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## The London Olympics



For those readers who don't live in London (Londoners were well warned of the problems), as part of the Olympic Games arrangements TfL have established an "Olympic Route Network (ORN)" (see map later) so as to keep traffic moving. This includes a lot of additional parking restrictions, banned turns, rephased traffic lights and the introduction of "Olympic Lanes" reserved for authorised vehicles only.

This network is in place not just for the two weeks of the Olympic Games but also for some weeks before and after and for the Paralympic games also, so in effect it covers the 25<sup>th</sup> July to the 14<sup>th</sup> August and another period later in the summer.

In addition there was a lot of encouragement for ordinary commuters to work from home, for everyone not to drive into London, and as a result, for tourists to stay away after warnings of severe congestion on the tube network and at some London tube and mainline stations.

The photo above shows the games lane in operation on the 31<sup>st</sup> July on Lower Thames Street about midday, part of the main east-west route that includes the Embankment in central London. The right hand lane is that reserved for Olympic vehicles and as you can see there is the occasional bus in it, but with a solid queue of traffic on the remaining lane, going eastbound.

Why is there hardly any traffic going westbound (indeed less than normal)? Probably because it's been held back by retimed traffic lights on the Highway further east.



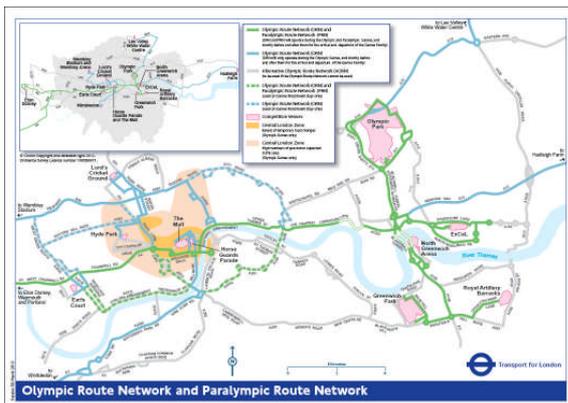
The same queue of traffic eastbound is shown above on Tower Hill, which shows an example of one of the “variable message signs” used to indicate when the games lanes are in use (from 6.0 am to midnight during most of the games).

Shown below is an example of a change made by closing off one lane on Mansell Street (the approach to Tower Bridge). This generated grid-lock in surrounding streets on a day before the games opened when traffic was blocked from forming the normal two-lane queue and obstructed other vehicles turning to the left. Unexpected changes such as this caused a lot of confusion, and many vehicles did not understand that the right hand lane was the games lane and the left for other traffic.



Did it work? Well the traffic within central London (if you avoided the ORN) was actually quite light. But getting into central London was a problem with obstruction on routes such as the M4, A40, A12 and A2.

Public transport was similarly generally OK so long as you avoided the congestion hot-spots. But the effort involved in revising traffic signs, painting on the road all the required road markings and other changes to manage the traffic must have been enormous. The inconvenience to the ordinary residents of London has been very substantial, most of whom simply wished to go about their ordinary business.



The Olympic Route Network (ORN)

*(Editor: This report was produced while the Olympic Games were in full swing. These very expensive events, are of course one of the last follies with which Ken Livingstone lumbered us (we still have the London Congestion Tax though).*

*To permit the Olympic authorities to monopolise certain road lanes for the “games family” (in reality mostly those who have purchased expensive visitor packages, are commercial sponsors, the media, administrators or other “VIPs” who are too precious to take public transport) must be one of the worst decisions of any publicly elected person. What percentage of Londoners supported that idea I wonder?*

*The Latin tag for this sop to the electorate, to distract them from other serious considerations, is “panem et circenses” – bread and circuses. The total cost was about £24bn according to the Guardian newspaper.*

*As it is Transport for London (TfL) seem to have done a reasonably good job of managing the impact although with the dubious result that they have scared off most other tourists from visiting London this summer – particularly those who might spend some money. Streets are deserted, shops empty and hotels have lots of vacancies so this Olympics is not going to provide a financial boost as expected. It's just going to be a expensive freebee paid for by taxpayers given to those who like watching sport.*

*Well at least we hopefully won't have to suffer any more Livingstonian distractions because since our last edition he was narrowly defeated by Boris Johnson for Mayor. A postscript on that event is in another article.*

*Let us hope that we don't have to suffer such nonsense again in future. Other cities should be warned not to put in bids for the Olympics on such conditions simply because they wish to host the games. Or if they wish to do so, venues and hotel accommodation should be chosen to ensure they are supported by a good road network, which London simply does not have).*

Association of British Drivers (London Region)  
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