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# WEST LONDON TRANSPORT STUDY

15/1/90

## Stage 2

New transport options for West London and their assessment using the Borough / DTp agreed objectives

Report prepared for West London RoadWatch

by the

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## CHAPTER ONE - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

1.1 The first **West London Transport Study (WLTS1)** was produced by the **Metropolitan Transport Research Unit (MTRU)** in January 1989. It reviewed the Assessment Study process, and outlined ways in which the consultants for the **West London Assessment Study (WLAS)** should proceed, in order to rectify earlier mistakes, and to use the objectives agreed between the London Boroughs and the **Department of Transport (DTp)** to achieve genuine progress.

1.2 Since then, the WLAS consultants have been testing their original range of options, which WLTS1 found to be inadequate and road biased. MTRU's conclusion was that further options should be tested. These should be more in keeping with the all-borough strategy put forward by the **London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC)**. This was supported by a group of five boroughs in West London, who agreed one further package for testing. Despite some resistance, it has now been added to the consultants' list.

1.3 Unfortunately, the option assessment process has been shrouded in secrecy, although some indications have been given to the boroughs. It appears that the consultants' work will be largely based on the assessment methods of the sixties and seventies, with little acknowledgement of the lessons learned in recent years about planning urban transport.

#### Key areas covered by the new report

1.4 This new study builds on the work in WLTS1 and covers several key areas. These can be summarised as follows:

i) A review of the current state of transport planning in the capital, the myriad of organisations, ad hoc arrangements, studies and statements from which a plan for London's transport must emerge (Chapter 2).

ii) The refusal of the DTp and its consultants to follow the objectives based assessment approach, recommended by the Government's own **Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA)**. In line with this, the boroughs and the DTp agreed a set of objectives for use in the Assessment Studies (see Appendix A). This report gives examples of what could be achieved if this approach were followed to its proper conclusion. Without such basic work, the WLAS consultants cannot define the real problems in the area, and without identifying the underlying problems, the solutions they offer can only be haphazard and ineffective (Chapters 3, 4 and 5).

iii) The necessity to develop new transport options for West London. MTRU has concluded that the current proposals are so flawed that it is essential to set out two further

options, in addition to the one put forward by the five boroughs. These are designed with objectives in mind, and openly recognise the interdependence of transport problems between different geographical areas, and between different modes of transport (Chapters 4 and 5).

iv) A bringing together of the MTRU options, the borough option, and a consultants' option including WEIR, to be assessed using the objectives based approach (Chapter 6).

v) The necessity for urgent action to be taken, which is reflected in a set of recommendations for immediate implementation (Chapter 1).

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

### The Transport Planning Framework in London

1.5 The picture painted in Chapter 2 of this report is one of severe organisational confusion and waste. In the midst of this duplication and complexity, the London boroughs have come together across the political divide to agree a basic policy direction. However, on any analysis, their legal powers and their financial resources are totally inadequate to implement a coherent transport policy for London.

1.6 Above all, there is a lack of clearly defined lines of power and responsibility, hence the plethora of statutory "consultation", "guidance", "advice" and "reserve powers". All of these are designed to allow central government to influence what local authorities or public sector transport operators (LRT and BR) might do. This system has been set up with no organisational dynamic which could produce the positive plans for London's transport which are so obviously required.

1.7 There is, of course, one exception. The strategic road programme in London is conceived, designed and funded in total by central Government. This might be tolerable in logic (if not in democratic principle) if it did the same for public transport, walking and cycling. It is ironic indeed that a Government committed to minimising public sector activities and maximising personal choice sponsors so completely one mode of transport. This is even more so because it is the mode least suitable for mass transit in a mature and densely populated urban area like London.

1.8 At first, many boroughs, particularly in outer London, felt that they could benefit by not being subject to a London master plan, geared to the needs of central and inner areas. But the health of London as a whole still depends on many activities residing in the original inner Metropolitan area, and on safe, reliable and affordable transport so that people can get there. The problems of the suburbs and the centre are inextricably linked.



1.9 Thus in the last two years there has been an increasing awareness that some form of agreed approach was required, and this was most clearly expressed in the **Strategic Planning Advice (SPA)** presented by LPAC to the Secretary of State for the Environment. This was agreed by all three political groupings on LPAC, and was backed by new research and detailed work by borough and LPAC officers. Its proposals are outlined in Chapter 2 and the Appendices. More recently, the two borough associations in London, the **Association of London Authorities (ALA)** and the **London Boroughs Association (LBA)**, have come together specifically to agree policies for transport. In certain areas, for example on rail investment and bus priority, there seems to be complete agreement.

1.10 At the same time, the professional bodies involved have taken a clear line which is in tune with the boroughs' conclusions. Improved public transport, traffic restraint, better conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, higher standards of safety for all travellers and the need for environmental improvements have become a familiar litany from bodies as diverse as the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Association of London Borough Engineers and Surveyors and the Royal Town Planning Institute.

1.11 The consensus which is emerging is in part explained by the obvious deterioration in London's transport system, the effects of the DTP's one sidedness, and the lack of clearly defined responsibility. Clear symptoms such as congestion on road and rail, unreliable and lengthening journey times by bus and private car, and for goods deliveries and emergency vehicles have exposed the weakness of this uncoordinated approach. The most recent Government "Statement on Transport in London" (reviewed more fully in Chapter 2) mixes public sector building with publicly owned corporations and private sector operators without any idea of co-ordination, and rejects any notion of a "masterplan".

1.12 There are many examples of how this inflexibility damages London's economic and social interests. These include the lack of proper infrastructure planning in Docklands and its completely inadequate light railway, the Channel Tunnel rail link and terminal fiasco, and the threat of bus deregulation in London, already implemented in every other major British city. Evidence now shows that deregulation has been accompanied by dramatic falls in passenger numbers, while in London, the only city without it, numbers are stable, even after real fares increases.

1.13 Finally there is the question of public sector planning and investment and the question of developer involvement. The route of the Jubilee Line extension now appears to be a matter decided by how much competing developers are willing to pay the Government to serve their particular development. This is despite the fact that a majority of the finance will have to be found by the operator or Government. There can of course be a positive role for

developers, with their special knowledge of commercial needs, and their financial resources. The idea, however, that the planning of such projects should be decided by a process akin to a Dutch Auction is one that the authors of this report find difficult to accept.

## Assessment and Decision Making

No overall transport appraisal methods

1.14 The current lack of organisational structures is matched by the lack of systematic methods of transport assessment. These should take into account all modes (including walking), and be geared towards public understanding (without which there will be no public acceptance). At present, the limited form of cost benefit analysis called COBA, produces entirely notional "income" for road schemes by saving motorists' time. For rail and bus the passenger must finance the system through fares, or developers found to pay in exchange for planning permission.

1.15 The inadequacies and unfairness of the present methods of assessment were detailed in the first WLTS report. There is still no comprehensive and publicly comprehensible system in place. This has led to disquiet and to cynicism among professionals, and to extreme anger among members of the public who are affected by Government schemes, and who rapidly become aware of the weaknesses in the current methodology. The unpredicted levels of generated traffic, on new roads from the Great West Road in the 1920s, through Westway in the 70s, to the M25 in the 80s, has finally convinced most people that these methods must be abandoned. Their errors cannot now be explained away by applying some mathematical post hoc fudge factors. The main problems can be summarised as follows:

- i) failure to identify and agree quality of life objectives for transport,
- ii) concentration on immediate symptoms rather than underlying problems,
- iii) inadequate and biased computer models and forecasts which do not include all modes of transport, and
- iv) failure to give clear and unbiased information and to hold open discussion about policy assumptions, leading to a failure to command serious public respect.

1.16 The proposals put forward in this report suggest a progressive series of moves as follows:

- i) setting out overall transport objectives,
- ii) use of these objectives to define problems, together with improved measures for "quality of life"



iii) development of solutions, again using objectives and improved measures for "quality of life", and

iv) public consultation and discussion leading to implementation of schemes.

1.17 Such a system enables conflicts between different objectives to be made explicit, and presented in an understandable way. This in turn allows the sort of open public consultation and discussion which is missing at the moment. It contrasts strongly with the way in which decision makers now hide behind the numbers produced by computer models as though the models did not depend on the values and policy assumptions fed into them.

#### The need for a fresh approach

1.18 A new approach is needed for two fundamental reasons. The first is that the current methods of assessment are now known to be technically flawed and completely unsuitable for use in London. The second is that there is a real need to restore public confidence. Many ordinary people are genuinely shocked when they experience the process of road planning first hand.

1.19 This is not to say that there will never be a conflict of interest, or that there will never be gainers or losers as a result of a transport project, or that some individual or organisation will never feel aggrieved. But it is essential that people feel that their case will be listened to fairly, and that even if a decision goes against them, the system of assessment is even handed, rather than obviously biased towards the proponents' case.

1.20 The fact of the matter is that the present system:

i) has no route for local public involvement (at borough or Londonwide level),

ii) provides copious legal and technical support for proposers of a scheme with no balancing resources for its critics, and

iii) takes as read the unchallengeable nature of certain Government "policies" (e.g. traffic forecasts) no matter how far they are proved to be suspect.

Chapter 3 therefore sets out principles, and some practical ways in which they can be applied, to create a new system of planning and assessment which is rigorous and fair. Such a system would allow decision makers to involve the public and to overcome the practical problems involved in implementing alternative transport plans.

## Real Solutions to Real Problems

### Applying the objectives based approach

1.21 If Chapters 2 and 3 represent a critique of current methods, and the ways in which they could be improved, Chapter 4 begins to apply these conclusions and show how different solutions to West London's transport problems could be applied. The approach is to adopt an integrated, objectives based approach, and this in turn leads to fresh options to achieve transport improvements.

### Rapid improvement for buses

1.22 Within this approach the role of the bus is seen as crucial, particularly in the next two to five years. Using existing technology, a new system of bus priority and reliability control could be implemented, offering enormous benefits eclipsing those achieved by road schemes. The transformation, in terms of people's ability to get to the places they need, would be very great throughout West London.

### BR and the longer term

1.23 Rail too has its role, with new stations and services on existing BR lines providing most benefits in the medium term. Both bus and BR improvements would relieve the overcrowding which is such a pressing problem on the Underground. In the long run, new Underground lines may also be required, together with service revisions such as those examined in the Central London Rail Study. However, these need to be looked at as a package, and individual elements closely scrutinised. The time needed for such detailed planning and preparation will be provided by the introduction of Londonwide bus priority.

### The need for car restraint

1.24 It is also considered essential that car traffic is restrained directly, as well as by indirect methods such as improving public transport or restricting parking. Parking control helps to limit stopping traffic, but does not affect through traffic, and much of London's private non-residential parking is completely uncontrolled. Boroughs are often faced with pressure from developers and residents who want more parking, and have to balance the requirements of a restraint strategy against local needs. This should not be their responsibility. Further traffic restraint is needed because the implementation of bus and pedestrian priority would not solve the congestion problems suffered by essential commercial traffic, or by those people who have a genuine need to make car trips.

1.25 Thus the MTRU options contain proposals to reduce traffic levels by some direct method. Effectively this means



area licensing (basically a permit system for residents and essential users) or some form of charge. Area licensing is attractive because it is based on need, but is likely to be bureaucratic, and rather inflexible. It still merits closer scrutiny. Milan, for example, has recently chosen to adopt such a system instead of pricing. The pricing option has the advantage of being simple and flexible, with a displayable windscreen ticket the simplest. Unfortunately this does not discourage journeys once a ticket has been bought, so pricing by the mile is seen as more sensitive and adjustable.

1.26 In any form of pricing, there are bound to be equity problems, but these are not insurmountable. First, the impact of road pricing when used to help bus passengers directly (not indirectly as with most studies), is in itself socially equitable. But this is not all. For example, pricing could be raised according to frequency of use, with the first trip in a week free, and prices rising to deter commuting. There is plenty of room for innovation and creative thinking: the Stockholm restraint proposals include the idea of everyone having to buy a public transport season ticket before they can drive into the centre.

1.27 It would be unwise to settle on the best system for London in this report, although a supplementary MTRU report early next year will review all the different methods now available. What is clear is that:

- i) there are no insurmountable technical barriers, and
- ii) recent evidence shows that the public will accept such measures, providing the benefits are secured.

### Achieving Results

1.28 The report finally comes to the question of how well the old options, and the new ones put forward by MTRU, would perform against the objectives agreed by boroughs and the DTp. A selection are reviewed in Chapter 6. Again, the five year multi-million pound Assessment Study process is not repeated in detail in this report. Certain exemplary calculations and assessments have been possible, however, using new and existing survey and modelling work. These are set out in Chapter 5.

### Bus priority

1.29 The first example is the design and assessment of a bus priority scheme from Shepherds Bush to Putney Bridge. This was selected to serve an area of low public transport accessibility, as opposed to maximising benefits to LRT, or according to the worst congestion. Ways of improving people's access to the centres of shopping and commercial activity in the borough by bus were then devised. The substantial

accessibility benefits such a scheme would have are indicated on the maps shown in Chapter 5.

1.30 In addition to this method of assessment, MTRU has investigated the potential savings to existing travellers using the bus routes that would benefit. In addition, purely for comparison, the notional value of the scheme was calculated using the DTp's methodology for road schemes. On this basis, bus priority in this area would pay for itself very easily in the first year, something that is almost unheard of for an urban road scheme. Time delays to motorists do not occur, because sufficient capacity is released to allow the priority measures. In London as a whole, a comprehensive bus priority programme would be worth over £250 million a year in the DTp's own figures.

1.31 The analysis shows the value of such schemes, how they would achieve objectives, and even pass the DTp's most stringent cost benefit test. If the consultants' reports contain no comparable schemes and assessments, they will have failed to meet the challenge put forward by years of technical work, leading to the agreed objectives set out by the boroughs and the DTp. At the time of writing it appears extremely unlikely that they will.

#### Traffic restraint

1.32 The impact of traffic restraint in this area is indicated by drawing on the LPAC modelling work in more detail. This was based first on the **London Area Model (LAM)** (see Chapter 2, and Appendices B and C), since made subject to a prohibition on its use by the DTp. LPAC has now repeated its work using the other London model run by the DTp (LTS), which if anything shows greater traffic reductions than LAM.

1.33 Thus the two crucial new elements in the MTRU options appear to score highly in terms of objectives achievement. By contrast, benefits from road based schemes are very localised, and evaporate within a few years as traffic grows to fill the space. Nothing is done to help those who must rely on public transport, people who suffer mobility handicaps, or to encourage those who can to leave their cars at home and use the bus or train instead.

1.34 Finally, there is a degree of flexibility in the MTRU options which is completely absent from existing WLAS proposals. The strength of proposals to manage the system is shown in the responsiveness of service levels (particularly by bus), and the way in which the level of charging for the use of roads can be adjusted in combination with fares to achieve the required "breathing space" for pedestrian, cycling or environmental improvements.



## OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Planning of Transport in London

1.35 There is a complete lack of organisational momentum towards planning for London's transport as a whole. The power of central Government to refuse permission for transport schemes has increased, as has the organisational dynamic behind road building. Responsibilities for public transport are dispersed, involving a mixture of public corporations (LRT, BR, LDDC), local authorities, private operators and developers. Large amounts of public and private money are being spent, there are a huge number of different local proposals at various stages of development, and no agency even to check whether they are compatible, let alone try to stimulate fresh thinking on how to solve London's transport problems.

1.36 This situation can only be remedied by some reorganisation of transport powers and responsibilities in London. It is important to separate this requirement from any political argument about what form this should take, and in particular whether a new strategic authority for transport should be created. This report does not consider the merits or demerits of such a proposal, or its political implications. However, it is clear that the current organisational failings are an integral part of the overall failure to come to grips with London's transport.

#### RECOMMENDATION 1: ORGANISATION

A new organisational structure for the planning of London's transport must be created so that the system:

- i) gives full recognition to the need for a Londonwide dimension to transport planning, as amply demonstrated in the Assessment Studies and elsewhere,
- ii) directs its effort towards positive and lasting improvements rather than ad hoc crisis management,
- iii) ensures that all agencies act in a co-ordinated way,
- iv) ensures that the interests of all Londoners are properly considered,
- v) is more comprehensible and accessible to the public, and
- vi) operates within the proper constraints of democratic practise.

It is not considered that this recommendation is in any way against Government policy. The problem is how far the DTP imagines that it has already achieved Recommendation 1. The conclusion of this report is that it clearly has not, and that action is urgently needed under all six headings.

## The Use of Objectives Based Assessment

1.35 Many existing techniques of assessment still being used are inaccurate, unfair and out of date. The objectives based techniques offer a positive way forward for identifying problems, developing solutions and assessing the options. Included in this is the use of minimum standards, targets for improvement, and the principle of applying relief where it is needed most. This is in harmony with the agreed objectives in the Assessment Studies, and with the conclusions of the Government's own Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment.

### RECOMMENDATION 2: ASSESSMENT

The Government should take immediate action to ensure that all transport schemes use objectives based techniques of assessment. Schemes must be assessed comparably and fairly across modes. The use of COBA in urban areas should be abandoned.

### RECOMMENDATION 3: TARGETS

In relation to achieving the objectives, the Government should set targets for transport so that:

- i) conditions are improved for those people currently with the lowest standards of accessibility,
- ii) environmental damage is reduced at the local, and Londonwide level, and the contribution to international pollution is reduced,
- iii) safety and security standards are raised throughout the transport system,
- iv) the impact of congestion on essential vehicle traffic is reduced.

### Urgent Action

1.36 The reorganisation of London's transport planning will be the means by which improvements are generated, and clear lines of responsibility set up. However, there are several immediate steps which the Secretary of State for Transport could take when he has considered the reports of his consultants, the responses from various bodies, local authorities and the public, and the results of other major pieces of research, including this report. For this reason three further recommendations are set out below.



**RECOMMENDATION 4:** **PARKING**

The Secretary of State should amend Traffic Management Guidance so that the car parking standards in Strategic Guidance become mandatory maximum limits, and alter both documents so that the outer London town centre limits apply throughout outer London. This would give the following maximum permitted parking for retail and office developments:

central London: 1 space per 12,000 square feet

inner London: 1 space per 8,000 square feet

outer London: 1 space per 5,000 square feet

Local authorities should continue to be allowed to reduce these under special local circumstances. A phased transfer of responsibility for enforcement of parking should be initiated on the lines supported by both local authority associations in London.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** **BUS PRIORITY**

A centrally funded and organised rolling programme of bus priority and improved bus control should be implemented immediately. New standards of service should be set for LRT buses, independent monitoring undertaken, and consumers given powers to ensure that standards are met. This will need to be integrated into the reorganised structure for planning London's transport.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** **RESTRAINT**

The Government must now agree targets for traffic reduction in central, inner and outer London, and Strategic Guidance should be amended to reflect the targets, rather than assumptions about traffic growth. An independent committee of inquiry is required to determine which method of direct traffic restraint is most appropriate for London. It should investigate:

i) all alternative methods, including selective bans, area licensing, restraint by reallocating road space to buses, displayable windscreen tickets, cordon pricing and electronic road pricing,

ii) the likely effects of such methods,

iii) in view of the difficulties in predicting the precise effects, the ability of each method to respond to changes in circumstances.

The Committee would be asked to set out the benefits and disbenefits of each, and recommend one for implementation. The carrying through of this recommendation would be the responsibility of the new organisational structure set up under Recommendation 1.