

## **Team London Bridge response to the London Bridge and Borough High Street walking and cycling changes, January 2023.**

### **Background**

Team London Bridge is a business improvement district, with almost 400 member businesses. We cover an area between London Bridge and Tower Bridge, including More London, The Shard, the station and Guy's hospital. Borough High Street is just outside our boundary, but St Thomas Street is inside our boundary, and the scheme under consultation is directly relevant to our members.

As part of the vision set out in our 2021 ballot and supported by 97% of our members, we have an ambition to be a London exemplar for walking and cycling. For this, we have worked closely with TfL, Southwark Council and partners for many years.

We have a [Cycling Action Plan](#), launched by Dr Will Norman in 2018, which sets out a vision that "Cycling will play a major part in the ongoing transformation of London Bridge as a globally significant place of modern commerce, enterprise and creativity". One of the key actions is to make sure the local network is better connected and legible, as currently there are many one-way streets, unauthorised turns, busy junctions and lack of dedicated lanes.

### **Response**

The response below sets out how the temporary scheme has impacted on the area in terms of cycling, walking and general traffic. It should be stated that the scheme no longer needs to deliver social distancing – the original objective. But that other objectives to improve walking, cycling, public transport and air quality are essential – as well as ensuring business deliveries and a world class visitor destination. We would like greater clarity over whether this is a consultation towards a permanent scheme, or just comments on the success of the experimental measures. A permanent scheme should give more information on traffic movements, the specifics of the scheme, and look at linkage between this scheme and other schemes on Tooley Street and the junction of Borough High Street / King William Street and Duke Street Hill.

### **Cycling in London Bridge**

#### **i. London Bridge**

The cycling experience across London Bridge is much improved with dedicated lanes and reduced traffic. Wands work well because it enables faster cyclists to overtake outside the lane – particularly important given the slopes here. There is some merging with buses at either end of the bridge, but given there is very little traffic during the day, this is not much of a problem. Solutions like floating bus stops will only create new conflict points with bus users. This route helps link London Bridge and the City of London, and link to the new C4 route. The main barrier is the junction of Duke Street Hill / Borough High Street / King William Street, and improvements to that will support a more seamless, safe cycling experience.

#### **ii. St Thomas Street (west)**

The existing temporary scheme has removed eastbound cycling on St Thomas Street, despite this being an important cycling destination, for example, the Shard and News UK secure cycle parking, and the spaces outside the station, hospital and university. Cyclists continue to use this unauthorised route, indeed many simply cycle on the pedestrian side of the barriers.

We commissioned traffic counts on St Thomas Street by the Old Operating Theatre in September 2022 over two 24hr periods (Tues 27<sup>th</sup> and Thurs 29<sup>th</sup>). Both days were very similar, with a slight increase on the Thursday across all modes. Results for Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> Sept show:

	Cycles	Cargo bikes	All other vehicles
Eastbound (not permitted)	438	4	1
Westbound (permitted)	918	31	3476

This means that 442 of the movements (eastbound) which were previously permitted are now not permitted, and are less safe due to lack of provision on the carriageway. There are still almost half as many movements in this direction – largely because there is no practical alternative. This scheme therefore definitely reduces cycle network connectivity. There is no legible access to these destinations on bicycle, unless arriving from south east London.

Also, for (permitted) westbound cycling movements, there is no right turn on to Borough High street. To cycle from The Shard to the City of London requires a U-turn or dismount. More likely, cyclists are choosing to turn right, through the pedestrian crossing. In both above-mentioned cases, the scheme leads cyclists to make unauthorised turns.

### iii. Borough High Street

Where the carriageway has been significantly narrowed to create a wider pedestrian area (outside the post office), cyclists are forced to merge with buses for a short stretch on what is a fast downhill section of road. This makes a more stressful, and perhaps more dangerous, cycling environment (this needs to be balanced with the reduced traffic here, which has created improved conditions for cyclists).

### Walking in London Bridge

In general, the temporary schemes have improved walking in the area by providing additional space, particularly at the junction of St Thomas Street with Borough High Street, which could get very congested. This will be further improved with temporary pavements creating a flush surface. The barriers have been an obstacle to informal crossing on the street – and perhaps a reason why barriers are often moved so people create gaps to pass through. The barriers have reduced or removed carriageway space for cyclists, and there is a noticeable increase in conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists behind these barriers.

### General traffic

#### i. St Thomas Street

When TfL implemented the temporary scheme in 2020, they removed the Access Only sign on the eastern entrance to St Thomas street (from Bermondsey Street) – a traffic reduction measure that had been delivered carefully in 2018 through consultation with local stakeholders to improve St Thomas Street in the long term. This has not been mentioned as one of the elements of this scheme. Traffic counts at that junction show the following impact before and after the temporary scheme (vehicle numbers moving westbound through the junction):

	Thurs 28 March 2019	Thurs 29 Sept 2022
Total vehicles	930	3,276
Motor vehicles	676	2,719
Bicycles and cargo bikes	254	557

The removal of the Access Only measure has led to a fourfold increase (over 400%) in motorised traffic along St Thomas Street. This is significant, particularly in an area where we are working hard to reduce traffic volumes and improve air quality by a major hospital (a hospital which has reduced its own logistics significantly during this period through a consolidation centre) and development site.

The positive news here is that cycling has more than doubled.

We would welcome further reviewing the taxi situation on this street, and other parked vehicles.

#### **ii. Borough High Street and London Bridge (King William Street)**

The removal of general traffic across King William Street (London Bridge) has been beneficial for the area in terms of buses flowing without congestion. Businesses have indicated that there have been some delays for deliveries, but this is perhaps more linked to restrictions on Tooley Street and increased congestion on Tower Bridge Road (possibly a result of restrictions on London Bridge). However, deliveries are still occurring and there is a significant increase in take-up of options by cargo bike – promoted through our Bikes for Business project. For example, all Amazon packages in the area are now delivered by cargo bike.

We have seen some additional large vehicles using Montague Close and exiting on to Tooley Street / Duke Street Hill. This has damaged the underside of London Bridge, and conflicts with a busy pedestrian stretch of Thames Path lacking in pavements and where people often walk in the carriageway. This should be looked at: why is it occurring, is it related to this scheme, and what can be done to mitigate it.

#### **Suggestions to TfL**

1. Maintain a widened southern footway on St Thomas Street, but reduce the additional width to allow a contraflow cycle lane eastbound. While the contraflow will be alongside parked vehicles facing the other direction, this was already the case before the temporary measures, and with low traffic levels do not present any significant risk.
2. Create a right turn for cyclists from St Thomas Street on to Borough High Street (and a left turn from Borough High Street into St Thomas Street).
3. Re-insert the Access Only sign at the eastern junction of St Thomas Street.
4. Reduce the width of the temporary pedestrian space on Borough High Street so that cyclists and buses have space to be side-by-side, without the need to merge (at least minimum standards based on London Cycling Design Standards).
5. Explore if there is any impact from these measures on additional motor traffic at Montague Close and Tower Bridge Road, and if there are mitigations that can be put in place.