

**Date: 9 July 2014**

**Item 7: Ceremonial Events in Central London**

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## **This paper will be considered in public**

### **1 Summary**

- 1.1 To identify the current position in respect of ceremonial events and the impact upon traffic congestion in London.

### **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 **That the Panel note the paper.**

### **3 Ceremonial events in London**

- 3.1 London, as the UK capital city, the main residence of Her Majesty the Queen and the home of Parliament, hosts the majority of ceremonial events that take place within the UK. These events showcase London, the Monarchy and tradition and attract many hundreds of thousands of visitors to the UK, London in particular.
- 3.2 High profile individuals and events provide an attractive target for both national and international terrorism, as well as fixated individuals. Additional security measures are necessarily put in place to protect these high profile events and individuals. Due to the nature of the closures and security measures required there is an adverse impact upon traffic flows, its management and business as usual.
- 3.3 Most ceremonial events take place at weekends and/or are confined to the Royal Parks, the Mall and Horse Guards parade ground. This has a more limited impact upon London's road space through Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) measures, but outer closures are still required.
- 3.4 A number of events each year take place during the working week and outside the confines of the Royal Parks. These require the installation of wider HVM measures and more extensive road closures. These events consequently have a greater adverse impact on traffic flows.
- 3.5 The main ceremonial season is in June when the Queen's Birthday Parade (Trooping the Colour), the two rehearsals for the event and the Beating the Retreat parades take place.
- 3.6 This year is the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Marines and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. As a consequence there has been an increase in planned ceremonial events. The State Opening of Parliament also took place in June this year. Previously, the date of the State Opening has been dependent upon the date of the general election. The introduction of fixed parliamentary

terms means that the event will now take place in May or June. The events in 2011, 2012 and 2013 were in May.

3.7 Ceremonial events, though of potentially considerable impact, are a small percentage of the events that take place in London each year.

3.8 The main scheduled ceremonial events are:

(a) The Queen's Birthday Parade (Trooping the Colour);

(b) The Major General's Parade (1<sup>st</sup> Rehearsal for Trooping the Colour);

(c) The Colonel's Review (2<sup>nd</sup> Rehearsal for Trooping the Colour);

(d) The State Opening of Parliament;

(e) Beating the Retreat (2 consecutive days);

(f) The Remembrance Day Parade; and

(g) Changing the Guard at Buckingham Palace (Though limited in size these events take place daily in April, May and June).

## **4 Ceremonial Events Planning Process**

4.1 There is an existing planning process for ceremonial events. The public management of these events is provided by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), though the routes and timings are long established and seldom subject to alteration.

4.2 The majority of ceremonial events which impact upon the transport networks take place at weekends. The State Opening of Parliament, which has a wider impact, including Whitehall and Parliament Square, takes place on a Wednesday in accordance with the parliamentary year.

4.3 The requirements for the extent of any HVM measures are determined in accordance with the current Security Threat Level, the status of the individuals taking part in the event and other factors as recommended by the MPS Security Coordinator (SECCO) with advice from the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre. Authority for the deployment of HVM requiring road closures is obtained through an Anti-Terrorism Traffic Regulation Order. The closures are implemented for the minimum time that is perceived to be effective, though the physical nature of the HVM increases the timescales.

4.4 TfL is involved in the planning process for ceremonial events and in discussion with the MPS SECCO unit in respect of the long term use and placement of HVM. Planning is undertaken with the intent of reducing the impact on the road network through placement locations and timescales and minimising the resultant congestion and disruption created by road closures and the implementation of HVM.

## **5 Non Ceremonial Events Planning Process**

- 5.1 There are recognised planning processes in place for non-ceremonial events, although there are variations between the 32 London boroughs. TfL is informed of the event if it is on, or is likely to have an impact upon the use of, the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN). Additionally TfL will be informed if the event is of such a size that it will impact upon other transport provision, particularly the bus and underground networks.
- 5.2 There are several hundred such events each year, ranging from community events, religious and secular celebrations, and demonstrations to large scale public events. TfL maintains a record of the events and documentation associated with them. Dependent upon the nature of the event there may be a direct involvement in the planning process. The London Streets Traffic Control Centre (LSTCC) events planning team may stand up for the event controller for the event or it may be monitored as part of the LSTCC event business as usual.
- 5.3 TfL is involved in the planning process for larger scale events, attending the specific Transport Planning Groups and the Safety Advisory Group which oversees the planning process and jointly “signs off” the event.
- 5.4 There is a formal meeting with the MPS on a weekly basis to discuss joint planning and to identify demonstrations and protests which may impact upon the networks. There is a legal requirement that protestors only need to give the police six days notice of a demonstration.
- 5.5 In respect of non ceremonial events, there is the opportunity to influence the routes and timings if they are likely to have a significant impact upon the transport networks. TfL can also decline the closure of roads on the TLRN and object to closure of the Strategic Road Network (SRN), though there is less opportunity to do this with late notice protest events.
- 5.6 If the event is multi-borough, or of such a nature that the potential impact of holding the event is severe, then it will be discussed at the London Events Senior Steering Group. This is hosted by TfL, chaired by the City of Westminster, and attended by senior event planners from the central London boroughs, the City of Westminster, the Emergency Services and the GLA. Following discussion at this level the event may be presented at the Mayor’s Major Event Oversight Board chaired by the Deputy Mayor and attended by senior leadership representatives of the Emergency Services and GLA family organisations. The remit of this meeting does not currently include the listed ceremonial events or public order events.

## **6 Impact upon congestion**

- 6.1 Events that take place in London, ceremonial or non ceremonial, are likely to have an adverse impact upon traffic flows and congestion. There is a limited capacity on the network and the closure of roads or restriction of road width will reduce this capacity further, slowing traffic and having a consequential impact upon congestion.
- 6.2 It is recognised that London is an attractive venue for events and protests in addition to ceremonial events. These showcase London as a city and are

generally beneficial to external public perception and the economy, despite the business as usual impact upon road space management.

- 6.3 Throughout the event planning procedure processes are put in place to minimise adverse impacts, both specifically in relation to the event and as part of business as usual network management. It is recognised that the nature and extent of ceremonial events provides less opportunity to influence routes and timings. Accordingly a greater reliance is placed upon mitigation.
- 6.4 Network capacity is additionally affected by planned and unplanned road works, construction activity, collisions and other incidents on the network as well as driver behaviour and compliance with traffic signs and directions. The nature of ceremonial events restricts the opportunity to re-route the event and therefore they may have a disproportionate impact upon congestion if there are other reductions in road capacity in the vicinity.

## **7 Network Mitigation**

- 7.1 There are a number of processes that can be used to mitigate the potential disruption and delays caused by planned and unplanned events. There is more opportunity to undertake pre-event mitigation for non ceremonial events where there is a greater element of influence on the route.
- 7.2 The identification and agreement of vehicular and pedestrian routes during the planning process allows wider mitigation activity to be undertaken. It also allows for planning to avoid potential conflict with other events, planned road works and traffic management measures in place for other road space activities.
- 7.3 Travel Demand Management (TDM) plays an essential role in the reduction of background traffic in the vicinity of the event footprint. The dissemination of information on the TfL website, emails to registered Oyster users, pre-event and real-time information on social networks and smart phone applications provides public notification of potential areas of congestion. Extensive TDM measures during the London 2012 Games demonstrated how to reduce background demand by up to 30 per cent.
- 7.4 The Road Space Management operational team deal in real time with perceived areas of congestion on the road network. This is part of business as usual but is also supplemented by staff from the LSTCC planning team for major events. The ability exists to put in specific plans for traffic signals, shortening or extending timings to allow areas of congestion to be cleared or reducing the volume of traffic from entering already congested areas. These active traffic management plans and real time responses provide the flexibility to address issues created by unplanned or unexpected events.
- 7.5 Events in central London have a major impact upon the bus network. Bus planners are involved in the planning stages of events and have the local knowledge and expertise to plan bus diversions to a route which minimises the potential for additional congestion, reduce the impact created by the diversions to other roads users and reduce any impact upon the travelling public.
- 7.6 Some large scale public events have an impact upon the road network which means that localised bus diversions are not appropriate and bus route

curtailments are required. The removal of buses from an area can aid considerably with congestion. However this needs to be carefully assessed against the potential inconvenience caused to passengers by a partial reduction in service. During operational events an experienced planner is present in the Surface Traffic Transport Operations Centre (STTOC) to deal with immediate issues that may arise on the network and to make any immediate amendments to be plans that may be necessary.

- 7.7 Taxi and Private Hire (TPH) have an increasing role in the TfL response to events – particularly for non ceremonial events TPH can remove spectators who would otherwise have difficulty in using other public transport methods. The provision of taxi marshals and temporary taxi ranks eases localised congestion and provides a structured approach to TPH activity.
- 7.8 A process has been put in place whereby the MPS provide a Bronze Congestion officer to work in STTOC in close liaison with LSTCC staff. This allows for a more effective deployment of MPS congestion resources to deal with the impact of the event while not being directly involved with event activity. This closer liaison between operational staff, both with the responsibility of dealing with congestion on London's roads, has proven beneficial in the active response to disruption and congestion on London's roads.

## **8 Volume of Events**

- 8.1 London is a major attractor for events. As the home for both the Royal Family and Parliament there is considerable ceremonial activity taking place. This also attracts other events and hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. This creates a considerable demand on the available road space of London.
- 8.2 London is also the major centre for protest, with the opportunity to protest directly outside Parliament and the ability to attract media interest. There is a lesser requirement for organisers of protest to give notice of an event. The minimum requirement of six days notice provided to the MPS reduces the opportunity to put congestion reduction measures in place and relies upon the ability to respond at short or no notice to the anticipated or actual impacts.
- 8.3 2014 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the commencement of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. There are also a number of other military anniversaries which have lead to an increase in ceremonial events this year.
- 8.4 Although empirical data for attendance at public un-ticketed events is not available, the perception is that there has been an increase. This is exemplified by the attendance at the New Year's Eve 2013 celebration, which had a considerably higher attendance than in previous years and resulted in a severe impact on the road network outside of the event footprint. Information provided by experienced planners is that there is an increase in attendance, background demand and the number of proposed events overall.
- 8.5 The expectation exists that despite mitigation measures put in place, the requirement for temporary or longer term road closures will impact on the network, and larger events raising congestion levels to Serious. It is unusual for the congestion severity to increase to Severe, although this was the case for New Year's Eve 2013 and the State Opening of Parliament 2014.

- 8.6 The TfL Events Team (TET) has created an events calendar for London. These range from small scale exhibitions and events at fixed purpose built venues to large scale demonstrations and public events. Information of events may be at a relatively late stage due to notification of protests and demonstrations. In June 2014 there were 247 known events; in July 92 events are anticipated; in August 15 events; in September 50 events; in October 12 events; in November 65 events and in December 43 events.
- 8.7 Procedures are now in place for more specific reporting through the Strategic Coordination Team to provide a more reliable dataset of information relating to event impacts. The TET will undertake de-briefs of significant events to identify the reasons for unexpected levels of congestion or disruption, lessons learned and information for subsequent event planning and consequence mitigation meetings.

## **9 Conclusions**

- 9.1 It is accepted that there is a requirement for ceremonial events to be held in the Westminster area, however these requirements need to be balanced against the level of disruption caused. There are existing processes and interagency relationships in place to ensure involvement in the planning process and to minimise any adverse impact of such events. It would be appropriate to continue to develop these processes and relationships to ensure the identification of all aspects which may impact upon an event and the necessary mitigation measures to put into effect.
- 9.2 There are currently multi-agency meetings taking place in relation to the use of HVM and the use of Temporary Traffic Restriction Orders to raise understanding and standardise the processes of the differing GLA family organisations. These will continue.
- 9.3 During large scale events an MPS Bronze Congestion supervisor works at TfL's Palestra building in close liaison with the LSTCC and STTOC staff. This ensures the rapid and effective deployment of MPS Network Mitigation resources to supplement the traffic management being undertaken through the use of TfL traffic management technology. This process will continue to be developed and improved to increase the effectiveness of joint traffic management.
- 9.4 Information is currently provided to the public in respect of events impacting the network. This is done through a number of channels including the LSTCC Traffic Information Management System TfL website, group email messages, Twitter and roadside Variable Messaging Signs. Advice is given in advance and in real-time to avoid areas because of possible delay. It may be appropriate for some events to emphasise the degree of congestion anticipated and to extend the perception of the event times in an attempt to dissuade non-essential traffic activity in the event area. For events taking place over a longer period of time, consideration is being given to advertising potential diversion routes.

### **List of appendices to this report:**

None

### **List of Background Papers:**

None

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