

Date: 22 October 2015

Item: Update on Roads Reopening Protocol

This paper will be considered in public

1 Summary

- 1.1 To update the Panel on the TfL and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Roads Reopening Protocol and the measures put in place to ensure the prompt reopening of roads following fatal, life threatening or life changing collisions.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Panel is asked to note the paper.**

3 Background

- 3.1 TfL and the MPS recognise the significant disruption to road users and to London's economy caused by road closures and the agencies are working together to minimise the impact. Significant effort is made towards identifying and acting on opportunities to reduce the impact of road closures and the length of time traffic is disrupted.
- 3.2 TfL initially agreed a Roads Reopening Protocol with the MPS in 2011. Its purpose is to ensure the prompt reopening of the road network following fatal, life threatening or life changing collisions. Road closures are required to allow the police to establish the cause of fatal, life threatening or life changing collisions and to keep other responders safe while working in a potentially dangerous environment. Serious Collision Investigation Units officers from MPS conduct detailed forensic investigations to produce evidence for the court or Coroner's Office. This work is skilled, technically advanced and can be very time consuming. Closed roads allow investigators to establish the 'train of events' and to preserve and collect all available physical evidence. Once the road is reopened, any remaining evidence is likely to be lost.
- 3.3 The Roads Reopening Protocol is a statement of the joint TfL and MPS commitment to opening roads promptly following a fatal, life threatening or life changing collision, whilst acknowledging the serious duty of the police and the emergency services to preserve life and undertake a thorough investigation. The joint commitment includes a target of four hours for reopening roads after an unplanned closure. For every closure affecting the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) or a bus route that lasts more than four hours, the police produce an exception report, and TfL and the MPS review how the incident was managed to identify any opportunities to improve incident response. More information on the protocol is included below.

- 3.4 The Panel requested this paper following a query about the length of time for the closure on the A21 due to a pedestrian fatality at the Farnborough Common junction with Hilda Vale Road on 11 June 2015. TfL reviewed the police response to the incident and is satisfied that the police and other services involved did all they could to reopen the roads as quickly as possible, given the circumstances involved.

4 Roads Reopening Protocol

- 4.1 The protocol is a statement and commitment from the MPS and TfL to work together to mitigate the impact of road closures following collisions that result in fatal, life threatening or life changing injuries. The protocol sets out how this is to be achieved:
- (a) Open the road (or part of the carriageway to allow some traffic movement) at the earliest opportunity within the context of a full and proper investigation;
 - (b) Roads and Transport Policing Command (RTPC) Roads Policing Teams will assist at locations and times of day where traffic disruption is caused or may be caused by collisions, and will work with TfL's London Streets Traffic Control Centre (LSTCC) to support effective traffic management actions to mitigate the impact of road closures;
 - (c) Constantly review and scrutinise processes, systems and training to help reduce the impact and length of time of road closure;
 - (d) Carry out rigorous joint debrief and analysis to identify any issues, what worked well and what systemic issues or themes need to be addressed; to put in place action plans to address lessons identified and review their implementation;
 - (e) Encourage an open, blame free culture when debriefing incidents, to ensure that both individuals and organisations are willing to declare any issues. This supportive culture will ensure continuous improvement and prevent further similar issues arising again;
 - (f) The MPS will produce and share an exception report for every closure of the TLRN or incidents affecting the TLRN or a bus route that lasts either more than four hours, or, by exception, when TfL requires a debrief due to the nature of the incident;
 - (g) Exploit opportunities in existing and new technology to help reduce the time taken to re-open the road and lessen the impact on road users, where financial restraints allow;
 - (h) Provide a leadership role within the MPS and TfL to support the reopening of roads (or part of the carriageway) as soon as possible within the context of a full and proper investigation, regardless of the direct responsibility for roads policing or traffic management the different departments may have. Specifically, RTPC will champion this protocol across the wider MPS; and
 - (i) Develop training and procedures to ensure processes support 'no idle time' during road closures and that the required resources are aligned in such a

way that concurrent activity is possible, and each service is activated as soon as it is required.

5 Improvements to MPS Collision Investigation and Minimising Traffic Disruption

- 5.1 The MPS and TfL (individually and collectively) have made considerable progress over many years, improving systems, processes, equipment and training to ensure that the investigation takes as little time as possible, and where possible a progressive opening of the carriageway takes place.
- 5.2 The MPS is recognised as a national leader for collision investigation, and is consistently at the forefront of innovation and good practice. The recent Joint Inspection of the Investigation and Prosecution of Fatal Road Traffic Incidents highlighted the MPS as a national exemplar of good practice in collision investigation. TfL has provided financial support to the MPS to assist in reducing the time taken for effective investigation. For example, TfL has purchased 3D scanning equipment for each collision investigation team, which reduced survey time for a collision scene by around 30 minutes. Staff numbers have also been increased in order to provide 24/7 cover for collision investigation units, so that investigators arrive at a collision scene quickly. All this assists in minimising the time taken that a road is closed following a fatal or life-changing collision.
- 5.3 The creation of the MPS RTPC, part funded by TfL and launched in January 2015, has delivered further improvements in the MPS' response to and management of unplanned incidents on London's roads. The RTPC replaces the MPS Safer Transport Command and the Traffic Operational Command Unit.
- 5.4 The RTPC now has a Grip and Pace Centre (GPC) which is a direct and fast time link between the MPS and command and control staff, to provide a constant flow of information between TfL and the MPS on incidents affecting the road and surface transport networks. The GPC monitors the police dispatch system for issues that may affect London's roads, and acts on opportunities to prevent incidents and events from affecting the TLRN, TfL tunnels and/or the public transport network.
- 5.5 Following a collision there are a number of stages that have to be completed before a road can be reopened, such as:
 - (a) undertakers attending on behalf of the coroner;
 - (b) vehicle/s removal;
 - (c) specialist clean-up; and
 - (d) damage to the road surface and road infrastructure rectified.
- 5.6 The collaboration between TfL and the MPS through the GPC in the LSTCC means that all the attending services – such as clean-up crews – can be facilitated access to the collision scene by the MPS and be ready and waiting to undertake their activities as soon as the crime scene investigation is complete.

5.7 Furthermore, a new police command structure has been introduced that means in the event of an unplanned road closure, the GPC supervisor takes on the role of Bronze Roads (Unplanned) for the incident. This role manages resources to mitigate congestion in the wider areas of the road network affected by a closure, and supports the officer on the scene by pressure testing decisions made to ensure full consideration is given to the impact on traffic congestion.

6 Next Steps

6.1 TfL and the MPS are currently working in partnership to review and refresh the Roads Reopening Protocol to better reflect existing good practice and to improve the response to other police closures including unplanned public order incidents and crime scene closures.

List of appendices to this report:

None

List of Background Papers:

None

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