

# **TramForward**

## *Campaigning for Light Rail*

PRESS RELEASE FROM *TramForward*

22 February 2010

### ***TramForward* disappointed with Oxford Street report**

TramForward is disappointed to see that the recently published report of the Greater London Authority Transport Committee ("Streets ahead: Relieving congestion on Oxford Street, Regent Street and Bond Street") has seemingly ducked proposing a sustainable long term solution to the problems of extreme pedestrian and traffic congestion in Oxford Street. However, this must be read in the context of and follows on from the previous decision by the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, to withhold further funding to progress the Cross River Tram scheme, to which the Oxford Street proposals would have been an extremely useful adjunct. Without Cross River Tram, which itself has been so disgracefully ditched by the Mayor, it might be difficult to see any tram-based Oxford Street scheme operationally in isolation.

Nevertheless, Oxford Street is a nightmare with pavements jammed with pedestrians (100,000 pedestrians a day pass the busiest point) and the roadway often solid with buses and taxis (23 bus routes traverse the street with over 300 buses an hour at peak times). Accident rates are 35 times the average for London streets and pollution levels 4.5 times the EU target. It is predicted that, if nothing is done, Oxford Street will have worst level of NOx pollution in the UK by 2015.

Improvements carried out some years ago, banning private vehicles from much of the street and widening some of the pavements did little to improve matters while the report's short term solution of removing some of the bus services from the street will probably also achieve little lasting improvement. (Transport for London is already committed to reducing bus services in Oxford Street by 20% by November this year).

The report's "long term" solutions include looking at the replacement of the remaining bus services with a shuttle bus the length of Oxford Street and "part" pedestrianisation between Oxford Circus and Bond Street. The report notes the Mayor's rejection of the previously proposed tram solution and considers that reviving it would be "too expensive and too disruptive".

However, experience in many cities worldwide and even as close to Oxford Street as central Croydon, has shown that trams can operate successfully and safely in pedestrianised areas in a way that buses cannot. Leidsestraat in Amsterdam and Bahnhofstrasse in Zürich are just two of many European examples. Trams would offer a surer means of reducing accident and pollution levels.

Geoff Lusher, Chairman of the Light Rail Transit Association, said "Another opportunity to seriously consider a sustainable, healthy and safe solution to a chronic congestion and pollution problem has been passed up. London should be following the lead of other world cities in using electric-powered rail-based transport to improve the urban environment. Paris, for example, has recently announced yet another major extension to light rail operation."

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. *TramForward* is the campaigning arm of the Light Rail Transit Association.
2. The Light Rail Transit Association is the world's leading organisation campaigning for better public transport through light rail, tramway and metro systems in our towns and cities for 70 years. It also supports the revitalisation of suburban and rural transport through the application of light rail.
3. The LRTA acts through its network of local branches, which campaign for better transport in their localities.
4. Membership of the LRTA costs under 12p a day. To join, visit [www.lrta.org](http://www.lrta.org) or write to the Membership Secretary, LRTA, 38 Wolseley Road, Sale, Greater Manchester, M33 7AU. Members of the LRTA receive the monthly magazine *Tramways & Urban Transit* - written and read by experts in the field - and gain other benefits including discounts on videos and books, tours of transport systems and cut-price admission to selected transport sites.
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