

Dear sirs

Following the decision by Ealing Council to deny continued access to bus lanes in the borough, the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) wishes to raise a number of urgent concerns.

The Motorcycle Action Group believes that any decision regarding access to bus lanes in Ealing should be suspended at least until 2012. That would allow a decision to be made on further evidence and would at least avoid action by the Council to undermine the current experiment by Transport for London routes.

In support of these concerns, we have identified two sets of issues that the Council is asked to address before proceeding to remove motorcycles from any bus lane.

Evidence-base

- The report to Cabinet showed little if any analysis of the nature of the collisions on Ealing's roads that would point to the presence of motorcycles in bus lanes as a likely cause.
- Alternative casualty mitigation options were not presented in the report to Cabinet.
- The report to Cabinet gave no exposure data or migration data that might illuminate changes in the casualty figures.
- The possibility of random variation in casualty numbers was not explored in the report. It is not unusual in any time period for some London Boroughs to see an increase in casualties, but a reduction in others, especially where numbers are low.
- There is evidence of a reduction in collisions during 2010 which suggests the rise in casualties may have been a transitory effect of adding a new group of permitted users. The proposed reversal of that change may have a similar effect, but this has not been addressed.
- Assumptions that changes in collision numbers do not reflect changes in motorcycle traffic, and that cyclists had changed their behaviour, are taken from a Transport for London report. TfL concluded that addressing the behaviour of car drivers and other road users at junctions was the more productive response
- TfL is considering whether changes to junction design would improve safety around junctions, this alternative was not presented to Cabinet.
- Preference for cycling is explicitly given as a basis for the decision. Motorcyclists are also a vulnerable road user group who benefit from very few considerations of this kind. The council has a duty to provide a safe and efficient road network for all groups of road user.
- It does not appear that summary accident data was presented to members of cabinet for scrutiny, only selected figures are presented in the narrative of the report.

Outcomes

- The Council's attempt to end motorcycle access to TfL bus lanes that pass through Ealing will undermine the current TfL experiment and make any findings that much more contentious. This cannot be in the public interest.
- We believe road safety would be better supported by a concerted attempt to get at the root causes of the much wider problem which affects other road user groups. Ealing appears to be willing to create confusion and disadvantage motorcyclists by withdrawing access to bus lanes in one part of London.
- Research by TfL found that the emissions from motorcycles are lower than for cars on identical journeys, even more so when motorcycles have access to bus lanes. The contribution of motorcycling to sustainable local travel in Ealing will be unnecessarily compromised by denying them access to bus lanes.
- It would appear that officers did not consult externally preventing motorcyclists representatives the opportunity to challenge the underlying assumptions. This was perverse considering the council set-up a special scrutiny committee to consider allowing motorcycle users access to bus lanes only two years earlier. Any future scrutiny of measures that affect motorcycle users should include motorcycle representatives.

- Press comments by a Council spokesperson certainly smacked of an emotional rather than rational decision.

Riders wishing to object to the new Traffic Orders may be unnecessarily thwarted by the Councils use of the unusual 'www2.' beginning to the web address www2.ealing.gov.uk/services/council/public_notices/ In the circumstances I would be grateful if you would notify me of the dates on which any Traffic Orders relating to denial of access to bus lanes by motorcycles are to be issued.