

# Reading Transport Commission: Evidence from Individuals

## First Draft: Evidence to 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008

By 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008 there have already been 260 responses to Transport Commissioner Sir Brian Briscoe's appeal for evidence. These come primarily from across the Greater Reading area (see map) - with Caversham and Central Reading particularly strongly represented - although we have also received messages from as far afield as Cornwall and Southampton. Almost all the replies so far have been from individuals, although we are now also beginning to receive responses on behalf of organisations, businesses, political parties and neighbouring authorities.

Sir Brian pitched his initial request broadly, with the aim of testing public views on current and future traffic and transport issues facing Reading, rather than focussing simply on the controversial one-way IDR proposal. The public were asked for their own ideas about solving the transport issues facing Reading, and access to the town centre in particular. Sir Brian was also eager to receive views on general themes such as:

- How do transport issues in Reading affect your journey to work or your business?
- How does traffic and transport affect the environment of Reading now?
- What impact will increases in traffic over the next 10 to 15 years have on the economy and environment of Reading?

Inevitably there is a huge range of opinion, sometimes contradictory, about these topics. However, the Commissioners have found the process extraordinarily helpful in highlighting key issues that concern the Reading public. We have summarised some of the recurring themes below.

### Does Reading have a traffic problem?

A handful of respondents do not agree that Reading has a really bad traffic problem, or perhaps feel that the issue had been *overstated*.

*"(Reading) is crowded in rush hour only - just 3 hours a day" (7)*

*"the only time I get held up is between 0800 and 0900 in the morning and between 1630 and 1800 in the evening" (42)*

*"Of course, like any road in the UK there are traffic tailbacks during rush hours, usually 0815-0900 and 1715-1815. I travel to the town centre almost daily by car outside these narrow time slots and do NOT have a problem" (53)*

For the overwhelming majority, the only debate is around just *how bad* Reading's traffic is.

*"Traffic jams start around 0630 on weekdays..." (13)*

*"The car park that is Reading's main roads slows down any travel I attempt from 0730-1030 and 1500-1900 weekdays and any time after 12 noon at weekends." (253)*

*"Traffic makes Reading centre a no-go zone for much of the day." (107)*

*"The weekends are often as bad as the weekdays for traffic, which shows what a success the town is. The peak times differ though." (2)*

*"There are already days on which Reading almost grinds to a standstill..." (36)*

*"You will look on most websites such as Location, Location, Location and they will tell you Reading has a lot going for it, but a NIGHTMARE traffic system..." (80)*

For some respondents the problem with Reading is not just traffic congestion during rush hour, it is also that they feel Reading's traffic is uniquely **unpredictable**.

*"I live in Caversham and work in Thames Valley Park. It's a three mile journey through Reading, but traffic is so unpredictable that I chose to take the longer route through Sonning because I know that even though it can be longer, it will be a well-defined journey time." (10)*

*"In the evenings I collect my partner from work which means a trip West-East and back 5 times per week. This trip can vary between 10-40 minutes each way." (18)*

*"It is impossible to gauge the amount of time required for what should be a ten minute car journey." (82)*

## What is the impact of Reading's traffic problems now?

Many respondents speak about the affect on **air quality**...

*"The pollution of the atmosphere from vast quantities of heavy goods and smaller passenger vehicles is significant at any time, but increased manifold when stationary." (20)*

*"The air quality in Reading feels pretty poor compared to Southampton" (75)*

*"The main affected areas I believe are Bath Road, Kings Road, Cemetery Junction, the Oracle area and the roads running into town from Caversham." (2)*

*"Cemetery Junction...has recently been recorded as one of the most polluted junctions in the country..." (260)*

...and **noise** and **smell**.

*"The constant rush of traffic or stagnant purr of car engines give few areas in the city peace, away from the noise and feeling of rush generated by traffic."*

*"Even in the quiet parts of Reading (the Kennet Valley for example) the sound of vehicle travel is intrusive. In the town centre the air smells of fumes most of the time. In the evening at the moment (mid December) the current weather is settled and cold, so the fumes can be seen over the town in the afternoon - you can actually see and taste the air pollution." (87)*

It is felt that there will be an increased risk of *accidents* and a negative impact on *road conditions*.

*"Risk of injury to other road users will increase, as will the speed of deterioration of highway infrastructure" (217)*

The effect on Reading's *ecology* is also seen as grim.

*"From a wildlife perspective, it's like any large town - wildlife keeps clear or dies..." (253)*

Others speak of the *negative* impact on their personal lives.

*"I hate the traffic so much I have become a hermit" (51)*

*"It (the traffic) made me have to change my job as the journey each day was ridiculously long and I was always late." (54)*

*"I would arrive at work tired, and fairly stressed out. My work day was most certainly affected by the amount of time lost by the traffic problems I encountered during the day... It became one of the major factors of my decision to move away from Reading" (11)*

*"Since my arrival in Reading in 2005 I regularly have sore throats, coughs and colds while previously, while living in other areas of the UK, I had not suffered to such an extent." (259)*

*"I like to take the children out for walks, but the fact that the roads are so busy really reduces the pleasantness of this." (78)*

*"Parking is also difficult with many households having two or more cars as their children grow up." (35)*

## What impact will increases in traffic over the next 10-15 years have on the economy and environment?

Most respondents regard an increase in traffic over the next 10-15 years as *inevitable* and some actively welcome it.

*"If Reading is to grow, it needs trade and business and shoppers. Those in charge should recognise it is their duty to serve these customers not the other way around... Residents are important but the town does not grow on residents alone... It has to receive visitors and they will come by car... (81)*

*"New businesses are key to the prosperity of the town." (51)*

Other respondents foresee fairly *dire* consequences.

*"Reading will come to a halt due to lack of forward planning and increases in government drives to build more in our area without the infrastructure to support the increases." (13)*

*"Traffic in Reading crawls and has to travel long indirect routes to get anywhere. Increases in traffic will make it all grind to a halt and Reading will become less and less attractive..." (258)*

*"People will go elsewhere for their shops. All this must impact heavily on the town's wealth" (115)*

*"I truly believe that companies will move out of Reading. The amount of lost hours for companies due to traffic jams, accidents, unsuitable public transport will be considerable. Consideration should also be given to the difficulty companies face attracting the right staff because of this reason." (45)*

*"You will not attract new businesses to Reading unless a good transport infrastructure exists. ... The north and centre of Reading will be abandoned by businesses and become a ghetto." (51)*

Not everyone believes that development necessarily means an *increase* in traffic. Some believe that through *traffic management* and technological developments (green fuel options etc.), the negative effects can be mitigated.

*"I'd like to see Reading disprove the theory that economic growth always equals increased traffic" (22)*

*"Traffic reduction must be the way forward so that people can reach places of work by green methods of transport." (254)*

*"We need to make a real effort to cut down on emissions by using better fuel." (60)*

Some respondents believe that *development* can and must be *controlled*.

*"The increase in traffic is not necessarily a given. This will largely result through the accelerated rate of development of the area - Chatham Place, South Reading corridor etc." (16).*

*"Limit the development of new houses and this will impact on traffic volumes" (8)*

In this context the redevelopment of the *Battle Hospital* site for housing and a new supermarket (*Tesco*) on the Oxford Road is singled out as a specific concern by around a dozen respondents.

*"The impact of Tesco/Kings Oak on the Battle site is going to be catastrophic..." (89)*

As is the Prudential's proposal to build a huge *housing development* south of the M4.

*"With the Prudential hoping to build 7500 homes in the Kennet Valley and the proposal to build 42,000 homes in West Berkshire the situation is not going to improve." (211)*

Some respondents believe firmly that *development* must be *stopped* forthwith.

*"Who says that traffic will increase over the next 10-15 years? RBC will kill Reading. Reading should be satisfied with being a town and not a city. RBC must stop increasing the size of the town and the number of people that want to get around. THIS TOWN IS FULL AND HAS REACHED ITS MAXIMUM SUSTAINABILITY"... RBC must get real about the term sustainability - there is no such thing as perpetual sustainable growth. Reading has in mind achieving a massive population growth. This should be debated before the traffic issue. (7)*

## What causes Reading's traffic problems?

### The IDR

When respondents discuss the cause of Reading's traffic problems, the *IDR* is rarely seen as a problem in itself (with the exception of the Oracle flyover).

*"There is no congestion for 'hours on end' on the IDR due to volume of traffic alone..." (49)*

*"I do not find the IDR to be intolerably busy - even at the height of the rush hour" (218)*

*"The IDR itself is not the problem, rather the lack of a joined-up transport policy for Reading and the surrounding region" (192)*

*"There is nothing wrong with the IDR, except for the fact that it was never finished and it does have a few points which could be looked at to improve flow." (211)*

*"The IDR is a good road. It's most roads leading onto it that have problems e.g. Cemetery Junction leading up to Sutton's seeds (roundabout)..." (148)*

*"Congestion on the radial routes leading away from the IDR seems to be a major factor in congestion on the IDR itself. Measures to increase the capacity leaving the IDR should reduce congestion on the IDR itself." (142).*

However the *IDR* is *not loved*.

*"Having lived in central Reading for three years, I do confirm the highly negative impact of the IDR on residents. This huge cut of concrete all around the town makes it unattractive, the noise generated by the traffic (and also the very poor asphalt) is unbearable..., the high density traffic surely generates huge amounts of atmospheric pollutants, the severing effect already mentioned also impacts other sustainable ways of transportation (walking and cycling)." (135)*

*"The existing IDR is a physical, visual and psychological barrier. For those of us living near but outside the centre, it greatly reduces the attraction of a walk into the town. For shoppers in the centre, it cuts them off from areas (notably London Street and Oxford Road) which might otherwise have provided secondary shopping..." (234)*

*"The IDR is like a rope around the neck of the city" (39)*

*"From the point of view of people on foot or bike, the IDR is like a hostile barrier, dividing the town" (172)*

And one respondent suggests *brightening* it up.

*"Paint the walls and smarten up the signs... Dirty grey concrete is not a good introduction to Reading" (227)*

Another wrote in detail about *integrating* the IDR better into its surroundings.

*"The original designers of the IDR... clearly had little sympathy for the close-knit traditional townscape... My message is that your studies should include examining how the townscape can be reconnected across the ring road and the apparent width of its corridor reduced, using new building and eliminating what the Urban design Compendium calls negative spaces." (234)*

## An Old Town

Some respondents specifically blame Reading's problems on its being an old town with a poor *road infrastructure*, without necessarily absolving traffic planners from all blame.

*"Reading is an old town with its routes and junctions never designed to take the levels of traffic we suffer from. However, it is totally manageable..." (23)*

*"An old town like Reading is always going to suffer with traffic problems we see daily, but must some of the glaring errors remain..." (115)*

*"The fact remains that Reading can't accept a lot more cars on its older roads even with the IDR." (48)*

## Ring Road

A further issue is the lack of a *ring road*.

*"Reading is one of the few towns without a ring road or, at very least, a North-South bypass. Reading has a perfectly good East-West bypass, the M4. Please study the map of the whole area and it is abundantly clear that Reading cannot continue to avoid action to stop North South traffic entering the town." (123)*

*"If I want to travel west I have to traverse the world's most windy and narrow roads or go via the town centre. If I want to travel to the M4 I have to rat run via Sonning or go via the town centre. All roads lead to Rome, so to speak." (253)*

The impact of this is to bring traffic *through* the town unnecessarily.

*"We have a system that brings traffic, needlessly, through the town, takes it round the town and which doesn't allow it to travel in and out of the town". (79)*

*"A very large proportion of the motorists passing through the town have no desire to be there - they simply have no alternative routes." (196)*

## Pinch points

Around one in four respondents mentions specific traffic *pinch points* which they feel lead to traffic hold-ups in Reading.

*"The town of Reading is riddled with individual points of congestion and hold-ups that overall make for a tortuous journey by car, and even by bus or bicycle." (23)*

Regularly identified as *problematic* are the following:

### *Caversham (North)*

Caversham, to the North of the Thames, is thought to have a number of pinch points, mainly caused by traffic lights, though the main issue is bottlenecks caused by the limitations of the two bridges over the Thames.

*"There are three notorious pinch points in Caversham:*

- *Gosbrook Road/ George Street traffic lights*
- *Prince of Wales traffic lights in Prospect Street*
- *Church Street/ Bridge Street traffic lights " (16)*

*"The bridge over the Thames at the end of Richfield Avenue (Caversham Bridge). It is not the bridge that has the capacity issues, but the capacity of the junction at the north end of the bridge and beyond." (21)*

*"I dare not leave for work after 0710 as the area suffers from 'pinch points' - these being Caversham Bridge and Reading Bridge." (31)*

### **Sutton's Seeds Roundabout/ Cemetery Junction/ King's Road (East)**

Several respondents claim that traffic congestion leaving Reading in the morning towards the A329M is the worst in Reading.

*"The main (morning and evening) bottlenecks are traffic trying to leave town to the East at Sutton seeds roundabout ... I believe we should concede that the 3<sup>rd</sup> bridge from the end of the A3290 will not be built as a public-use bridge. Therefore the Sutton's (TVP) flyover should come down. In its place a remodelled junction could allow almost continuous flow from London Road onto the A3290, the A4 or TVP." (6)*

*"For me the particular concerns are the rail bridge at the far end of King's Road leading to the A4. This seems to be the entire cause of traffic problems leaving reading along King's Road and back past the prison, Forbury Road all the way to the railway bridge east of the station. The capacity of the TVP flyover is very important to Reading... it should perhaps be picked up and rotated 90 degrees." (21)*

### **London Road/Eldon Road/Sidmouth St (East)**

The decision to make King's Road one-way for cars travelling east and London Road one-way for cars travelling west is still unpopular with a number of respondents. One-way systems are not, on the whole, liked.

*"An examination should be made of the benefits or otherwise of one way systems to see whether traffic flow would be assisted by reversion to two way operation"... (202)*

Sidmouth Street and Eldon Square, which link the two roads, are seen as particularly problematic.

*"Make Sidmouth Street one way northbound only (simplifies junction at south end, removing need for traffic lights on London road, which are a significant source of delay. Make Eldon Road one-way southbound to balance up the north-south capacity with Sidmouth Street. It would also allow you to simplify the Kings Road junction with Eldon Road and probably the junction with London road too. Both of these are blockers on traffic." (64)*

*"The junction at Queens Road/Sidmouth Street is a good example of where at some times of the day the priorities are hopelessly wrong so that even at 7 pm (when I normally leave the office) the traffic is tailing back for a considerable distance along the IDR going in an eastern direction but there is very little traffic coming down Sidmouth Street." (84)*

### **Junction 11/ A33 relief road/ Rose Kiln Lane Traffic Lights (South)**

Junction 11 on the M4 to the South of Reading is a well-known traffic bottleneck and is due to be upgraded. Traffic changes at Rose Kiln Lane on the A33 relief road, which runs from the M4 to the centre of Reading, are extremely unpopular with respondents.

*"Whenever I drive in I run the risk of being snarled in the Junction 11 problems..." (137)*

*"Using the A33 towards the town centre on my return journey home is dangerous, particularly at the traffic lights at the junction with Rose Kiln Lane. This is because there is a totally alien road layout leading up to this junction. The two lanes heading North suddenly turn into one lane causing very frustrated drivers to cross over the marked no go area in an aggressive manner to force their way into the bit which turns back into two lanes about 20 metres before the lights. The outside lane with much less traffic turns right. This whole business slows the traffic and jams it up during rush hours." (147)*

*"The roundabout at Rose Kiln Lane was taken away and replaced with traffic lights. Why? It worked very well before... the roundabout was safe... it is worse (now) because the traffic backs up considerably at peak times." (61)*

### **Oxford Road/Tilehurst Road/ Bath Road (West)**

Respondents also identify problems with traffic congestion on the main routes in the West of the town. Here there is no particular agreement over pinch points, but the abolition of bus lay-bys on some routes and the existence of bus lanes is criticised.

*"Even on a bus, the gridlock down the main arteries such as Tilehurst Road and Oxford Road are off-putting and frustrating, not to mention polluting." (37)*

*"For my current job, I travel westbound via Bath Road to Junction 12 of the M4 everyday. In some days I see eastbound queues of cars on Bath Road all the way to West Berkshire." (48)*

*"In the case of Oxford Road, it's buses that hold up buses further down the line". (23)*

### **Cow Lane bridges (West)**

Cow Lane railway bridges are currently viewed by respondents as a pinch point on the direct route from Caversham Bridge to the West of Reading. The Reading Station development envisages a solution to this through a new two-way road skirting the Reading Festival site that would go under the railway lines. Cow Lane would be closed, including to pedestrians and cyclists, which is itself unpopular with respondents.

*"Attack Cow Lane Bridges - I've been a Reading resident for 25 years, and Cow Lane was in the news when I came!" (219)*

*"Currently Cow Lane provides an important route for cyclists (and pedestrians) travelling from West Reading to Caversham, the River Thames, the Rivermead Leisure Centre and the Richfield Avenue industrial area. The need for this route will increase as new homes are occupied on the Battle Hospital site." (228)*

### **Oracle flyover**

The IDR is not felt, itself, to be a cause of traffic congestion, with the exception of tailbacks of cars waiting to get into the main car parks.

*"The Oracle shopping centre, whilst proving to be a commercial success has caused severe traffic problems, particularly at some weekend, often blocking the IDR from Castle Street and, indeed, blocking the IDR itself." (202)*

Some respondents give extremely *detailed suggestions* for how to *manage* these points of congestion. Whilst not replicated in this overview, they can be found on the Commission's section of the RBC website - notably submissions *4, 23, 61, 203, 217* and *251*.

### School Run

A number of respondents make specific mention of the impact of the *school run* on Reading's traffic, making the rush hour far worse in term times.

*"The school run has a huge impact on the volume of cars" (2)*

*"I try to avoid the school run routes". (20)*

*"Journey time into Reading to work takes twice as long on term time days..." (255)*

### Match days

Another issue is excess travel generated on *football match* days.

*"One night a week I have to leave work in the rush hour to get to Wokingham before 7pm. it can take more than 30 minutes to go around 10 miles, especially when there is a football match on at Madejski Stadium." (60)*

Some people, however, think this is *manageable*.

*"Match days are not too much of a problem. Advance notice means that you can plan your journey around them." (2)*

### Traffic flow

A number of respondents make the point that Reading's problem is not the sheer volume of traffic, but rather issues with *traffic flow* through the town.

*"It's not the volume of cars per se that's the problem, more the amount of stopping, pulling away etc. they have to do." (14)*

*"It is a physical and volumetric fact that slowing everything down causes any vehicle, bus, lorry, taxi, car NOT to get to its destination efficiently" (81)*

*"The so-called Inner Distribution ring road has some 15 sets of traffic lights, light controlled pedestrian crossings and roundabouts - one way or not such an abortion simply will not allow the traffic to flow." (196)*

Around thirty respondents have complaints about Reading's *traffic lights*. Phasing of traffic lights comes in for particular criticism.

*"It is abundantly clear to the daily motorist in Reading that there is a concerted effort to disrupt traffic flow by using traffic lights. Try driving from the roundabout at TGI Fridays down the IDR to the A33 and then on to the Madejski. EVERY set of traffic lights will stop you, no matter what the time of day..." (10)*

*"Re-phasing of traffic lights to halt a possible conflict at traffic signals is also a new problem and currently causing severe congestion in places. This is done to avoid oncoming traffic passing each other... We must accept some risk and find a level of safety that is*

*suitable against a balance of traffic flow. The perfect example is the junction of Castle Hill/Russell Street/Coley Avenue/Bath Road. (23)*

*"There are a number of junctions which work very much better when the traffic lights are not working at all. If they (traffic lights) are necessary there needs to be a more sophisticated phasing system so that lights operate on a different basis at different times of day. The junction of Queen's Road/Sidmouth Street is a good example of where... the priorities are hopelessly wrong" (84)*

Some respondents also make the point that *pedestrian crossings* are a major cause of disruption to traffic flow.

*"There are no pedestrian footbridges on the IDR, so any single pedestrian can stop the flow." (30)*

### Buses

Buses are viewed as a major cause of congestion in the town. The decision to stop using bus *lay-bys* is particularly unpopular.

*"Why in certain parts of our town do traffic planners use buses at stops to bring traffic to a stop where there used to be lay-bys, for the bus stop and traffic to be able to flow accordingly" (115)*

*Bus lanes* too come in for criticism and some respondents would like them removing, or at least for them to operate for a *limited* period only each day.

*"Any scheme that favours buses is, ipso facto, going to create congestion for other road users." (23)*

*"Bus lanes should not be allowed to continue operation over twenty four hours of the day. London, with all its congestion problems, manages with a 0700-1900 system and so should Reading." (202)*

*"Bus, motor cycle and taxi lanes should be restricted to operating at peak rush hour times only. May I suggest 7am to 9.30am and 3.30pm to 7pm. (166)*

'*Bus gates*', *chicanes*, *traffic islands* and *road humps* are also disliked.

*"We also have bus gates at Oxford Road and Basingstoke Road. These force drivers to make a left turn at a set of signals, travel all the way around a roundabout then back to the set of signals they were already at." (23)*

*"Road width restrictions, such as, chicanes are really unnecessary. They were put in to aid Reading Buses, but they do not have the right to impede other motorists' progress. They are extremely dangerous when sited near bus stops." (166)*

*"Please explain how putting chicanes and obstructions on our roads make them any safer." (56)*

### Lorries

Some respondents comment on the perceived negative impact of lorries and HGV travelling through Reading. There is even a suggestion that *sat nav* has made the problem worse.

*"Huge lorries use the Woodcote Road as a cut between motorways, inappropriately, as there are no signs telling them to use the official designated route from Oxford (A34) and it is impacting on the local communities and businesses. The use of Sat Nav means more and more are travelling on inappropriate routes, and, for example, getting stuck under the Cow Lane Bridges." (94)*

*"Reading is also frequently used as an A34-M4 short cut for freight and this problem needs to be addressed" (41)*

### Car parks

Car parks, and especially the Oracle *car park*, are seen as part of the problem.

*Queuing on the road for access to car parks is unacceptable; car park operators should be obliged to design their facilities to accept a much higher rate of ingress." (51)*

*"Oracle slip road off the IDR. Someone didn't do their sums? Thousands go there at the weekend." (74)*

## Motor vehicle-orientated solutions to Reading's traffic problems

### One-way IDR

Only a minority of respondents mention the IDR in any context. Of those who comment specifically on the one-way IDR scheme, most were *opposed*.

There were a range of concerns about increased *mileage*, impact on *business*, access by the *emergency services* and suitability for *cyclists*.

*"The one-way IDR is a death trap for cyclists" (14)*

*"The one-way IDR looks a disaster. Longer journeys mileage wise" (19)*

*"Most of the stores I go to - Wickes, Drews, Homebase, Tesco would require a complete encirclement of the whole town in order to get there." (53)*

*"If the proposed one-way IDR comes to fruition it could cause no end of problems in an emergency..." (49)*

Even amongst some respondents who might have been prepared to give the scheme the benefit of the doubt, there was bemusement about why the proposal was for the IDR to be one-way in an *anti-clockwise* direction.

*"If you are going to make the IDR one-way, for heaven's sake make it clockwise so you don't need traffic lights on all the junctions - you could do it with filter lanes and the traffic coming on and off at each junction would not need to cross (there is a good reason why roundabouts go clockwise). It might actually make good sense like this." (39)*

A small number of respondents, however, were whole-heartedly in *favour* of the scheme.

*"I thought the one-way IDR seemed to be a very good start - at least it looked like the council were prepared to take significant measures (and possibly take a risk which I think is necessary to tackle the problem)." (1)*

*"A one-way IDR would have been an excellent scheme for stimulating further commercial development." (6)*

Some respondents felt that a key issue with the IDR was that it was badly handled **politically**.

*"Councillors appear to have been persuaded on technical grounds, but paid too little attention to ensuring that the public understood the scheme." (176)*

### A regional issue

A number of respondents make the point that Reading's traffic issues go beyond Reading's historic boundaries and are either an issue for the wider Reading urban area or are indeed a regional issue. They are felt to be in part the result of, or even heavily influenced by, **regional policy**.

*"The Government's goal (is) to use Reading to fulfil its housing and commercial projected needs for the South East... This is an important issue, whether the town is being directed from within its boundaries or from external pressures... The view I hold is that the town has rejected the one-way IDR and with it the development required in government planning." (214)*

A number of respondents stress the need for cooperation with **neighbouring authorities**.

*"Transport in Reading is not just Reading, it's Wokingham, West Berkshire, Oxfordshire etc." (45)*

*"It's important that efforts are directed to completing the (bus) network in partnership with Reading Transport, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough Council..." (217)*

For some respondents the answer would be for **GOSE** to intervene...

*In the event of a politically-driven conflict over a transport scheme that has a regional impact, both should agree to be bound by a decision made by the regional office (GOSE). (217)*

... or to create a **Greater Reading** authority...

*"Reading is surrounded by other authorities that seem not to care how their increase in population has a serious negative impact upon its traffic management. Reading surely needs to be in control of what is, in effect, Greater Reading." (32)*

...or even to recreate **Berkshire County Council**.

*"Recreate Berkshire County Council, destroyed over a decade ago, and grant it appropriate planning powers." (73)*

### 3rd bridge

One of the most popular suggestions for improving Reading's traffic - mentioned in positive terms by over 50 respondents, is a **third bridge** over the Thames. Only a handful of submissions were opposed to this.

*"If Reading does not get a third bridge over the Thames, it doesn't matter what plans there are to improve roads, make the IDR one-way or close them - the Thames is a bottleneck that needs to be addressed..." (5)*

*"Previous delays to the plan have been caused by South Oxon District council objecting to their land on the edge of Reading being used. It is mainly their residents that clog up Caversham and would benefit so make the government rezone the land to avoid them delaying it." (17)*

Some people thought that the bridge might even generate *revenue*.

*"If the bridge had a toll of 50p or £1... it might pay for itself in the long run..." (25)*

Some respondents were concerned about the impact of a third crossing on traffic in *Caversham*, with suggestions that a northern bypass of some kind might be needed - and was not necessarily desirable.

*The infrastructure of the roads both within Reading town and, most importantly, those approaching it from the north are totally inadequate to support another bridge. I refer to the A4074 - Woodcote Road - coming in from south Oxfordshire, which is single lane... Another bridge would only be feasible if another motorway was to be built through Caversham or Emmer Green, which is clearly out of the question." (53)*

*"Although a 3<sup>rd</sup> Thames crossing would alleviate pressure on Reading, I believe this could cause worse effects North of the River, unless a Caversham bypass is built to the A4074." (10)*

*"Obviously we need another bridge across the Thames (goes without saying) but it's not obvious where to deposit the traffic on the north side - you'll probably need some new road infrastructure in Caversham to cope with it..." (39)*

#### 4th bridge

Others wanted not only a third new bridge, but also a *fourth* bridge. Usually the third Thames Bridge is envisaged as linking Thames Valley Park on the south bank of the Thames with the Henley Road (A4155) on the Oxfordshire bank. There are differing views about where a fourth bridge might be situated.

*"The bridge would cross the river Thames west of Dean's farm, Caversham, and on the opposite bank near the Tesco superstore." (203)*

*"Urgently consider building a fourth bridge West of the town..." (123)*

#### A New Sonning Bridge

Two respondents suggested that, rather than building a third major bridge over the Thames, Sonning Bridge should be *redeveloped* or replaced.

*"I am against a major third bridge over the Thames (threat to the South Oxon countryside). A same size replacement bridge for Sonning (with restricted access to the old bridge) would be a fair option though." (230)*

*"To improve my plight to and from work, Sonning Bridge needs to be widened to allow two way traffic over it. Either that or a vast improvement in the current traffic light phasing". (121)*

## Cross Town Route

Around twenty respondents would like to revive the idea of a *cross-town* route, first mooted in the 1980s.

*"Some years ago, when there was a Conservative County Council, they proposed a new road to run from the end of Vastern Road through waste-land along to the end of the A329M road. Tesco built a large supermarket ready for it; they did not want to be in a cul-de-sac. The road would have offered considerable relief for the Forbury, King's Road and Cemetery Junction and therefore the IDR. But the local Labour run Borough Council blocked the building of the road purely for party political reasons, so Reading central traffic continued to suffer." (123)*

*"Widen each lane of Napier Road (to widen it slightly would not destroy King's Meadow), when the road reaches the Tesco Super Store, instead of ending there, it would veer to the right and travel east right alongside the railway embankment. It would continue to hug the embankment all the while, go over the River Kennet, alongside the railway bridge and on to the present terminus of the A3290. I foresee very little 'Green' destruction; there is no rolling countryside or 'Bluebell' Woods on the route that I have suggested. As for any loss of 'Peaceful Tranquility' this has to be a joke. With trains roaring over the Kennet railway bridges every few minutes there is very little prolonged tranquillity" (49)*

## Southern Bypass

One respondent also remembers proposals from the 1970s for a *southern bypass*.

*"There was a plan to have a Southern bypass running along the M4 from Junction 10 to Junction 12. In the 1970s it was part built, it could be finished if there was cooperation between Councils." (42)*

## Ring road

Some respondents feel that Reading should take an even more radical approach and go for a full *ring road*.

*"Another suggestion is a ring road round the outside of Reading, again with plenty of park-and-ride access points." (222)*

*"It would appear that, in principle, an outer ring road is the solution, including new river bridges and partly involving M4 and A329M thus diverting unnecessary traffic away from the centre and other areas such as Sonning. Although very fundamental, long term, this appears to be the only solution..." (79)*

## Traffic Lights

It is also felt that there are far *too many* traffic lights. Some respondents even suggest *getting rid* of traffic lights altogether.

*"If traffic lights fail, can you please explain why the traffic flows better, could this not be "food for thought"!!! We need to make the traffic in Reading "FLOW" not come to a standstill as it does in Reading at peak times, we have too many sets of traffic lights by far and all you do is push the traffic into a bottleneck whatever alteration you seem to make in Reading..." (61)*

*"There are far too many places where traffic is stopped. Removal of traffic lights and other systems must be a priority with the objective of keeping the traffic moving (safely) at all times." (65)*

*"Remove traffic lights everywhere and implement roundabouts" (161)*

A couple of respondents suggest different or improved traffic light *technology*.

*"One solution, which may not cost a fortune, and provide some relief while the commission looks into possible solutions is to create a Floline Traffic Light System. Also to introduce peak hour reversal of priorities as use to happen at the top of Castle Hill before the lights were upgraded and traffic slowed." (211)*

*"All traffic lights should be connected to a 'scoot system' which I believe operated in this town some years back." (166)*

### Lower Speed Limits

Around half a dozen respondents suggest imposing a 20mph speed limit on some roads in order to improve traffic flow.

*"Lower speed limits on all but major roads. A default speed limit of 20mph would be a start followed by some serious enforcement." (56)*

### Weight restrictions on lorries

Several respondents suggest using *weight restrictions* to limit the access of lorries to the town.

*"Heavy lorries... entering Reading just to pass through to another town must be stopped. Place weight restrictions as other towns have and do not be put off by other counties who object - this is about our town." (13)*

*"Explore the routes of traffic that travels down St Peter's Hill to see if any of it (particularly lorries) can be routed elsewhere... (e.g. using weight restrictions). (5)*

### Congestion charge

Around fifteen respondents mention some kind of *congestion charge*, road *pricing* or *road tolls*. Two out of three are in favour of some kind of charge...

*"Charge drivers driving into the town centre during weekends." (50)*

*"Tolls for people using the roads in and around Reading" (118)*

... the rest are *opposed*.

*The answer is not... a congestion charge...because more affluent people will choose to pay at the expense of the less well off." (254)*

## Other solutions for Reading's traffic problems

Respondents fall into two camps when considering the role of public transport, walking and cycling as potential solutions to traffic issues in the centre of Reading.

On the one hand, some feel that the private car is here to stay and that planners should not attempt to place *restrictions on cars* in favour of other modes of transport.

*"RBC need to understand that the private car, and not the bus, leads to the success of Reading. At the very least these two transport systems should equally share the road space..." (10)*

*"Why is it that Reading traffic planners think that they, and they alone, have cracked the age-old problem of Supply and Demand by assuming that if they place enough impediments in the path of motorists they will simply go away? We have a town full of unused cycle lanes, little-used pedestrian crossings, vast swathes of tarmac restricted to buses only, exhaust-pipe busting speed humps, "traffic calming" width restrictions, none of which work, while motorists are left to fume and sweat on what little road surface remains." (51)*

Others feel that the only way forward is a massive drive to **improve public transport**, possibly even requiring central government intervention.

*"The solution can only be much better and cheaper public transport hand in hand with measures to reduce car use such as reducing the amount of parking in the centre of town. Unfortunately the cheaper public transport can probably only really be done by central government funding. I would support an increase in income tax to fund this." (78)*

## **Buses**

Over 90 respondents make comments on Reading's bus services, many of them seeing improved public transport as the only sensible way forward for the town. On balance respondents feel that the bus service is **improving**.

*"Projects like the 'quality routes and refresh of vehicles have moved bus transport from being a 'poor option' to something acceptable." (256)*

### ***Ticketing policies***

Only one or two respondents describe fares on Reading buses as reasonable. The overwhelming majority are critical of the cost, with some respondents making unfavourable comparisons with London buses<sup>1</sup>.

*"If the Council is trying to get more people out of cars and on to buses, which they should be, it's not working as the bus fares are so staggeringly expensive that people prefer to drive... The extortionate bus fares mean that I will always walk in - come rain, wind, hail, snow or sprained ankles... Others, who live further away, have the option of spending money on the bus, or spending money on petrol. Even with petrol prices at more than 31 a litre, most are naturally going to drive." (44)*

*"Currently it is far cheaper to use a car, particularly for a family. Stupidity in my opinion." (138)*

One respondent analyses ticketing prices in some detail and points out perceived **anomalies**<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The single and return fare for a journey within the Greater Reading Urban Area is currently £1.50/£2.90. There is also a Bus-About ticket offering unlimited daily travel at £3.

<sup>2</sup> 30 day and 90 day tickets apply to the whole of the Greater Reading Urban Area (for which area there is also a weekly travel pass at £15)

- 1) A single bus journey of any distance costs £1.50, a daily return being £2.90. Assuming a five day working week, this costs £14.50 per week.
- 2) You can buy a West Reading zonal travelcard, valid for 7 days, for £9.00 (£9.00 per week).
- 3) You can buy a 30 day ticket for £53.00. Assuming 12 of these bought per year, this is £12.23 per week.
- 4) You can buy a 90 day ticket for £151.00. Assuming 4 of these bought per year, this is £11.61 per week.

So it costs more to buy a ticket for 30 days or 90 days than it does for a week. Surely this can't be right! Why aren't the longer tickets cheaper?

To put these in comparison, you can buy an annual bus travelcard, valid for all London, for £560.00 (£10.77 per week), and one for Birmingham/West Midlands for £486.00 (£9.35 per week). Why are Reading's annual tickets higher than London's and Birmingham's? (44)

**Child fares** are felt to be too high.

*"Reading buses for example, insist that children age 11-19 should carry a Readi-ID in order to guarantee child fares - what's the point? Child return fares are £1.70, but it is cheaper to buy an ADULT 7 day ticket for South Reading - there is no option of a child ticket - this should be reviewed, why should children who are obviously under 16 be made to pay adult fares when they should be paying child prices? (145)*

The policy of **not giving change** on buses is also disliked.

*"Reading Transport bus drivers require the correct fare to be given, but Reading Transport do not state on bus stops or on the outside of buses what the correct fare is, even though bus fares are standardised. Regular users get to know, but strangers or first-time users have no way of knowing what change they are going to need? How can this need not be obvious to management?" (58)*

Some respondents would like to see an extension of **Oyster card** style technology or **books of tickets**.

*"Introduce a workable payment scheme - either something similar to the Oyster card... or something similar to continental practice where you buy a ticket or a book of tickets in advance and then validate them at the bus stop or on entering the bus..." (59)*

It is felt that tickets could be more **widely available** for sale.

*"Substantially increase the number of outlets selling tickets including more local shops and more machines at bus stops. Use machines that can handle debit and credit cards.(231)*

Amongst a number of suggestions for **reducing** fares are:

*"Free bus tickets for first year students to encourage bus use... Why are there no substantial student discounts available? (9)*

*"Introduce a family fare so that it's always cheaper to take a bus into town than to drive in and park there." (50)*

*"There should be more free bus services to schools for children" (146)*

### ***Not enough cross-town routes***

There is also criticism that many bus routes seem to go to the town centre, with only a handful of cross-town routes, and that cross-town travel can be expensive as a result.

*"For the majority of routes, the town centre acts as the terminus, whereas services that link each side of the town should be more integrated" (152)*

*"I have to travel from just south of the town centre to east of the town centre, so public transport is not viable" (20)*

*"Pricing of bus tickets should encourage across-the-city journeys (not just to the centre) (194)*

### ***Bus network/availability***

Respondents point out that the bus network is not comprehensive - particularly in the areas of Greater Reading that are outside the borders of Reading Borough Council and where the Council is not the passenger transport authority.

*"Residents of this area (Tilehurst/Purley) are very poorly served by public transport if they are not near a bus stop served by the no. 17 premier service." (3)*

*"Bus services from the Reading Station to the west of Reading... are infrequent and indirect" (223)*

*"There need to be new routes to cover the whole of the urban area. There are some areas of Reading I cannot reach by bus ... For instance there is no bus from either Woodley/Sonning to either Twyford or Earley station. If there was I would use the train into Reading for work." (250)*

Bus services ***outside the borough boundaries*** are also particularly likely to be criticised for shortcomings in availability.

*"The morning bus service from Sonning to Reading is inadequate. The last direct bus leaves before 0730. The evening service from Reading to Sonning is no use whatsoever it is so unreliable". (213)*

*"The buses stop early and after 1900 there are hardly any. (Address in Earley.) (46)*

Within the borough boundaries it is noted that:

*"The Nighttrack service used to be excellent, however I have not used this service at all since the cuts came in earlier in the year... Now the longest wait is an hour, which is simply too long to be attractive." (52)*

*"There are large areas of middle class Caversham Heights and Emmer Green not covered by a bus service." (5)*

*"The lack of an evening bus service from Caversham to Reading is frustrating to me as I work shifts and don't own a car. I would also like to see more bus services on Sundays between Caversham and Reading." (191)*

*"In Caversham there are no buses on Sunday. This makes it difficult for the young and the old and ensures the rest of us have little choice but to take the car." (43)*

### ***Buses are unreliable***

In many areas, Reading buses face the same problems as the rest of Reading's traffic and this can make them ***unreliable***, so people may prefer to use cars.

*"The traffic problems in Reading cause the bus services to be unreliable - if people are going to be stuck in traffic they would rather be stuck in the comfort of their cars." (36)*

*"We had a lodger for a while who needed to travel into the town centre every day for work. She gave up on the buses because they took so long in the traffic" (78 - address in Earley)*

*The bus network... is severely crippled during peak times when it is usually quicker to walk." (259)*

### ***More bus lanes and direct routes in the town centre***

Whilst some respondents are adamant that bus lanes are a major cause of Reading's traffic problems, others believe that the answer is ***more*** bus lanes and more direct bus routes in order to improve the reliability of public transport.

*"Buses get caught up in traffic when bus lanes end, so we should be turning more bus lanes into bus-only lanes." (22)*

*"Better continuous bus lanes with cameras on all to prosecute car infringers at peak times"*

*"Buses ... go all around the town to get to the station." (258)*

### ***Bus information/ marketing***

Passenger transport information is felt to need improvement. Whilst the real time boards are praised, they are not felt to be totally accurate, and they are found only on part of the bus network.

*"The real time boards are only useful if they are accurate - The word 'Due' has taken on a whole new meaning - buses disappear from the board without appearing at the stop, some appear to go backwards as times are amended..." (36)*

*"A London example - the use of spider maps and heavier bus advertising have increased use of buses." (256)*

*"Reading Buses is not good at marketing... When they try to do something new (for instance, a service linking Earley and Woodley a few years ago, which they made no perceptible attempt to publicise or encourage the public to use and after a very short trial period dropped) they tend not to support it vigorously enough." (73)*

### ***Smaller buses needed***

A number of respondents feel that the use of ***smaller buses*** would allow more frequent and flexible services.

*"Create shuttle buses from University Campus to town running regularly with student fares." (9)*

*"Bring in smaller shuttle mini buses to key points within the network, e.g. M4, J11, A329 ay Winnersh etc. More frequent pickups that can use bus lanes will get a better take up rate than larger infrequent buses..." (19)*

*"A more flexible system of perhaps smaller vehicles criss-crossing the suburbs might be an idea." (32)*

### **No bus station**

Some respondents regret the demise of the old **covered bus station** on Station Hill and suggest that Reading needs a new station.

*"Lack of a modern bus station is a glaring omission from Reading as a town." (9)*

### **Trains**

Trains, like buses, are criticised for being too **expensive** and sometimes too **slow**.

*"To avoid (the Reading rush hour) I have started to use the train. It is excruciatingly expensive (about £3500 a year), highly unreliable and I often have to stand (several times a week). (29)*

*"It would cost me twice as much time and money to go to work by train rather than by car." (48)*

The current shortcomings of Reading's **main station** and current railway infrastructure are noted.

*"Improve access onto and off the platforms (at Reading station) as they are dangerously congested at morning rush hour" (255)*

*"Although the direct links are great they are regularly delayed, especially in the evening which can be frustrating. The station itself has good facilities but the platform layout and signage is such that if you need to quickly change platforms it can be hard work. In addition to this the access facilities are poor. The lighting in the car park is not ideal and the lifts are pretty shabby, regularly there is fresh graffiti and the smell of urine." (75)*

*"Issues with railway infrastructure regularly let down many commuters in the Thames Valley Area. With the absence of 'an additional line' - like the Waterloo Services from Reading- Travellers in the West of Reading are at a distinct disadvantage." (41)*

Some people would like to see **Crossrail** extended to Reading.

*"The Crossrail needs to extend to Reading at least". (232)*

*"Cross Rail, if it ever goes ahead, should be extended to Reading to offer through services from Reading to Heathrow, the City of London and Docklands." (192)*

It is also felt that the rail network would be enhanced by more **suburban stations**.

*"A train station for Green Park, for Thames Valley Park ... would be a real boon" (5)*

*"Add several halts along the railways into Reading from the West, such as Fords Farm and Southcote and from the East, Woodley and Newtown, as examples. This could form the basis of a light railway network." (147)*

Problems **parking** at suburban railway stations and with **picking up** and setting down at the main station are regretted.

*"I know that stations such as Tilehurst, West Reading, Early, Twyford and Winnersh do not have a surplus of parking space." (211)*

*"The drop off facilities to the south of Reading station are very poor." (220)*

### **Mass Rapid Transit (MRT)**

The idea of introducing some kind of *light railway* system or *trams* is popular with around one in twenty of respondents.

*"The MRT scheme to Caversham via a new public transport bridge is key. I would use it." (6)*

*"A decent mass-transit system. Imagine a tram or light rail system connecting the Park and Ride site at Junction 11 with South Reading, the town centre and main line station." (22)*

*"A light railway system like the one which has helped re-development in the east and south east areas of London. A frequent, reliable transit system is key to boosting the local economy." (41)*

*"A dream solution would be to have continental type trams covering inner and outer Reading with regular services at 10 minute intervals, with cars therefore not being necessary for short journeys." (94)*

### **Park and Ride**

Reading currently has limited *Park and Ride* facilities, with services from the Madejski Stadium in South Reading and from Loddon Bridge (Showcase Cinema), located to the East, near the A329M in Winnersh. The latter is operated jointly with Wokingham Borough Council.

*"It is not easy to park at the Showcase and access is complicated as the buses stop at 1800, even though the shops and restaurants are still open in town." (258)*

Around 40 respondents suggest that a wider Park and Ride network would cut down the number of car journeys to the town centre. Some people would like to see this combined with *dearer parking* and/or *fewer* parking spaces in the town centre.

*"Stop building parking lots, as this encourages people to drive in and park there. Instead build more Park and Rides, spread around Reading..." (50)*

*"Park and Ride facilities to the north of the Thames and an additional one to the south. Improved signage to persuade people to use the existing Park & Rides. Better flood protection for the Winnersh Park & Ride." (1)*

*"Provide free park and ride high security car parks at the Thames Valley Business Park... the Green Park end of the A4. Find a site for the A4 west of Calcot and finally one in Caversham for traffic from Oxford." (30)*

*"A comprehensive bus Park & Ride system is suggested (including) Mapledurham playing fields... Clayfield Copse recreation ground... Shepherds Hill Roundabout, Woodley... East of the former Shire Hall... Burghfield Road, Southcote..." (203)*

*"Enough of the talking. JUST DO IT. But it had better be affordable. Why not make it free?" (51)*

### **Cycling**

More than 100 respondents mention cycling. Whilst not everyone would have cyclists considered as a *priority* group....

*"The costs of the improvements in terms of benefit to the main groups of users (commercial traffic, domestic traffic, mass transport, cyclists and pedestrians) are markedly unequal. The costs per pedestrian and per cyclist are very high because there are so few of them. Yet the proposed space given over to these two groups are disproportionately high. Part of this may be unquestioned political correctness and a zeal for safety that is not driven by a proper understanding of risk" (220)*

... the overwhelming majority regard cycling as a **solution**, or at least a **partial solution**, to Reading's traffic problems.

### ***No Cycle Strategy?***

Some respondents claim that Reading Borough Council does not take cycling provision seriously enough. Indeed, one suggests that Reading does not even have an up-to-date Cycle Strategy.

*"It took me some time to get (RBC) to admit that they currently have no formal cycling strategy - the last strategy documents covered the period 2001-06 and is not available on the RBC website. The Local Transport Plan 2006-11 makes only passing references to cycling." (206)*

### ***Cycling can be dangerous***

A number of respondents note that cycling in Reading can be positively **dangerous** and that poorly designed **cycle facilities** can add to that danger.

*"... the volume of traffic at certain times makes cycling on the roads appallingly risky, especially as frustrated drivers can be very aggressive. (99)*

*"I cycle to work... if I ever have to travel across Town to meetings in the north or west, I really feel I take my life into my hands every time I do so. Particular areas notoriously difficult for cyclists are the roundabouts on the approaches to both Reading Bridges - in fact all the roundabouts where cars travel too fast entering the junctions and often appear unaware of cyclists." (254)*

*"Ideally I would ... use my bike, but do so only rarely. This is because in heavy traffic. I am frankly scared of the centre of Reading. There are too many places (particularly bridges and roundabouts) where I have to mix in with cars and lorries." (105)*

*"Cycle facilities are intermittent, usually poorly designed and in many places actually hazardous (or take you into hazardous locations, such as underpasses)" (87)*

### ***Cross town routes***

The lack of legitimate and safe **cross-town** cycleways is particularly regretted.

*"Legitimate cycling in the centre is currently confined to the same one-way routes provided for motor traffic. This makes journeys bizarrely tortuous and needs to be re-examined." (234)*

*"The route across the town centre (is illegal)... The fact that I am illegally using areas where it is legal to drive a lorry is even more bizarre... Reading is dominated by nose to tail cars driven by impatient people or nicely pedestrianised areas where cyclists cannot go... (109)*

*"As a result of decisions and actions by the council over the years, there is no longer a route for cyclists from Reading train station to the Oxford Road. This is because Greyfriars Road*

*and Friar Street have been made one-way (towards the station only), and more recently Broad Street West (the only remaining route) has been barred to cyclists. On top of this, cyclists have occasionally been threatened with on the spot fines for using the one remaining route via Broad Street West.” (64)*

### ***Incomplete cycle network***

A major issue is the very ***incomplete*** cycle network. Cycle routes do not necessarily link up to other routes - they just end.

*“I commute by bicycle. The major issues for me are:*

- *Cycle paths do not cover the whole route, which is all on major roads*
- *Cycle paths that do exist often end just after a major junction; this is dangerous and inconvenient” (249)*

*“The cycle routes do not join up. For example between Berkeley Avenue and the A33 there is a 200m stretch back between the shared paths and over the traffic lights. Also along the Oxford Road the cycle route disappears shortly after the town centre and does not re appear for at least another mile... In obvious places for cycle paths there are none: The western end of Berkeley Avenue? Whitley Wood Lane?” (257)*

### ***Advisory cycle lanes***

The road network is not seen as cycle friendly. Major roads tend not to have ***advisory*** cycle lanes.

*“Cyclists are not legally able to ride up the inside of a queue of stationery traffic (they are supposed to overtake to the right). A cycle lane would make it legal... (87)*

### ***Poor cycle crossings***

A number of respondents make the point that it is extremely difficult for cyclists to ***cross*** over major roads, and that the IDR is a particular barrier.

*“If you make cycle crossings too tortuous, they will not be used. For example, if I were to use the cycle crossings past Winnersh roundabout, I should have to stop at three sets of lights. I don’t. I use the same route as the cars and this is consequently more dangerous.” (221)*

### ***Shared cycle paths***

Another pet hate is cycle paths ***shared*** with pedestrians.

- *Cycle paths are often shared with pedestrians, this is fair on neither party, not is it safe for either especially if small children walk on the pavement.” (249)*
- *Shared cycle paths - these do nothing to encourage people to cycle. In Reading they are generally no wider than a normal pavement and are dangerous to pedestrians and cyclists. Cyclists have little room to manoeuvre and pedestrians do not expect cyclists on the pavement. (The obvious exception to this is along the A33.)*

### **Poor publicity and signage**

Cycle routes are not felt to be well **publicised** and the **signage** is seen as poor.

*"Why isn't there a map of cycle routes on the Reading town council website? Why have I to contact Reading Cycle Campaign to find a route? Does this imply that it is too difficult for a novice to choose a cycle route in Reading?" (257)*

*"There are few signed quiet routes, and although there are quite a few routes that exist they are learnt by experience rather than promoted, and they have frequent "no cycling" signs." (87)*

*"My cycling journeys take me to several different parts of the town, and as I am not originally from Reading I have great trouble for two reasons. One is that the cycle routes are rarely effectively signposted (the signposts I see point to destinations miles away, none say what is a mile away, which is ridiculous!) and they are so randomly dispersed around the town." (104)*

### **Cycle stands/ security**

Many of the respondents who are cyclists comment that there is not enough **parking** in town for bicycles and that the cycle stands that do exist are not **secure** and are open to the elements.

*"There are not enough cycle racks in central Reading..." (206)*

*"The number one problem is security. Bikes are expensive and a genuine secure lock-up is a must. And it's impossible to find in Reading. (Bear in mind that Reading is an insurance black-spot for crime". (14)*

*"If I were to consider riding a bicycle to the station there is no secure area to leave the bicycle." (31)*

### **Cycles and public transport**

Several respondents make the point that it is extremely **difficult** to take bicycles on public transport.

*"Train services (should) allow cycles on trains." (255)*

*"The train journey is risky. It is usually possible to get my bike to the station, but it is not guaranteed." (109)*

*"Buses, including park and ride schemes should have provision for carrying cycles. It's not difficult or expensive. Efforts should be made to encourage train operators to carry cycles free of charge. Currently cycles are banned from popular services." (172)*

### **Walking**

Respondents believe that some of the provision for **walkers** in Reading is very good. For example:

*"The current routes through the riverside parks and from Mill Green and across the lock are very good, and I have been pleased to see better lighting and new benches along the way. My observation is that they are quite heavily used, particularly by people working in town or catching a train. I hope in this respect the council will keep up the good work." (105)*

However, many of the points made by respondents about cycling apply equally to walking – poor *phasing* on traffic lights, no *footbridges*, poor availability of *crossings*, and *shared use* paths.

*“I walk to work in central Reading. 50 % of that journey is taken up waiting to cross at pedestrian crossings. I can’t believe how long it takes for lights to change to allow pedestrians to cross. Every day, infuriated pedestrians resort to running between traffic.” (103)*

*“Traffic on busy routes acts as a barrier to pedestrians and cyclists where there are no foot bridges and traffic lights stay in favour of cars for long periods (Caversham Road, Vastern Road, Cemetery Junction, etc.)” (66)*

*“There is no thought at all given to helping people walk or cycle into Reading from Caversham. The two bridges are very dangerous and pedestrians have to run the gauntlet of traffic between the traffic light changes at Caversham Bridge as there is no crossing for them to use from Thameside Promenade to St Peter’s Hill”. (94)*

*“Several walking routes are spoilt because they have been converted to shared use (pedestrians and cyclists) where there simply is not the space.” (79)*

There are also concerns that the Reading station redevelopment may remove a much-used *pedestrian route* into the town centre.

*“The station improvement will sever a vital artery for pedestrians and cyclists.” (87)*

### Footbridge/Transport Bridge

Some respondents suggest that the third bridge over the Thames should be a footbridge for *pedestrians* and *cyclists*, perhaps including a light railway or trams.

*“For pedestrians and cyclists there is a need for a separate bridge across the Thames halfway between the two existing road bridges, and also for better access across the railway (which perhaps should be included in the big station redevelopment).” (183)*

*“A third bridge across the Thames, if built, should be for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians only.” (183)*

### Car free centre

Around a dozen respondents think that Reading would be enhanced if the town centre were entirely *car free*.

*“Make the centre completely car free, buses only (see Slough, Maidenhead and Bracknell main streets...” (18)*

*“Make the area inside the IDR ‘essential vehicles’ only.” (22)*

### Personal security

A few respondents, overwhelmingly female, comment on personal *security* issues when using public transport, or walking or cycling in the town.

*“Improve lighting on paths so that it is safer to walk or cycle at night.” (93)*

*"Also if there was better lighting/CCTV in Reading it would feel safer to use public transport - at present I avoid it as I do not feel safe walking by the station or waiting for buses at night." (27)*

### River buses

Two or three respondents mention the possibility of making more use of Reading's *rivers*.

*"Why not use the river Thames more? E.g. river buses from Caversham/Tilehurst to Reading Bridge and the Thames Valley Park" (5)*

### Green travel plans

A number of respondents mention the need for both *schools*...

*"Until school buses are provided or children walk or cycle to school (as I did) there will continue to be exacerbation of this problem" (2)*

*"Children should be able to walk to school - i.e. their school should be within walking distance of their home, and parents/carers should be discouraged from making unnecessary school runs." (232)*

*"Pilot walking buses - paying locals to walk groups of children to school." (5)*

*"Introduce school buses which operate in the school catchment area, as in America." (161)*

*"... promote cycling (and walking) for the journey (to school). Lots of good stuff has been done on this elsewhere in the country by Sustrans with their Safe Routes to Schools programme" (127)*

... and *businesses* to develop green travel plans.

*"If companies could be offered an incentive to their employees to encourage car sharing maybe they would think harder about enforcing it... I've heard of companies like Oracle having a pool of bikes employees can borrow or rent." (80)*

*"What work has been undertaken towards the provision of Green Transport Plans for major employee locations including shift change-over times, shelf stackers, cleaners and security staff...?" (252)*

### Other towns and countries do it better

Finally, a number of respondents believe that other countries, and indeed, other towns in Great Britain, *cope* much better with aspects of their traffic problems than Reading and that Reading could learn from them.

*"I would strongly suggest looking into Hasselt in Belgium where they made the inner ring road one way and managed to increase public transport usage by 800% overnight (1300% over 6 months). I have visited there on a research trip and would be happy to discuss with you." (1)*

*"What you may wish to consider is to have the courage to implement the simple solutions introduced in the northern Dutch town of Drachten where they removed every single traffic light. Where appropriate these were replaced by roundabouts. The result of this simple move was a dramatic improvement in traffic flow (to the point where jams all but disappeared) and a dramatic reduction in accidents." (111)*

*"I used to live in Stuttgart in Germany... the public transport was excellent - well planned, well used and properly invested in... In addition, the separate forms of transport are linked up (trains, S and U Bahns and buses) very well." (153)*

*"Look at Oxford - fantastic Park and Ride out of town, regular buses, moderate fares and cars completely removed from anywhere near the town centre." (9)*

*"I've looked at Aylesbury which is a "Cycling Demonstration Town" and receives additional funding for this. The segregated cycleways send out a very clear message when the cycleway is empty and the road is jammed solid." (256)*

*"Look at High Wycombe's new bus shelter which is modern... and promotes sustainable transport." (9)*

*"However, what a pleasure it is to travel in and around Basingstoke as with many other towns" (79).*

### **Summary**

The above summary is taken from submissions from individual members of the public who responded directly to the Traffic Commission's appeal for evidence.

*The report will be updated in early February to incorporate submissions received by 31 January 2008.*

### **'Common Sense' Party Questionnaire**

In addition, the Commission has received 32 questionnaires that were solicited by the Common Sense Party. These responses cannot be analysed in the same way as the questionnaire uses leading questions - for example "Do you think bus fares should be set at a level to attract customers? e.g. £1 or 50p - to which 100% of respondents replied 'yes'.

To summarise key messages (albeit sometimes prompted by the questionnaire) - 30 respondents were opposed to the one-way IDR, 2 failed to answer; 16 respondents were opposed to the '£515 million' railway scheme for Reading, 14 were in favour and 2 failed to answer; 27 respondents were opposed to road charging, 5 were in favour; 4 respondents were opposed to the Cross Town Route, 26 were in favour and 2 failed to answer; 26 respondents were opposed to "closing Cow Lane for good", 2 were in favour and 2 failed to answer.