

DRAFT

**Report of the Environment Select Committee's
South Circular Investigation**

March 2006

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Results Summary – paper questionnaire

Results Summary – online questionnaire

Detailed online Summary available on:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The South Circular (A205) is a Transport for London (TfL) road which runs through the borough. The South Circular has a big impact on those who live, work, learn and travel through Lewisham. All those who use the South Circular are well aware of its many problems, the most prominent of which is traffic congestion. However, finding a solution to the problem is a real challenge.
- 1.2 For this reason, the Environment Select Committee chose to take on this challenge at the beginning of the municipal year 2005/06 and hold an investigation into traffic congestion on the South Circular.
- 1.3 This report provides the details and a summary of the Committee's investigation. Also detailed in the report are the recommendations which have been developed as a result of the investigation.

2. Background

- 2.1 In October 2003, the Chair of the Committee announced that the Committee will be carrying out a time limited investigation into the levels of traffic congestion on the South Circular (A205). The investigation focused on the area between the Jenner Health Centre on Stanstead Road in Forest Hill and Rushey Green.
- 2.2 Residents, business's in the area, Doctors, the Commander of the South East Ambulance service, the fire brigade, Councillors and officers were invited to send in their views on the problem and possible solution's to the congestion. From the reposes the committee received, It was generally confirmed that the congestion on the South Circular is a major problem and this problem persisted at all times of the day and also on the weekends.
- 2.3 A number of suggestions and prospective solutions were put forward including widening the road, stricter enforcement of bus lanes, co-ordinating public works, co-ordinating traffic lights and reducing the amount of people using their cars.
- 2.4 In response to the consultation, the Head of Transport in the Council, explained the difficulties of trying to alter the South Circular. It was explained that the difficulties were due to the cost , the wider environmental issues and the sheer unacceptability of the extensive compulsory purchase and demolition of houses that would be involved. The South Circular Assessment studies proposed such a scenario and this was comprehensively rejected by the public.
- 2.5 There were no recommendations or follow up actions following the time-limited investigation.

3. Scope of the Investigation

- 3.1 Two years on and the problem of traffic congestion on the South Circular is still a major issue. The outcomes of the investigation in 2003 have helped to focus the scope of investigation the Committee chose to embark on in the 2005/6 municipal. The Committee will be looking at the problem of traffic congestion on the South Circular from a realistic perspective and focussing on how best the capacity of the road can be managed as it is.
- 3.2 Following discussions with key officers and drawing on the lessons learnt and the outcomes of the investigation in 2003 the committee agreed the scope for the investigation at their meeting on 26 July 2005.
- 3.3 It was decided that the investigation must be mindful of what the Council can actually do and the structural constraints and limitations of the road.
- 3.4 The Committee also felt it was important to establish an understanding of the function of the South Circular and also evaluate the effectiveness of bus lanes - looking at enforcement and how effective they are.
- 3.5 In carrying the investigation, Members also hoped to explore:
 - The impact on side roads – rat runs
 - Signalling and lights on Roads
 - Railway Bridge issues (Forest Hill, Catford Bridge and Hither Green)
 - Stanstead Road bus lane camera
 - Forest Hill – interchange with bus's and trains, misplaced bus shelter
 - Box Junctions – enforcement policy
- 3.6 As a result of the investigation, the committee hope to develop recommendations and options on how best to reduce and manage traffic congestion on the South Circular, possibly through small scale improvements and / or identify areas for further investigation.

4. Method of Investigation

- 4.1 The Environment Select Committee initially planned to carry out the Investigation by inviting key stakeholders to an evening meeting and then holding an open event. However, following discussions and consultation about the most useful way of gathering information and evidence, the scope for the investigation was revised. It was decided that public and expert advice could be provided through an open questionnaire that would be distributed to target groups and also be

available to everyone on line. This could then be followed by further discussions with the relevant parties.

5. The Questionnaire

- 5.1 In designing the questionnaire, it was kept in mind that the questionnaire should be simple and needs to make clear that the outcome is to make better use of the South Circular in terms of buses, cycling, walking, traffic signals, and not to look at major alterations which are not feasible.
- 5.2 The questionnaire explored the type of user, the frequency of usage, the time in which the road was used, the part of the road used by the respondent, their views on the problems of the road and any possible solution they may have.
- 5.3 The questionnaire was presented and approved by the Mayor's Consultation Board on 28 November 2005. Having been through the Consultation Board, the questionnaire will be available on the Council's online database – Consultation Finder.
- 5.4 A paper copy and online version of the questionnaire was developed. The paper copy went to the following:
 - all Lewisham Councillors
 - all Lewisham MP' and the MEP
 - bus drivers
 - local businesses like Tesco's Sainsbury's, Iceland, Lidl, Boots
 - local post office
 - local couriers
 - local schools
 - local mini cab and taxi operators
 - attendees of the Transport Liaison Committee
 - local cycling groups
 - libraries
- 5.5 The questionnaire was sent out and respondents were given a month to respond to the questionnaire.
- 5.6 In order to raise awareness of the questionnaire, it was advertised in Councillors Update, Managers Update and a press release was also sent out. Details of the investigation featured as a new news item on the council website and also as an item on the internal Sharepoint system with a link to the online questionnaire. Pedestrians were also alerted about the questionnaire through the electronic notice board outside the town hall.

6. Summary of Results

6.1 A paper and an online questionnaire was developed. The online questionnaire drawn up using survey monkey, proved to be very successful with up to 333 people, filling in the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire are available online, in the 'Consultation Finder' section of the website, of which there will be a link to this report. The paper questionnaire, distributed to target groups was less popular with 15 responses sent back.

6.2 To summarise the findings:

I. What is your interest in the South Circular Road

The majority of those that filled out the questionnaire drove a car or were passengers in a car. This was followed by pedestrians.

II. How many times a week do you use the South Circular?

65.5% of the respondents to the online questionnaire used the road on five days or more. 10 out of 15 of those that filled in the paper questionnaire also used the road on 5 days or more

III. What time do you normally use the South Circular

Individuals gave multiple responses to this question. Use of the South Circular during the peak hours of the morning and during the day was the most frequent response from the respondents of the paper questionnaire. For those that filled the online questionnaire, it was the peak morning period, followed closely by the evening.

IV. What section of the South Circular do you use the most?

Multiple responses were provided to this question by certain people. The Catford Town Centre section to Torrison Road was the most frequently used section of the questionnaire for the online respondents. The section between Forest Hill and Brockely Rise was mostly used by those responding to the paper questionnaire.

V. Please list up to five problems and key locations on the South Circular

A variety of problems were cited by respondents including:

- Too many bus lanes
- People going in and out of St Dunstons College
- Not enough bus routes or bus lanes
- Traffic lights sequencing
- Narrow railway bridges at Catford Hill/ Stanstead Road
- Parked vehicles avoiding congestion charging

- Traffic pollution
- Yellow box junctions get blocked (at Catford Road/ Thomas Lane)
- Poor pedestrians crossing facilities at Burnt Ash Junction/ and the junction of Brockley Rise and Stanstead Road/ Forest Hill fire station
- Poor cycling provision
- Forest Hill Station exit/entrance difficult getting onto the road
- Narrow and congested roads which means traffic spills out into neighbouring roads

VI. Do you have any solutions to these problems

Amongst some of the solutions presented were:

- Encourage walking to school
- Provide school buses to replace parents driving children to school
- Widen the railway arches
- Put in cycle lanes for eastbound cyclists and cycle traffic signals
- Improve pavements
- Phasing and sequencing of traffic lights needs to be addressed
- Bus routes along the whole South Circular
- Cheaper and cleaner public transport
- Implement more bus lanes
- Pedestrian crossings
- St Dunstons to review policies for children being dropped off and picked up
- Extend the DLR from Lewisham to Bromley
- Remove bus stops from the bridge in Catford
- Enforce law on pavement cycling

VII. What alternative would you use if the South Circular were temporarily closed?

Amongst those that filled the online questionnaire and the paper questionnaire, most people would seek an alternative road route if the South Circular were temporarily closed

7. Other Evidence

As a result of the online questionnaire, the SE23 Forum group started a discussion board on the issue of traffic congestion on the South Circular.

Amongst the comments made, includes:

- problems with traffic lights on Canadian Avenue
- too many bus stops on Stanstead Road (Between Catford and Brockley Rise)

- Catford Railway Bridges – the road is too narrow
- Scrapping the concept of the South Circular
- The plans to re-route the road by Laurence House car park should be implemented

Some of the solutions to the problem include:

- Combine the entry road for Halfords and Wicks at Catford
- Reduce access to the roads joining the South Circular at Catford Bridge from the Roads joining from the north
- Reopen Catford Broadway to cars (one way) to bypass the South Circular

8. Conclusion

In scoping and developing the review, the Committee were mindful of the fact that the South Circular is a TfL road and there are many structural limitations to the road. This was clearly conveyed to the public.

The Committee aimed to get public opinion on the problem of the South Circular with suggestions of solutions and have clearly achieved this with around 350 responses to their consultation.

The majority of the responses to the questionnaire that we received was online. The online questionnaire was not only more successful due to the rate of respondents, it was also more cost effective in terms of design and production and timeliness. It also proved to be efficient in terms of human resources as well, as survey monkey collates the general questions as people fill in the questionnaires. Because of this more time is freed up to assess the detailed comments provided.

The long production time of the paper questionnaire (6 weeks) also meant that the timetable for getting the questionnaires out, analysed and then carrying out further investigation/ inviting evidence from witnesses had to be compromised.

9. Recommendations

The committee reviewed the evidence from the consultation at their meeting of 7 March. Following discussions it was decided that the results would be further analysed by experts in the councils Transport division.

The committee decided that they would re-visit the review once the results have been analysed.

For further information please contact: Fola Beckley, Policy and Research Officer, Overview and Scrutiny Team. Ext 49976

APPENDICES

Summary of Paper Questionnaire results

1. What is your interest in the South Circular Road (you can tick more than one box)

Bus driver	1
Bus passenger	8
Van /light goods vehicle driver	
Heavy goods driver	
Cyclist	2
Pedestrian	9
Car driver / passenger	12
Business / shop (owner / employee)	
Local resident / residents' group	7
School teacher / parent	5
Taxi driver / minicab	
Motor cycle / moped user	2
Other	

2. How many times a week do you use the South Circular?

Once a week	1
Twice a week	3
Three to four days a week	2
Five or more days a week	10

3. What time do you normally use the South Circular? (more than one box ticked)

Peak morning (7am–10am)	10
Peak evening (4pm–7pm)	6
During the day	10
Other all day and night	1

4. What Section of the South Circular do you use, the most? (more than one box ticked)

London Road to Forest Hill	7
Forest Hill to Brockley Rise	10
Brockley Rise to Catford Hill	6
Catford Hill to Ravensbourne Park	5
Ravensbourne Park to Catford Town Centre	5
Catford Town Centre to Torrington Road	5
Torrington Road to Hither Green Lane	4
Hither Green Lane to Baring Road	3
Baring Road to borough boundary	3

5. Please list up to 5 problems and key locations on the South Circular

- Traffic jams towards both Catford and Forest Hill in term time *2
- Particular problems are caused by cars going in and out of St Dunstons College
- Obstruction delivering in the daytime
- Reduction of space due to bus lane
- Too many bus lanes
- Traffic lights
- Narrow railway bridges at Catford Hill/ Stanstead Road
- Poor provision for cyclists at Catford gyratory
- Poor pedestrian provision *2
- Heavy traffic *2
- Pollution
- Crossing Westbourne Avenue is difficult
- Yellow box junctions get blocked *2
- Pedestrians cant cross safely at the lights on Burnt Ash Junction
- Bottle neck to/from Catford
- Forest Hill Station exit/entrance difficult getting onto the road
- As a pedestrian, its difficult to cross Brownhill Road at the intersection with Torridon Road
- At entrance and exit gates to St Dunstans school, bus's doe not observe red stop lights and block those turning into the school
- Bus lanes, Forest Hill to Dulwich
- Outside St Dunstans the silly yellow box's for the parents of school children
- Getting out of Ravensbourne Park into the South Circular
- Bicycles on pavements as a pedestrian
- Vehicles parked in bus bays in London Road
- Not enough bus routes or bus lanes
- All zebra crossings should be raised and much wider in Catford Town Centre

6. Do you have any solutions to these problems ?

- Encourage walking to school
- School Buses to replace parents driving children to school
- Widen the railway arches
- Put in cycle lanes for eastbound cyclists and cycle traffic signals
- Congestion charge
- Improved pavements
- Footbridge over Westbourne Avenue or traffic lights at the junction with Woodygates Road
- Pedestrian Crossing phase on traffic Lights * 2
- Sort out light sequence at St Dunstans
- Make exit from Forest Hill station left turn only
- Traffic lights for pedestrians
- Make bus drivers observe the highway code
- Remove unnecessary traffic light at the turn into Catford Hill
- Use bus lanes when bus's aren't using them
- Remove yellow box's and use entrance further back towards Forest Hill
- No cycling on pavements

- More Bus lane *2
- Bus routes along the whole South Circular *2

7. What alternatives would you use if the South Circular were temporarily closed?
(more than one box ticked)

Seek alternative road route	12
Stagger journey	
Use public transport	2
Other (please specify) Train	1

Monitoring Purpose Information

Postcode

- SE4
- SE6 *3
- SE12 *2
- SE13
- SE14 *2
- SE19
- SE23 *4

Gender

Female	7
Male	8

Ethnic Origin

White	
- British	10
- Irish	3
- Turkish	
- Any other White Background	1

Black or Black British	
- Caribbean	
- African	1
- Any other Black background	1

Mixed	
- White and Black Caribbean	
- White and Black African	

- White and Asian	
- Any other mixed background	

Asian or Asian British	
- Indian	
- Pakistani	
- Bangladeshi	
- Any other Asian background	

Chinese or Other ethnic group	
- Chinese	
- Vietnamese	
- Any other ethnic group	

Do you consider yourself disabled?

Yes	
No	16

Further Information

A detailed response (to questions 5 and 6) was sent in by a bus driver

- Problem 1
Catford Island – Popular destination, causing tailbacks to Plassey Road and down Brownhill Road. Why didn't planners give a separate entrance and exit?

Solution:

Build a separate exit downstream of the current with a 'No queue beyond this point' sign

- Problem 2
No right turn into Halfords/ Wicks trading estate – Traffic turns right into this mini retail park. Given the lack of movement around Catford, you can understand why people don't want to turn left

Solution

Maybe a yellow box will allow a better flow

- Problem 3
Narrow lanes at the junction of Catford Road and Canadian Avenue – The southern lane (heading west) of Catford Road goes narrow at the point where Canadian Avenue joins it. The gap as built in is not wide enough for two lanes. This causes traffic in the right-hand lane to give way to larger vehicles as they swing round to try and avoid the kerb that sticks out.

Solution

Realign the kerb by approximately 2 foot, using either the footpath or the grass verge at Laurence House.

- Problem 4
124 service bus drivers changing at the stops outside the Town Hall and Laurence House. This adds to the distortion of traffic flow as other bus routes need to swing out to get past them

Solution

Have the bus drivers change at the bus stand by St Dunstons

- Problem 5
St Mildred's Bridge Lights – The phasing at the lights of Verdant Lane and Hither Green Lane will cause a tailback up St Mildred's Road and onto Westhorpe Avenue. Also in the evening eastbound traffic tails back from the Burnt Ash double junction to Torridon Road.

Solution

Change the phasing. However this may cause a longer tailback up Verdant Lane and Hither Green Lane or Burnt Ash and Baring Road. I believe the reason there is so much traffic on these roads is the current road management system involving short bits of 'one way' and 'no entry' or feeder roads.

Online Questionnaire

The complete detailed online questionnaire contains 333 responses.

The responses can be viewed by going to:

- www.lewisham.gov.uk
- In the top left hand column of the website, click 'Go straight to'
- Click on 'consultations'
- Click on 'consultation finder'
- Write in the title of the investigation or postcode to find it.

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