



## **SWELTRAC's Response to the draft Mayor's Transport Strategy**

### **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 draft Mayor's Transport Strategy, and we appreciate the opportunity to offer our views from a cross borough perspective.

In general terms, we broadly welcome many of the issues highlighted within the draft strategy and the aspirations that the Mayor holds for improvements to transport infrastructure and services in the capital. We particularly welcome any moves to increase the focus on transport issues in Outer London areas, although there is a feeling that the emphasis placed on these needs was stronger within the Mayor's 'Way to Go!' document. It is disappointing that the findings of the Outer London Commission do not appear to have been given greater weight within the document. The Mayor needs to do more to show that reductions in car travel and improved public transport in Outer London are high priorities for him. However, the move towards a 'hub and spoke' approach, as opposed to the earlier 'super hub' proposals, is welcome.

The emphasis placed on the role of Boroughs in identifying and implementing proposals to improve transport within their own geographical areas is also welcomed, although it is recognised that this can only be possible if they are given the support and resources from TfL to fully undertake this task. MTS2 appears to place extra responsibilities on Boroughs in areas such as electric vehicles, Community Safety Partnerships, street tree planting, etc, but does not clarify how these measures are to be funded.

The complementary publication of the drafts of MTS2, the revised London Plan and the Economic Development Strategy will hopefully help to ensure consistency between these documents.

### **2. Transport Proposals**

#### **i. Rail & Tram**

We are pleased to see an increased emphasis on the need to work with National Rail and to continue the integration of London suburban routes into the overall transport environment as overseen and managed by TfL – e.g. the recent introduction of PAYG Oyster onto mainline rail services. Many parts of south and west London are reliant on 'heavy rail, services, and any measures

that result in improvements to integrated fares, ticketing, information and interchange will act as incentives in encouraging modal shift and thus reducing congestion and pollution on our main road network. We particularly support proposals 8, 9 and 10 in terms of their ability to help deliver increased capacity on routes within south and west London. Whilst some outer London locations such as Kingston would benefit from additional rail services, even stations such as Earlsfield, Wandsworth Town and Clapham Junction (whilst well served in terms of numbers of trains) can suffer from severe overcrowding problems by the time trains have reached them on the way into or out of central London terminals. There is a clearly identified need to improve rail capacity in this part of London, and, whilst useful as planning documents, it is felt that Route Utilisation Strategies do not always make proper allowance for suppressed demand.

There are particular issues at East Croydon station, which data shows is the third busiest interchange in London after Clapham Junction and London Bridge. We would request that consideration be given to allowing Gatwick Express trains to stop there, as well as seeking a commitment for an additional platform to be built at the station.

We are disappointed at the apparent lack of commitment to large-scale orbital rail transport, particularly in west London. We would draw attention to the West London Transport Strategy proposals for improved orbital travel within several south western London Boroughs.

SWELTRAC has been a key participant in the Station Access programme for several years, working with all our Boroughs to help identify and implement improvements to passenger access at those stations where the need is strongest and the greatest benefits can be achieved. We share the view expressed by the London Borough of Hillingdon that it would be advisable to nominate a 'champion' for each station to help identify and promote such improvements that will enhance the passenger experience and promote greater use of the rail network.

### *Crossrail*

As a Partnership, we have been consistent supporters of Crossrail. Although this only has a direct impact on a small number of our partner Boroughs, we recognise the economic benefits that can be achieved for the capital as a whole by the introduction of a high-frequency east-west service crossing London. Not least, this will have a significant impact in reducing overcrowding and increasing capacity on other existing services.

However, we support the aspirations of some of our Boroughs to see an interchange station located in the Mitre Bridge/Old Oak Common/Willesden Junction area, where Crossrail intersects a number of other lines. We also support a turnback station in the Kensal area. This would provide key links to north-south services and assist in avoiding a significant number of journeys into and out of central London by many passengers. This could also provide an important hub to link in to any new services such as those proposed for High Speed 2.

We have also been long-term proponents of the need for Crossrail 2 (Chelsea/Hackney line) and the benefits it could bring to parts of south west London. We believe that there needs to be a firmer commitment shown to this

project and a clear timeline indicated for the potential implementation of this scheme following completion of Crossrail.

#### *London Overground*

The London Overground service has seen significant improvements since the transfer of the old Silverlink services to TfL. Further improvements to capacity are likely to encourage greater use of these services, which we see as an important part of the orbital travel options available to passengers across London. This would enable many journeys to and from south west London to be able to bypass the central area. We welcome the capacity improvements being introduced in the form of new trains and longer platforms and would support any further investment and service improvements that might be made on these routes. We would welcome further consideration of the Royal Borough of Kingston's aspirations to see the network extended into Kingston town centre, and the London Borough of Hounslow's aspirations for an extension to Hounslow.

SWELTRAC has been critical of the termination of the West London Line services directly to Gatwick Airport, causing many passengers (often with heavy luggage) to have to interchange using inadequate platforms at Clapham Junction. As an additional measure, the reopening of platform 1 would allow a more frequent service to operate on the West London Line.

We would urge the inclusion within MTS of support for improved public transport access to all the airports serving London, not just Heathrow.

#### *Tramlink*

The south London Tramlink services, centring on Croydon, have proved to be a popular and reliable form of public transport in this busy part of London where car ownership is still high. We believe there would be significant benefits in proceeding with the extension proposals that would take the service to locations such as Crystal Palace, Tooting and Sutton. There is a heavy emphasis on rail within MTS2, even though much of it falls outside of the direct control of the Mayor and TfL. We would like to see greater consideration given to networks such as Tramlink, where many improvements could be made with limited reference to other agencies and organisations.

### **ii. London Underground**

The tube network has limited incursion into south London, although there is a significant part of the Underground network running through West London. This has particular importance in providing a key route to and from Heathrow Airport and central London.

We welcome the initial proposals for an extension of the Northern Line to serve the Battersea Power Station area and the new developments in that vicinity. The fact that this could be funded largely by developer and private sector contributions is an added incentive to push ahead with this project. However, we also believe that there will be a need for TfL to commit to the provision of an element of the funding for the scheme to ensure its viability.

However, we would also wish to see an undertaking to make improvements to the District Line. Particular emphasis should be given to the route from Wimbledon into Earls Court, which is the most overcrowded section of the network with few alternative modes of transport available that directly cover this route.

### **iii. Bus Network**

With a limited or non-existent tube network in many parts of south and south-west London, bus services provide a key mode of public transport for a significant part of the population in the SWELTRAC sub-region.

We support proposals to keep the bus network under regular review, as other changes to public transport services or new commercial and residential developments can result in significant shifts in ridership levels.

With the change in LIP funding and the loss of the LBPN, we are concerned that bus priority measures will lose much of the impact that they may have had in the past, particularly on cross boundary sections of bus routes. Some Boroughs are likely to give bus measures a much lower priority than may have been the case in the past. This could have more far reaching implications in terms of the overall impact on bus services across different parts of the capital. TfL should identify means by which the momentum of such schemes can be maintained, possibly through a co-ordinating body such as the proposed new sub-regional partnerships.

On a more specific note, SWELTRAC has been a champion of bus route X26, which runs from Croydon to Heathrow Airport, stopping only at key locations such as town centres. We have supported the increase in frequency of the route, and would encourage further enhancements to help increase ridership and improve performance. We believe that orbital bus routes such as this can and should play a key role in developing orbital travel options around the suburbs. More emphasis needs to be given to the role of the bus as a measure to secure improved orbital travel.

We support all means to improve information for bus passengers such as through Countdown 2 and other real-time information services on digital media such as the internet and mobile phone applications.

### **iv. The Blue Ribbon Network and River Crossings**

SWELTRAC contains a number of riparian authorities, including the London Borough of Richmond, which is the only London Borough to cover communities on both banks of the Thames. It is often forgotten that there is an important need for good river crossings in west as well as east London.

We have long been exponents of the better use of the river for transportation services, and believe there is much scope for this. We had previously proposed the undertaking of a study that would look at the potential for new ferry services along specific lengths of the river, where such a facility would not be undermined by quicker and shorter rail and road services. It would have also looked at the scope for creating new crossing points on the Thames, particularly where rail links on one side of the river could be used to serve residents and businesses on the other bank who currently have lengthy journeys in order to access public transport. These links might take the form of ferry services or new bridges. We are conscious of the work that has already been done to look at improvements to river services and would encourage the continued development of any proposals that arise from these deliberations.

Some initial studies have been done through SWELTRAC in the past for a new pedestrian/cycle bridge across the Thames between north Battersea and

Chelsea Harbour/Imperial Wharf (the location of a new London Overground station). We believe there is a strong case for such a facility and would encourage TfL to give this further consideration.

We also believe that there is a case for the inclusion of the Grand Union Canal in the Blue Ribbon Network, as this constitutes a major pedestrian and cycling commuter route, as well as being a leisure route, and its significance should be recognised in this respect.

#### **v. London's Airports**

Common concerns about access to Heathrow Airport were amongst the main factors for the formation of SWELTRAC more than 15 years ago. It remains a key issue for us today, and our desire to seek improvements to public transport services into Heathrow underpins many of our projects. We have keenly supported improvements to the X26 bus service (as mentioned above) and have undertaken major schemes in the past to improve Rail-Air services at interchanges such as Feltham.

We welcome the Mayor's continued commitment to oppose further expansion at Heathrow, although it is felt that MTS2 could be bolder in addressing issues of airport capacity. We also welcome any projects, such as Crossrail, which will improve fast and direct access to and from Heathrow, central London and other parts of the capital. Proposals such as those for High Speed 2 would help to replace the need for many short haul flights.

We have offered our broad support to Airtrack as a means to further improve rail access to the airport from south London. However, some Boroughs have concerns about the impact on existing commuter services and, particularly, the impact on traffic that might result from the increased 'downtime' at level crossings along the route. We are pleased that this concern is identified within MTS2 and would urge the Mayor and TfL to continue to work with BAA and the relevant train operators to seek solutions to these problems.

As mentioned above, we would urge the inclusion within MTS of support for improved public transport access to all the airports serving London, not just Heathrow.

#### **vi. Cycling & Walking**

SWELTRAC supports the Mayor's aspirations for a 'Cycling Revolution', to be brought to reality through projects such as the 'Biking Boroughs' initiative, the Cycle Hire scheme and the plans to encourage cycling through the Cycling Superhighway network. However, there is a view that there could be better consultation with Boroughs in the development of the Superhighway routes.

We believe that it is also important to focus on small scale cycling improvements that will enhance and encourage local trips by bike. Better cycle parking facilities at railway stations should be encouraged and funded, and we welcome the inclusion of this proposal within MTS2.

Legible London has been trialled within one of the SWELTRAC Boroughs (Richmond) and we believe this could be an important tool in encouraging walking and, ultimately, helping to reduce overcrowding on bus and tube services for short journeys that can often be made more easily on foot. We do not feel that adequate emphasis is given to this within the Walking section of MTS2, nor to the health and fitness benefits that can be gained by walking.

We would also like to see greater recognition of the Wandle Trail as a strategic walking and cycling route in south London for both commuter and leisure purposes.

**vii. 'Better Streets'**

The concept of improving streets by reducing street clutter and improving the design and quality of street schemes and their infrastructure has proved successful in places such as Kensington High Street . These are principles that many (if not all) of the SWELTRAC Boroughs would seek to follow. Whilst recognising that there is no 'fit-all' solution for street improvements, a clearer definition of what constitutes a 'better street' would be useful to Boroughs.

We would welcome the pedestrianisation or introduction of shared space schemes in many of our town centres, although we recognise that this is difficult to achieve in some locations.

**viii. Climate Change & CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions**

SWELTRAC has been involved in the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points over the last two years and has made a significant contribution to the proposals to roll out a London-wide scheme. We are conscious of the many benefits that can be gained by encouraging the use of EVs, but also aware of the difficulties faced by many people who would wish to make the change to such vehicles but are deterred by the lack of guaranteed charging facilities and their own particular driving requirements. It is therefore important to get the infrastructure in place first if there is to be any significant uptake in the use of EVs, and we support any proposals that will help to make this happen.

Whilst supporting in principle the Mayor's EV Delivery Plan, we would encourage a cautious approach in the early years of the plan. The development of new fast and rapid charging technologies could quickly make some of the currently available infrastructure obsolete. Ultimately, public funding of such facilities will need to be replaced by a greater financial outlay by EV users such as through the use of PAYG charging points.

We also welcome any plans to promote car clubs and the use of other low carbon vehicles and carbon efficient travel options.

**ix. The Demand for Travel**

All London Boroughs have now seen the benefit of the iBus facility, which provides much better journey information to bus passengers and is a great benefit to the blind and partially-sighted. As previously mentioned, we would support all measures to provide better real-time information for bus passengers via the internet and other digital media.

The two Smarter Travel projects undertaken in London to date, are within the SWELTRAC Boroughs of Sutton and Richmond. The Personal Travel Planning project in Hounslow also falls within the south and west sub-region. We have therefore worked closely with both these authorities in encouraging the development of Workplace Travel Plans and promoting behavioural change and modal shift. There have already been many successes recorded in respect of the original pilot project in Sutton, and perhaps there is a place for greater recognition of this within MTS2.

We would encourage a greater emphasis on such measures in the future, and would underline the benefits achieved by sub-regional working on business Travel Plans in terms of both the economies of scale and the ability to work with businesses that may include different sites in a number of Boroughs.

**3. Smoothing Traffic Flow**

There are concerns that measures to smooth the flow of traffic could cause conflict with pedestrian use of the highway in some locations and, thus, mitigate against efforts to encourage walking. Greater clarity on the prioritisation of interventions would be welcome.

We would support the further research into the potential use of High Occupancy Lanes, and also consideration of the use of bus lanes by coaches, minibuses (and possibly HGVs) where this is not already permitted.

**4. Conclusion**

To conclude, this response sets out the views of SWELTRAC based on the comments received from our partner Boroughs. They cover those areas of policy and delivery in which the partnership is most significantly involved and seeks to represent those issues which are of common concern to some or all of the London Boroughs within the south and west London sub-region.

We trust these comments will be given due consideration and will be helpful in preparing the final version of the Mayor's Transport Strategy.