



Redesign CS9 responds to pollution questions regards CS9

Redesign CS9, a self-funded group of local traders and residents who live and work in Hammersmith and Chiswick, has clarified its position on pollution questions with regards to the proposed CS9 Cycle Super Highway.

@redesignCS9

“TfL traffic modelling that predicts a decrease of motor traffic on Chiswick High Road (and is based on a situation that is not entirely analogous) could easily have been caused by traffic being forced onto other routes. If that happened in Chiswick, it would not only increase congestion and pollution elsewhere, it would push vehicles onto roads less able to carry large volumes of traffic.

No one is "claiming that air pollution could be reduced by increasing the speed of motor traffic", although air pollution does decrease by preventing traffic from idling at lights, in jams and by enabling engines to run at maximum efficiency. The proof is that improving the flow of traffic resulted in a 13% reduction in pollution on Chiswick High Road (London Borough of Hounslow figures) when the SCOOT traffic light system was implemented. The pedestrian version was integrated recently, although pollution levels are harder to assess since London Borough of Hounslow no longer use the monitoring station on Chiswick High Road and declined to join the London Air Quality Network. Conversely, increased journey times occurring because of road narrowing due to the implementation of CS9 will inevitably result in slower traffic and more instances when traffic is stationary, thereby adding to local pollution.

There are many other initiatives that could reduce pollution in the area including implementing the Ultra Low Emission zone. Whilst motor traffic is a major cause of air pollution, significant amounts of pollution are caused also by other factors including, in winter, by wood burning stoves. A recent study by King's College London found that in January 2018, wood-burning stoves produced 50% of the toxic emissions in some areas of London. Another recent study published in *Science* magazine found that volatile chemicals emitted by household cleaners and cosmetics react with air to produce significant causes of secondary pollution by photochemical smog. The causes of air pollution are complex and simply reducing road traffic would not eliminate them.

Pollution from vehicles on Chiswick High Road is not likely to be reduced by making journeys worse for the 40 to 80 people who can be carried by one single or double decker bus for instance. It is neither a fair nor sensible way of using the road space or the very limited financial resources available to a cash-strapped TfL. Forty to eighty cyclists will take up considerably more road space than one full bus, creating, were it to happen, exactly the sort of problem that occurs in cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen.

More people cycling would only reduce the net contribution to air pollution by vehicles if a

significant number of people cycled instead of used road transport. There is nothing to suggest that it will happen - quite the opposite. There was a 100% increase in the number of people cycling in London between 2005 and 2016. That makes a lovely soundbite but not much sense in terms of using it as a model for reducing pollution, let alone allocating funding, because the increase of modal share of cycling was from 1% - 2% of all road users. The number of people stating that they would never cycle, conversely, increased by 4% between 2015 and 2016 (by TfL's own admission, a statistically significant increase). In the same report, TfL's Attitudes to Cycling Survey 2016, the majority of respondents stated that they would never cycle - TfL chose to designate these people as "pre-contemplating cycling".

Of course, large numbers of people are also not capable of cycling and, given that Chiswick has an older population than the rest of the borough (source: London Borough of Hounslow) and that the population in general is ageing (source: ONS figures), the numbers of people in that category can only increase. Schoolchildren already benefit from free public transport in London. It seems unlikely that many more will choose to cycle instead and it would be a waste of resources for schools to have to provide supporting infrastructure and security when many are asking parents to contribute to funding textbooks.

Even if the incremental increase in cycling was much greater and happened over a shorter time period (and there is nothing to suggest that this will be the case), the percentage of people cycling would still be miniscule. Cycling infrastructure studies, including TfL's own Attitudes to Cycling Survey 2016 and peer-reviewed academic studies, have shown that generally, new cycling infrastructure may attract different cyclists but, in a two-year study in three cities for instance, it did not result in more people cycling overall. In fact, cycle superhighways were found by one study (Dalton) to be a major disincentive to cycling for women, minors and novice cyclists. This has also been borne out by anecdotal evidence from Copenhagen and Amsterdam where a mass of cyclists causes congestion and is intimidating to all but the most aggressive riders during peak times.

The health benefits of cycling can be achieved just as easily on a static cycle in a gym or by cycling in a velodrome. If London Borough of Hounslow considers this an important way to encourage people to get fit, they could consider adding static cycles and other equipment to parks, like that on Southfield recreation ground. It would cost a lot less than £70 million.

Cycling would be a lot safer if cyclists took more responsibility for their own safety by undertaking training (often provided at no cost to the cyclist), by cycling in a responsible manner that is appropriate to other road users (including other cyclists) and by not breaking the law.

There aren't very many people who would claim that cycling is more comfortable than travelling by other forms of road transport and even fewer that would claim that a concrete barrier is attractive. Plenty do argue that the pollution-absorbing trees that will be cut down to accommodate CS9 and the loss of wide pavements will be hugely detrimental to Chiswick High Road and make it a far less attractive place to be. A hedge and flower beds have actually been removed on Chiswick Back Common and Acton Green to accommodate cycle racks. Not only less attractive, but no chance of the plants being able to absorb and process pollution either.

Having to cross a cycle superhighway when travelling on foot from south to north or vice versa or when alighting from or boarding a bus is not very attractive - or safe - especially for people who are physically impaired. In fact, it may be impossible for some such as wheelchair users. That is before the likely impact on businesses has been considered. The removal of parking facilities will have a disproportionate effect on people with temporary, intermittent or permanent disabilities who have no other option than to travel by car or taxi for essential journeys.

Walking and cycling have been clumped together, but nothing is done to make walking any safer or more pleasant. Cyclists often choose to represent anti-social and illegal cyclists as being a "few bad apples". If that is the case, they cause a disproportionate amount of stress and harm to pedestrians and have made walking extremely unpleasant if not downright dangerous. In contrast to the 2% of people who cycle to work in London, 24% of people walk daily. Cyclists speed along towpaths, pavements, pedestrian-only areas and in parks where by-laws prohibit cycling, meaning that there are almost no areas where it is possible to walk without encountering them. Some cycling organisations promote the fact that No Cycling signs are, in some cases, only advisory; this included encouraging cyclists to continue to ride through temporary roadworks, both anti-social and potentially dangerous to cyclists as well as other people. A fair number of cyclists are extremely abusive to pedestrians. Pedestrians (and dogs) have been threatened, struck, injured and killed by cyclists, yet very few resources have been put into enforcing the law. That is not very likely to improve given that Chiswick no longer has a police station and has far fewer police on the streets. As cyclists have no mandatory identification, even if they cause damage and harm, they cannot always be traced. Yes, cyclists have also been injured and killed in RTAs but by no means all such incidents are the fault of the driver. That is never the case when cyclists ride on pavements.

Not enough is being done to ensure that pavements are kept in good repair and are kept free of litter and leaves. Again, quite the opposite. The York stone on Chiswick High Road has been replaced by small slabs which had to be re-laid almost as soon as they were first down, and which create many more trip hazards than the much larger York slabs. Leaves are left for prolonged periods until they become a major hazard.

So, aside from aspirational statements that the world would be a better place if only more people took up cycling, there is no proof that CS9 would benefit more than a small percentage of (mostly male, affluent) cyclists who happen to want to travel in that direction and probably mostly when the weather is fine.

There is however plenty of evidence from TfL, LBH and academia that there is nowhere in the UK where the provision of (expensive) infrastructure has resulted in cycling replacing other forms of transport to any significant degree. We also must bear in mind that, if this experiment fails, the money will not be available to other projects that are of significant proven benefit and indeed, it is entirely possible that more money could be spent on removing the infrastructure as happened with many traffic calming measures.

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Ends

*Traffic data analysts INRIX surveyed more than 1,300 cities around the world. Results showed that traffic jams in London cost drivers an average of £2,430 in lost time and fuel every year, with congestion costing London £9.5 billion annually. The A406 at Chiswick roundabout was found to be the most congested road in the global survey. CS9 is likely to make a substantial contribution to the problem, some of which will be mitigated once the Power Road bridge replacement works have finished.

All data and references were correct at the time of publication.

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