

Agenda for roads

Now that government wants to help drivers get about there are ideas they can adopt to make the vision a reality.

Talking to Ministers, they say they do want highways authorities to review traffic light phasing and controls.

It would be good if all sets could be equipped with sensors so lights responded to different traffic conditions. At low use times lights should shift to green when any vehicle approaches a red light when there is no traffic using the green. At normal times green time should be proportionate to traffic flows.

If these systems cannot be used the phasings should be adjusted to reflect normal use patterns. For example, the lights at the junction of the Embankment with Vauxhall Bridge Road, a busy London junction, offer twice as long on green for traffic approaching from over Vauxhall Bridge. This produces unused green time in that direction and permanent queues on the other three. Why?

The government should allow traffic turning left at a light controlled junction to treat the red light as a Stop sign. Drivers should stop as now on red but if the turn was free of vehicles and pedestrians then they should be able to proceed.

Ministers approving schemes to alter road layouts and junctions should not approve or fund Council schemes which are designed to get vehicles off the road. Of course we need better routes for cycles and safe paths for pedestrians. Taking roadspace off vehicles on busy main roads is not the way to achieve this aim.

Roundabouts are usually better than light controlled junctions. They should usually be preferred.

Where right turning traffic can easily get stuck Councils should be encouraged to widen the carriageway to create a right turning lane to free traffic going straight on or turning left.

Councils should exercise greater discipline over timings and duration of works that entail digging holes in roads. This should include their own Highways department.

Councils should move to getting utilities under verges and pavements in conduits with locked access to avoid the continuing need to dig up roads to repair pipes and wires.