

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 20 November 2013
Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Mayor's Report

Darren Johnson (Chair): The Mayor will provide an oral update of up to five minutes in length on matters occurring since the publication of his report and all four party groups have asked for an update in response to the recent tragic deaths of cyclists.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Darren. There are all sorts of things been happening since we last met and I would single out a plan we have announced to use waste heat from the Tube to heat 500 homes in Islington. We have launched a food-save scheme to help businesses maximise their profits by diverting food away from landfill obviously towards useful purposes, consumption apart from anything else. We have a cleaner air website to help drive down pollution in London's atmosphere, which, as the Assembly will recall, has over the last five years improved considerably with NOx down 20% and particulates PM10 and PM2.5, both down 15%.

We are on track to deliver 100 pocket parks across London and we announced - I think just the other day - another 33 projects across 17 London boroughs. The new London Crime Prevention Fund is trying to cut down on re-offending, particularly among drug users, and there is a big project we have just launched in Bexley to do that, much crime is drug-related and if you can help them off drugs you can help them to stop re-offending.

We have a project we launched on 7 November to use food waste to run buses in the Barking area, all the buses that run from the Barking depot will now run with a blend of 20% regular diesel and 80% biodiesel or chip fat basically, chip fat in the buses, about time we did it. One of the difficulties is we do not have a refinery nearby in London to produce the biodiesel and we are trying to get that market going, currently they are up in the north of the country or in Scotland.

We have also launched a London Schools Atlas on the web, an interactive function, so that kids can learn more about the history of our city.

All Groups have asked for an oral update on cycling fatalities and I am going to go through that quickly if I may because I know everybody will want to come back with questions. The first point is the one I have made many times over the last few days, which obviously is that one death is one too many and obviously our thoughts are with the victims, with their families and those who love them and care for them. It is also important to stress, and this is a difficult point to make when people are mourning, but this is very important to stress, that the spate of fatalities that we have seen in the last couple of weeks must be seen in the context of an overall decline in fatalities. I was challenged on the radio yesterday by a guy from a cycling group who said that the number of fatalities since I have been Mayor over the last six years was about 80, it is actually 81 from 2008 to 2013, but if you look at the previous six years it was 102 and if you look at the five years, for instance, between 2008 to 2012 in my Mayoralty, there were 68 cycling fatalities on the roads in London, the figure between 2003 and 2007 was 82. Whichever way you cut it, you are looking at a reduction in the number of fatalities over identical periods of time.

You are also looking at a very considerable increase in the volume of cycling and that is the key point that I think people also sometimes forget. I know that is a hard point to make in this context, I know that people do not always listen to it, and it is difficult to expect that point to be broadcast in these circumstances, but I do think it is important to make, statistically it is getting safer to cycle, your journey is less likely to end in a

fatality, but it is very important to continue to work to make cycling ever safer. There is a huge amount of work that we are engaged on at all sorts of levels.

Obviously, when you look at what is happening on the roads, you have to look at the role of heavy goods vehicles (HGV) -- and you have to pursue the scheme that we have at the moment, for instance, to make sure that all HGVs entering London are properly equipped with the safety features that we would want to see. We are consulting on that now, we want to create a safer lorry zone in London. I am sure the Assembly is fully aware --

Darren Johnson (Chair): If you could bring your comments to a close now.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just want to make a couple more points if I may, Darren. We are also of course investing massively in cycling infrastructure and the third point I would like to make obviously is that it is absolutely vital that all road users respect the rules of the road as far as they can and just to repeat the key and salient data, which is I think getting slightly lost; although we bitterly regret the recent spate of fatalities, it is vital to stress that overall the number of deaths we are seeing on London's roads from cycling is coming down.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. I will take questions from groups on cycling first and then if there are any questions on other matters of the Mayor's oral update we will come to those.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Mr Mayor, at the Cycling Vision launch last week, Transport for London (TfL) explained how they took just 18 months to install a cycle lane on a really straightforward bit of road; 18 months. London cannot wait 18 months for you to correct some of the issues on Cycle Superhighway 2 (CS2) and some of the other dangerous junctions in London. What are you going to do to speed up this urgent work on the highway?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are doing an awful lot and, as I say, I think it is very important to continue with the Cycle Superhighway programme, we are not going to be deflected from that. There are people out there who would like to use the current spate of accidents as a justification for saying that we should have fewer cyclists on the roads; I absolutely reject that approach, I will not be deflected from our course, which is to encourage more cycling in London and to that end we will continue to invest in the transport infrastructure that we need. I can give you an example of --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): This is about how long it is taking, Mr Mayor, it is how long it is taking. 18 months may be fast for traffic engineers; it is not fast enough for ordinary Londoners who want to be cycling but want to cycle safely. What are you doing to speed up the works that are urgently needed on the roads in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To give you a couple of examples, we are, from next year, we will be constructing a Cycle Superhighway from Elephant & Castle over Blackfriars bridge to King's Cross, which will be very largely segregated, it will be an extraordinary new Cycle Superhighway for London. As you know, we are also consulting now on the east/west Cycle Superhighway, which will run more or less from the City along the Embankment up through to the West Way; it will be the longest continuous urban Cycle Superhighway in Europe. You also ask what I personally am doing, I would just point out that - I cannot remember how long you have been serving on this Assembly, Caroline, I think you came in when I did - but there were no Cycle Superhighways at all during a period in which cycle fatalities were running at a much higher rate and I humbly point out that actually if you look at our record over the last five years we have shifted heaven and earth to get these things installed, they are not easy to do.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): I am not sure you have, Mr Mayor, it is not fast enough, and that is the issue. Two years ago we talked about reviewing dangerous junctions in London; we have seen a handful of changes put in place. I think you, as Chair of TfL, need to make sure the officers there start working at the pace that Londoners want them to rather than in their traffic engineer world that seems to take years and years for the smallest change to happen.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I must reject completely what you say because I think they have worked extremely fast and extremely well and it is very easy to put in sub-standard or inadequate schemes and be forced - because they have been badly researched and badly thought through - to take them out again. That is not what we want to do and we want to make sure that what we do lasts and produces genuine improvements for London.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Mr Mayor, you need to start taking some responsibility here and getting things to be done quicker where they can be safely for cyclists in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I appreciate that you need to try to score points about this, Caroline --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): This is not about scoring points, this is about what you are doing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- but I really think if you look at the record and you look at what we have done over the last five years, I really do not think anybody could credibly say that we have not put cycling safety and put cycling at the forefront of our ambitions and to the best of my knowledge there were no Cycle Superhighways before I became Mayor; I am pleased that we are getting on with the programme and we are getting on with them as fast as possible.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): We will get into the detail I think in December at the Transport Committee.

Jenny Jones (AM): You keep talking about the deaths but you are ignoring the figures on the seriously injured and the fact is cycling is not getting safer in London. These are your figures, Mr Mayor, in 2008 - when you were first elected - on average a cyclist could do over 400,000 cycle trips before being killed or seriously injured. In 2011, three years after your smoothing traffic flow and changing traffic lights and so on, the average cyclist could only make 364,000 trips before being killed or seriously injured. Cycling is not getting safer. You have been asking me to apologise for two years for saying that. Now I am going to ask you - I do not want an apology - but I think you should apologise to the families of the victims and to the people who have been seriously injured on the roads.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you should apologise for your continual scaremongering. How often --

Darren Johnson (Chair): If you let Assembly Member Jones finish her question first then you can come in.

Jenny Jones (AM): I would like you to apologise to the families of people who have been killed and to the people who have been seriously injured on the roads because of your flawed and quite dangerous policies.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it very striking that you sat in this Assembly - to the best of my knowledge, I think you were there - when cycle fatalities were running at a much higher rate. I do not believe that you protested then, I do not believe that you said anything then, I think you should apologise to Londoners for your inertia, your silence and your refusal to stand up for cyclists.

Jenny Jones (AM): I would like to say, Mr Mayor, that I was the first person to mention road safety in this Chamber and cycling in this Chamber and I have worked hard all of my political career to make the roads safer.

Your comments are outrageously incorrect and you do now owe me an apology. Let me get back to my original question; will you apologise to the families of those who have been killed and to the people who have been seriously injured because you have made the roads more dangerous?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I reject what you are saying; I think if you look at what --

Jenny Jones (AM): These are your figures, Mr Mayor, they are not my figures, they are your figures, Transport for London (TfL) figures.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Actually, if you look at what is happening on the numbers of people being killed on our roads and --

Jenny Jones (AM): I am not talking just about people being killed; I am talking about the seriously injured as well.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you look at what is happening on the number of people, even the number of people being injured -- admittedly we have a larger number of people currently being injured, and I am concerned about that, but that is I think a function of the huge increase in the number of cyclists and --

Jenny Jones (AM): No, I am talking average trips; that takes into account the extra numbers. All right, let us move on to the fact --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think, if you were being honest with Londoners, you would actually apologise for your continual scaremongering about cycling and you pretend to be a fan of cycling and you pretend to stick up for it, but all you do in my view is try to terrify people about the state of our roads. Of course there is a risk involved in cycling, everybody --

Jenny Jones (AM): He is being personally quite offensive and inaccurate, Chair, can you please ask him to withdraw his remarks.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Everybody understands that there is a risk. What we have been doing is --

Jenny Jones (AM): Can you ask him to withdraw his remarks of a personal nature?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- very considerably reducing them --

Darren Johnson (Chair): You can do that; it is your question.

Jenny Jones (AM): Mr Mayor, let me move you on to the fact that you have been blaming the victims. Back in October 2011, I asked you about the rising number of child and pedestrian casualties, because there are a lot of pedestrians dying and being seriously injured as well. I asked you about them and you blamed handheld devices for the rise. You did not have any evidence at that time but you have had two years now and you are still talking about headphones and so on being a danger. Where are the statistics? Do you have the figures from TfL on that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let me just say something about that conversation --

Jenny Jones (AM): Do you have the figures? Do you have the figures on how many of these collisions are caused by people wearing headphones? I asked you this two years ago. Do you have the figures?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If we do have any such data I would be happy to share it with you, but I think the important --

Jenny Jones (AM): Then what are you basing your comments on?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will tell you what I am basing my comments on --

Jenny Jones (AM): Blaming victims.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I am not blaming the victims, I do think in a mature society where it is perfectly obvious that accidents on the roads are caused by many factors -- and if I remember correctly yesterday we had a long conversation on the radio, which was mainly about what we were doing to stop lorries from turning left in such a way as to catch cyclists unawares, what we were doing to make cyclists more aware of lorries turning left - that was what the discussion was about, what we are doing to make lorries safer. I was then asked a throwaway question at the end about headphones and I mentioned my view, which is that I think it is dangerous for cyclists to have headphones on while they cycle and I think that in London traffic I

Jenny Jones (AM): What about it being dangerous when cars go into advanced stop lines and there are lots of factors, you cannot pick on one factor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did not pick on it, but if I may say --

Jenny Jones (AM): Mr Mayor, you are being very offensive today and you are being blind to the causes of the problems. The problem is your policies.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Most people listening to this would say that it is entirely reasonable in the context of collisions between motorists, HGV drivers and cyclists, it is entirely reasonable of us to focus on what we can do to make HGVs safer, but I think people would also feel the conversation was inadequate if we did not draw attention to the additional responsibility of cyclists, Jenny, to be sensible and to obey the rules of the road.

Jenny Jones (AM): He is wasting my time, could you please shut him up?

Darren Johnson (Chair): I am going to let the Mayor continue to answer the question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you seriously disagree with that then I think that you need your head examined because --

Jenny Jones (AM): Can you stop being so offensive? What is the matter with you? Why are you being so personally rude? Why can you not stick to the topic?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not intend to be personally rude, Jenny. If I am personally rude to you, obviously I am very sincerely apologetic. I just sometimes feel that you are not entirely civil to me and --

Jenny Jones (AM): I am talking about your policies, not about your personality.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- I reserve the right to answer back in kind. We are doing a huge amount to invest in the roads; we are doing a huge amount to make our transport system safer. What I do not think Londoners (overspeaking)

Jenny Jones (AM): Repetition. I do not have to listen to this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I do not think anybody in this city can conceivably ignore is the simultaneous, parallel, additional duty of cyclists to behave responsibly. If you are saying that duty does not exist then I would like you to assert that now. Are you saying that cyclists have no such duty?

Jenny Jones (AM): I am here to ask the questions, not you. He is wasting my time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you are wasting everybody's time. In my view Jenny has wasted our time quite long enough and it is high time you went off to the House of Lords where you belong and wasted their time.

Jenny Jones (AM): You are just jealous.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Assembly Member Biggs.

John Biggs (AM): Thank you, Chair. Following from Jenny Jones' point, I think there is an underlying problem, which is that too much of our cycling policy is written by what I call 'gung-ho alpha males' and it is at risk of creating road conditions that are not safe for people who are not of that disposition. For the record, the safest Cycle Superhighway, which runs through my constituency - in my experience, I may be wrong on this - but it is Cycle Superhighway 3, which was built under your predecessor and when you were elected, you have changed the colour of the tarmac, and I think we should celebrate the fact that cycling is being better catered for in London, but there are still some very, very serious problems.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think I would agree with that.

John Biggs (AM): The serious problems, I want to speak particularly about Cycle Superhighway 2 (CS2) and the little bit of CS2 between Aldgate and the Newham border, six people have lost their lives in less than three years, on that piece of road, and it is a scandal, I mean it is outrageous that not enough has been done to deal with that. I met with you and the widow of one of the first victims in your office over two years ago and we talked about the measures that needed to be taken. Time and again TfL - what I call the dead hand of TfL - and their bureaucracy have said, "No, road priority is such that we cannot give the time at these important junctions to make it safe for the more vulnerable users", and I think that is a very severe indictment. You have to respond at present to a coroner's letter, which you cannot comment on I guess because of the legal process, but there is urgent need for you to shake up TfL and get them to recognise that the sacrifice of motorist time is a price worth paying for the safety of vulnerable road users.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

John Biggs (AM): Do you accept that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On CS2, we have put in a massive new entirely segregated section, which I hope you appreciate and have personally inspected, I am sure you have.

John Biggs (AM): The bit that has just opened in Newham, yes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The Bow Roundabout, which is I think the issue that you are particularly concerned about, John, we have made a huge effort to transform that roundabout and it goes back to what I was saying a moment or two ago to Caroline, who was saying, "Get on with it. Do more". It is easy to put in things that are inadequately researched and do not stand the test of time.

We were urged, for instance, to put in a cycle-only traffic light at Bow, which indeed we have, and in my view, looking at it and the operation of that traffic light and the segregated stretch that goes behind the bus stop and so on, you have to ask yourself whether there is a risk of over-engineering some of these solutions. I am afraid that I am not absolutely convinced that you can always produce Nirvana without producing a situation in which the signals are too confusing. It is very difficult to get this right. What we have is a situation in which you have vulnerable road users in the form of cyclists on that stretch of road who are mingling in the traffic with very dangerous large vehicles and there is no very easy solution for this; if there was, believe me we would have done it. One thing you could do is construct individual flyovers for the cyclists. You could totally segregate out. You could construct cycling flyovers. It would be expensive, but I am perfectly prepared to contemplate it. The other thing I hold in the back of my mind as a regular cyclist is that I am not convinced that every cyclist would use it, because what would happen is that they would come to this moment where they had the option of sticking on the ground and --

John Biggs (AM): But I think --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- If I can just continue the point because you asked me a serious point, if they have the option of sticking on the ground and saving time and exercising their rights as road users and going with the traffic or they have to puff and pedal right the way up on to a new safety feature that I am afraid many of them might choose to ignore unless you said that cyclists were to be compelled to use that safety feature, and again you would then be starting to erode, what I think, is the right of cyclists to use all stretches of the road in London and that is not a route that I want to go down.

What I am trying to get at is that the answers that people regularly put forward, when you dig into them, are not as easy, not as straightforward as all that. Much more needs to be done to educate cyclists, to educate HGV drivers, and of course much more needs to be done to invest in our roads.

John Biggs (AM): I do agree that those things are important. Viewers need to understand that we have limited time, which is why we try to interrupt you on long answers, and I do respect your lengthy answer. There is a solution. I am a world expert on the Bow roundabout now. I have been there so many times with transport officers, with cycle campaigners, with local politicians. I have tried to understand it, I have had meetings in my office, I have had meetings in your office, because three people have lost their lives there, and there is a solution. It might be quite expensive. It might require us to do quite a lot of work and there are interim solutions, which will make it safer as well. I think that is a price worth paying and I would ask you in your authority as Chair of TfL to instruct that we go further to make that junction safe.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just say that it is in my heart too to do that, I mean completely? I look at Bow. I want it to be safer, but exactly what you do there --

John Biggs (AM): I take that as a yes then.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is one vital point that I think --

John Biggs (AM): There are many vital points.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- that people should know about Bow and about that east/west stretch generally in the Hackney/Newham/Stratford area. We are going to be opening up quiet ways, additional quiet ways, so people who do not want to be on that stretch of road, who find the idea of the Bow roundabout too challenging, we will make sure that there are additional quiet ways, and that possibility has opened up by what we are doing in the [Queen Elizabeth] Olympic Park and the routes we can create there.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Assembly Member Tracey.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you, Chairman. Mr Mayor, I do not know whether you know, but in the last half-an-hour or so Chris Boardman, the well-known Olympic cyclist, has actually said that he thinks you are taking very positive steps to deal with this problem, but he also asks when or how you are going to proceed to the idea of perhaps limiting heavy lorries and tippers particularly during the peak hours when of course the maximum number of cyclists are on the roads.

There are two other things: one is when are we going to see far more lorries with audio warnings on them such as one does encounter in the city on certain trucks going around, because that must be a positive step. The last thing, to what extent are cyclists insured? Because Jenny Jones has raised the ones that are injured rather than those unfortunates that are actually killed on the roads, but what about proper insurance for cyclists?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On the tipper trucks, which is the big issue for us, there is no question that a disproportionate number of fatalities involve HGVs and big vehicles of all kinds and that is why we are consulting on a safer lorry zone in London. It may be that as part of the safer lorry zone we will insist on lorries having an audible “I am turning left” function. It would also be useful therefore if cyclists could hear that function; that is why I make the point that I do about things in your ears.

The question is, what would be the effect in terms of lives saved of banning lorries in the peak hours? We need to dig into this a lot and we need to work out how it would work. I want you to know I am not averse to the idea instinctively. We did a lot during the Olympics to try to move traffic off the roads during times when it was going to be congested with Olympic traffic, there are lots of things we can do. I notice though, the most recent cyclists who perished unfortunately in collisions with HGVs, only a small number of them actually had their accidents in the peak period, as far as I can remember the statistics, so you would not by any means solve the problem. I think it was 2 out of 14 is the figure I have in mind were actually during these peak hours in the morning, and the gentleman who lost his life in Camberwell for instance most recently, that happened at noon.

What you would also risk, I believe, is a great glut of lorries as soon as the peak was over, and they would also be in conflict with all other road users, including cyclists and pedestrians, in much greater numbers during that period. What is difficult, I think, is to imagine that we could somehow ban them altogether from London roads when they are needed for construction; they are needed to keep the economy going. What you can do is make them much safer. I will certainly look, and I do not want to rule it out, we are going to look at all the options and all the experiences of other cities.

People talk a lot about what is going on for instance in Paris; actually in the greater Parisian area they had 17 fatalities last year; that is more than us. There are no magic solutions to this; it is a question of engaging on all fronts and not just with road infrastructure, not just with lorries, but also with trying to encourage sensible behaviour by cyclists and others.

Richard Tracey (AM): But if you are not going to be able in a practical way to ban them during peak times, it does make the audio signals on heavy lorries, perhaps even on buses, even more important for the cyclist, does it not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is why we are consulting on it as part of the safer lorries zone, we are looking at that.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Shawcross.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Thank you, Chair. Mr Mayor, I want to follow up on John Biggs’ point about CS2. Cross-party, the leads on Transport Committee here have just met the London Cycling Campaign and

they basically advised us that you should now have over 10,000 emails in your inbox. London's cycling community want you to respond very urgently and speedily on the specific problems of CS2 and on the need to revisit and refit some sections of the Cycling Superhighway network because quite frankly they are confusing, they are weak, they very often let cyclists down just at the moment when they need protection. I think we all understand that the earlier infrastructure was more problematic and that recent changes have been very positive and good and there has been more segregation, but I think it is important that we all admit that CS2 was substandard when it was installed and actually there is an urgent action plan from London Cycling Campaign, they want you to make some changes right away. What is your response to those tens of thousands of Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My response is that obviously we are always open to suggestions and the whole road surface is in continual process of negotiation and improvement obviously and we are going to try to make CS2 and all the other Cycle Superhighways as safe as we possibly can.

I have said to John what I have already said about the Bow roundabout, if there is more we can do there then we certainly should do that. I think most people would accept that the changes towards the Stratford end of CS2 are pretty remarkable. You cannot unfortunately do that everywhere in town. I think what people need to understand about the Cycle Superhighways is that they are not going to provide a kind of invisible force-field around cyclists that is going to protect them, but what they are there to do is to alert everybody that this is a place where you are going to find cyclists in large numbers, where you are going to have to pay attention to the road.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): The confusion is one of the key issues here, is it not, because people have been lulled into a false sense of security and I think there have already been too many occasions when cyclists have actually had to go out and protest in large numbers to get things sorted out. People have been protesting about Bow because they are doubly angry as they did make very good suggestions, technical suggestions, about how that roundabout could be improved and made safe, and actually they were pushed back and the plans were not good enough.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not agree with that. Have you cycled the roundabout?

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): I have walked around it, Mr Mayor. It is very difficult to walk around it because there are very few pedestrian crossings as well.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What you notice if you --

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): The cyclists are telling us that they have had to do things like do mass demonstrations on the Blackfriars bridge. There is plenty of good technical advice available to you, Mr Mayor, available to TfL, to get these schemes right. The problem is you cannot prioritise smoothing the traffic flow and always keep the cyclists safe.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is not true. It is completely untrue. We have taken huge amounts of time off motorists at Bow Roundabout, we have taken huge amounts of time, and we have actually done what the cycling group wanted and we put in a cycle-only traffic light. What you cannot budget for is a decision by a cyclist not to use that lane or not to use that traffic light.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Are you telling me you are not going to respond positively to the London Cycling Campaign's specific requests about CS2 to do things like install immediate protected space for cycling at Aldgate junction, to commit to installing cycling and pedestrian-specific lights across Bow Roundabout? Are you saying seriously that you think CS2 is good enough now? There are 10,000 people who have emailed you, Mr Mayor, to tell you, to plead with you: it is not safe enough.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said, we are always willing to look at suggestions; we are always willing to make improvements where we can.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): They want a commitment to action, Mr Mayor. Will you make a commitment to act now on CS2?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are acting across all Cycle Superhighways and will continue to act for the foreseeable future.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. Can I just remind people in the public gallery? We do need to have this meeting in silence. I will not allow interruptions from the public gallery. I know this is a heated topic but we need silence if we are to properly hold the Mayor to account. Assembly Member Boff.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, one of the things I would urge you to do, if we can depart from the sort of -- I sometimes think that one of the biggest obstacles to cycling safety is sometimes the rancorous negativity of Jenny Jones when it comes to this issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I agree. A false friend of cycling.

Andrew Boff (AM): Even when she has a point, she throws it away. Can I ask you, even though, as you have accepted, the number of fatalities has reduced, that the actual number killed and seriously injured (KSI) has remained stubbornly the same - a little worse, a little better - but it is actually stubbornly the same, and that needs to be addressed. One of the expectations I think of the public is that safe cycling in London should get safer, not just be capped at the current level. I would ask you to attend to that and that you be driven by evidence.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, but I would ask everybody to be driven by evidence and when the debate concerns cycle fatalities, as it has in the last fortnight, I think it would be a very good thing if the BBC carried loud and clear the information that over the last five years there have been fewer cycle fatalities on London's roads than there were in the previous five years, in spite of a massive increase in cycling. Whether that will be broadcast on the news or not I have no idea. Who would like to bet whether the BBC London News will actually carry that fact?

Jenny Jones (AM): But it is not true, so why would they?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry, it is true, Jenny.

Jenny Jones (AM): No, it is not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is true.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Assembly Member Jones, if you want to come in for an additional exchange you signal and I will bring you in at the appropriate moment.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There have been fewer fatalities in the last five years than the previous five years.

Darren Johnson (Chair): The exchange is with Assembly Member Boff.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will give you the figures again, I really think they need to hear the figures again, and (overspeaking)

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, I would appreciate it if you responded to my question rather than Jenny Jones' intervention, and indeed her intervention proves my comment earlier that actually that kind of behaviour gets in the way of improving cycling safety in London. Actually the other groups have been relatively positive. Val Shawcross has been positive; John Biggs has been positive, but we do get this sort of irrational hysteria that we have from Jenny Jones and it is annoying because there are some points that she is making and that is that the KSIs have remained stubbornly at the same level and they need to be attended to.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is absolutely right, Andrew, and that is why I said everything that I have said about investment in the roads, why we are putting a £1 billion programme on transforming our road network, and why we are going to expand our efforts at education. One thing that I want us to do is to think particularly about new cyclists, cyclists who are a little bit less confident, and see what we can do to help them understand how to use the roads, how to be properly cautious, how to enjoy cycling in London, we are thinking about what we can proactively do as TfL to do that.

I really do want to, just because Len [Duvall, AM] and co were disputing this. I have the figures again. I will repeat them. From 2008 to 2013 - in other words a six-year period - there were 81 fatalities; 2002 to 2007 there were 102 fatalities, or if you cut it another way, if you look at the years 2008 to 2012 there were 68 compared to 82 between 2003 and 2007. It is very difficult to look at the statistics in any other way. The number of deaths from cycling on London's roads has come down and that is an astonishing thing when you consider that the number of cyclists on London's roads has gone up by 176%, and that is the context I think in which this whole debate needs to be viewed. That is not an easy point to get across. I have tried several times to get it across. I hope very much that every Member of the Assembly will find that it is the first thing that springs to their lips when they are asked to comment on what is happening on the roads in London.

Andrew Boff (AM): If I can just very quickly pass you two more points. Can we first of all, again - I want to be evidence-based on anything you do - but I also respect that the public are concerned about accidents, collisions, and the fatalities that have resulted from those on CS2 and I think the public would want to see a review of CS2. I am not suggesting that you should instantly adopt everything the London Cycling Campaign tells you to adopt; that is not what we are about, but the public would want to see a review and be assured that action is being taken and so we would ask you to take that lobby from the LCC very seriously, My colleague Dick Tracey [AM] was on there and is supportive of that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am grateful to you, Andrew, for what you do to support cycling in London and the encouragement that you have given me over the last few years and you have certainly been a very valuable advocate. You are completely right in what you say. We need to continue to try to make all our Cycle Superhighways safer. I think that again, insofar as you are going to have accidents, it is, I am afraid, statistically quite likely that they will be at least in the vicinity of these major superhighways because they tend to attract quite a large proportion of the traffic. We will certainly look at every incident very carefully to see what implications it may have for the road layout, for how it works, for the effect that the signals have on the cyclists, on the impression they get of their safety or otherwise on a certain stretch of the road. Of course we are looking at that the whole time.

Andrew Boff (AM): I am very grateful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If we can review CS2 to make it completely perfect that would be what I would want to do, but what we cannot do, and I really hope I will not be accused of blaming the victim if I say this, because I have no intention of doing that, but what we cannot do is provide engineering of every inch of road surface in such a way as to guard against behaviour that is irrational and unexpected.

Andrew Boff (AM): I take that point, Mr Mayor, and I do not think that is really the basis of the request for the review. CS2 has raised questions in the past. Taking aside the fatalities, there have been questions raised about CS2. I have raised questions many years ago about particular parts of it. It is not that I am asking you instantly to change it according to how the LCC say you should change it. I am saying that what we need is a review and can you give an undertaking that there will be a review of CS2?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, we are certainly upgrading CS2, we will certainly been going through doing all the improvements we can possibly make to that Superhighway and indeed others.

Andrew Boff (AM): So there is an undertaking to give a review of CS2?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It follows from everything I have said this morning, Andrew, that all our Cycle Superhighways are in a process of continuous review, so if that is the assurance you seek then you certainly have it.

Andrew Boff (AM): That is not the assurance I seek. I know your reluctance to pick out one Superhighway and say, "We are going to review this one", because it in some way gives kind of credence to the narrative that in some way it is dangerous, but the public would want some reassurance on that CS2 and I think it is only fair that you can give that concession and say, "We will review CS2".

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are reviewing CS2; I do not think there is any point in saying we will review it when we are reviewing it, and we will continue to review all Cycle Superhighways.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Assembly Member Cleverly.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Mayor, we have already seen this morning the reaction from some Members to your response to a direct question about cyclists wearing headphones, and I am very conscious that a period immediately after a series of terrible incidents like this is often the hardest time to have a dispassionate conversation, quite understandably so. In light of that, and so that we can all make our decisions and policy choices in an environment of hard fact, will you be willing to commission a small discrete piece of statistical research done by a completely independent body, perhaps one of London's academic institutions, doing a bit of data analysis around the patterns of accident circumstances involving cyclists around London - not just the fatalities, those are important - but all, so that we have a large enough dataset so we know accurately the proportion involving HGVs, the proportion involving Cycle Superhighways, primary, secondary roads, experienced cyclists, inexperienced cyclists, etc. I think that will give us a strong factual basis on which we can have no party political divides about how to move forward on this issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Certainly on all the fatalities we have now a wealth of information about them as far as we are able to assemble it, because sometimes the evidence will be confused, but we have pretty good information about what has happened and we study it. On the injuries, I am less certain about exactly what data we have, but I am more than happy to share it with you.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you. Would you be happy for me to contact Andrew Gilligan [Cycling Commissioner] about progressing this piece of research? I think it is very important.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure that lots of data already exists. I do not know whether it is ready for publication at the moment, but I would be more than happy to share what we have with you.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Assembly Member Biggs.

John Biggs (AM): Thank you, Chair, and I think it is important that we come back on this. I think you are at risk of becoming captured by the bureaucracy of TfL. I have a report here, June 2013, "*Casualties in Greater London during 2012*", published by TfL, which tells us the number of fatal and seriously injured cyclists between the calendar year 2011 and 2012 rose by 18% from 571 to 671 cyclists killed or seriously injured, and that is a pretty significant increase. That is a matter of record published by TfL. I do not want to quibble; I do not want you to --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Then do not quibble. If you do not want to quibble, then do not.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Let John Biggs finish his question.

John Biggs (AM): This is a statement of fact but I think the more important point is that we are signalling collectively, all the political groups in London I think are signalling that we want people to cycle in London. We have instated these things called Superhighways, which give a signal to people that they will be safer and better treated than they would on other bits of highway. We are encouraging people to do these things, and when we have a piece of road like CS2, which is dangerous - it is dangerous, I argued in my team that we should suspend it, that we should argue it be suspended, they talked me out of this for a number of reasons - but it is dangerous, the lanes are narrow, it is stressful for motorists as well as for cyclists because it is just not fit for a Cycle Superhighway, it is as simple as that, and you need to act really urgently. I have a public meeting, next Thursday I think it is. I would be very pleased if you came and spoke to that meeting and assured people.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am grateful to you, John, for the way obviously that you are pursuing this. It is very important that we do what we can to make CS2 as safe as we possibly can and that goes for all Cycle Superhighways. We continue to invest in them and we continue to research the implications of each and every accident on those Cycle Superhighways to see what they might tell us about how we can do better, and I have to tell you that sometimes, looking at some of the accidents on CS2, it is very hard to conclude what a traffic engineer could have done to obviate such a disaster and sometimes it might be clearer, sometimes there might be something that you could do.

John Biggs (AM): It is an accident waiting to happen.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You can say that but, as I say, I have not heard you saying much in the last few days that cycle fatalities have come down over the last five years. I have not heard Members of the Assembly. I have not heard it from Jenny. I have not heard it from the BBC. I do not think I have heard a single person point out that actually your chances of dying on a cycle journey in London are lower now than they were five years ago and lower than they were ten years ago. Has anybody said that? Has anybody from the GLA Conservatives said that?

John Biggs (AM): With respect, Chair, we have a duty of care, and that is not a sufficient answer.

Darren Johnson (Chair): I have not seen any other Member wish to come in now on cycling so are there any questions on any other aspects of the Mayor's oral update? Can we then move on to the questions on the order paper.

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