Developing a London cycling safety code
10001
December 2010
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- Research conducted by 2CV
Contents

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Summary and conclusions

Cycling in London: mindset and risk

Developing a London cycling safety code
Introduction
As put forth in the Cycle Safety Action Plan earlier this year, ‘As well as an unprecedented investment in the delivery of innovative cycling schemes like cycle hire and cycle superhighways, we must make sure that every person who gets on a bicycle feels and most importantly is as safe as possible’ – Kulveer Ranger, Mayor of London’s Transport Advisor

Towards this end, Better Routes and Places (BRAP) are looking at opportunities to develop educational tools and safety advice for cyclists to encourage cyclists to ride more safely and considerately for themselves and for others.

Research is required to explore the potential of a London cycling safety code and how to create engagement with it. In addition, some messages have been developed and research is required to assess response to these messages and likely impact on behaviour.
Research Objectives

• To understand how a London cycling safety code/tips may be of benefit to London’s cyclists and encourage them to ride more safely for themselves and others
  • Spontaneous ideas for what a cycling safety code may include
  • Response to the proposed cycling safety code stimulus
  • Ideas for improvement: concept, content, language, tone of voice, how to optimise engagement and adherence
Sample

- The research comprised of eight groups with London cyclists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>SEG</th>
<th>Inner/outer London</th>
<th>Cyclist status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>ABC1</td>
<td>Inner</td>
<td>Less experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>35-55</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>ABC1</td>
<td>Outer</td>
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<td>Inner/Outer</td>
<td>Experienced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The sample included a mix of commuter and leisure cyclists from a good geographical spread of London areas

- Research was conducted by 2CV in December 2010
Stimulus

- A number of different stimulus elements were provided to the group to assist in development of the London cycling safety code

- 12 x safe cycling advice messages developed by TfL

- Logos of potential contributors to the campaign (e.g. TfL, Mayor of London, Met Police, Evans, London Cycling Campaign, DfT etc)

- Statistics about cycling in London

- Examples of other cycling safety codes
Summary and conclusions
Summary and conclusions

1. Cyclists quickly get into habits (good and bad) which are mainly driven by learning from observations and experiences on the road.

2. Like most drivers, cyclists quickly develop a self-perception of being a good cyclist.

3. Again like drivers, cyclists generally agree on the need for ‘good’ behaviours but at the same time justify their own rule-breaking behaviours.

4. Whilst all agree in principle with the concept of a ‘cycling safety code’, in reality the messages suggested by cyclists and evaluated in research contain no ‘new news’ and in any case (like drivers) cyclists tend to adhere to or breach the rules according to their own judgement.

5. In order to change cyclists’ behaviours, messages (and the media in which they are transmitted) need to prompt Acceptance, Reflection and Adoption (i.e. they need to make cyclists re-examine their behaviours and work out for themselves why the rules are there, and why it’s in their interests to comply).
Summary and conclusions

6. In conclusion, whilst it is important for cyclists to be aware of, and adhere to, the desired behaviours, a simple code of conduct is unlikely to change their behaviours because they are deeply-ingrained at an early stage, and cyclists justify them rationally (as they see it).

7. A more indirect method of changing the behaviours is required, which would consist of (but not be limited to)
   • Embedding the twelve guidelines into existing collateral (as has been done for cycle hire)
   • Positioning them as a way of ‘enjoying safe and responsible cycling’ as opposed to a set of rules
   • Positioning them as a cyclist-to-cyclist set of guidelines, as opposed to a TfL-to-cyclist set of rules
Cycling in London
Mindset and risks
A spectrum of cyclists exists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cautious</th>
<th>Bigger Picture</th>
<th>Over confident</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| • Less experienced and more infrequent cyclists. Lack confidence  
• Create a bubble around themselves and do not interact with other road users  
• Feel intimidated by other road users  
• Open to training / additional support | • More experienced and cycle regularly  
• Confident / positively assertive  
• Read the road ahead  
• Desire to learn to become a better cyclist | • High frequency and ‘professional’ cyclists  
• Aggressive and competitive cycling style  
• Do not wane to pressure or advice from others |

Cautious and Bigger Picture cyclists are both open to becoming better cyclists
Cyclists learn on the go from practical experience and advice

- For most cyclists, the only formal training they have received (if any) has been cycle proficiency tests at school:
  - The ‘basics’ of cycling (control of bike, arm signals, basic maintenance)
  - Training at school or on residential streets, not inner London

- Most useful and practical learning happens as you cycle:
  - Mirror other cyclists’ behaviour, get tips from friends
  - Develop own coping mechanisms
  - Limited to location and circumstance
  - Learning by consequence – eg when bad things happen
  - Learn from own mistakes, other people’s experiences, known ‘hot spots’ (eg junctions, ghost bikes)
  - Can result in the wrong habits being formed
The learning curve

First 10 rides
(2 weeks to 6 months)
Learn to handle bike and deal with other vehicles on the road

Next 10-200 rides
Learn incidentally about hot spots / risks and techniques for staying safe through experience and observing others

200+ rides
Become an ‘experienced’ cyclist, have seen most of it before and learning gradually to become better
For some this is a ‘tipping point’ to becoming more reckless as they feel they know the road well enough

Most relevant learning happens on the road, from both good and bad experiences / observations
London cyclists’ psychology: I trust my judgement

- Cyclists develop a coping mechanism to deal with fear and the inherent risk of cycling in London – a belief that *their 'judgement' will prevail and keep them safe*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cautious</th>
<th>Bigger picture and Overly confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More likely to be cycling ‘in a bubble’ – shutting down awareness of other road users to lessen feelings of fear (not making eye contact), may never feel confident or motivated to look around them.</td>
<td>These cyclists become experts, are comfortable multi-tasking and taking in their surroundings. Making confident and bold decisions makes them feel safer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

→ *Take as few ‘risks’ as possible and cycle passively believing this is the safest they can be*

→ *Believe their judgement is king and will protect them from adversity*

The more confident you become cycling on London’s roads, the more you rely on your own judgement. Learned and repetitive behaviours are hardest to change.
The majority of cyclists are unified by a common attitude of how cyclists ‘should’ behave

• In principle, cyclists share the idea that they should abide by the rules of the road and respect other road users
  • A safety code is suggested to highlight the rules

• However, the reality of London roads can lead to a disconnect between this belief and their actual behaviour

“Cyclists can be so badly behaved, running red lights and being a danger to themselves and others. It’s not right, something needs to be done”
  Experienced, Male

“There are basic rules everyone should abide by, like using lights, and keeping your bike in good condition”
  Inexperienced, Male

All cyclists want to be taken seriously – be seen to be ‘doing their bit’ and not in the wrong
The challenge is to get this belief translated into action on the roads
Times when behaviours bend under pressure

• Cyclists can feel threatened by vehicles and will rationalise bending the rules to protect them from dangerous situations

• See other cyclists doing the same

• Revert back to ‘leisure’ ideas of cycling – carefree, disregard for other road users

• Perceived to be few laws for cyclist behaviours, or they aren’t enforced very often

"There are some nasty junctions on my route that I know are safer if I pull away before the lights turn\nExperienced, Male"

"If I’ve had a few drinks and it’s quiet then I might ride on the pavement for parts of the journey – just to be safer\nExperienced, Female"

Lack of enforcement creates a culture of disobedience against other road users
The rules of ‘safe’ cycling in London are multi-dimensional

Cycling in general
• Common sense – learn from cycling proficiency when young, being a driver

Cycling in London
• Experience – learn from own/other people’s experience, mirroring other cyclists behaviour
• Cycling as a mode of transportation
• Pressure from busy road conditions

Fixed considerations
• Always relevant, every time you ride

Circumstantial considerations
• Context dependent, making a judgement call
The rules of ‘safe’ cycling in London

The basic ‘rules’ of cycling

- Wear a helmet
- Wear appropriate clothing – visibility
- Bike lights after dark – red and white
- Signalling to other vehicles
- Maintenance of your bike
- Looking twice before proceeding

Cycling in general

- Pavement – if it gets dangerous, safer on the pavement
- Drinking and cycling – only had 1-2 drinks, then ok
- Running red lights – anyone around? If not then it’s ok

Cycling is for fun

- Pavement – if it gets dangerous, safer on the pavement
- Drinking and cycling – only had 1-2 drinks, then ok
- Running red lights – anyone around? If not then it’s ok

Circumstantial considerations

- Confidence – make a decision and go for it, ability to multi-task (look, signal, accelerate, check twice etc.)
- Know your rights, highway code
- Allow full door’s width from parked cars
- Ride away from the gutter
- Considerate cycling – safer if you acknowledge other vehicles, make eye contact
- Cyclists have responsibilities too
- Know your route – otherwise can get distracted
- Consider the weather and time of day
- Use all of your senses to stay alert – no headphones
- Undertaking at junctions can be fatal

‘Doing my bit’ on London’s roads

- Running reds – can keep you safer
- Going the wrong way down a one way street to avoid busier roads
- Wait at the front of cars – helps with visibility, swerving through traffic if necessary
- Turning left at red light at junctions – can keep you safer
- London’s roads are unpredictable-need to change your positioning, relation to other cars as need be
- Often safer to pass on the right
- Roundabouts – can get on pavement
- How to deal with buses, taxis, motorbikes – depends on driver, pressure to go faster, etc

My own bag of tricks

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*Messages tested
Breaking the rules

Cycling in general

The basic ‘rules’ of cycling

- Although well understood a sense of entitlement to break to the rules if “the only person I’m hurting is myself” eg not wearing a helmet, bike maintenance
- Bad habits often develop out of laziness, complacency

Cycling is for fun

‘Doing my bit’ on London’s roads

- Part of being a ‘responsible cyclist’
- Learnt through experience and some cyclists may not be aware or have incomplete information eg Highway code

Fixed considerations

My own bag of tricks

- Cyclists develop their own set of rules in relation to specific situations
- These develop over time and bad habits can become automatic
- “I know best” mentality can prevail

Circumstantial considerations

Many rules are seen as personal judgement calls and thus rule breaking is rife
Each journey is the accumulation of many different safety decisions

Cyclists are not always consistent, even within their own decision and many different factors lead to each decision they make: situation, mood, purpose of journey, adrenaline, who they’re with etc.
Cycling case studies – over confident

**Male, Soho tattooist, experienced**

- Ashley has been cycling in London for over 10 years, since he was 18 – he commutes to work daily on his bike.
- He feels very confident about his ability to read the road and considers himself a high risk taker. He often cycles with headphones on and likes to race couriers.
- Despite this over-confident stance he will not ride through red lights as considers this foolish.
- He was not aware that it is against the law to ride at night without a red light on the back. He has a white light and thought this was sufficient as he is visible.

**Male, graphic designer, experienced**

- Tom grew up in London and has been cycling more regularly for the past 5 years.
- He is also a car driver and feels that makes him a very safe and confident cyclist.
- Tom regularly rides home after having a few drinks after work, and does not wear high visibility clothing or lights. He also wears his headphones at times.
- He justifies this behaviour by saying that when he drives his car he can always see cycle riders – even if they don’t wear high vis or use lights, and so when he is on his bike, other car drivers must be able to see him too.
- He is convinced that he will be able to keep himself safe in any circumstance.
Cycling case studies – bigger picture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiona, experienced, outer London</th>
<th>Sam, female, experienced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Fiona has commuted to work in outer London for the past 18 years and her journey is mostly on cycle paths and through parks. She tries to avoid busy roads.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not wear a helmet but will sometimes wear reflective bands once it gets dark.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not always abide by the rules of the road and has learnt the hard way – fined for jumping a red light, stopped once for riding her bike after too many drinks after work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• She does think it is safe to ride past stationary vehicles to get to the front of the traffic and will stay behind when riding on the road.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sam has been cycling in London for many years. She cycles everywhere, always wears a helmet and lights but doesn't wear reflective clothing as it ‘costs too much’ and ‘doesn't look great’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• She also goes through red lights occasionally where it is safer to stay ahead.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sam used to undertake lorries at junctions to get ahead but saw a girl killed at Hackney by a LGV. Since then she has tried to avoid going on the inside because there are more important things than getting ahead. However she feels that other cyclists often pressure her by shouting or ringing their bells. She used to give into the pressure but not anymore.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Cycling case studies - cautious

Jane, less experienced, inner London

- Jane has been cycling for just over a year and only rides on short journeys to friend’s houses in South Kensington
- Tends to cycle mostly in the evening and sticks to the back streets. Jane will sometimes ride on the pavement if it is quiet as she feels safer
- As she is riding when it is dark she will always wear a reflective yellow vest but does not wear a helmet as she finds it uncomfortable

Alison, less experienced, commuter

- Alison cycles to work a few days a week having started commuting eight months ago. Her husband cycles and persuaded her to try
- She is very safety conscious and always rides wearing a helmet, reflective lights and bicycle lights
- Alison feels intimidated on the road by traffic and other more experienced cyclists who sometimes shout at her for blocking their path. She will get onto the pavement as busy junctions
- She wants to learn and asks her husband for advice and has sometimes buys Cycling Weekly
Creating safer cycling behaviours
Opportunities
All cyclists agree in principle how cyclists should behave

- The rules proposed by cyclists are consistent regardless of level of experience and risk taking.
- They are also consistent with what is proposed by TfL currently.

This code could act as a reminder of what they already know.
There is agreement that these ‘rules’ should be endorsed

**London Cycling Safety Code**

- Do not run red lights
- Use front and rear lights
- Wear a helmet
- Wear appropriate clothing
- Signal every manoeuvre
- Do not undertake
- Do not cycle on the pavement
- Cycle considerately
- Be aware of your environment and other road users
- Know your route

However, regardless of agreement, the rules bring no new news
A minority of the messages were more contentious in terms of comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confident cycling</th>
<th>Road positioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Could be misinterpreted as aggressive cycling</td>
<td>• Felt to be quite circumstantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidence is a skill learned through experience</td>
<td>• More experienced required to execute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather than instruction</td>
<td>• Need to be able to read the road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fear of intimidation from drivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Concerned it could put cyclists at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>greater risk</td>
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</table>

However, even if these were new news, neither were going to be actively taken on board without personal experience or coaching.
Behaviours are engrained and a challenge to change

- All cyclists said the code would have minimal impact on their own behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cautious</th>
<th>Bigger Picture and Overly Confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convinced they are being safe / cycling with care already</td>
<td>Feel they have clocked up the miles to have the right to cycle how they want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack confidence to change manoeuvring</td>
<td>Judge each scenario and the rules as they arise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I like the idea, but if I feel scared then I am still going to jump onto the pavement”
Inexperienced, Female

“I don’t trust myself sometimes to take my hands off to signal”
Inexperienced, Female

“It’s a good idea and I’d like to see it…. But, I’ve been cycling since I was 18 and can judge the traffic and know when it is safe to jump the lights”
Experienced, Male

“It’s good for people who have recently taken up cycling but it’s not really relevant to me”
Experienced, Female

As the rules are familiar, they do not provide a motivating fact to drive behaviour change
What role can a cycling safety code play in changing behaviours?

- Due to the complex nature of cyclists’ behaviour (an accumulation of hundreds of different decisions on each ride), changing behaviour requires a complex and multi-stage process:

  **Comprehension:** Understanding mistakes and risk points

  **Reflection:** How it applies to their own cycling behaviour

  **Adoption:** Learning to behave appropriately in most instances

- Almost all messages achieve comprehension currently, but do not cause reflection or application.
- A cycle safety code highlights the basic rules of the road but is not new news across all cyclists in London and does not tackle the more nuanced behaviours.
- Achieving adoption of safer behaviour requires a high level of on-going engagement from cyclists with a commitment to continuously consider how they could cycle more safely.

Whilst a cycling safety code reminds people of the basics, it would not create behaviour change. A campaign that demonstrates how to be safer will be required to change behaviours.
Prompting reflection is a complex challenge

- Statistics on cycling safety didn’t seem surprising or prompt reflection

- To make cyclists reflect, some cyclists claim demonstrating the worst case scenario can challenge their self perception and prompt immediate reflection

- However, whilst these are motivating, they are not ideal as they would scare many cyclists off cycling - particularly the less experienced

“There do campaigns for drivers, and that one for teen road safety, but nothing for cyclists, maybe they need to do something to remind us of the risks”
Male, Experienced

There is a need to empower rather than scare
Opportunity for reflection lies in cyclists’ shared experiences

- Cyclists learn from their own experiences or shared stories from close groups eg partner, friends, work colleagues
- Use videos as a proxy for a greater wealth of experience
  - These are not hard and fast rules but demonstrate specific scenarios to aid cyclists with future decision making
  - Cyclists can easily imagine themselves in the same situation
  - Showing the consequences (not shocking but close scrapes) provide greater explanation for the recommendations

A more practical and engaging demonstration of the code of conduct
And training can benefit cautious cyclists

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently lack the awareness to look up and learn from other cyclists on the road</td>
<td>Very difficult to engage these groups with training courses as they feel they know best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool of experience is very limited</td>
<td>An opportunity for training in bike maintenance or route planning to avoid accident hot spots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise they lack confidence and this is a cause for concern</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneously suggest training would be of benefit</td>
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Help to demonstrate ‘confident’ cycling techniques
Safety messages require relevant hooks

- Cyclists are hard to engage with ‘safety’ messages as they think they are riding safely

- Due to the complex nature of cycle safety behaviour, there are three areas to target:
  - Cycling is for fun: benefits from reminders that behaviour is often illegal, greater enforcements
  - Doing my bit on London’s roads: appeal to the sense of responsibility that many cyclists have, meeting other road users half way
  - My own bag of tricks: demonstrate familiar scenarios but with increased risks associated with the behaviour

A campaign will have to work hard to be relevant – messages must immediately cause reflection
A multi-platform campaign would work best

- For example:

| Distribute select safety videos across social networks and online | Raise awareness for training with posters and radio | Editorials in major London papers on safety advice and personal stories | Partnerships with cyclist brands | Gorilla tactics such as messages on bike racks, bike handlebars | Cycling events, work or schools |

Can work towards culture change, which will support reflection and adoption
Suggestions for how to engage cyclists with safety messages

An opportunity to create a more accessible pool of information that cyclists can access which incorporates both authoritative and user generated content.
1. Videos: an opportunity to encourage reflection and adoption

- A proxy for real life experience

- Opportunity to create content that is from the perspective of the cyclist and therefore feels empathetic
  - Do not put the blame on the cyclist but explain objectively why their actions may put them at risk

- Role for user generated content and creating a community of London cyclists helping to educate each other

- [User generated footage]
2. Training: building confidence for cautious cyclists

- One on one training gives feedback on cyclists’ habits and behaviour on the road
- Cycling along a familiar, commuter journey helps to point out positioning tips
- Building awareness is key – many respondents did not know it was available through local borough
- Obstacles to involvement can be inexperienced cyclists’ inhibitions, uncertainty over how to book and whether the training is applicable for your personal level of experience
3. Cycle safety code: important component, all cyclists agree

- Achieves the first step of educating cyclists can be a component of the broader campaign
- Agreement over the principles and the name
  - London safety tips
  - London safety code
- Tonality needs to be carefully pitched
  - Must talk in a language that is compelling and engaging to all cyclists
  - Must be adult to adult tone and not point blame
  - Should deliver an element of new news
  - Could also pose questions to prompt greater reflection

  - An example of safety messages: 7 mistakes you are making with your cycling
4. Cyclist highway code: many cyclists don’t know the rules

- Information is not easy to find
- Some cyclists have never taken a driving test
- Need to know consequences of certain behaviours eg laws and fines
- Effective at forcing people to re-evaluate their breaking of the basic rules of cycling, especially when this rule breaking has become habitual
- Greater enforcement can help to address the sense that cycling is ‘lawless’ and the animosity this creates between other road users
- This could exist as a test for cyclists to test their knowledge, ‘how safe are you?’
5. Statistics: need to be relevant to cyclists

- Plotting on maps so the statistics are applicable to cyclists’ own routes
  - Example of hot spot map
- Statistics are more engaging if demonstrated visually
- Do not just list deaths as this can be too scary but list accidents
- Provide a clear message for why the statistic is how it is…. E.g. junctions / undertaking so that cyclists can learn from it
6. Resources for cycling in London

- Cycling maps for download
- Route suggestions for commute and leisure
- Training courses for all levels
- Local cycling groups
- Video tutorials on maintenance
Leverage existing resources

- Respondents cited many examples of resources already available online
- Possible to utilise partners as opposed to creating content from scratch

http://www.ghostbikes.org/

http://bicycletutor.com/


http://www.criticalmasslondon.org.uk/main.html
Tailored areas for different levels of experience

- Content dedicated to cyclists with different levels of experience will be important

**Inexperienced**
- Training
- Rules of the road
- Road positioning and hand signals

**Experienced**
- London cycling developments
- Maintenance sessions
- Route finding
- Clubs

“I didn’t know about the free courses. I’ll definitely look into this when I get home. Is the info on the TfL website?”
Female, Inexperienced

“I’m going to have a think about my road positioning. I can see the argument but I want to speak to more people first.”
Female, Inexperienced

“I’d like to learn how to give my bike a service rather than paying a bike shop.”
Male, Experienced

“It would be good if I could look at different route suggestions.”
Female, Experienced
Credibility can be achieved through collaborative authorship

- Cyclists agreed that a collaborative approach to branding worked best:
  - Each brand brings its own benefits to the campaign:
    - passionate about cycling
    - the transport authority in London / maps and tips and tools
    - and other cycle shops – specialist cycling expertise / vouchers / offers
    - linked to developments in London cycling (superhighways, cycle hire)
    - the law
  - Other brands are less important to include:
    - lower awareness, but could provide an important bank of information
    - TfL replace the need for this
    - important brand in road safety. This was not tested but came up spontaneously