

## **Boris Bikes are fuelling central London's traffic conflicts**

What is the point of Boris Bikes ('Bike hire cuts Tube and walking trips', *LTT* 4 Nov)? Nine out of ten of the trips were already being made by 'sustainable' modes. The bike trips switching from car or taxi (6%) means around 1,200 short trips a day, saving no more than 6,000 motor vehicle kms, compared to around 2.5 million vehicle kms daily in central London. Reductions in congestion or emissions will not be noticed at this level.

Promoting cycling in central London could perhaps be justified if it was accompanied by a substantial reduction in vehicle kilometres driven in that area, enabling a significant reallocation of scarce roadspace to cyclists, buses and deliveries. But neither the Boris Bikes, nor the commuter-oriented 'cycle superhighways' can achieve that type of mode switch, because marginal drivers abandoned central London long ago. Central London now offers better conditions for walking than ever before, and the bus network has been developed into one of the best in the world. The combination of going on foot or by bus works well for short-to-medium length journeys, and this situation should not be disturbed without good reason.

Pulling people off other sustainable modes (walking, Tube, train) and onto bikes will add to the intensity of traffic conflicts in a street environment almost totally unsuited to special cycle facilities, and with no compensating gains. Pedestrians will have to cope with greater difficulties crossing the street, and bus passengers will have to tolerate slower journeys as buses are hindered and slowed by bikes, especially at bus stops and junctions. The only people to benefit will be those choosing the cycle mode.

Cycling does have a role to play in London, but this should be carefully thought through and in context. There is huge scope for cycling to solve transport issues in outer suburban London, for example, and much to do to achieve that. So why is the main effort going into encouraging bikes in the constrained environment of central London, where a few will exercise their choice to the inconvenience of everyone else?

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