

# Draft Cycle safety action plan

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Sustrans submission

December 2009

compiled by Greg King

**Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity.**

Our vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. We work on practical, innovative solutions to the transport challenges facing us all. Sustrans is the charity behind the award winning National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools, Bike It, TravelSmart, Active Travel, Connect2 and Liveable Neighbourhoods, all projects that are changing our world one mile at a time.

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# Introduction and overview

Sustrans welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Draft Cycle safety action plan.

Sustrans agrees that cycle safety is a key issue in London. Whilst the proportion of cyclists being killed or injured has reduced over recent years, the perceived safety of cycling in the capital remains the main reason for the low levels of cycling. It is also the main challenge facing the Mayor and Transport for London in achieving the cycling revolution. Sustrans therefore fully supports the focus on cycle safety that this action plan provides.

Sustrans believes that the draft action plan includes some important priorities for improving cycle safety in London. However, there are key areas where Sustrans believes the plans must go further. This includes:

- A greater focus on vulnerable cyclists
- Clearer guidance on speed limits and cycle facilities
- Prioritisation of measures with cross-over benefits for other vulnerable road users
- Adoption of a 'vision zero' for cycle fatalities in London

In responding to the draft plan Sustrans initially highlights the key elements of the draft action plan that it believes are particularly important. It then puts forward a number of recommendations for the final plan.

## Key elements of the draft action plan that Sustrans supports

### Focus on HGVs and construction vehicles

Sustrans agrees that the focus on cycle safety in relation to HGVs and construction vehicles, as presented in the draft action plan, is appropriate.

In terms of the most serious collisions involving cyclists, there is clear evidence that lorries have a disproportionately detrimental impact. Of all traffic movements, left turning HGVs (and other large vehicles) is the single biggest cause of cycle fatalities, accounting for roughly quarter of all deaths.

Accordingly, Sustrans believes it is right to make this a priority area for action, especially considering the increase in the number of lorries on London's streets over the next few years associated with major construction projects, including the Olympics and Crossrail.

### The inclusion of greenways

Sustrans fully supports the inclusion of greenways as part of the range of measures described in the '*Delivering new, safe, cycle route and facilities*' theme in the draft action plan. Sustrans agrees that off-carriageway facilities for cycling, including greenways, play a key role in improving cycle safety by providing a safe and attractive environment where new or returning cyclists can gain confidence.

As the draft report sets out, as levels of cycling have increased in London the proportionate number of cycle fatalities has reduced. This correlation between cycling level and safety is well established and is observed right across Europe<sup>1</sup>. It occurs for a number of reasons, including increased driver

awareness of cyclists and increased driver attentiveness to cyclist needs resulting from more drivers being cyclists themselves<sup>2</sup>.

By encouraging higher levels of cycling and building the 'base' of cyclists, greenways contribute to improved safety.

Because greenways respond to both peoples' concerns about the safety of cycling in traffic and the positive perceptions of cycling as a healthy, fun activity<sup>3</sup> they are key in facilitating a greater uptake of cycling. In Outer London particularly, where levels of cycling are currently low, but where there is a wealth of green spaces, greenways could play a central role in encouraging new people onto their bikes. In this way greenways contribute to a wider growth in cycling, and a greater presence of cyclists on the streets, since people who take up cycling recreationally may then adopt cycling as a more general transport mode<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, greenway development includes provision of on-road routes which link to and between green spaces, thereby directly improving cycle safety on parts of the street network.

## Sustrans recommendations for the final strategy

### Greater focus on vulnerable cyclists

Despite recent growth in cycling, it remains that cycling is a minority activity in London, with most Londoners never getting on a bike<sup>5</sup>. The most significant deterrent to cycling is fear of traffic; over two-thirds of Londoners do not think that cycling is a safe way to travel around London<sup>6</sup>.

The impact of the perceived danger associated with cycling in London is plain to see in the cycle journey statistics, with more vulnerable cyclists significantly underrepresented. Roughly twice as many cycle journeys are made by men than women<sup>7</sup>, and whilst levels of cycling rose significantly since 2000 among working-age people, the number of cycle trips made by children and young people declined between 2001 and 2006/07<sup>89</sup>. Sustrans believes that these are defining issues for cycling in London which must be reflected much more clearly in the draft action plan.

Sustrans believes that the action plan should highlight the significant demographic inequality in cycle journeys in London and the extent to which this is caused by perceptions of poor cycle safety. In addition, the action plan should set out the principle of addressing this inequality by giving full consideration to vulnerable potential cyclists in provision of cycle schemes.

**Sustrans recommendation: The Cycle safety action plan should clearly set out principles that all new cycle infrastructure in London should be conceived and designed with consideration given to the safety (and perceived safety) of the most vulnerable potential cyclists.**

### Clearer guidance on speed limits and cycle facilities

Obviously many factors in the street environment influence cycle safety and perceptions of it, including traffic speed, volume, road capacity and design. It is equally clear that measures to improve safety must take full account of local context and site specific circumstances.

Nevertheless, Sustrans believes that the action plan should promote a *default* position in relation to street management and infrastructure measures which have a key influence on cycle safety. This should include clearer guidance on speed limits and provision of cycle lanes/tracks.

Sustrans believes that the Cycle safety action plan should set out the broad principles for how all of London's streets that cyclists may wish to travel along should be made safe for cyclists of any age or ability.

Traffic speed is a key determinant of the appeal of an urban environment for walking and cycling. Reducing the speed of traffic is noted as the second priority for improving streets (after reducing traffic volume) in both Manual for Streets (DfT, 2007) and TfL's own London Cycling Design Standards (2005).

Traffic speed is also of central importance to the severity of collisions. Recent analysis of cycle deaths in London found that virtually all fatal collisions occurred on roads with a speed limit of 30mph or higher<sup>10</sup>. The study also found that the introduction of 20mph limits on residential roads could produce a 50 percent reduction in pedal cyclist killed and seriously injured casualties<sup>11</sup>.

Further research, recently published by the British Medical Journal, found that the introduction of 20mph zones in London over the last two decades have significantly improved road safety for users of all modes. This is especially true for children and young people, with the number of 0 – 15 year olds being killed and seriously injured reducing by half in areas where the speed limit is reduced to 20mph<sup>12</sup>.

Sustrans believes that the action plan should reflect this principle by providing guidance on speed limits in London, including promoting the expansion of 20mph speed limits. Sustrans supports the recommendation of the London Assembly in the recent report, *Braking Point: 20mph Speed Limits in London*, that funding should be made available to pilot borough-wide speed limit reductions on residential streets<sup>13</sup>.

**Sustrans recommendation: The Cycle safety action plan should promote the reduction of traffic speeds, and the expansion of 20mph zones, with the intention of making 20mph the default speed limit on residential streets in London**

Sustrans recognises that a 20mph speed limit on every London street may not be viable and that key distributor roads and other parts of the strategic road network are likely to remain at 30mph.

Sustrans believes that to make a street with a speed limit over 20mph safe (and safe feeling) for cyclists, the default position is that it should have good quality cycle lanes on or off carriageway. This must be combined with appropriate treatments and street alterations at junctions to raise driver awareness of the presence of cyclists and to ensure that all cycle movements through junctions are safe.

Sustrans believes that to provide a good quality cycling environment on busier distributor roads there is frequently no adequate alternative to providing dedicated cycling space. This usually requires the reallocation of road space from motorised vehicles.

A good example is the recent highway alterations on Blackfriars Bridge. The removal of a general traffic lane enabled the provision of good quality cycle lanes, which delivered significant safety improvements. Additionally, it allowed for the pavement to be widened, thus improving the pedestrian experience.

Road space re-allocation measures include: introducing traffic-free transport corridors for cycling and walking; introducing priority lanes for cyclists and public transport; pavement widening; intersection treatments to improve safety for cyclists, as well as pedestrians; parking restrictions and enforcement and raised crossings. Generally, these measures all aim to make access by sustainable and public transport choices simpler and more convenient.

This approach is supported by public health advocates. In 2007, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) issued guidance on physical activity and the environment which offered national evidence-based recommendations on how to improve the physical environment to encourage physical activity. This includes measures to re-allocate road space to active travel modes.

**Sustrans recommendation: The Cycle safety action plan should promote the provision of good quality cycle lanes on or off carriageway as the default position on streets with speed limits over 20mph.**

## Prioritise measures with cross-over benefits

Sustrans believes that the action plan should target and prioritise measures to improve cycle safety which also deliver safety benefits to other vulnerable road users.

Examples described above - of lowering speed limits and reallocating road space from general traffic to sustainable modes - provide safety benefits to pedestrians as well cyclists<sup>1415</sup>.

Another example, which is not mentioned in the draft action plan is the removal of pedestrian barriers. Removing pedestrian guard railing in the recent renovation of Kensington High Street (against the advice of safety engineers) appears to have reduced the accident figures for pedestrians<sup>16</sup>, whilst also designing-out the potential risk of cyclists being trapped between vehicles and road-side barriers.

Sustrans also believes that the safety benefits to other road users from increasing levels of cycling per se should be highlighted, in order to strengthen justification for both the measures set out in the Cycle safety action plan and the Mayor's wider ambition for a cycling revolution in London. As a recent CTC report sets out, *"For every mile travelled, fewer injuries involve cyclists than motor vehicles. Every cycle trip that is a switch from car use means fewer injuries and deaths to others"*<sup>17</sup>.

**Sustrans recommendation: The Cycle safety action plan should set out the safety benefits to other vulnerable road users from modal shift to cycling, and it should prioritise cycle safety measures with cross-over benefits.**

## Target zero fatalities

Sustrans notes the sad fact that the current target to reduce the number of cyclists killed and seriously injured in London (50 percent by 2010 compared to the 94-98 average) will not be met. Sustrans fully supports the statement in the draft action plan that further action is needed and that new targets for cycling KSI reductions beyond 2010 must be set.

In approaching target setting, Sustrans believes that the Cycle Safety action plan should set out a vision and intention for zero cycle fatalities in London. Targets for percentage reductions in casualty figures should be presented as interim in relation to the ultimate zero fatality goal.

Cycle fatalities in London are often highly publicised and their occurrence is likely to be a significant deterrent to some potential cyclists, thereby inhibiting cycling growth in London. Cycle deaths and serious injuries also obviously have a very considerable negative impact on the lives those that directly experience them.

Accordingly, Sustrans believes that it is appropriate that the Mayor and Transport for London should work towards the vision of there being no more people killed on London's streets.

This approach was pioneered in Sweden, with the 'Vision Zero' programme which is based on "*a refusal to accept human death or lifelong suffering as a result of road traffic*"<sup>18</sup>. By population, Sweden has among the best road safety record in the world<sup>19</sup>. The principle was also recently adopted by the Scottish Parliament in Scotland's Road Safety Framework, which sets a vision for no road fatalities in the country across all modes.<sup>20</sup>

**Sustrans recommendation: The Cycle safety action plan should set out a vision for zero cycle fatalities in London and percentage reduction targets should be presented as interim towards that goal.**

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- <sup>1</sup> Safety in numbers in England (downloaded from [http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/0905\\_SiN\\_full\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/0905_SiN_full_rpt.pdf)), 08 December 2009.
- <sup>2</sup> Safety in numbers in England (downloaded from [http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/0905\\_SiN\\_full\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/0905_SiN_full_rpt.pdf)), 08 December 2009.
- <sup>3</sup> Cycling in London, Transport for London, October 2008.
- <sup>4</sup> Cycling Greenways Implementation Plan, Draft, April 2006.
- <sup>5</sup> Cycling in London, Transport for London, October 2008.
- <sup>6</sup> Cycling in London, Transport for London, October 2008.
- <sup>7</sup> Travel in London, Transport for London, 2009
- <sup>8</sup> London Travel Report 2007, Transport for London, 2008
- <sup>9</sup> London Travel Report 2006, Transport for London, 2007
- <sup>10</sup> Analysis of police collision files for pedal cyclist fatalities in London, 2001 – 2006.
- <sup>11</sup> Analysis of police collision files for pedal cyclist fatalities in London, 2001 – 2006.
- <sup>12</sup> Effect of 20 mph traffic speed zones on road injuries in London, 1986-2006: controlled interrupted time series analysis, Grundy et al, British Medical Journal, Sep 2009.
- <sup>13</sup> Breaking point: 20mph speed limits in London, London Assembly, April 2009.
- <sup>14</sup> Effect of 20 mph traffic speed zones on road injuries in London, 1986-2006: controlled interrupted time series analysis, Grundy et al, British Medical Journal, Sep 2009.
- <sup>15</sup> Analysis of police collision files for pedal cyclist fatalities in London, 2001 – 2006.
- <sup>16</sup> Towards shared space, Ben Hamilton-Bailie, URBAN DESIGN International (2008) 13, 130 – 138, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.
- <sup>17</sup> Safety in numbers in England (downloaded from [http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/0905\\_SiN\\_full\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/0905_SiN_full_rpt.pdf)), 08 December 2009.
- <sup>18</sup> Swedish Road Administration (Vagverket) (viewed at: <http://www.vv.se/Andra-sprak/English-engelska/Road-safety/>), 10 December 2009.
- <sup>19</sup> Swedish Road Administration (Vagverket) (viewed at: <http://www.vv.se/Andra-sprak/English-engelska/Road-safety/>), 10 December 2009.
- <sup>20</sup> New road safety framework (Jun 2009) (downloaded from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2009/06/15121346>) 08 December 2009.