improve the public's health

London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London, SE1 2AA

30/08/2016

Dear Ms Wells,

RE: The UK Faculty of Public Health's evidence submission to the London Assembly Transport Committee's investigation into traffic congestion in London

About the UK Faculty of Public Health

The UK Faculty of Public Health (FPH) is committed to improving and protecting people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. FPH is a joint faculty of the three Royal Colleges of Public Health Physicians of the United Kingdom (London, Edinburgh and Glasgow). Our vision is for better health for all, where people are able to achieve their fullest potential for a healthy, fulfilling life through a fair and equitable society. We work to promote understanding and to drive improvements in public health policy and practice.

As the leading professional body for public health specialists in the UK, our members are trained to the highest possible standards of public health competence and practice – as set by FPH. With close to 4,000 members based in the UK and internationally, we work to develop knowledge and understanding, and to promote excellence in the field of public health. For more than 40 years we have been at the forefront of developing and expanding the public health workforce and profession.

When considering policy options for reducing congestion, we urge the Transport Committee to note that the best options for the good health, quality of life and resilience of all Londoners - and therefore London's economy - are those which promote walking, cycling and public transport use over the use of private motorised vehicles.

In responding to the Call for Evidence, we have focussed our responses by addressing those questions where we have specific expertise and views to express.

General Questions

Our response:

High volumes of motorised traffic in any form has the following impacts on the health of all Londoners, as detailed in the GLA's report on the Health Impacts of Cars in London¹:-

1. Road traffic injuries and deaths
2. Noise
3. Severance - destinations that are geographically close cannot be reached easily on foot due to busy wide roads that may be difficult to cross and perceived to be dangerous.
4. Air pollution
5. Climate change
6. Deterring people from travelling on foot or by bicycle.

Some of these effects, such as air pollution, may be worsened during congestion – that is when high-volume traffic is slow moving - as already noted by the Transport Committee in its Call for Evidence. It should also be noted, however, that congestion can have some benefits:

¹ Greater London Authority (2015) Health Impacts of Cars in London
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/health_impact_of_cars_in_london-sept_2015_final.pdf

- It can result in low vehicle speeds, which reduces the risk of road traffic injury in the event of collisions²
- It can discourage people from driving cars for short trips that could be done by more healthy modes
- It is one of the key reasons for lower-than-average car ownership in London³. Car owners are more likely to use their cars through habit, including for trips which could be completed as or more quickly using other transport means¹.

Charging for road usage

Our response:

We support road pricing regimes because they are an effective means of reducing discretionary car use which in turn delivers a wide range of health benefits,⁴ particularly if implemented in conjunction with infrastructure improvements to encourage walking, cycling and public transport use.⁵

There is clear evidence that road user charging schemes, such as the Congestion Charge, result in lower volumes of traffic within the zone⁶. There would be an even greater reduction in congestion and a much more significant health benefit to Londoners if the exemptions for taxis, private hire vehicles and residents were removed.

The Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) is a welcome measure to tackle air pollution. It may also reduce congestion in the short term while non-compliant vehicles are being replaced. However, without measures to encourage modal shifts in transport these effects are likely to be only short term. The ULEZ would be more effective if it covered a wider geographical area, a broader range of vehicles and elicited a higher charge which could then be used to deliver transport measures that support active travel and TfL's Healthy Streets approach.

Measures to target specific types of vehicle

9. How can the Mayor and TfL reduce the number of delivery vehicles on London's roads, especially in congested areas at peak times?

Our response:

More stringent measures to manage deliveries are required. Currently there are significant inefficiencies in the system and the negative health and economic externalities of these vehicles on the road are not being met by the private sector. For example, there should be greater use of drop off centres/ collection points at public transport hubs.

10. To what extent is an increase in minicabs contributing to traffic congestion, and how could this issue be addressed?

Our response:

While the use of taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) may be of personal value to some individuals, they contribute considerably to congestion and are an extremely inefficient mode of transport in an area which

² World Health Organisation (1991) http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/road_traffic/world_report/speed_en.pdf

³ Transport for London (2013) What are the motivations for owning a car? <https://tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/technical-note-13-what-are-the-motivations-for-owning-a-car.pdf>

⁴ NICE (2008). Physical activity and the environment [PH8]. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph8>

⁵ Mindell J, Sheridan L, Joffe M, Samson-Barry H, Atkinson S. HIA as an agent of policy change: Improving the health impacts of the Mayor of London's draft transport strategy. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. 2004;58:169-74.

⁶ Transport for London (2008) Central London Congestion Charging Impacts Monitoring- 6th Annual Report <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/central-london-congestion-charging-impacts-monitoring-sixth-annual-report.pdf>

has limited road space combined with large numbers of people and the highest public transport provision levels in the country. As such they should be restricted to areas of greatest need (i.e. away from central London to areas of poorer public transport provision) and they should no longer be exempted from road user charging schemes such as the Congestion charge.

In central London, the proliferation of taxis and private hire vehicles encourages people to travel very short distances in cars in a place that should be the most pleasant to walk and cycle and which has some of the best public connectivity in the world. Taxis also contribute significantly to air pollution within the congestion charging zone. Taxis and PHVs are used disproportionately by people with higher incomes but the congestion and air pollution they cause impact most heavily on more disadvantaged people, which contributes to widening health inequalities. More disadvantaged people tend to have both higher exposure (as wealthier people generally live in less polluted areas) and also higher susceptibility to the effects of air pollution (because the young, the elderly and those with pre-existing circulatory and respiratory diseases are more commonly found among disadvantaged groups).⁷

The need for taxis and PHVs for disabled people is overstated; more than 8 out of 10 disabled Londoners are not wheelchair users and are able to use a range of transport options – most commonly walking (78% of disabled Londoners walk at least once a week) and the bus (56%). Wheelchair users also use a range of transport options, and do not use taxis more than non-wheelchair users⁸. Disabled people are amongst the most physically inactive and socially isolated in London, and the number of disabled people in London is expected to increase significantly over the coming decades due to rising levels of long term conditions and people continuing to work at older ages. There is therefore an urgent need for London's public transport and public realm to enable them to build activity into their daily routine and to interact with other people.

11. What contribution can car clubs make to tackling congestion, and how can the Mayor and TfL encourage these?

Our response:

Car clubs can be effective in reducing car ownership in areas of poor public transport access which will have ensuing health benefits as well as reducing discretionary car use that can contribute to congestion. In areas of good public transport access and high density, car clubs can **increase** the use of cars for trips that could be done by other modes and therefore contribute to congestion. However, car clubs can provide an alternative to private car ownership where people might want one for occasional use, for example to transport heavy or bulky items.

In London, public transport access is reasonably good in many places and we therefore would not support car clubs as a priority method to tackle congestion across the city, although car clubs may have some benefits in selected areas of poor public transport access.

Car clubs:

1. Are unlikely to have much impact on congestion – only one in five trips made by London's car owners are made for commuting purposes⁹, and in a city as large as London, where people live and work in so many different parts of the city, there are unlikely to be many instances where car clubs are a practical solution to meet people's transport requirements.
2. Will not have the co-benefits for health of increasing physical activity that can be achieved by encouraging modal shift to walking, cycling and using public transport.

⁷ RCP / RCPCH. *Every breath we take*. London: RCP, 2016 www.rcplondon.ac.uk/file/2912/download?token=5pFurNnk

⁸ Travel in London: understanding our diverse communities 2015. Transport for London <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/travel-in-london-understanding-our-diverse-communities.pdf>

⁹ TfL London Travel Demand Survey 2013/14 and Travel in London 7

12. To what extent could greater efficiency in the provision of bus services help reduce congestion, and how?

Our response:

Having access to a convenient, efficient and affordable bus service is essential to improving productivity in the city. Bus services must be frequent and reliable in areas with poor alternative public transport provision so that people are not nudged back into car use. The effect of London's current congestion on bus services – in making bus services slower and less reliable – is a priority for action. Bus priority lanes may need to be considered and 'general traffic' – private motorists, taxis, private hire vehicles and deliveries - needs to be severely restricted.

The current distribution and intersection of bus services also need to be reviewed. The current provision of bus services across London is problematic in that too many buses have to go through the congested centre, where they are not needed in such large numbers due to alternative public transport options and more walkable and cyclable distances and environments. Bus services also need to be redistributed to serve outer London better, so that people living in outer London do not need to depend on car use with its ensuing negative impacts on the health of those both inside and outside the cars.

Encouraging modal shift

Our response:

Modal shift is an imperative, both to build sustainability into London's transport system, and to build physical activity back into the lives of all Londoners. As recommended by The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC), "a change in culture is needed so that it is no longer considered 'normal' to spend a large amount of time sitting in cars"¹⁰. If Londoners swapped motorised trips that could reasonably be walked and cycled, 60% of them would meet the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity through active travel alone. The population of London would gain over 60,000 years of healthy life every year as a result and this would deliver an economic health benefit of over £2 billion annually¹¹.

Encouraging modal shift requires co-ordinated measures which simultaneously:

1. Increase public transport use
2. Promote active travel, both for whole trips and in conjunction with public transport
3. Discourage car use.

There is still much more that can be done in London. Over one third of all the car trips made by London residents are less than 2km and could be walked in up to 25 minutes¹. Car trips per day made as a driver generally decrease as access to public transport increases, as measured by the Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL). Transport planning needs to focus on people and their movement, rather than vehicles.

Measures to increase public transport use

- Improvements to the bus network – as outlined above
- Improvements to local rail services – including improving cycling and walking routes to stations, and providing an adequate quantity of secure cycle parking at every station

¹⁰ Exercise: The miracle cure and the role of the doctor in promoting it. (2015) Academy of Medical Royal Colleges <http://tinyurl.com/hhbn4fs>

¹¹ Transport and health in London: The main impacts of London road transport on health. (2014) Greater London Authority http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Transport%20and%20health%20in%20London_March%202014.pdf

- Measures to make car use the least affordable and convenient option when there is a public transport or active travel alternative e.g. restricting availability of on-street parking (see FPH guidance on measures to reduce car use¹²)

Measures to promote active travel

- Reallocating parking space for cycle parking & public seating areas
- Widening and improving pavements
- Introducing safe cycle lanes where appropriate
- Reducing car parking at destinations and providing cycle parking, particularly in areas of good public transport accessibility and/or a large walkable/cyclable catchment, to discourage car use
- In new developments - requiring direct desire lines for walking and cycling, for example, through filtered permeability; high levels of cycle parking; and encouraging developments with a mix of uses, for example residential, retail, leisure and/or commercial uses to reduce the need to travel by car.
- Providing free cycle training for children and adults

Measures to discourage car use

- Traffic management – such as traffic-calming schemes to reduce vehicle speeds, area-wide 20mph speed limits, reducing delivery traffic, ‘play streets’ policies, and car-free days.
- Road-user charging schemes – such as the ULEZ and removing congestion charging exemptions for taxis, PHVs and residents.
- Removing convenient parking – through controlled parking zones, reallocation to other uses (pedestrian benches, cycle parking, pavement widening), regulating parking permits, introducing emissions-related parking charging, working with leisure and services providers to reduce parking at destinations.
- Requiring car-free residential developments in areas of high public transport accessibility (or low-parking ratios such as a maximum of 0.2 spaces per unit).
- Minimising parking in commercial developments (apart from accessible parking for Blue Badge holders)

Not all of these measures fall directly under the remit of TfL but many can be influenced by the Mayor.

Providing new road infrastructure

Our response:

In a city such as London where space is at a premium, new roads are neither a feasible nor sustainable solution to the city’s transport requirements. There is a clear proven relationship between providing space for driving vehicles and increased vehicle miles driven¹³, which means that building new capacity for private vehicles does not reduce congestion. London needs a radical transformation to prioritisation in the transport system to ensure that general traffic is limited to only those vehicles that need to be there.

Disadvantages of new road schemes:

- They create fewer jobs than spending on public transport schemes¹⁴
- They create fewer jobs in their supply chain than public transport schemes¹⁴
- They are expensive and not possible to deliver in the short term¹⁵
- They fail to cut congestion¹⁵

¹² Faculty of Public Health (2016) Briefing Statement: Local action to mitigate the health impacts of cars www.fph.org.uk/uploads/Local_action_to_mitigate_the_health_impacts_of_cars.pdf

¹³ Metz D (2008) The Myth of Travel Time Saving. Transport Reviews. 28: 321–336.

¹⁴ Employment in Sustainable Transport. (2010). Ekosgen (Passenger Transport Executive Group, Campaign for Better Transport & Sustrans)

- They often stop the delivery of small-scale investment in road safety and traffic measures eg. junction improvements¹⁵.

Benefits of investment in local public transport¹⁵

- Promoting economic growth
- Improving access to employment
- Increasing productivity due to reduced congestion and improved journey time reliability
- Promoting regeneration of areas around the transport networks
- Higher returns on investment (ie. better value for money) than road building projects
- Creating more jobs than road building projects
- Improving equity, because local public transport investment enables more social groups and areas of the country to benefit
- Improving connections and communication between firms (agglomeration).

Maximising available road space

18. What effect has the additional space provided for cycling and pedestrian infrastructure had on congestion?

Walking and cycling are the **most** space efficient, healthy and environmentally sustainable transport modes, followed by public transport.

Use of private vehicles is the **least** space efficient, healthy and environmentally sustainable mode of transport.

In highly congested areas of London with high public transport provision and where significant proportions of trips are short enough that they can reasonably be walked or cycled the most efficient use of the limited space is to reallocate it away from private vehicles to walking and cycling (half of all walking in London is as part of public transport trips¹⁶). This delivers a healthy, sustainable city that is welcoming to visitors and attractive to business.

If you require any further information from FPH, please contact FPH's Policy Officer

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Acknowledgements:

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¹⁵ Smarter Spending to boost the economy (2011) Campaign for Better Transport www.bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/Smarter-Spending.pdf

¹⁶ Improving the health of Londoners. Transport action plan. (2014) Transport for London www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/improving-the-health-of-londoners-transport-action-plan.pdf