



SWELTRAC's Response to "Way to Go!" - Mayor's Transport Strategy 2009

1. Introduction

SWELTRAC is a sub-regional transport planning partnership covering ten Boroughs in the south and west London area. These include the London Boroughs of Croydon, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton, and Wandsworth and the Royal Boroughs of Kensington & Chelsea and Kingston upon Thames. Each of these authorities will have provided their own comments on the Mayor's "Way to Go!" document, and we appreciate the opportunity to offer our views from a cross borough perspective.

We acknowledge that this is the first stage towards the production of the new Mayor's Transport Strategy and are encouraged by the early priority which has been given to the re-assessment of transport in the Greater London area. We particularly appreciate the Mayor's view to increase the focus on transport issues in Outer London areas. As such, we offer our response on the Mayor's preliminary transport strategy document, in keeping with our partnership's consistent engagement with the planning and transportation objectives of the Mayor and Transport for London.

2. "Way to Go!" Overview

Overall, SWELTRAC views the "Way to Go!" as a useful prologue to the Mayor's forthcoming Transport Strategy. For the most part we are in favour of the principles and policies being developed for MTS2. There are many aspects of this document which SWELTRAC endorses; however we highlight a number of issues concerning the following:

- The recognition of the important role played by the Boroughs in responding to transport matters and the commitment of the GLA and TfL to work in unison with the Boroughs in delivering transport projects is welcomed. We would also add that borough partnerships such as ourselves will continue to have a key role in co-ordinating cross-borough relationships to deliver important transport schemes.
- The decision to build upon successful on-going transport policies and projects is naturally welcomed. However, we believe that to contribute to and allow for the proper development and investment in individual areas, a hierarchy for the favoured transport projects should be issued. Whether transport schemes which are now deferred remain as possibilities for the future, or are completely removed from the long term transport plans, needs to be confirmed. This also includes the delivery timelines for these transport projects over the course of MTS2. These decisions will impact the planning, economic and social decisions made not only by Boroughs, but also businesses and the wider community as a whole.
- A considerable part of SWELTRAC's resourcing is dedicated not only to Station Access but to Workplace Travel planning; with an objective to

'Reducing congestion through reducing single car occupancy drivers' to which we note the consistency between the Mayor's own comments. *"Our ambition is to help people out of their cars by persuasion not persecution"*.

- As such we continue to support existing and new policies and strategies which will make travelling by sustainable modes a more realistic option for London's workforce.
- As it will be especially relevant to our sub-region, we appreciate the increased attention given to Outer London areas to develop upon their existing transport networks. We support the increased recognition of the practicalities of orbital transport, although we acknowledge the difficulties in implementing such wide scale projects. We have always advocated the concept of orbital transport and the benefits it brings to both local and regional transport needs.
- One of our key objectives is based on a polycentric view for our sub-region, supporting town centres as key hubs and interchanges not only for better travel options but for the overall economic development of such areas. We are pleased that it is corroborated within the Mayor's emerging principles that people can live and work in the same area. To support our objectives for town centres we very much welcome the policies aimed at improving the urban realm through the removal of street clutter and promoting walking and cycling.
- Having reviewed this document, one of our principal concerns is the slight antagonism shown towards buses. The Mayor refers to *"the red wall in Oxford Street"*. In Central London, there is a strong case for promoting a reduction in congestion on many city centre streets which would enhance the overall public realm. However, for a sub region such as the South West, with inferior rail services in times of increasing rail fares and economic recession, buses provide an integral part of our transport network. While we support greater use of rail to meet our mass transit needs, the reality for Outer London areas such as in the South West is the current and future high reliance on buses in the absence of sufficient underground or overground services.

3. Response to Consultation Questions

1. Do you generally support our principles for developing policy? If not what other principles should apply?

After careful consideration of the principles outlined in a "Way to Go!" the following are our views:

Respecting your Choice - SWELTRAC schemes are spread across an array of transport modes so we welcome the principle to emphasise choice. As the Mayor suggests, cars have played an important part within transport since their large-scale production began in the early half of the 20th century. However, the Mayor conveys certain hostility towards the hierarchy of transport modes, which would represent a fundamental change in the way transport matters are considered and, as such, raises a number of issues. While we advocate the principle of offering increased choice, deviating from this established hierarchy may weaken the justification to implement beneficial sustainable transport schemes. We agree with the principle's intention and welcome the commitment to supply alternative modes of travel, but as one of our

primary objectives is to reduce the number of car journeys, we consider this policy requires stronger distinction.

Keeping you informed - SWELTRAC and its partner Boroughs considers this a vital feature towards achieving efficient use of the transport network, so we therefore support this principle. The availability of good real-time information obviously impacts upon people's daily travel choices as well as helping to manage travel demands. This principle will benefit residents, workers and businesses.

Protecting the environment - One of SWELTRAC's primary objectives is to support the development of innovative technologies and solutions aimed at reducing CO2 emissions from motor vehicles. Throughout the past two years we have worked on a sub-regional Electric Vehicle Charging Point scheme. To date we have 9 charging points installed across 4 of our boroughs, with further installations guaranteed within 2009/10. Therefore we fervently support this principle towards the introduction of new technology that will help to produce a cleaner, greener London. The Mayor discusses the harmful effects that excessive fumes from buses and taxis create. This statement adequately applies to the Central London area, where the reduction of buses and taxis would have clear environmental benefits. However, there is no mention of the high volumes of cars, vans and lorries that circulate on London's roads everyday, making up the bulk of London's traffic flow.

The subject of excessive fumes from buses - although applicable to Outer London areas - does not warrant similar attention to that of the Central hub, simply because the Outer London transport network in areas such as the South West are highly reliant on buses. Although it is a monumental task, the wider pollution impact from all modes must be examined to determine an optimal, efficient, green transport network across all of London.

Developing Outer London - Due to our geographical region, and as discussed in the 'Overview' section above, we are fully supportive of this principle. We believe that SWELTRAC can play an important role in implementing key transport projects in the future. We look forward to seeing how such a key policy principle can be acted upon and subsequently the potential results and changes that will arise from it. To reiterate, the reference to orbital trips is welcomed. Although the current economic climate may inhibit the development of large scale orbital schemes in the future, we would hope that such schemes are not lost altogether. For instance, we have supported the development of proposals for a West London Orbital route through consultants Capita Symonds, and the expansion of the X26 express bus service between Croydon and Heathrow. It is also important to be aware of the interaction, and improve public transport links, between outer-London and their neighbouring counties such as Surrey. We have always had good relations with Surrey County Council. Therefore, similar to our sub-regional partners, we have a long standing ambition to see the Croydon Tramlink network extended to Sutton town centre. We hope that this will remain in the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) despite the short term funding constraints.

Connecting Transport and Planning – Again, SWELTRAC strongly supports this principle because of its obvious benefits, as we highlighted in our response to "Planning for a Better London". For a considerable time there has been a growing need to integrate London's planning and transport policies. Our view is that polycentric growth, rather than a central concentration of economic activity, should be encouraged as a key means to reducing demand for transport in London. Taking

economic and population growth forecasts into account, it will be increasingly important, especially for the challenging Outer London areas, that priorities set out in the London Plan complement those within the Transport Strategy.

Working with the Boroughs - We welcome the recognition from the GLA and TfL of the important role the individual boroughs play in providing solutions to London's transport problems.

"It is our job to listen and learn from the boroughs to help them achieve their objectives".

The majority of relations between the boroughs and TfL are in relation to funding. TfL suggests it plans to offer more freedom to the boroughs with regards to funding by simply providing an overall administrative role. However, as has been vividly documented, the TfL Portal has created some difficulty for the boroughs. As a partnership we have also experienced significant difficulty in managing the finances of our schemes. The cross-borough perspective is that this system is very restrictive for boroughs and partnerships alike and contradicts the idea of offering more freedom to the boroughs. If TfL are planning to work more closely with the boroughs and partnerships, we would advise that a complete review of this system be undertaken to ensure that it is able to operate in the user-friendly manner which was no doubt originally intended.

Transport for All - We appreciate the Mayor's commitment to make London's transport accessible for all. This principle specifically relates to our sub region, as many of our rail stations are ill-equipped to cater to the needs of the disabled. SWELTRAC has always had good relations with disabled groups. There are many town centres in our sub-region, where disabled access requires improvement not only for wheelchair users but also the visually impaired. Although provisions for the disabled can be very expensive, we ask that this policy is not focused on just Central London, but evenly applied across the capital.

Value for Money- We appreciate the Major's honest and realistic views in relation to the provision of further transport infrastructure due to restrictive funding in the current economic climate. However, we add that the principle of working more closely with the boroughs and sub regional partnerships will be essential to develop projects that deliver optimal benefits.

We believe that the united principles set out in this document offer a good prerequisite for improvements to all modes of transport in London. We look forward to being further consulted on these principles throughout the continued development of MTS2.

**2. Have we identified the key challenges facing transport in London?
If not what other issues should we be considering?**

This document identifies a lot of the key challenges facing transport in London. A feature of significant note is the consideration paid to the growing population and consequent demands that will ensue on balancing competing interests. We respect that Central London warrants a high level of attention, primarily because of the greater travel demands in this area, and this document aptly illustrates Central London's transport problems. However, we still feel that the transport issues relating to Outer London are not comprehensively covered. For instance, the challenges faced by car, bus and rail users making local trips. The document is very responsive

to the issues facing peak time commuters, but there is an increased need to acknowledge the travel patterns of all day and weekend travel.

“Way to Go!” highlights the major projects to be supported and the challenges that they address - namely Crossrail, the 2012 Olympics, the underground upgrading and improvements to London Overground. We have always and will continue to support these ventures because of their importance to the Capital. Another proposed project that specifically serves our sub region is Airtrack. We acknowledge that TfL has no direct involvement with this project, but we would encourage its continued support to enhance passenger accessibility to Heathrow.

The partnership welcomes the notion of expanding the Underground services south of the Thames.

“If we are buying these tunnelling machines, as we are, why not see if we can use them to dig south of the river and expand the Tube network there?”

We specifically appreciate the reference to the extension of East London Line Phase 2b to Clapham Junction. If this scheme were to be implemented it would not only comply with the policy of orbital travel, but would also go a long way towards bridging the gap between the level of services North and South of the river. We realise that due to the Olympics, East London will receive a large majority of the focus over the next few years. However, we believe that following 2012, an increased focus will need to be given to West London and we reiterate that the proposed West London Orbital will warrant detailed attention.

The Mayor offers his support for urban realm and streetscape projects, with shared space for pedestrians and cars. This reflects our priority to enhance town centres and therefore we fully support these policies.

3. *We have emphasised an approach to encourage more people to walk and cycle. Do you agree with this?*

SWELTRAC strongly supports the approach to encourage more people to walk and cycle. As previously discussed, we consider walking and cycling initiatives extremely important for realising our objective to develop accessible, vibrant town centres within our sub-region. There are also added health benefits to London’s residents – and our overstretched health services – in encouraging these particular modes of transport. We appreciate the Mayor’s views that if funding can not be committed to the larger schemes, these schemes must be replaced by a linked network of sustainable localised transport projects. This statement is particularly relevant to our sub-region.

We also support this approach from a work place planning perspective, as our remit includes workplace travel planning which seeks to promote sustainable travel modes for work travel.

We fully acknowledge that, principally, walking and cycling are localised modes of transport. Therefore we believe the work that we carry out - particularly on station access schemes and other area based schemes providing for interchange between modes - are essential. We ask that to provide for future sustainable transport in Outer London areas such as the South West, increased funding is provided for cycle parking schemes and others such as area based schemes. We welcome the reform to the LIPs process reducing scheme programmes from 23 to 5. This will provide greater flexibility to the boroughs to create better multi-modal, sustainable schemes, but we also would add that partnerships such as SWELTRAC should continue to

provide a central role co-ordinating views between Boroughs, especially in relation to cross-borough schemes.

Specifically we support the implementation of a public cycle hire scheme in Central London and embrace the Mayor's proposition to outer boroughs to implement parallel schemes, as it not only improves transport integration in the outer boroughs but would also provide commuters with more travel alternatives to their vehicles. *"Why not develop parallel cycle hire schemes in the outer boroughs?"*

We acknowledge the Mayor's endeavours to provide an equal Transport System through equitable methods. As there is already a lack of balance in sustainable transport use, we would suggest that some priority is given to addressing less predominate travel modes.

SWELTRAC has developed good relationships with specific walking and cycling organisations, such as Living Streets and the London Cycling Network, both of whom have undertaken very good work in recent years. It has been well recognised in transport circles that the London Cycling Network has received significantly less funding for their 09/10 programme. We suggest that this contradicts the Mayor's visions for a cycling London, and consider that this issue needs to be addressed.

4. *Are there things you think the Mayor should do to improve transport in London which are not identified here?*

We believe the "Way to Go!" document generally conveys the Mayor's honest and realistic views of transport in London and discusses many of the transport themes and issues SWELTRAC also considers priorities. However, we have already highlighted certain concerns which we would like to reinforce in this section, along with a number of additional proposals and recommendations:

- The increased focus on borough workings is appreciated. However, there is little reference in this document to the role of partnerships. We consider that with the proposed LIPs reforms, and the large scale cross borough projects, provide an opportunity for partnerships such as SWELTRAC to become even more important in co-ordinating the individual borough visions for the good of the sub-region and London as a whole.
- A long term transport investment programme is required, supporting and guiding investment to ensure that the planning and transportation improvements are effectively achieved.
- Lobbying for government funding for transport improvements. Although there is enough funding to cater for existing commitments, details of future transport projects and the priority the Mayor assigns to them in actively lobbying the government for funding would be useful. This will become increasingly important as the Capital's population continues to grow subsequently raising travel demands.
- There are certain statements in the document which appear to reflect hostile views towards buses. As we have earlier discussed, buses are intrinsic to the transport network in Outer London areas. There have been significant improvements to the London Bus Network such as the continued improvements of routes through the London Bus Priority Network and the Bus Priority team in TfL, along with other features such as IBus. However,

there are other measures which could improve bus services such as the sequencing of bus arrival times at bus stops, especially with the current advances in electrical technology. Why not provide research into electronic navigational mechanisms to provide on board information so that bus drivers on the same route would know the fixed position of other buses on that route? This could potentially resolve the problems of long waiting times at bus stops, ensure more efficient use of all buses and subsequently reduce the clustering of buses along the same route.

- A stronger commitment to travel planning for schools, hospitals, businesses and other destinations, and for residential areas through personalised travel planning. This is particularly important to our sub region because of the high reliance on car travel and inferior transport infrastructure provision.
- We recommend greater attention be paid to surface access to Heathrow to build on the encouraging increase in workers using sustainable modes of travel, for instance by promoting Airtrack.
- Improved interchange both between modes and within modes would improve the transport experience in London.

To conclude, SWELTRAC are looking forward to working alongside both TfL and the GLA over the coming years. We look forward to using the consultation period on MTS2 later in the year to promote the transport projects that will make a difference for our sub-regional area.