**LONDON ASSEMBLY – INVESTIGATION INTO TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN LONDON – RESPONSE BY THE TRANSPORT PLANNING SOCIETY (TPS)**

The Transport Planning Society (TPS) is an independent institutional body in the UK, established to facilitate, develop and promote best practice in transport planning and to provide a focus for dialogue between practitioners and others interested in the field. It is supported by four long established professional institutions –ICE, CIHT, CILT and RTPI -all of whom have an interest in transport planning as well as their own core activities.

The Transport Planning Society administers its own Professional Development Scheme for transport planners, leading to award of the Transport Planning Professional (TPP) qualification which is the only professional qualification uniquely aimed at transport planners. The Society has over1200 individual members and 30 corporate member providers of transport planning services in the UK and elsewhere.

Our response (set out below in italics) has been drafted by the Policy Group within the TPS Board, all of whom were elected by the membership as a whole. The Policy Group is in constant dialogue with other members of the Society and the views expressed here may be taken as broadly representative of them.

Our response to the General Questions (1 to 4)

*The most comprehensive source of detailed traffic monitoring is available directly from TfL. These data measure traffic composition by time, vehicle type and area. A more detailed monitoring regime is now required in order to gauge the impacts of emerging trends including post development multi-modal surveys, vehicle transmission types, taxi/minicab mix, emission types, street parking and loading intensities by vehicle and street type. This expanded range of monitoring should assist in informing the causes of traffic change hence providing the answers to your key general question.*

*Traffic congestion causes serious damage to both the local economy and environment. In parts of London the road networks are regularly subject to near-gridlock conditions and others to occasional breakdown because of their critical or limited nature. Growth in population and employment beyond the Central Area will have a disproportionate impact on traffic congestion as public transport is weaker and few improvements in road capacity and management are likely. London can still learn from other cities particularly with regard to bus rapid transit, light rail/tram project funding, selective provision of limited geometry road grade separation at congestion hotspots to enable improved conditions for buses, pedestrians and cyclists road pricing, parking management and integrated land-use and transport planning.*

Question 5. How effective is the Congestion Charge? How should this scheme be modified?

*Reasonably efficient as a demand management device in reducing congestion in Central London but far too beneficial to local residents and exempt vehicles. This is a “blunt instrument” in road pricing terms and warrants a mileage charging refinement. Strong leadership from the London Assembly and the Mayor would be needed to extend the area and careful consideration of alternatives (via parking levies and emission charging) needs to be followed through.*

Question 6. To what extent would a usage-based road pricing regime help to reduce congestion?

*Usage-based road pricing would be far more effective in managing demand and very much more equitable. The ROCOL studies undertaken prior to the establishment of the GLA are worth re-reading.*

Question 7. How might the Ultra-Low Emissions Surcharge affect congestion levels?

*This surcharge can only really encourage the vehicle fleet to change to lower emission transmission over time. It may have some shorter term impact on traffic levels and congestion but this would be eroded soon enough. In defining a physical boundary for any ULEV scheme such as the South Circular Road there could be the undesirable and unintended consequences of focusing harmful pollution levels onto a road like the South Circular which is in effect a poorly connected set of local high streets.*

Question 8. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of these other interventions?

* Tolling for river crossings or other major infrastructure
* Workplace Parking Levy
* Devolving Vehicle Excise Duty to London

*Tolling river crossings would be effective in cases where new capacity is added and where there is a need to enable local economies to benefit by means of differential pricing designed to deter non-local trips. There is still a case for applying premium charges on such bridge crossings or indeed on any new significant capacity increase if a more comprehensive form of road pricing is introduced.*

*We strongly commend the application of a Parking Levy across the whole of London. This would need to address the entire parking market rather than simply focus on the workplace as in Nottingham and under consideration in Oxford, Cambridge and a number of other cities. This instrument would help to manage traffic and parking demand as well as raise funds for local transport and environmental improvements. It is capable of being applied in a price-sensitive way and hence avoiding potentially damaging environmental and market boundary distortions. Every parking space other than off street private residential parking would pay a relatively low and graduated levy so that no particular sector is facing all the impact of the levy.*

*Capturing the Treasury VED would be most helpful provided it becomes additional money. We do not anticipate the Treasury to make this available without stringent conditions if at all.*

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

*Apply more of the measures adopted during London 2012. Other vehicles servicing London’s needs are also growing at a high rate and already cause disproportionate delays when “parked”.*

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

*Apply more comprehensive and extended road pricing.*

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

*A very small contribution is likely in the short term. To the extent that they reduce car ownership, that takes pressure off on-street parking areas and should reduce trip making by car. To the extent that non-car owners users may be attracted to using Car Club vehicles rather than public transport, that could have an adverse effect on congestion. More research is needed of the ways in which Car Clubs are used.*

*Either way, refined and consistent pan-London policies are needed but these must be flexible enough to deal with the changing car ownership trends. The roll-out of the first autonomous cars is no longer a pipe-dream.*

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

*Some efficiencies and certainly reduced congestion should arise if London’s town centre stations and other bus stations/hubs were better located to avoid dead mileage and over-bussing congested central roads.*

*Several issues need to be addressed. Bus journey times are currently increasing in London with a deterrent effect on passenger growth. Bus-on-bus congestion is becoming more prevalent on busy routes and around bus hubs, and this requires a review of the relevant operations and stop locations. Secondly, better provision needs to be made for buses in junction remodelling schemes, where bus journey times are often extended due to longer routeings through the junction, more traffic signal stops, slow speeds round low radius turns, and the need for difficult manoeuvres to access stops. Thirdly, in certain areas, bus speeds are being affected by the blanket introduction of 20 mph speed limits and the imposition of such limits on bus routes should be reviewed.*

Question 13. How can TfL further encourage a shift from private car use to public transport or active travel modes?

*Apply a multi-pronged approach by employing a combination of London 2012 measures and road pricing with a parking levy. Invest further in strategic cycling measures, and take steps to make bus travel more attractive.*

Question 14. Can new road infrastructure help reduce traffic congestion? What specific new infrastructure is required in London?

*It can reduce congestion particularly if supplemented with management measures such as re-allocating capacity and applying charges. There are numerous congestion black spots in the Capital where the environment and public safety is seriously compromised by gross congestion. Such locations are often in heavily populated areas where pedestrian, cycling and bus provision is woeful and where space for physical change is limited or expensive. These are potential locations for imaginative designs for limited facilities that grade-separate major traffic flows from pedestrian, cyclists and buses without adding capacity for general traffic. Good practice exists in Continental cites and particularly in France.*

*Many of London’s town centres already exhibit serious congestion and this is likely to worsen given the demands of growth. A good example of achieving benefit from road investment in London would be the tunnelling of the A4 route beneath the Hammersmith town centre and gyratory. A balanced contribution of both public transport and road improvements will be necessary where there is feasible and acceptable.*

Question 15. To what extent is there a risk of new roads encouraging people to drive? How can this risk be avoided?

*There is obviously a risk here but it would be minimised if complementary measures as described above are implemented in parallel.*

Question 16. How should road infrastructure be funded?

*By a combination of TfL capital funding, new monies raised from road pricing, parking levies and tolls and developer obligations. Most road investment in London would yield benefits for bus operations. A CIL could also be employed.*

Question 17. How effective are TfL’s measures to limit roadworks, such as the lane rental scheme? How can these measures be made more effective?

*This is difficult to test and we suspect major works are well managed whereas minor ones are left in place too long and are less well co-ordinated. The price mechanism should be employed to a greater extent.*

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

*Major works in Central London are always high profile and the effect on congestion has been well documented. Detailed monitoring has no doubt revealed more results. The longer term effects are as yet unknown.*

Question 19. How can the use of technology be enhanced to help TfL manage congestion? For instance, how can the iBUS system be used for this purpose?

*The introduction of an operator/user continuous real-time performance feed (app) of service offer and condition is needed.*

*What is needed is an app which recommends the best route by bus given current, not scheduled, journey times.*

Question 20. How effective has the Road and Transport Enforcement team been in tackling congestion?

*We have difficulty in answering this question but would expect some benefit at least as a residual from the London 2012 practice and experience where the relevant agencies were obliged to work together. We have not seen any research evaluating the effects of the Team. What is needed is some modelling of the situation that would have prevailed without the Team’s interventions, with outcomes compared with what actually occurred on the day.*