

By Email - 11 October 2022

Dear

Thank you for your question intended for the September Cabinet meeting regarding Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs). As you're aware, following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and in line with protocols, the Cabinet meeting went ahead with only urgent items on the agenda, to reflect the fact that we were in a period of national mourning; all questions and non-essential business were removed from the agenda. As a result, I understand you were offered a written response which you agreed to.

This is a common fear when residential road closures are installed which assumes that trips which used to pass along a road simply divert to other roads in the immediately surrounding area and problems are shifted to those other roads. This misses the fact that roads are designed for different purposes. Roads in residential areas are not designed to carry through traffic which is better accommodated on main roads. It also misses the phenomenon of 'traffic evaporation' where some short car trips will not divert when the journey becomes slightly less convenient because of road closure. Instead the person making the trip might decide to walk or cycle instead of using a car or they might decide not to make the trip at all.

The concept of "traffic evaporation" reflects the fact that, when changes such as modal filters and low traffic neighbourhoods are introduced, some drivers change their travel choices to alternative forms of transport, while others (i.e. through-traffic) make diversions further away to avoid the locality altogether.

The concept was established in academic research carried out by Sally Cairns, Carmen Hass-Klau, and Phil Goodwin in 1998 and followed up in 2002 and has since been widely observed in scheme evaluations. Cairns et al looked at 70 case studies and found that in half of the case studies examined, where road space for traffic was reduced, there was an 11% reduction in the number of vehicles across the whole area, including on the main roads.

Initial analysis of the impact of the LTNs in Hackney have seen a significant drop in the number of trips within the LTNs. The same analysis did show some roads experiencing higher levels of traffic. However, the analysis points to evidence of an overall reduction in traffic volume on the boundary and main roads across Hackney. Air quality modelling based on traffic counts shows that this reduction in traffic has improved air quality at all modelled receptors.

To understand whether the schemes have had an overall impact on bus passengers, bus speeds have been analysed using pre-pandemic performance as a benchmark. Bus speeds increased during each of the lockdown periods and decreased in between when traffic

returned to the roads.

At the end of the 2nd lockdown in mid-2021, with the LTNs still in place, speeds had broadly returned to pre-COVID levels closely shadowing broader London trends. On a borough-level, the bus speeds in Hackney track the trajectory of bus speeds across London and do not show an impact from the introduction of LTNs on speeds.

I hope that this response is helpful, but if you have any further questions please do come back to me.

Yours sincerely

Mete

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