

News from the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG)

MAG welcomes GLA Transport Committee bike safety report but slams ‘Third World roads in a First World capital’

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The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) has praised the Greater London Authority (GLA) Transport Committee for their intelligent assessment of the shortcomings in London Mayor Sadiq Khan’s attitude towards motorcycle safety in the city.

London’s Regional Representative for MAG, Tim Fawthrop, clarifies the riding community’s concerns: ‘MAG has actively worked with Transport for London (TfL) and the GLA to assist with creating a coherent safety agenda for motorcycle and scooter riders. While some of the recommendations have been accepted, others have been either ignored or apparently agreed to but subsequently not actioned.

‘For instance, the Urban Motorcycle Design Handbook, which was a great piece of work to which MAG actively contributed, appears to have created no urgency amongst TfL officers. In addition, the opening of all bus lanes to bikers across London is a proven life saver. Why haven’t we seen any effort by TfL to persuade Boroughs to do that?’

‘Cycle schemes receive hundreds of millions of pounds in funding, even though their safety figures indicate far fewer fatalities and injuries than for motorcyclists. Yet TfL’s own data shows that the fatality rate amongst motorcyclists in 2016 was four times greater than that for cyclists. Compared to just eight cycle users, thirty-three bikers lost their lives. Yet a number of the changes that TfL has implemented are making motorcycling riskier: for example, narrowing lanes so the perfectly legal process of filtering by motorbikes is made more dangerous. Also, the state of the road surface in places is shocking; something the Chair of the Committee, Keith Prince, and his team, have rightly included in the report. There are locations where we’ve got Third World roads in a First World capital.

‘MAG once again offers to work with TfL to help secure the training, the road policy and to get the attitude towards the hundreds of thousands of bikers in the capital right. It’s not difficult. They just have to listen to the advice they’ve repeatedly been given. They’ve done it for cyclists. If they’re serious about Londoners’ lives, they’ll do what it takes to reduce the unacceptably large number of motorcyclists’ lives which are being lost too. To not do so is a breach of their duty of care towards an economically important community of road users in London.’

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ENDS

Key points of the GLA Transport Committee report

(Taken verbatim from the report)

- 1. The Motorcycle Safety Action Plan needs to be updated.** We are now beyond the implementation date for all the actions in the previous plan, and there is no evidence that riding a motorcycle is any safer. We need a fresh look at this from the Mayor and TfL, bringing together all planned measures with clear timings and outcome measures.
- 2. The Mayor and TfL should consider reinstating their plans to develop a ‘London Standard’ for motorcycle safety training.** It is not clear why this commitment was removed from the Mayor’s draft Transport Strategy. Quite rightly, the proposed London Standard raised expectations that motorcycle safety was a key priority for the Mayor. We are not wedded to any particular branding for the safety training programme, but for the Mayor to signal that his training initiatives are being watered down is inadvisable.
- 3. The Mayor and TfL need to clarify how their proposed accreditation scheme will work and make sure it is inclusive.** In particular, it would be disappointing if motorcycle courier firms using self-employed riders were not eligible for accreditation. We accept that meaningful accreditation will require clear training standards that may be difficult for these firms to meet in relation to riders they do not employ directly. However, a route to accreditation should be designed so potential customers and couriers can make an informed choice on the safety practices of firms they work with.
- 4. We welcome TfL’s Urban Motorcycle Design Handbook as a major step forward for motorcycle safety.** Its guidance must be followed, however. This applies to both TfL and borough road schemes. We support the ongoing changes to roads to create Healthy Streets across London and make cycling and walking safer – good design for safe motorcycling must be implemented in the delivery of these schemes.
- 5. Reductions in TfL’s road maintenance budget are worrying.**

Motorcyclists are particularly susceptible to poor road surface conditions. We accept TfL’s assurance that safety critical repairs will continue to be made. Any evidence that motorcyclists are at increased risk from damaged roads should be acted on immediately.
- 6. The Mayor and TfL need to get serious about ensuring motorcyclists can ride in all bus lanes.** We are unconvinced that TfL is persuading boroughs to make this change with sufficient vigour. The rate of progress is far too slow and this is causing unnecessary risk for riders. TfL should provide whatever practical support boroughs need. Ultimately it might be necessary for the Mayor to use his financial leverage to make this change.