

## The Development of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods – Focus on Main Roads

### BACKGROUND

As Low Traffic Neighbourhoods are developed, it is vital that measures are taken to ensure that surrounding main roads, and those who live, shop, work and visit them, do not experience worse air quality and higher traffic volumes in the longer term.

As we have noted, nearly all schemes find that Low Traffic Neighbourhoods result in “traffic evaporation”, or a reduction in traffic volumes over the wider area, over time. (Background below<sup>1</sup>)

Below we suggest the steps that can be taken, over different timescales, to limit or reduce long-term negative impacts on surrounding main roads.

As background, it should be noted that the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), which went into operation in the Central London Congestion Charging Zone in April 2019, is due to be expanded to all roads bounded by the North and South Circular roads in 2021.

Research over the first 6 months of operation has shown an immediate improvement to air quality. TfL has found a 36% reduction in roadside concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) between February 2017 and September 2019 coupled with a reduction in traffic flows in central London from May to September 2019 of between 3 and 9%.

In addition, in many parts of London, traffic levels on main roads are now far lower than they were 15 or 20 years ago<sup>2</sup>.

### POLICIES TO SUPPORT MAIN ROADS

Options for boroughs to address the impact of LTNs on main roads include the following.

- Measures to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport over general motor traffic with the aim of reducing through-traffic and capacity for vehicles. These include **wider pavements; bus gates** (NB may not be appropriate on some roads); **20mph limits** (and measures to improve compliance); **more crossings; more seating, trees, and planters; continuous crossings for pedestrians across side roads** and **closing side streets to motor vehicles**. (If you remove most of the turning movements into/out of side roads along a stretch of main road, such as happens with a low-traffic neighbourhoods, that can in itself smooth traffic flow on the main road too. See “Braess Paradox”<sup>3</sup>).
- Pollution falls off very quickly with distance so any measures that move general traffic further from pedestrians and buildings have a positive effect. Suggested here, therefore are **protected cycle tracks; bus lanes; planted lane dividers**.
- **Increasing the cost while restricting the availability of parking** to make driving to the area, and trips by car within the area (that could easily be made by walking, cycling or public transport) less attractive. This could include Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) (over relatively small areas) with extended hours, increases in parking charges, the introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy and reductions in the number of parking spaces.

<sup>1</sup> <https://londonlivingstreets.com/2019/07/11/evaporating-traffic-impact-of-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-on-main-roads/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://bikedata.cyclestreets.net/trafficcounts>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mlH9bnvWVE>

- Across a local area/town centre, **the development of a sustainable delivery hub/consolidation hub to reduce the number of vans using main roads.**
- **Enacting planning policies that require car-free development.**
- **Local bans on diesel vehicles (whose emissions exceed EU-permitted limits (Euro III))** following the recent example of Bristol<sup>4</sup>.
- **Low Emission Bus Zones on such main roads.** In London, there are now 12 such zones, including Putney High Street and Brixton Road, where only new or retrofitted buses are allowed to operate on those routes.
- Lobbying for a) **further ULEZ expansion (to the M25)**, b) a **Workplace Parking Levy** in the borough and c) **local congestion charging and/or Road User Charging** as a priority for long-term and meaningful reductions in traffic across whole areas.
- **Green screens and other "mitigation" measures may also reduce localised pollution impacts of increased motor traffic**, but really should be a last resort only where simply reducing main road traffic capacity isn't possible.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-50292596>