BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 19 (December 2002)

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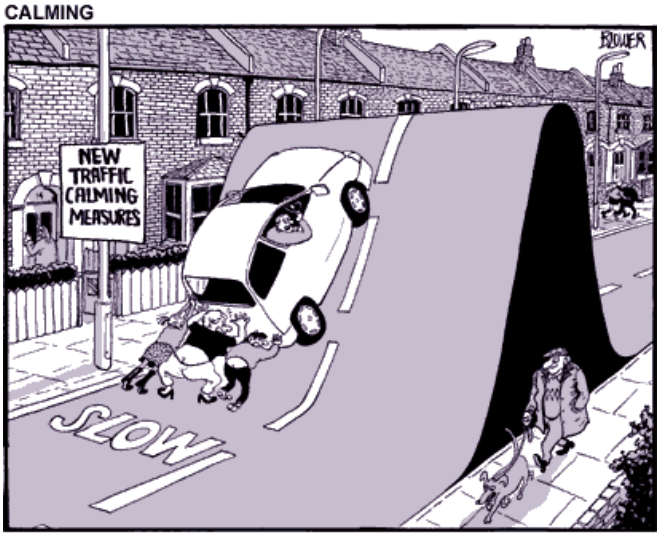
NEWS ITEM: GOVT PLEDGES TO SLASH ROAD SPEED LIMITS AND ENFORCE THE POLICY WITH MORE SPEED CAMERAS AND TRAFFIC CALMING



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Editorial

This edition gives you an update on the big political decision soon to be taken in Bromley. Namely will we have to put up with more speed humps or not!

The results of our member survey are included (thanks to everyone who returned the survey form), which makes interesting reading.

Other local news follows, including a prize competition, and at the end we have the first part of an article on how to improve all forms of transport in Bromley. Hopefully it will demonstrate that we are not just grumblers (although there is plenty to grumble about in the state of transport in Bromley) but also have some positive suggestions to make. Don't forget to let us have comments for our Letters section which has only temporarily been dropped for space reasons from this edition.

Roger Lawson, Editor

Latest Bromley Hump Proposals

Our last Newsletter contained an article on the proposals for over 100 speed humps (60 pairs of speed split humps) in Poverest Road, Elmstead Lane, Queensway and Maple Road.

Our members will have since received further information on these proposals. We also circulated a leaflet in local roads and to some businesses in Bromley and attracted a number of new members as a result (welcome to new readers).

To remind you, the original proposals had a total cost of £223,000 and were of course contrary to the policy previously adopted by the council in Spring 2002 which stated that "predominantly non-vertical" speed reduction techniques were preferred. This of course echoed the Conservatives election platform commitment of "no more speed bumps", which was probably one of the main factors in their sweeping election victory. Will the Conservatives stick to their promise? We shall soon see.

Despite the previously mentioned promise, a decision was originally taken by George Taylor, Environment Portfolio Holder, to put this speed hump proposal to public consultation (the excuse was apparently that there was a rush to get the funding through from Transport for London, and the proposal had been hanging around for some time). However, it was subsequently decided that alternative "non-vertical deflection" schemes would also be devised and put to public consultation, so the public would have three choices: "humps", "no-humps" and "do nothing".

The "non-vertical" schemes can be summarised as follows (with our comments thereon):

a - Queensway: More pedestrian refuges and road markings to make the road look narrower and hence slow traffic. Also 2 zebra crossings (rather than one on the hump scheme), and changing the kerb lines and parking bays (there will probably be more parking apparently). *Our Comments: Still an emphasis on the speed problem in this road, when there does not appear to be one and no speed measurements have been taken by the council. The new proposals may well cause additional traffic congestion, so we think this needs more careful study.*

b - Elmstead Lane: Gateway treatment, road surface treatment (e.g. coloured surface) and a "speed adviser" unit. However the table under the roundabout at the junction with Sundridge Avenue would remain as council staff could not think of any alternative. *Our Comments: Again an emphasis on the speed problem when in fact the accident statistics show that this is not the cause of most accidents in this road. We would like to see the money spent on junction improvements which are the location of many accidents, and a different treatment of the Sundridge Avenue roundabout (probably making it larger with better signage and road surface treatment near the entry points). A zebra crossing near the station and improved pavements have also been suggested by residents.*

c - Poverest Road: It is now proposed to treat both this and Leesons Hill together which also has an accident problem. Solution is more pedestrian refuges, surface treatment and speed advisers. *Our Comments: Certainly an improved proposal, but more restrictions on parking in these roads seems advisable also.*

d - Maple Road: Entry treatment, road narrowing, central refuges, surface treatment, plus still one speed table where there is a junction with a side road. *Our Comments: none.*

In general we consider the revised proposals to be an improvement. But from what we know about the accidents in these roads, from resident's comments and looking at the historic accident data, we do not feel the revised proposals have been well designed. Neither are they clearly justifiable on cost/benefit grounds.

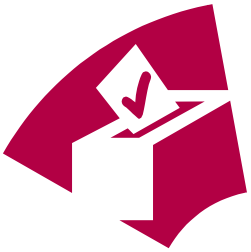
Unfortunately we have not received the full accident data to enable us to formulate our own alternative proposals - we have submitted a complaint to the council about the unnecessary withholding of important information for no

good reason. We cannot advise fully our members or other readers unless information which should be in the public domain is disclosed, and in this case there was absolutely no reason why it should not have been released on request.

Council staff even seem to have adopted a policy of not giving information on the accident data to councillors and this was not done even though requested before the "hump" proposals were put forward. Council staff appear extremely reluctant to have anyone examine the data that justifies these measures (either the "hump" or "no-hump" schemes). Needless to say, when the data we do have to hand is examined, it clearly shows that the scheme is misconceived and a waste of money. In fact, simpler, cheaper measures are likely to be more effective, if they are justified at all. This is exactly the same situation as we reported on in our last edition with the Mottingham Estate - basically a spurious justification for an expensive wide area scheme which was not going to solve the problems that did exist.

Readers who wish to object to these proposals, and have not already done so, should contact their local councillors or write to: : Mr G. Hayward, Director, Environmental Services London Borough of Bromley, Stockwell Close, Bromley, Kent, BR1 3UH

Member Survey Results



Thanks to everyone who responded to our member survey, and for the additional comments you wrote in. The following is a brief analysis of the results. Note that we also received some completed forms from non-members but as their answers were generally not significantly different (except where noted), they have been included in the figures. The percentages given "for" and "against" below are of the total number of responses, so any difference from 100% is accounted for by the "don't knows" or those people who for some reason didn't tick one of the boxes.

New schools in Bickley. There were 37% in favour of opposition and 59% against, so clearly most people feel that the desperate need for new schools in the borough overrides the preference to preserve green belt land, or the risk of additional traffic congestion.

The Aquila Site. 74% wished us to continue opposition to a high density housing estate on this site, with only 18% opposed. In fact one member threatened to resign if we didn't oppose it.

The Expansion of Biggin Hill Airport. 63% wished us to oppose this, with only 26% in favour. There were several comments about the need for improved infrastructure before the airport is expanded, and one of our members who flies private planes from the airport objected because scheduled flights would disrupt such usage.

Opposition to an Airport at Cliffe. This was more evenly divided with 37% wishing for us to oppose it and 48% against. One member felt that flight paths from the existing airports would actually make this new site rather impractical, which has also been reported elsewhere in the press.

The London Congestion Charge. There were two questions on this subject. 70% were opposed "in principle" with 22% not, but 78% felt it was not practical and would not reduce congestion, versus 18% who thought it might work. Mr Livingstone may have some difficulty in getting re-elected on these numbers and taking into account the comments written in on the forms.

Note however that non-members were much more willing to support the scheme both in principle and in practice, which probably just shows that politicians are much more likely to want to interfere with peoples lives and introduce additional taxation than our members - however even there the results were pretty evenly balanced.

Demolition of the Orpington Station Road Multi-Storey Car Park. 48% were opposed to the demolition, with 29% in favour, and clearly a significant number of "don't know's". One

comment was "a stupid proposal that only helps big business" (presumably they mean Tesco).

Opposition to More Speed Bumps. 92% were opposed to more speed bumps with only 4% wanting more. A typical comment was "an utter waste of rate payer's money". Not an unexpected result perhaps.

Use of Speed Cameras in Bromley. 41% wanted more speed cameras, with 52% against. Clearly there was no clear cut view on this matter with comments such as "more effective than humps", "would like more red light cameras", "yes but only with good planning and can be seen", or "there are enough".

More Residents Parking Permit Schemes. Only 18% were in favour of more such schemes, with 63% against, a decisive result. Several comments such as "makes any form of neighbourhood visiting extremely difficult" and "an increase in council tax by the back door".

Restrictions on Long Term Parking and Workplace Parking Taxation. 33% were in favour of such measures, with 48% opposed. Comments made included "does much harm to local businesses" and "would only agree if council employees ceased to be able to park next door to their work".

Rating of BBRAG Newsletters. Our average score from members was 8 (out of 10), but only 7 from non-members. *(Editors Comment: Clearly still room for improvement).*

BBRAG Internet Web Site Visited. 40% of members had looked at our web site, which probably equates to the typical penetration of PC web access in Bromley. No non-members had looked at it which is a bit disappointing (maybe politicians are simply too busy to spend time on such activities).

How Would You Like to See Transport in Bromley Improved? This question got a large variety of responses. Here's a few of them:

- More effective improvements to local rail commuter services.
- Extend the "underground" to Bromley.
- The key is to stop new development.
- Forbid on-street parking on bus routes.
- Do away with bicycle lanes as not used.
- Widen roads with less pavement.
- Put cycle lanes on pavements, not road.
- A light rail system, or DLR extension.
- Remove under used bus and cycle lanes.
- Provision of regular and reliable bus and rail services.
- Better parking facilities for train commuters.
- More emphasis on considering the impact of new schools, housing, etc.

Does BBRAG Stick to the Right Issues? 78% seemed to be happy with what we spend our efforts on, with only 7% unhappy.

General Comments. These included "should stick more to local issues", "need to expand membership", "would like more public meetings" and "we should work more with the local council rather than opposing their activities".

You can be assured that your executive committee will take on board the results of the survey and the comments made.

Rookery Gardens Home Zone

The proposed "home zone" for the Rookery Gardens Estate in St. Mary Cray has been approved. This will be the first such zone in Bromley and if it proves successful there may well be others implemented later.

To quote from a council report: "The Home Zone aims to change the way that the streets are used and to improve the quality of life by making them places for people, not just for traffic…. The new central green area and proposed secure gardens for ground floor maisonettes will be supplemented by the provision of informal play equipment in verges at the side of the road." There will also be crime reduction measures incorporated such as improved street lighting and CCTV cameras.

Note that the Rookery Estate is pretty much self contained already and there will be a closure of one of the roads, with a new separate access road.

(Editors Comment: This proposal appears to an outsider to be a generally good idea because this estate is certainly visually unappealing at present. However the local residents don't seem to be overwhelmingly in favour of all aspects of the proposals).

Orpington, Burnt Ash Lane and Locksbottom Parking Consultation

A wide area of Orpington, even extending into Chelsfield and Green Street Green, was recently consulted about a possible permit parking scheme, or other parking restrictions in Orpington.

The response of the public to the consultation leaflet was truly appalling with no responses at all from 147 roads of the 397 roads covered! However about two thirds of those who did respond did not think there was a parking problem, and two thirds did not want a permit parking scheme.

However the large majority of responses from such roads as Aynscombe Angle, Moorfield Road, Elmcroft Road and Wiltshire Road near the one way system at the northern end of Orpington High Street were in favour of a permit parking scheme. *(Editors Comment: There is a long-standing problem in this area with a number of office blocks and insufficient off street parking. The result is that these streets are filled with long term parkers which may cause difficulties for the residents).*

It is therefore intended to implement a "Controlled Parking Zone" but only in the area immediately adjacent to the High Street and the area to the north mentioned above. A proposed scheme in this area has now gone out to public consultation.

(Editors Comment: Clearly such a scheme will push these long term parkers somewhere else, or simply encourage businesses currently located in that area to move elsewhere. It is a pity that these plans do not include any proposals to provide alternative parking provision as in the short term the cars will likely simply move a few streets further out.

I am also concerned that the there was a clear overall majority against a permit parking scheme in Orpington, but that democratic view seems to have been ignored in favour of the opinions of a few residents. Our members also clearly voted against further permit parking schemes in Bromley with a number of adverse comments about how they operate in practice).

On the survey response form, 82 residents also expressed concern about the loss of the Orpington Station Road multi-storey car park. *(Editors Comment: And quite rightly - see our previous articles on this subject).*

A consultation exercise has also been commenced in respect of part of Burnt Ash Lane and surrounding roads in the area south of Grove Park station. Again it is likely that a permit parking scheme or one-hour yellow line scheme will be introduced to deter long term parking.

More parking restrictions and some permit parking are also proposed for the Locksbottom Parade area.

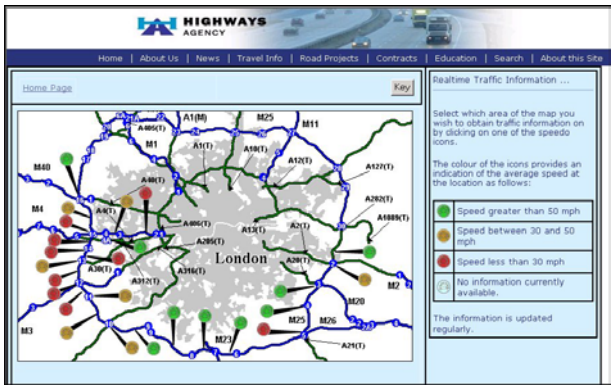
Web Site News

The Transport for London web site (at www.tfl.gov.uk and see above picture) has been much improved lately. It now includes a new journey planning facility that can also be accessed directly from www.journeyplanner.org - this enables you to easily plan any journey in London via bus, train, tube, tram, river boat, etc, and will even given you estimated walking time where you need to interconnect between services. One useful feature is that you can look up a "departure point" like a train station and see when the next train is due to depart.

The TfL site also provides various maps and includes a link through to the London Underground web site (www.thetube.com) .

One interesting feature of this site is that it enables you to set up free "alerts" that are sent as SMS, WAP or PDA messages (eg. to your mobile phone) that advise of significant delays on such services as the tube. *(Editors Comment: If anyone has any experience of using this facility, perhaps they could advise if it is effective).*

The above sites appear to be quite well designed and are certainly useful, particularly for regular users of public transport. It is good to see that TfL is at least spending taxpayers money on something worthwhile in this area.



For the motorist, central government has a very useful site at the following location: www.highways.gov.uk/news/m25_rt/index.htm or see the picture above.

This provides information on traffic speed and incidents on the M25 motorway and other motorways. The site has been mentioned before but it has been greatly expanded recently - you can even see what the overhead gantry signs are saying before you get on the road.

Again for the motorist, but possibly not so positive, is the new London congestion charging payment site which is at www.cclondon.com. All residents should have received a leaflet from Transport for London recently explaining the scheme, which is very much as described previously in this Newsletter.

To save you having to type in the above web site addresses, all these sites are referenced on the BBRAG web site "Links" page (the BBRAG web site is of course www.bromleytransport.org.uk).

The BBRAG web site has also been improved recently with a new page on "Speed Humps and Medical Conditions" and the layout revised so it fits better on lower resolution screens.

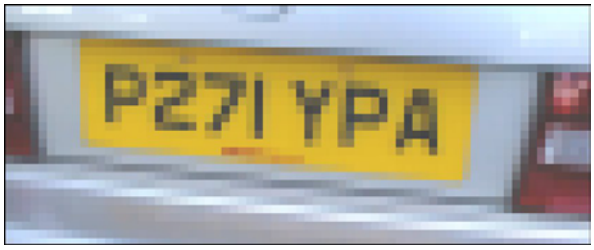
Road Works In Southborough Lane

Readers may have noticed some road works, including one way working with traffic lights, in Southborough Lane. This is near Southborough Library and apparently is forecast to last 16 weeks, although there will be a break over Xmas. Needless to say this is creating large traffic queues on a road which is already very congested during rush hours. The lack of double shift, or even 24-hour working, seems difficult to justify.

London Congestion Scheme Latest

It is confirmed that Feb 17th 2003 will be the start date for this scheme. They are now talking about picking up 85% of cars using the automatic number plate recognition cameras, which they think will be sufficient to enforce use. *(Editors Comment: that is surely less than was originally anticipated, and of course doesn't take account of those drivers who cannot be traced even if the number plate is correctly recognised).* It also has been mentioned that about a third of the people who do drive into London are actually not residents of the Greater London area - they could argue that it's a case of taxation without representation as they were not consulted on the scheme and have no opportunity to vote for or against Mr Livingstone and his policies.

Private Eye recently contained an article on the technical viability of the London congestion charging scheme. The "Boffin" author pointed out that each number plate requires about 100 kbytes of data to store the digital image, so that the systems will have to process up to 200 gigabytes of data per day. If people don't pay then all this information will have to be stored for use in future prosecutions.



If the system goes down for any length of time, or there are any technical glitches, then there could be a major problem with it coping with all the data. Needless to say, if the system does not work, then all the £200 million spent on installing the equipment and developing the software could be wasted.

Incidentally the system is being developed by Capita, but don't bet on getting the money back from them if it does not prove practical.

(Editors Comment: You can figure out for yourself how much per London household that is, which could be wasted. However, from my knowledge of IT systems, I think the system may be practical, even though it is a large and ambitious project, but only if people pay in advance, ie. if everyone is honest it may work. If there is a reluctance to pay up front, or widespread avoidance then it will soon become overloaded. Also if everyone chose to pay each day via phone rather than by other means, then I wouldn't bet on them all getting through. Any widespread civil disobedience or refusal to pay would cause it to collapse in a few days. If you don't approve of this scheme, maybe you should delay or try to avoid payment because if everyone did this then it would fail.

Either way I see a lot more people queuing for buses - either to get on them, or waiting for them so they can sneak in past the cameras behind one).

A new web site dedicated to opposition to the Congestion Charge is www.sod-u-ken.co.uk. You can use it to rage against the scheme, or buy car stickers and t-shirts so support their campaign.

There were a number of adverse comments from the floor to Ken Livingstone on the Congestion Charging Scheme at the recent "London Conference".

> "I hate cars. If I ever get any powers again I'd ban the lot"....Ken Livingstone, Sunday Times, 21/11/1999

Mr Livingstone remained unmoved, and said he was pretty sure it would prove practical.

Meanwhile Ken Livingstone has shown his commitment to public transport by hiring a taxi to take him home from the Labour party conference in Blackpool - that's only 234 miles and it cost him £260. His excuse was that he had to be back in London early in the morning, but the first train from Blackpool would still have reached London by 9 a.m.

Ken's deputy, Nicky Gavron (picture left), has been selected as the Labour Party candidate for the position of London Mayor in 2004, narrowly beating Tony Banks. She supports the Congestion Charging scheme and according to a Tory spokesman, is "even more anti-car than Ken Livingstone" and is another potential senior politician who cannot drive. However, she has pledged to use the proceeds from the congestion charge to improve bus services in the suburbs and has also promised to eradicate child poverty, increase police numbers and build more affordable housing, if elected. She told reporters that she didn't want to be seen as just a "zone one mayor", but suggested that voters make Ken Livingstone their second choice on the poll card.

(Editors Comment: This looks like an electoral ploy to try and take the wind out of any Tory candidate who might focus on the opposition of outer London boroughs to Ken's policies).

Local Humbug and Prize Competition

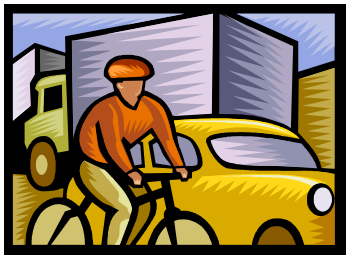
Police recently mounted an operation in Rushmore Hill (the road from Pratt's Bottom to Knockholt) following a number of local complaints of speeding. A 39 year old woman who was caught by the speed radar was actually one of the complainants. Seven other tickets were also issued.

(Editors Comment: The following comment from Sir Winston Churchill seems apt: "No folly is more costly than the folly of intolerant idealism. Follies which tend towards vice encounter at every stage in free

and healthy communities enormous checks and correctives from the inherent goodness and sanity of human nature; but follies sustained by lofty ideals go far, and set up strange and sinister reactions. When standards of conduct or morals which are beyond the normal public sentiment of a great community are professed and enforced, the results are invariably evasion, subterfuge and hypocrisy."

The first person to contact the editor and advise what he was referring to at the time will win a book prize worth £20).

Traffic Up By 3% in UK



To reinforce the point made in a later article about the inexorable rise in traffic, the Department of Transport has just announced that traffic in the UK has grown by 3%. In the last quarter it was up by that amount over the same period in the previous year, although they estimate the underlying trend to be between 1 and 2%, ie the same has it has been for the last ten years.

Clearly both central and local government policies to reduce traffic growth are simply not working. Apparently people would prefer to use their private cars even if they have to spend longer stuck in traffic jams. The reader can no doubt figure out why.

Improving Transport in Bromley (Part 1 of 3) by Roger Lawson

B.B.R.A.G. has been criticised in the past for opposing many council policies and plans, but without putting forward viable alternatives. People say it's easy to complain, but more difficult to devise better solutions. So this article is an attempt to redress the balance.

I believe that transport in Bromley can be substantially improved, and not necessarily by spending more money, although the latter would of course help. But it does require decisions to be taken about how existing resources are used.

Incidentally when B.B.R.A.G. objects to specific plans, such as a traffic calming scheme, we do usually try to put forward alternative proposals. However this depends on receiving relevant background information such as traffic accident data from council staff. They have unfortunately become increasingly obstructive in providing such data.

The National Transport Background

Bromley's transport problems cannot be separated from the national scene. Our problems are much the same in many regards as the rest of the country. The capacity of rail and underground services has not improved significantly over the last few years, despite major investment and privatisation. Usage of bus services has been falling in most of the UK and cycling is declining. Meanwhile the number of road vehicles has gone up by 700 per cent in the last 50 years, but the road space has only increased by 25 per cent.

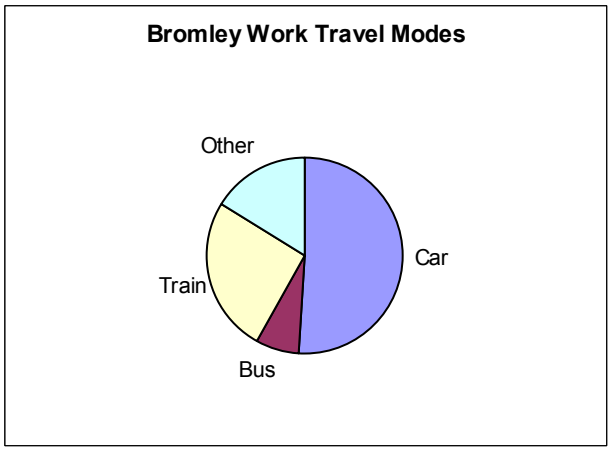
As people become wealthier, they tend to use motor transport more, and car usage has actually got relatively cheaper in recent years. In addition, many more school children get transported to school via car resulting in the "school run" problem - this was not just a result of more concerns by parents for their children's safety (whether justified is debatable), but also the change in government regulations about what schools one can apply to attend.

The population has also been increasing, particularly in the South East area, and Ken Livingstone plans to further expand the population of London. As John Redwood pointed out in the article we published some months ago, there is simply insufficient capacity in all types of transport, and continuing under investment in expanding provision.

Bromley Transport Background

Although there are a large number of Bromley residents who use trains to commute to work in central London, in fact cars are by far the predominant mode of travel in outer London

boroughs such as Bromley. In the last census figures from 1991, over 50% of people in Bromley used cars as their primary travel mode, and the figure is probably even higher now. Buses were 7%, trains were 26%, and other modes such as walking or cycling were 16%. These figures are represented by the pie chart below. For other purposes such as shopping, evening leisure trips and other purposes, cars are even more dominant. Freight movement is also almost totally reliant on road transport.

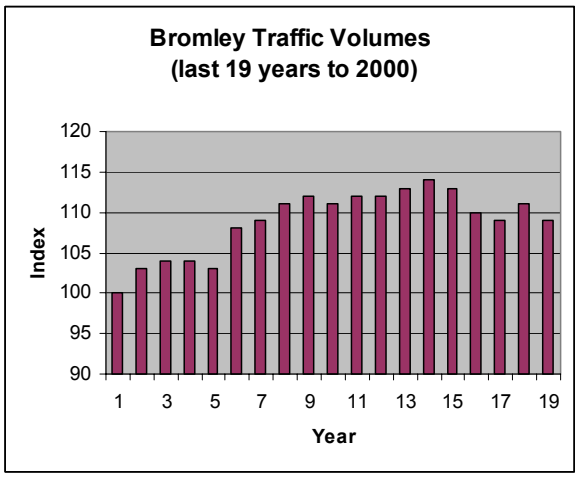


Vehicle traffic in outer London is projected to rise by 7.5% over the next 10 years (reference Mayor of London's Transport Strategy),

Bromley has one of the highest rates of car ownership in the UK. In 1991, 76% of Bromley residents had one or more cars, compared to 59% in London as a whole, or 67% in the UK. They also tend to own newer, more costly, cars.

It will be interesting to see how these figures have moved in the recent national census but it seems unlikely that car ownership or usage will have fallen. In fact, many more women are now car owners and drivers, more households are being formed, the general workforce is more mobile, and "school runs" have increased in the last few years.

Traffic volumes from counts taken by Bromley Council have apparently stabilised in the last few years, but that is probably due more to road saturation being reached than for any other reason (more on this later). See the following chart for the trend.



BBRAG believes that one should accept that private cars are going to be the primary mode of transport in Bromley for the foreseeable future. Therefore the strategies taken should recognise that fact. Encouraging the use of public transport may have some minor benefit, but, for example, even if you doubled the use of buses, it is only going to have a marginal impact on traffic congestion in Bromley. In reality, bus usage has been falling in the last few years in most areas (as people become wealthier they simply choose to use more comfortable and safer private vehicles), and reversing this trend is likely to be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible.

Behaving like King Canute by trying to reverse the inexorable trend to more private transport use is simply not a sensible policy.

The rest of this article tackles each of the main issues under separate headings.

Reducing Traffic Congestion

Everyone complains about traffic congestion, not just in Bromley, but in the UK as a whole. Articles in previous Newsletters have covered this subject, so I won't repeat it here. Bromley Council has adopted a policy to reduce traffic flows by 10% between 1997 and 2010. How this is to be achieved however is not totally clear, but there are policies in place to increase the use of public transport and encourage more walking and cycling.

A Typical Congestion Point in Bromley (Widmore Road)

Unfortunately a lot of the information on traffic congestion in Bromley is purely anecdotal. We all remember fuming in traffic jams, but there is no data on congestion or where it occurs. The above traffic volume statistics only tell you about the movements of vehicles past a few fixed points. If the traffic is slowed or stationary due to congestion nearby, then volumes may actually appear to fall.

Trying to cure congestion without measuring how bad it is, or where it occurs, is a pretty silly approach. Although there is some scientific argument about the best way to measure congestion (at least so that it reflects people's subjective views on the delay or frustration they have experienced), one way is to measure the journey times between a number of fixed points.

For example, you could measure the average journey times from the edge of the borough into the centre of Bromley using the A21 or A222 roads at certain times of day. Typical cross Bromley routes could also be studied.

You could also measure the traffic queue lengths and typical time to cross at major road junctions.

BBRAG advocates that such measurements should be commenced as soon as possible so that a picture can be built up. The advantages would be:

- It would be clear whether congestion was getting better or worse.
- It would tell us whether any measures that are taken have a beneficial or adverse impact.
- By taking measurements for a large number of different trips and at many junctions, it would tell us where the worse congestion was present.

Of course having such data would not be of much benefit if it was not used. One of the peculiar aspects of the current transport management regime in Bromley is that no effort or money is spent examining the existing problem areas, or looking at road improvement schemes. The council have staff allocated to traffic engineering, but in fact such staff seem to spend all of their time on bus lane schemes, permit parking plans, road safety schemes, devising transport policies and other matters. Your editor has not seen any proposal to reduce traffic congestion by road engineering (e.g. junction improvements, road widening, or even new road construction) in the last few years.

Of course road safety is an important matter, but unfortunately many of the road safety schemes have unintended negative effects on traffic congestion - such as the queues created in Perry Street (the A222 - see below) when the right filter lane into Ashfield Lane was shortened.

The Unnecessary Perry Street Obstruction

As a result, the general trend in Bromley will continue to be a worsening of congestion, even if traffic levels were restrained.

The only significant major new road construction in the borough in recent years was the Tweedy Road/Kentish Way development which removed A21 traffic from the town centre. Surely a major improvement for everyone! Clearly such developments depend on central government funding, but minor works could still be very advantageous.

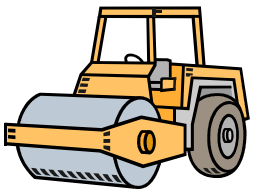
Note that encouraging alternative transport modes such as the use of public transport or cycling is certainly worth doing, and BBRAG generally supports such measures, *but only where*

there is a sufficient cost/benefit ratio. At present any expenditure on bus lanes or cycle paths tend not to be considered in relation to the benefits and nobody studies or forecasts the likely use of cycle paths, or the benefits to bus users from bus lanes (one recent TRL report in fact showed that many bus lane schemes resulted in negligible benefits in journey times for bus users while creating congestion for other road users - and expenditure on bus lanes in Bromley for example have been nearly a £1million so they are not exactly cheap). BBRAG would like to see a proper cost/benefit evaluation of all transport measures before they are approved.

One possibility to improve traffic congestion in Bromley would be the more extensive use of computer controlled traffic lights. For example, by suitable synchronised timing it might be possible to improve flows on Tweedy Road/Kentish Way.

Looking at some of the issues mentioned above is however difficult without having any model of the traffic and other transport flows in Bromley. Possibly a computerised model of journey routes in the borough could be developed to help predict the impact of different transport measures. This would also assist with planning policies (such as the impact of the Aquila development mentioned below).

Another measure that might be worth considering is the reporting of traffic congestion in real time in Bromley. At present, it is easy to pick up traffic congestion information on the M25 and other major routes - this is now available from various paid services, or free on the internet or on the radio. It enables you to easily divert around problems (well at least in some cases). However there is almost no data available on local roads in Bromley, even on the "A" routes. Knowing roads were congested would enable people to divert, or delay their journeys, thus relieving congestion.



A major cause of traffic congestion is road works. Although this problem is even worse in central London, where the same road can be repeatedly dug up by different contractors, it certainly affects Bromley as for example the Southborough Lane works mentioned in an earlier article. Even worse has been the Blackheath "hole" on the A2 which has closed a major London artery for many months.

The causes and solutions to these problems could justify a separate article on their own, but it would certainly seem possible to the writer to resolve these difficulties if sufficient effort was put into it. This is surely an issue of lack of management time, management commitment and budget.

The "school run" is another major cause of traffic congestion which has significantly worsened in recent years. The initiative to create "walking buses" (you can get a video from the council on how they operate), might help to a small extent, but the problem is really that you only have to have a small proportion of children coming from some distance away to result in a lot of extra car movements. Maybe staggering school hours would be one solution, either have different classes or years start at different times, or whole schools on different schedules. Certainly there would be some objections raised to such proposals and there may be some cost implications, but is it not better to do something than nothing?

Alternatives are the provision of car sharing plans or school buses, but again these require resource commitments. The more one looks at this problem the more one realises that there are solutions, but simply a lack of commitment of time or money to do anything about them. However "school travel plans" to encourage some of the above are a part of the councils plans.

"Green travel plans" and other initiatives to help workers to plan their journeys via public transport may also be useful, and can be relatively low cost.

"Red routes" to ensure traffic continues to move on primary routes have been introduced, but are bedevilled by poor enforcement and exceptions made for local traders. Although the GLA has been increasing enforcement, I would like to see a lot more done to keep these routes clear, and in fact extend the scheme to other main routes.

To Be Continued….

This article will be continued in later editions when the topics of Improving Road Safety, Reducing Air Pollution, Improving Bus Services, Trains/Underground/Light Rail/Trams, Encouraging Cycling/Walking, Planning Policies and Parking Policies will be covered.

If you have any comments on this article, or additional suggestions for improvements, please let us know.

BBRAG Background Information

The Bromley Borough Roads Action Group (B.B.R.A.G.) stands for a more democratic and more rational approach to the traffic management problems of the London Borough of Bromley. Our initial formation some years ago was based on opposition to the kind of traffic calming scheme that was being introduced in the borough that simply caused more traffic congestion, and general inconvenience to road users, without any significant benefit in terms of road accident reductions. In fact, the money wasted on such schemes could have been much better spent on actual improvements to road safety in other areas. We now take a more general interest in all transport and associated environmental issues in the borough of Bromley and the greater London area. This includes traffic management schemes, public transport, road safety, parking policies, air pollution, other transport environmental issues such as noise, and associated local and central government policies. Our prime objective is to promote improvements in the transport infrastructure while stopping wasted expenditure on unpopular, ineffective or inappropriate policies.

Contact Information

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B.B.R.A.G. Treasurer and Newsletter Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, fax: 020-8295-0378, Email: roger.lawson@btclick.com), Chairman: Peter Appleby. Contact either of the above for information on the aims and objectives of B.B.R.A.G. or for membership information (membership costs £7.50 per annum for individuals or £50 for corporate membership). B.B.R.A.G. would be happy to advise or assist anyone who is concerned about any traffic, transport or road safety issues in the borough.

Our internet web address is: www.bromleytransport.org.uk. This contains much useful information including articles extracted from our newsletters. It also contains a "News" page which is updated regularly with items of topical interest.

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