

Government drops local authority LTN guidance



The Department for Transport announced last month that it will not proceed with the draft guidance drawn up by the last Government requiring more extensive and meaningful consultation by local authorities that are looking to install Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs).

The Government argues that it must be a local decision. Its approach will come as a huge disappointment to people who feel they have been short-changed by LTNs.

An umbrella group representing fifteen local campaigns has written to Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander (pictured above) to question why she has chosen to abandon a policy that “*increased democratic accountability*”. They fear the decision will encourage councils to implement more LTNs despite public opposition to them.

The Government is selling its decision to drop the guidance on the basis of the importance of local decision-making but it looks as much like a reluctance to become involved in a controversial national issue. It may well come back to haunt them as there is no sign of the issue disappearing from the public or political agenda.

In light of the Government's decision to hand power over LTNs to local councils it is worth a reminder what the Demos report said...

In May 2024 the independent think-tank Demos published a report into the way LTNs have been implemented during and since the pandemic. A number of parties were accused of spreading disinformation, including local councils:

‘The rush to introduce LTNs caught many residents off-guard with some finding out about LTNs through tickets or penalties. Many councils simply failed to target the full range of households that needed the information about the schemes that would affect them. For those that councils did target, communications failed to cut through. From the start, residents were left to feel excluded from the process of policy design and implementation.’

‘The dominance of web-based, passive approaches to consultation and lack of proactive engagement with vulnerable communities, such as disabled people, who were likely to be disproportionately affected by schemes, led to the exclusion of citizens from decision-making that had a significant impact on their day-to-day lives. The timing and scope of consultations as well as the perception of council bias in the process led many citizens to feel disempowered and that their participation was futile. Councils would misrepresent [complex] evidence in online debates by sharing their own evidence of the policy with simple, but misleading summaries of results. The lack of transparency and facilitated discussion at a local level regarding the trade-offs implicit in the policy as well as the positive framing of more nuanced evidence led some citizens to describe the council's approach as “*manipulative*” and even “*gaslighting*”. LTNs have “*fundamentally undermined trust in local governance*.” ’

For further information: https://irp.cdn-website.com/630197fe/files/uploaded/SEJ_Demos_Report.pdf

Government refuses to ban 'floating' bus stops



The Government has refused to ban floating bus stops. Although it has ordered a 'pause' to shared bus boarders (where passengers get on and off directly on to a cycle lane), it has only said it will review the design of floating bus stops.

The announcement was made by transport minister Simon Lightwood in the House of Commons during debate in the committee stage of the bus services (no 2) bill. He said the Government would issue guidance on the design of floating bus stops within three months of the bill becoming law, but ruled out banning all floating bus stops because he believes that could put the safety of cyclists at risk.

Andrew Hodgson, from the National Federation of the Blind of the UK (NFB UK) said: *"We are very disappointed about the outcome. We had hoped for a total ban on future bus-stop bypasses of all types and that all of the existing ones would be taken out"*

<https://www.tomtom.com/traffic-index/ranking/?ref=the-londoner.co.uk>

<https://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/The-next-stop-Making-Londons-buses-better.pdf?ref=the-londoner.co.uk>

Our Comment

It is not anti-cycling to oppose shared bus boarders and floating bus stops. It is pro-disability. Transport for disabled people leaves much to be desired but there have been improvements in recent years, particularly in London and on its buses. Floating bus stops and bus boarders reverse that trend.

Hounslow kicks out Lime bikes

Lime bikes have been kicked out of a West London borough after complaints of "anti-social" parking on pavements.



Hounslow Council ended its two-year association with the e-bike rental company, taking away Lime's right to operate, following complaints over blocking of pavements and the cost of hires.

RAC report: drivers back ban on pavement parking



Four out of five drivers want the Government to take action on pavement parking, a recent survey by the RAC has found.

42% back an outright ban. 41% want councils to have more powers to prohibit it. London and Scotland are the only places where it is currently banned. Roads Minister Lilian Greenwood is expected to make an announcement shortly about whether it will be banned more widely.



Bus journeys getting slower and slower

Almost three quarters of London's bus routes are now slower than they were a decade ago, according to an analysis of Transport for London data done by The Londoner. Out of 748 active routes across Greater London, 555 (74%) have seen a drop in average speed since 2015.

Why is this happening? *"The volume of traffic is greater nowadays"* says Chris Barker, chair of Future Transport London, part of the London Bus Alliance – a campaign group formed in 2021 to reverse the decline in bus ridership.

At first glance, that's surprising, as the number of licensed vehicles in London has fallen. According to Department for Transport data, there were just under 3 million vehicles in the city in 2023, the lowest figure since 2013. There's also been development of the underground network, most obviously the Elizabeth Line, which should be taking cars off the road.

But the cars that are on the road are spending more time there, thanks to Uber (and others). *"There are more hire vehicles now, like ride-hailing services, so even though there are fewer cars overall, they're circulating much more"* Barker told The Londoner.

Barker also points to narrower bus lanes, sometimes reduced to make room for cycle infrastructure, and constant roadworks as other culprits.

All of this combines to make driving through London increasingly difficult for all vehicles. According to TomTom's 2024 Traffic Index, the city centre now holds the title of Europe's slowest. On average, it took 32 minutes and 8 seconds to travel six miles in 2024, 38 seconds slower than the year before.

Buses are a staple of London's public transport system: **34% of Londoners use the bus at least three times a week**, more than any other mode of transport, according to a London TravelWatch report published in November 2024. 1.8 billion journeys were made by bus in London last year, with people on lower incomes, women and black and ethnic minority communities tending to use them more than other passengers. At £1.75 a ride, they're the cheapest form of transport.

<https://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/The-next-stop-Making-Londons-buses-better.pdf?ref=the-londoner.co.uk>

The danger of floating bus stops

We haven't seen a better description of the danger of floating stops than this one posted by Sarah Leadbetter on twitter

"If my guide dog gets hit that's my independence gone"

"We are still sharing the pavement with cyclists coming straight at me and my guide dog Nellie. Before I could get on a bus as it pulled into the pavement. I can't use a bus because of floating bus stops as its not safe, with lines on the middle of the pavement, up stands that separate you from an cycle lane, my guide dog is trained to go to an curb, so Nellie walks into the cycle lane."

"I and Nellie my guide dog have to cross a cycle and floating bus stop, or use a shared bus border, cyclists coming at you at speed, if my guide dog gets hit that's my independence gone, when getting off an bus Nellie gets off first into an live cycle lane, this is a lot, we don't want floating bus stops as it's isolating blind, visually impaired, disabled, older people are staying at home, I can't use an bus any more."

London is failing business



- London traffic is the slowest in Europe.
- Its public transport fares are amongst the highest.
- It's bad for Londoners but it is dreadful for business.
- Congestion means higher costs and lower productivity.
- That impacts on all residents and their quality of life.
- The biggest traffic problems are on the 'main' roads.
- These roads need to be the focus of the Mayor and local councils.
- Imaginative policies to sort main roads need to be the priority.
- As a start, traffic should not be relocated on to main roads.
- Traffic on main roads need to start moving.

This is simply not sustainable.

Otherwise, London is going nowhere.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jan/06/london-is-europes-most-congested-city-with-drivers-sat-in-traffic-an-average-101-hours-last-year>

<https://bettertransport.org.uk/media/24-feb-2022-public-transport-in-uk-cities-most-expensive-in-europe/>

SUVs reach 30% of car market

The number of giant cars in England's cities has increased tenfold in recent years.

Analysis published by Clean Cities has found SUVs have gone from 3% to 30% of existing cars in the past two decades. In London, the number of SUVs has increased from about 80,000 in 2002 to about 800,000 in 2023.

More than 1m cars that are too big to fit in parking spaces are sold in the UK each year, and numbers are growing. SUVs also add to road danger, air pollution and noise.

There are calls for SUVs to pay higher taxes and parking charges.



Our Newsletter

Please contact us if you would like to become a member.

Email:
sej@socialenvironmentaljustice.co.uk

Website:
www.socialenvironmentaljustice.co.uk

Twitter (X):
@SocEnvJustice

We are entirely funded by our supporters, so donations welcome.