



**Save Our Buses (SOB)**

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## **Cycling Infrastructure:**

A response from *Waltham Forest's* Save Our Buses campaign

To: Greater London Authority  
Transport Committee  
22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018

Via email [TransportCommittee@london.gov.uk](mailto:TransportCommittee@london.gov.uk)

### **Introduction**

Members of Save Our Buses (SOB) welcome the opportunity to contribute to the GLA Transport Committee's investigation into cycling infrastructure. We hope that our submission will be helpful in determining the most positive outcome for bus users and cyclists. After all there are times when many cyclists will become bus users and vice-versa.

### **Background to Save Our Buses**

*Waltham Forest's* SOB campaign group was formed in January 1990 in response to London Regional Transport's decision to axe West End bus routes 38 and 55 from Lea Bridge Road in East London.

Through the 1970s and 1980s chronic congestion and a failure to prioritise buses led to: deteriorating reliability, lengthy journey times and a reduction in patronage. The reduced viability of routes 38 and 55 coincided with budget cuts and service reductions across the Capital.

### **Campaign Success**

A relentless seven year community campaign followed. Supporters included: Local residents, The London Borough's Of Hackney & Waltham Forest, local & national politicians, businesses, senior citizens groups and bus workers.

Campaign members included cyclists who helped to build support for our Lea Bridge Road ***Ticket To Ride*** charter which called for **Bus Lanes**, **More Buses** and a **West End Link**.

The introduction of extensive bus lanes by Waltham Forest Council paved the way for the extension of route 55 to Leyton, Bakers Arms in April 1997.

### **Lea Bridge Road Buses Today**

From Leyton, Bakers Arms towards Clapton three bus routes link with Central London as follows:

**Route 48** Walthamstow Central, **Leyton Bakers Arms**, Clapton, Hackney Central, Shoreditch, Liverpool Street Stn, London Bridge

**Route 55** **Leyton Bakers Arms**, Clapton, Hackney Central, Shoreditch, Old Street Stn, Clerkenwell, Bloomsbury, Tottenham Court Road, Oxford Circus.

**Route 56** Whipps Cross, **Leyton Bakers Arms**, Clapton, Hackney Downs Stn, Dalston Stn, Angel, Barbican, St Pauls, Barts Hospital

At the busiest times a combined service of about 30 buses an hour provide areas of low car ownership between Leyton and Clapton with high frequency, quality public transport.

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### Mini-Holland: Bus Lane Removal

SOB has made representation to both the London Borough Of Waltham Forest (LBWF) and Transport For London (TfL) about the removal of bus lanes from Lea Bridge Road. We believe that there is a risk of repeating the mistakes of the past.

### Mini-Holland: Lea Bridge Road Bus Journey Times

In 2018 the loss of TfL's operational grant has led to frequency reductions on London bus routes. If the Lea Bridge Road bus services lose passengers as a result of the removal of bus lanes, routes 48, 55 and 56 will be put at risk.

TfL has admitted to SOB that bus services will be adversely affected by the changes made as part of the Mini-holland project. On 28<sup>th</sup> July 2016 the former Managing Director of Surface Transport, Leon Daniels informed us that

**“...bus journey times along Lea Bridge Road will increase..**

### Mini-Holland: Lea Bridge Road Consultation

LBWF's consultation document, *Lea Bridge Road – A Street For Everyone*, offered a different perspective:

**“Bus lane operational times will remain the same and we anticipate, through TfL modelling, that the average bus journey time will not be impacted by the changes to bus lanes.”**

Pre-consultation perception surveys were carried out by LBWF during March/April 2015 with residents, businesses, cyclists and visitors. Bus passengers **were not included**.

However, the LBWF consultation document noted that **61%** of people travel on Lea Bridge Road by **public transport**. **Buses** provided public transport on Lea Bridge Road at the time of the surveys.

The only direct approach to public transport users was an email from P J Bradley, TfL Head Of Consultation Delivery. This was sent out on **24<sup>th</sup> November 2015** but consultation on sections **b & c** of the scheme ended on **25<sup>th</sup> November 2015**. The email referred to a closure date of **2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015**.

Parts **b & c** contain the sections of bus lane which were most critical to the restoration of route 55 in 1997.

### Mitigation

In recognition of likely delays to Lea Bridge Road services, TfL indicated that mitigation would be sought elsewhere on the bus network. Included are measures in Central Walthamstow which it was hoped would improve reliability and journey times on buses in the area.

This was explained by Sam Monck, TfL's Head of Borough Projects and Programmes Surface Strategy & Planning in correspondence with SOB dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017:

**“As you know, we have been working hard with LB Waltham Forest to undertake extensive traffic modelling along Lea Bridge Road to ensure that the impacts on bus journey times are manageable and acceptable. We have been working with them to ensure that any potential negative impacts on bus journey times created by the Lea Bridge Road scheme are mitigated elsewhere on the network to reduce overall impact.**

**We try to make improvements that balance the various objectives for the road and bus network. The recent widening of the Walthamstow bus station should assist with journey times and reliability and in addition, in the future, the Walthamstow Gyratory scheme should provide improved bus journey times for many services which access the Walthamstow Central area.”**

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## Mini-Holland: Buses In Walthamstow

The implementation of Mini-Holland has severely undermined bus services operating from and through Central Walthamstow. SOB has drawn attention to:

- Bunching and uneven intervals between buses.
- Slower buses.
- Longer and unpredictable journey times.
- Unreliability.
- Shortened journeys

These are hallmarks of failing bus services and consequently many routes in the area have lost substantial numbers of passengers.

We have pressed TfL to reveal when they first became aware of the disruption to bus services on Hoe Street, Waltham Forest's principal bus corridor. To date they have been unable to provide an acceptable response.

## Mini-Holland: Walthamstow Bus Service Cuts

TfL is removing additional resources which had cushioned many services.

Frequencies have been reduced on five Walthamstow routes in recent months as follows:

### **48 Walthamstow Central to London Bridge**

- Frequency reduced from 8 to 10 minutes, Monday to Saturday daytime from 24<sup>th</sup> June 2017.
- The service has suffered delays at both ends of the route.
- Passenger numbers are down just over 1.4m (19%) in the three years to April 2017.

### **W11 Walthamstow Central to Chingford Hall Estate**

- Frequency reduced from 10 to 12 minutes, Monday to Saturday daytime from 4<sup>th</sup> November 2017.
- Passenger numbers are down just over 178,000 (13%) in the three years to April 2017.

### **W12 Walthamstow Coppermill Lane to Wanstead**

- Frequency reduced from 20 to 30 minutes, Monday to Saturday daytime from 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017
- Passenger numbers are down 131,723 (15%) in the three years to April 2017.

### **230 Wood Green to Upper Walthamstow**

- Frequency reduced from 12 to 15 minutes, Monday to Saturday daytime from 6<sup>th</sup> January 2018
- Passenger numbers down almost 500,000 (10.6%) in the three years to April 2017.

### **58 Walthamstow Central to East Ham**

- A temporary reduction has been consolidated with the introduction of a new permanent timetable on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2018.
- Frequency reduced from 10 to 12 minutes Monday to Saturday daytime.
- Passenger numbers are down just over 1.2m (14.5%) in the three years to April 2017.

Routes **48**, **230**, **W11** and **W12** now have frequencies last seen during the **1990s**, an era when buses were often viewed as the *Cinderella* service of the public transport system.

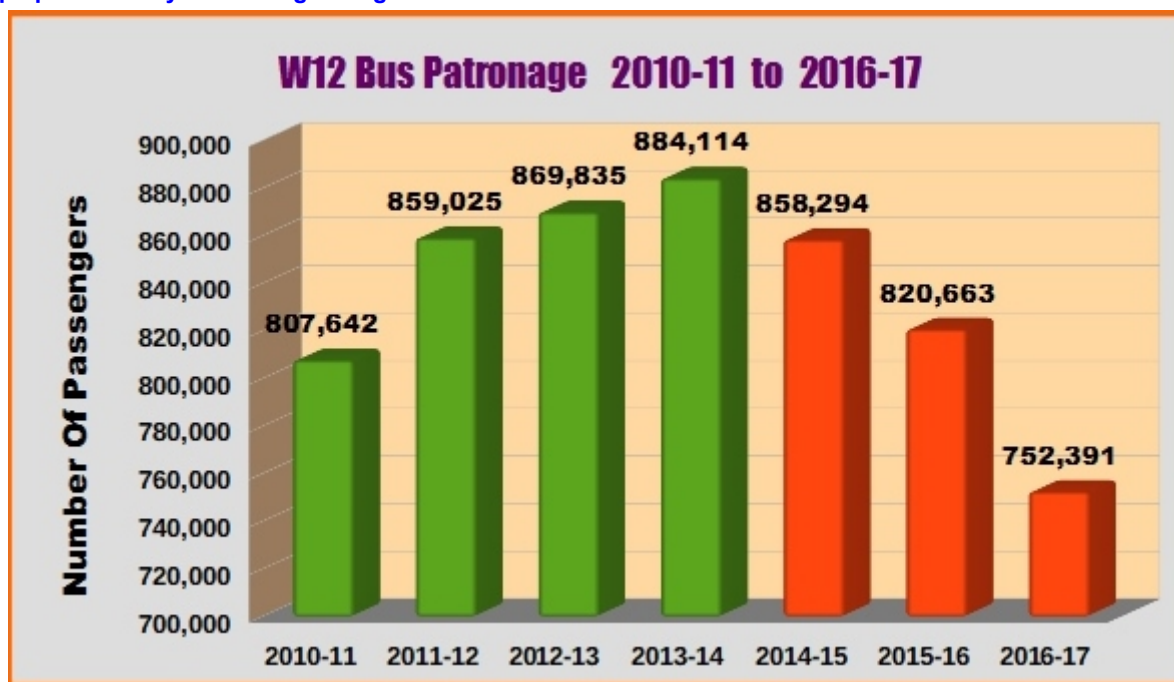
## Mini-Holland: Bus W12

### **The Route: Coppermill Lane, Walthamstow Central, Walthamstow Village, Whipps Cross Hospital, Snaresbrook, South Woodford, Wanstead**

The W12 bus should be the flagship service of Walthamstow's Mini-Holland. It runs west to east across Waltham Forest through central Walthamstow and the Village. It is given priority along Orford Road, in the very heart of the Mini-Holland area.

Untill 2013/14 passenger numbers on the W12 had been steadily rising but there has been a marked decline since then, as shown in the graph below.

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There's a direct correlation between the drop in patronage and reliability issues affecting route W12 over the last three years.

One example of deteriorating reliability between 2016/17 that accelerated the decline in passenger numbers occurred during the evening of 9<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

SOB observed four eastbound W12 departures from Hoe Street/Grosvenor Park Road within 15 minutes. Two of the journeys were terminating half way along the route at Whipps Cross.

The 20 minute frequency at the time was run by six vehicles. With four buses bunched together that left two to cover the rest of the route.

These are some of the factors that led TfL to cut the W12 route's frequency by a third on 2<sup>nd</sup> December last year. However, it is TfL's funding of Walthamstow's Mini-Holland that helped create the conditions to destabilise the service in the first place.

## Conclusions

This submission is not an exhaustive evaluation of the impact of Mini-Holland on bus services. However, such is the level of concern that we recently re-iterated our call for London's Mayor, Sadiq Khan to commission an Independent Review of Waltham Forest's Mini-Holland, specifically in relation to bus services.

This would afford the opportunity to provide solutions and restore the fortunes of local bus services in Waltham Forest and beyond. Three years ago few would have expected to see the return of 1990s timetables to bus routes in Walthamstow.

Damage done to bus services radiating out from Walthamstow means that mitigation cannot be provided in compensation for future delays on Lea Bridge Road.

Whilst services in Walthamstow have been mired in congestion bus lanes kept the Lea Bridge Road services moving. Removing bus priority turns the clock back 27 years, which is regressive.

It is worth pointing out that effective bus lanes send out a visual message to other road users. **It can be quicker by bus.**

**Priority lanes to move cyclists and bus passengers past the jams would be a force to be reckoned with. They would broadcast the message that there is an alternative to the car.**

Paul Dogan - Save Our Buses Campaign Member