

PLANNING IN LONDON

THE JOURNAL OF THE LONDON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT FORUM

A Special Reprint for TRANSPORT 2000 Is there any strategy for London's Public Transport?

MAKING A TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR LONDON

During the first half of 1996, the Evening Standard and the Architecture Foundation sponsored a series of public seminars at Central Hall, Westminster, to discuss the future of London as we approach the Millennium and enter the 21st century.

At every seminar, transport and the impact of traffic congestion on London, was raised as a major issue. The state of our public transport networks was constantly criticised. Why did major failures occur? Why were fares so high? Why were bus services unreliable?

Transport 2000 was asked to participate in the May seminar, to discuss the future of London's transport networks. Suzanne May, Chair of T2000 (also Deputy Chair of London Regional Passengers' Committee) put forward the transport issues that environmentalists consider crucial for London's future sustainable development. At that presentation, T2000 circulated a pamphlet written by their London Vice-Chair, Richard Pout and John Stewart, Chair of Alarm UK, putting forward ten points to develop A PUBLIC TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR LONDON. This article updates those ten points, focusing on the development of London's existing railway networks, putting forward a concept to promote an Outer Circle railway line around London.

URBAN CLEARWAY

Since May 1996 Transport 2000 and ALARM UK have worked together with a group of other voluntary sector transport activists from organisations, such as the London Cycling Campaign, Railway Development Society, London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies and Friends of the Earth, to commission a study for a traffic reduction strategy.

URBAN CLEARWAY, launched on Monday 20th January 1997, was researched by Keith Buchan of the Metropolitan Transport Research Unit. Both Urban Clearway and Making a Transport Strategy for London, reprinted in this pamphlet, set out a way forward to solve London's ever-worsening traffic congestion crisis. For more information about Urban Clearway - copies are £5 including postage - and the London Transport Activists' Round Table, contact John Stewart at Alarm UK, 9-10 College Terrace, Mile End, London, E3 5AN.

Tel: 0181-983-3572

A PUBLIC TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR LONDON

For more details of A Public Transport Strategy for London, contact Richard Pout at T2000 on 0181 348 5064 or write for details of Transport 2000's campaigns at Walkden House 10 Melton Street, Euston, London, NW1 2EJ. Tel: 071-388-8386

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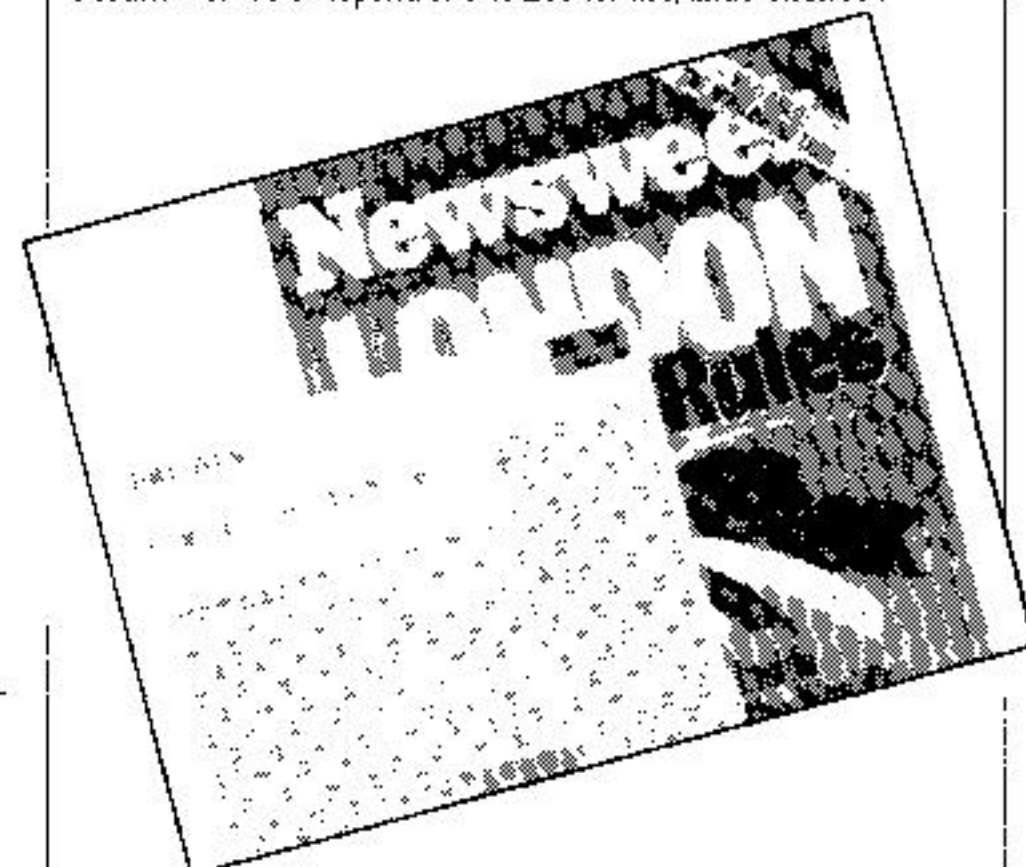
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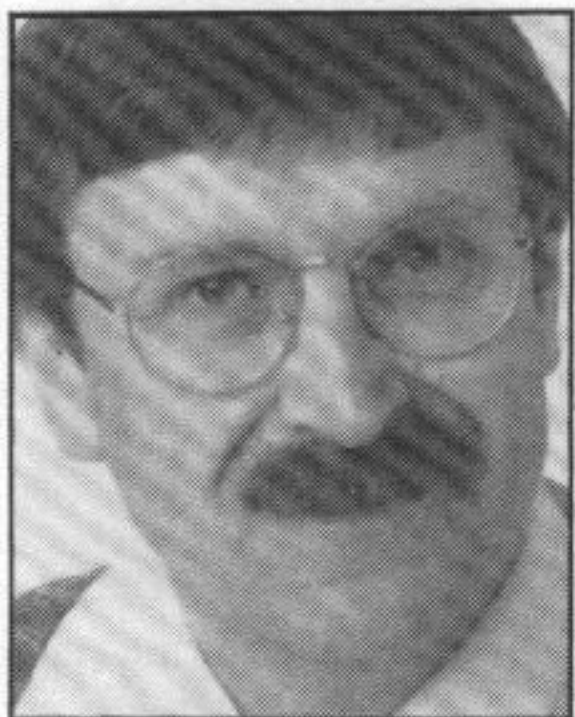
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Making a transport strategy for London

Transport 2000 has a Public Transport strategy for London. Richard Pout outlines some of the thinking behind it.



Richard Pout is a freelance writer on transport and vice-chair of Transport 2000 London Region.

Transport 2000 is the National Environmental Transport Campaign working to promote sustainable transport networks, increased use of public transport, walking and cycling, and alternatives to the private car and HGV. A full version of Transport 2000's Public Transport Strategy for London and details of their national and local campaigns are available from 10 Melton Street, London NW1 0171 388 8386. Richard Pout can be contacted on 0181 348 5064.

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- Travers, A and Glaister, S - An Infrastructure Fund for London. LSE / Greater London Group 1995*
- Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment - Trunk Roads and the Generation of Traffic DoT / HMSO 1995*
- A Transport Strategy for London - GoL / HMSO 1996*
- Towards a Public Transport Strategy for London - Transport 2000 L&SE 1996*
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The author would like to thank John Stewart, chair of Alarm UK for his many contributions to this article, along with Katy Andrews, Stephen Joseph, Klaus Meyer and others for their assistance.

Any debate or discussion on London's present problems or future development inevitably turns to transport. Formerly a world leader, London's once revered transport networks have become the butt of virtually every pundit's criticisms (usually aimed at the Northern or Tilbury & Southend misery lines!) owing to lack of investment.

Most simply blame the Government. Its philosophy of a home and car owning 'democracy' has contributed to many current problems in both the housing and transport sectors. The Government's belief that the market will provide has not been vindicated as it is now seeking to restore some structure to privatised transport operations.

Planners, the business community and environmentalists, however, fear a Labour Government may not implement the major changes needed in transport policy to overcome several decades of neglect.

Over the last year three major studies published by London Transport, London First and the Government Office for London emphasised the mega-projects like Crossrail and Terminal 5 while glossing over the pressing need to use existing networks more effectively. (LT's paper did consider alternative strategies for the suburbs, guided busways and light rail, but these have long lead-in times.)

In the late 1980s several area assessment studies evaluated various road and rail strategies, but no comprehensive regional survey has updated the 1975 London Rail Study. This proposed Thameslink, Crossrail and a North Orbital Line, and suggested several relatively low-cost schemes that could even now provide effective short- and medium-term solutions. While many other road schemes were implemented, the Jubilee Line Extension was the only major rail project to be started, but not until many millions had been spent on the controversial Docklands Light Railway as the Government's contribution to improving local public transport in the East End.

What about Londoners? Many perceive public transport as expensive and unreliable, and yearn for the return of the GLC's Fares Fair policy. A majority rated road traffic as London's biggest problem in an *Evening Standard* survey, concerned that unacceptable levels of congestion and pollution affected the economy and quality of life in the capital.

Transport 2000 and Alarm UK have set out ten objectives to provide an affordable public transport system that would assist the growth of London's economy, improve the quality of life for its residents and 'get London moving'. The prime objective is to optimise use of existing rail and bus networks. But the Government must set targets to reduce levels of traffic, pollution and road casualties and increase public transport journeys, walking and cycling.

- A London Region Transport Authority (LRTA) should be established for strategic transport planning, and managing and developing transport networks, as in major provincial cities. This could eventually form part of an elected London authority. Strategic planning must set targets to reduce the need to travel; major projects around Kings Cross and Stratford, and in the East Thames Corridor offer potential to plan more cohesive community units and discourage car centred developments.

- Reviving London's local railways with trains at least every 15 minutes on former BR lines within the old GLC area would encourage more people to turn up and travel, as on the Underground. The Network SouthEast routes serving Greater London and the major towns near the M25 should be marketed as London Railways, using the LT Target logo, with services specified by the new LRTA, not the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (OPRAF).

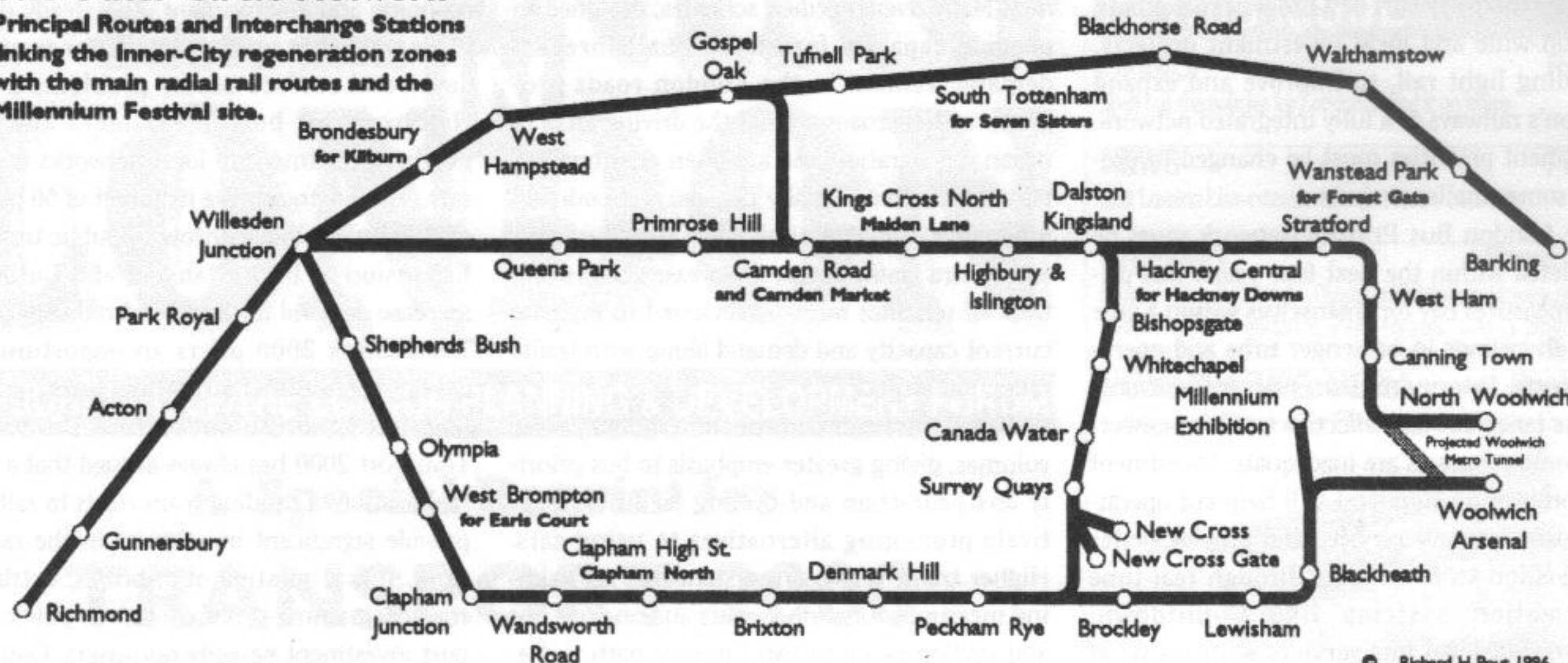
BR management, and now the Train Operating Companies (TOCs), concentrate mainly on high-profile lines to centres like Bedford, Cambridge, Guildford and Brighton often at the expense of London's suburbs, as present market structures encourage greater emphasis on longer distance commuter services.

The local rail system has not addressed travel needs in the capital, nor the potential revenue from running Underground-frequency services. This needs a change of Government and management attitudes to raise public awareness through marketing the network with the Underground, like the Paris Metro and RER.

Investing in station, interchange and service improvements will raise train service profile without necessarily needing any significant extra funding for operation or capital investment in new trains. Extra staff at stations could sell tickets to maximise revenue from reliable

The Outer Circle Network

Principal Routes and Interchange Stations linking the Inner-City regeneration zones with the main radial rail routes and the Millennium Festival site.



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Orbital Rail Networks: London's surface railways include a network of lines that could offer passengers an alternative to using their cars for orbital journeys on an Outer Circle network. Presently many passengers have little alternative but to come into the congested central zone to interchange between trains.

services and promote a safer passenger environment.

Linking existing orbital routes, the North, South, East and West London Lines, into an Outer Circle could provide new travel opportunities offering frequent services between depressed inner city districts and developing suburban centres as part of a co-ordinated London-wide regeneration strategy. Connecting routes from Gospel Oak to Barking through depressed north-east suburbs and Peckham Rye, Lewisham, and Blackheath into the Millennium site should be included into this 'new' London Railways network, which could be on the Underground map by 2000. (In the longer term the Woolwich Metro and Tunnel would link the Outer Circle to the East Thames corridor and North Kent at Woolwich.)

Radial services can be upgraded line by line to the London Railways standard. This is in neither the Government's Transport Strategy for London, nor OPRAF's minimum specifications, where only half-hourly services are specified.

Thameslink is the most cost-effective project to reduce over-crowding on other public transport networks. It links existing BR commuter routes across London and could provide 'Thameslink Metro' services, also marketed as London Railways, to many areas not served by Underground routes. This must be a priority for the new LRTA and Government.

- The Underground has suffered two decades of under-investment. Important maintenance and infrastructure renewals have been neglected, demonstrated by the serious power failures that have virtually closed the network down over the last two years. London Underground needs £750 million annually for ten years to maintain and improve the existing system. Generating

more passenger journeys and revenue could pay for much of this investment.

The Underground is the best alternative to driving into central London, and extending some existing lines to provide interchanges with the surface networks increases the potential for park-and-ride journeys. Government must support low-cost extensions with strategic benefits, regenerating inner-city zones, like East London to Dalston and Highbury service, delayed by lack of funding. The projected Victoria Line extension to Northumberland

Park could improve access to the Lea Valley.

Extensions into South London could include the Victoria Line to Herne Hill and Crystal Palace, the Bakerloo to Lewisham, Catford and Hayes and the Northern to Streatham and Norbury. These would make more effective use of the Underground's central distribution network and reduce passenger interchange movements at heavily congested stations like Victoria.

A long-term strategy must be developed for the 'mega' projects, Crossrail and the Chelsea-



Brockley Station

Lack of interchange between surface rail services makes the train an unattractive alternative to the car for anything other than radial journeys. Restoring high level platforms at Brockley for about 2.5m could provide an interchange linking services from Dartford, Blackheath and Lewisham to trains

running towards Crystal Palace and Croydon. The interchange could eventually link Outer Circle trains running from Clapham Junction to the Millennium site with Thameslink Metro trains to Croydon and Sutton. A new surface interchange in the West Midlands at Smethwick Galton Bridge opened last year at a cost of £4.0m.

Hackney metro as part of a programme of both London-wide and local investment projects, including light rail, to improve and expand London's railways as a fully integrated network. Investment priorities must be changed to promote some smaller projects.

- The London Bus Priority Network must be completed within the next four years. Bus priority measures pay for themselves within a year through savings in passenger time and operators' costs. Priority measures depend not only on bus lanes but also effective traffic engineering; some proposals are inadequate. Investment in monitoring equipment will help cut operating costs, improve services and provide better information to passengers through real-time information systems like Countdown. Integrating local bus services with trains at interchange stations though co-ordinated timetables and ticketing is essential for marketing public transport as the convenient 'seamless' alternative to car travel. Conveniently located stops, good waiting facilities and shelters are also important.

Route Tenders should set quality standards for vehicles and staff conditions to attract more passengers and revenue (The net-cost tendering system forces down standards). It is important that developments in regenerating suburbs are adequately served by good bus services from the outset to discourage new car commuting patterns.

- Fare levels must be reduced relative to the marginal cost of motoring. The latter has fallen significantly in real terms over the last 30 years while public transport costs have increased above inflation, with consequent disbenefits. This is particularly so for short local journeys where bus or train fares appear uneconomic to car-owners. Many Londoners want cheaper fares, bringing us into line with European practice.

- Changing parking and taxation policies for company cars is fundamental to traffic reduction strategies. Controlling both the supply and price of workplace and on-street parking could significantly reduce car use. A graduated local tax on commercial parking spaces should be introduced with revenue allocated to public transport improvements.

Company car subsidy should be phased out; 80 per cent of cars now entering inner and central London are receiving company assistance. (Allowances for genuine essential users must be safeguarded.) On-street parking should provide adequate short-stay waiting spaces with regulations that can be enforced while residential areas are managed with Controlled Parking Zones to discourage commuter parking.

- Unlimited demand for road space cannot be

met. Many over-specified schemes, designed to provide capacity for virtually all forecast demand, remain in the London roads programme. New roads are not the driving force of urban regeneration and are often environmentally destructive, socially divisive and counter-productive. SACTRA established that they generate extra traffic rather than ease congestion, thus all schemes must be reviewed to evaluate current capacity and demand along with traffic reduction targets.

Red Routes can control and regulate traffic volumes, giving greater emphasis to bus priority and pedestrian and cycling facilities, positively promoting alternatives to using cars. Higher traffic engineering standards for calming measures, junction layouts and on-road bus and cycling facilities can improve both pedestrian safety and traffic movement. Realistic waiting restrictions providing loading and short-wait parking bays should be introduced and enforced on local roads to keep junctions and pedestrian crossings clear of parked vehicles.

- Investment in safe and convenient cycle and pedestrian networks is fundamental to sustainable transport policies. All transport users are pedestrians for part of their journey and many might consider cycling if better facilities were available. TOCs must be encouraged to accommodate cycles on trains and at stations. Targets to install cycle and pedestrian facilities must be established. These are relatively cheap and would facilitate choices other than cars for shorter trips.

- Improved access to all transport modes for mobility impaired people must be consolidated into a network access programme. This is equitable to all potential passengers and generates extra revenue, partly offsetting installation costs. It also opens up employment opportunities for disabled people. In the short term a core network of fully accessible Underground and surface stations is needed.

- An airport access strategy promoting improvements to rail and bus links to airports is essential. A coherent policy for managing London's airport capacity is important for its

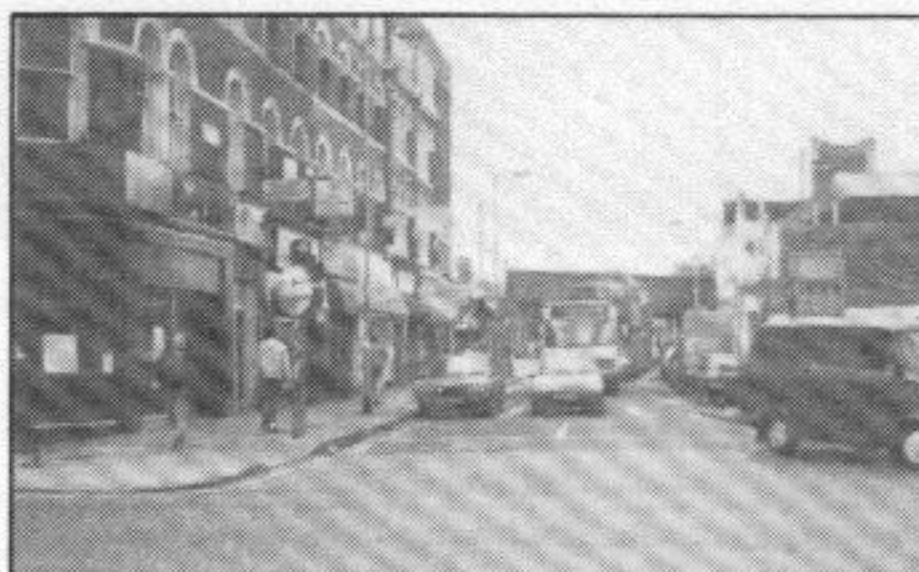
economy and environment. The steady growth in air traffic has increased noise for many residents and surface access problems around Heathrow for both passengers and staff. Further investment in local networks is necessary if BAA is to achieve its target of 50 per cent of all journeys to Heathrow by public transport. Expansion at both Stansted and Luton will increase demand for improved rail services and Thameslink 2000 offers an opportunity for developing fast inter airport rail links.

Finally, where do we find the money? Transport 2000 has always argued that a major reallocation of funding from roads to rail could provide significant investment in the rail network. It is a question of priorities; cutting the road programme is not enough as public transport investment benefits non-users. Cost-benefit analysis must be reviewed to establish a level playing field for investment criteria.

Other countries recognise the wider benefits of improved public transport, which can be paid for in various ways; employers payroll taxes in France (versement), local property taxes in the USA and local sales and fuel taxes in several other countries. £72million of European funds have been allocated to public transport investment in Dublin.

Business and commerce regard London's present transport networks as an economic burden and are sympathetic to a rate supplement being hypothecated to public transport expenditure. LSE economist Stephen Glaister proposed an Infrastructure Fund, levied through the business rate, but this initiative was not supported by the present Government. Glaister argued at the Evening Standard transport Debate that 'the Government's Private Finance Initiative can never bridge the gap between costs and revenues for projects which are fundamentally loss-making', adding that the PFI was 'a smoke-screen to obscure inaction'.

Government must make a firm ten-year funding commitment to develop and support a public transport system that adequately meets London's economic, social and environmental needs; the one we presently have does not.



Finsbury Park
Poor traffic engineering can have a serious

impact on bus services, traffic movement and, most importantly, pedestrian safety. Bus operators and the local amenity group at Finsbury Park want this junction remodelled but the separation of responsibility between the Traffic Director and Islington Borough means that nothing is done! Meanwhile one short 300m traffic queue backing up the busy Stroud Green Road wreaks havoc with ten bus routes while pedestrians risk life and limb due to inadequate crossings.