



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
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01-212 ~~XXX~~ 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1

A.T.

rec'd 1/8

Dear Margaret

I thought you would like the enclosed personal copy of the paper we are sending to Borough Councils, firming up our proposals for reallocating London's transport responsibilities following abolition of the GLC. Their formal views are being sought by the end of September before the proposals are finalised. Copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library and sent to national organisations that commented on the October document. We have not sent them direct to any of your local action or environmental groups though of course if they ask for them we shall supply them. If there are any particular points that you would like to discuss with me or any additional information you would find helpful, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Yours ever

Lynda

MRS LYNDAL CHALKER

REALLOCATION OF TRANSPORT RESPONSIBILITIES IN LONDON

FOLLOWING ABOLITION OF THE GLC

Issued by the Department of Transport

July 1984

REALLOCATION OF TRANSPORT RESPONSIBILITIES IN LONDON FOLLOWING ABOLITION OF THE GLC

Note by the Department of Transport

INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretary of State has welcomed the helpful responses from many London borough councils and other bodies who have commented on the proposals for reallocating London's road and traffic responsibilities following abolition of the GLC published last October ⁱ. This note describes the details of what is now proposed as a basis for seeking borough council views by 28 September before the proposals are finalised. Comments should be sent to:

The Department of Transport
Room C5/15A
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 3EB

A STRATEGY FOR LONDON'S ROADS AND TRAFFIC

2. Completion of the M25 will mean that long-distance traffic will be able to traverse the south-east without passing through London. It will be the Government's policy to ensure that the maximum possible use, in particular by freight traffic, is made of this massive metropolitan by-pass. The proposed reallocation of traffic and highway roles and duties within Greater London is intended to form a basis for developing with borough councils a long-term view of what needs to be done and commitment by all concerned to its achievement. Without a co-operative approach London's living conditions will continue to suffer, jobs will move away and resources will be wasted. This co-operative approach on traffic and highway questions will of course form part of a wider overall approach.

3. The White Paper "Streamlining the Cities" recognised the need to maintain close links between land-use planning and highways and traffic management. Strategic transport and highway matters will be among the matters considered by the London Planning Commission and will be reflected in the strategic guidance to be issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment. The borough councils will be required to have regard to this guidance in the policies of their unitary development plans and to bring forward appropriate proposals.

ⁱ. Reorganisation of Local Government in Greater London: Reallocation of Transport Responsibilities: Consultation Paper issued by the Department of Transport October 1983.

THE STRATEGIC LONDON NETWORK

4. A coherent and planned approach is needed to handle London's traffic flows. Many of London's road traffic problems can and should be tackled locally, but the consultation document noted that some issues have implications beyond the boundaries of individual boroughs. It set out proposals for co-ordinating traffic matters where this was desirable over wider areas. The proposed extent of the strategic London network where traffic movement needs to be considered as a whole is identified in the map at Annex A. It comprises the key routes which will be a Departmental responsibility, together with some 300 miles out of the 825 miles of metropolitan roads to be transferred to borough councils. Final details of this network will be settled with borough councils. As proposed in the October document, borough councils will be required to consult each other about and notify the Secretary of State of proposals that affect any of these roads. He would have time-limited powers to withhold his approval.

GUIDANCE TO BOROUGH COUNCILS

5. In order to assist borough councils both generally in carrying out their new traffic management responsibilities, and in particular in making proposals affecting the strategic London network, the Secretary of State proposes to issue general guidance in respect of London's traffic management policies. These would cover such matters as parking, lorry access and bus priorities and would be worked out in consultation with local authorities, and monitored through an appropriate collective arrangement with borough councils. This might take the form of the Voluntary Joint Committee envisaged in the October document; and this might also serve as a useful forum for handling other issues (for example links with planning policies and proposals). This will be discussed further with borough councils. In addition to his existing reserve powers the Secretary of State would have reserve powers to intervene where borough councils' exercise of their powers disregarded his guidelines in such a way as to have adverse consequences for the movement of traffic in London. In addition, the borough councils would be required to consult other authorities about proposals which might affect their areas and, where any disputes could not be resolved by the boroughs themselves, the Secretary of State's consent would be required before the proposal could go ahead.

6. In this way, the main responsibility for London's roads and traffic would rest with the borough councils but wider policies could be applied consistently in terms of traffic movement throughout London as a whole and in relation to its environs.

DEPARTMENTAL ROADS

7. The response to consultation has indicated that, with some minor adjustments, the scale of the proposed transfer of some 70 miles of metropolitan roads to Departmental ownership as part of the key routes of London is about right. Some bodies have suggested that there should be rather more extensive transfer to the Department in order to ensure that the main traffic network is considered as a whole. The Secretary of State believes however that the proposals outlined above in relation to traffic management mean that there is no need for more extensive Departmental ownership and that as far as possible the responsibility for maintaining London's roads should rest direct with the borough councils.

8. It has also been represented by some individuals and local environmental groups that all existing GLC roads should be transferred to the boroughs. The Secretary of State believes that this view is misconceived. The construction of the M25 and comprehensive signing to encourage its use will open up a new prospect for London. The key routes that handle London's traffic will no longer have to deal with through traffic with destinations elsewhere; but they will continue to serve as main distributor roads for longer distance trips within London itself without which the metropolis could not continue to function properly. As such they serve much more than a local role and it would not be appropriate for the responsibility and cost of maintaining these key routes to rest with borough councils.

TACKLING LONDON'S PROBLEMS

9. The Secretary of State believes that reallocation of London's roads and traffic responsibilities on the above lines will form a clear basis for the joint development of effective measures to meet London's needs. A long-term look will be needed at what should be done about the worst traffic problems of London and the damaging environmental consequences. The Department will pursue discussions at individual borough level about identifying the trouble spots and is preparing for a series of assessment studies of corridors where particularly severe problems exist. It will develop with borough councils the basis for working out together a 10-15 year action plan to tackle them. The improvement of environmental conditions and safety will be a prime objective as well as the reduction of delays and congestion for road users.

10. As announced recently, the Secretary of State has asked the independent Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) to turn its attention to the problems raised in urban road appraisal, with a particular view to assisting those assessing needs, possible solutions and their wider impacts. The Department will be giving particular attention to ways of tackling the environmental problems of existing urban roads and to the development of practicable programmes of early improvement including measures to reduce noise. Lessons learned in these studies will have wider application.

11. In most cases the Secretary of State expects the practicable solution to lie in some modest form of improvement. But the options which need to be explored both regarding his own roads and those of the borough councils would include those set out in the consultation document. At many points the apt solution will be better traffic management measures, local improvements at bottlenecks, and attention to turning traffic at junctions. Elsewhere more general improvement along the line of existing roads would be sensible. These options between them should resolve most of London's traffic problems in a practicable fashion; only where they are seen to be insufficient would a new section of road warrant further study. The essential factor is to ensure that problems are examined and tackled vigorously in pursuit of a consistent policy which enhances environmental, traffic and safety conditions, including those of pedestrians and cyclists.

THE ROLE OF TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

12. Work is already in hand on the approach to developing new guidelines and codes of practice on a number of traffic management measures. This forms part of a wider review of ways in which traffic management measures, in the light of current experience, can best be developed in urban areas

generally. Work in this field will form a context for the Secretary of State's guidelines to be worked out with borough councils to form the basis for traffic management planning in London. It will also be taken into account in the strategic guidance to be issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment on the preparation of unitary development plans.

ALLOCATION OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

13. The consultation document also identified three executive functions on which further discussion with borough councils would take place. These were:

- a. the provision of a central capability to handle London-wide transport data;
- b. the Urban Traffic Control system currently being developed for co-ordinating traffic signals in London, under the day-to-day control of the Metropolitan Police;
- c. arrangements to achieve consistency of signposting.

DATA PROVISION

14. In view of the importance of this function, the Secretary of State is prepared to assist and encourage liaison between borough councils to ensure the continuing collection and analysis of data to meet their common needs. Discussions will take place with the borough councils on the development of co-operative arrangements. If, however, they are unable to agree satisfactory arrangements by the time of abolition, the Secretary of State will be prepared to make transitional arrangements to ensure that London-wide data collection and analysis are maintained. There would then be further discussions with the borough councils about permanent arrangements; these would cover the information to be provided and how to accommodate ready access by those who require it. The scope of data collection in London would also be reviewed to relate it better to national data collection and to the necessary analysis of London trends, while at the same time discontinuing unnecessary central data collection and analysis. Appropriate arrangements would be developed further in discussion with local authorities and others concerned.

URBAN TRAFFIC CONTROL

15. The Secretary of State shares the view, expressed in response to consultation, that the Urban Traffic Control system should be maintained and developed. Further discussions will take place with the borough councils on co-operative arrangements for the management and operation of the system. The Secretary of State would have reserve powers to take responsibility for planning and management of the system, if no satisfactory arrangements could be agreed by the time of abolition. In this event, as much as possible of the practical application would be devolved to boroughs, together with certain functions such as signal design and pedestrian facilities. The present important Police control role would be maintained. The opportunity for contracting out to private industry the operation of parts of this system such as maintenance would also be examined further. The overall aim would be to ensure that a comprehensive view of the system and its consistent application in the interests of handling London's traffic would be maintained.

SIGNPOSTING

16. Responses to the consultation paper have indicated that there should not be special problems connected with directional traffic signs. The overall signing of London is already under consideration and proposals will be discussed further with the borough councils in the light of the other changes that are proposed in respect of the strategic London network, and the intention to secure the maximum use of the M25 as an alternative to London's roads.

ROAD SAFETY

17. The Secretary of State attaches great importance to ensuring that a coherent approach is maintained to road safety. As with other data collection, if the borough councils are unable to make satisfactory arrangements in time, the Department of Transport would take steps to ensure that central accident data analysis and dissemination within London are maintained. The experimental and advisory work done by the Department nationally will continue to provide borough councils with access to the latest techniques and developments; and road safety questions will also be covered in the traffic management guidelines to be issued by the Secretary of State. In addition, a London Road Safety Committee will be established with representatives from the London borough councils, the Police, the Department, and national road safety organisations, to provide a suitable focus for advice and co-ordination in this key area.

OTHER ISSUES

18. Other allocation issues have been raised in the course of the consultation. These are as follows:

- a. Thames bridges: The proposal here is that each bridge (or tunnel) not on a key route should be transferred to one of the riparian London boroughs. This proposal will be the subject of further detailed consultation which will cover arrangements for sharing existing expertise and financial implications.
- b. Piers: Each of the present GLC piers should become the responsibility of the borough within which it is situated.
- c. Woolwich Ferry: As indicated to Parliament by the Minister of State for Transport, the continued operation of the Woolwich Free Ferry will be unaffected by GLC abolition. Further consideration is being given to the appropriate transfer of responsibility.

NEW FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

19. Ratepayers will no longer pay any part of the cost of improving and maintaining those roads for which the Secretary of State becomes responsible. Boroughs would be eligible for Transport Supplementary Grant for important local road improvement schemes, subject to the proposals for changes in TSG now being discussed with the local authority associations. When the GLC is abolished, the financing costs of borough councils' additional responsibilities for road investment net of TSG, and their maintenance and administrative costs will be taken into account in the

changes to be made to the Rate Support Grant system at that time. This will involve adjustment to the GREs for transport expenditure, to targets (if they are retained), grant-related poundages and the London Rate Equalisation Scheme. These changes will also take account of the proposed new arrangements for TSG.

THE NEXT STEPS

20. The views of borough councils on all the above points will be carefully taken into account in further developing the preparations for a smooth transition to the new transport arrangements for London. Discussions will also take place with borough councils about developing future liaison and co-ordination arrangements on matters of common interest both prior to and following the proposed reorganisation.

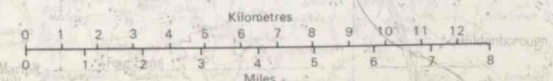
STRATEGIC LONDON NETWORK AND LINKS WITH M25

GLC BOUNDARY

M25 AND MAIN ROUTES (outside Greater London)

KEY ROUTES

OTHER STRATEGIC ROADS (within Greater London)



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