

Motorcycle Action Group



Manchester

Congestion Charging for Motorcycles

3rd July 2007

Foreword

The proposal for a traffic charging scheme by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) is aimed to overcome the increasing problems of congestion in this city.

The Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority has stated¹, "We can bid to government for a 3 billion pound package of local transport investment and local congestion charging. If we're successful, this would be the biggest and most far-reaching transport investment programme ever launched outside London."

All the local authorities within the Greater Manchester area met at the end of January and agreed in principle to a charge on 15 roads. Although the bid is to be submitted later this year the decision to make the bid to Government appears to be due to be made at the end of July 2007.

If AGMA does decide to submit a bid at the end of July, a formal (second stage), statutory consultation, as set out by the Department for Transport will be undertaken. This will include full consultation around each and every individual scheme proposed in the TIF (Transport Innovation Fund) bid outlined on May 25th.

No congestion charging could be introduced before there has been significant improvement in Greater Manchester's public transport. A first phase system could be in place by late 2012.

Recent reports in the motorcycle press and local papers have stated that the proposed congestion charging scheme for Manchester, has initial plans to include charging for motorcycles.

This document outlines the response from the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG UK).

It sets out the reasons for an exemption for motorcycles² based on compelling evidence that they do not cause congestion as has been demonstrated in London, Durham³, Stockholm⁴ and as outlined in proposals for congestion charging in Edinburgh⁵.

The purpose of this response is based on a question that MAG put forward to the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority and that was recently answered by the authority on their website.

Question: "Would motorbikes be exempt from any congestion charge?"

Answer: "It is possible Motorbikes will pay less than cars - this is still being considered"

The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG UK) is a lobbying organisation that exists to represent, protect and promote the interests and rights of motorcycling.

MAG is a member of the Federation of European Motorcyclists Associations (FEMA)⁶ comprising of 23 national riders' rights organisations from 18 European countries.

MAG represents riders nationally, mainly via its representation to Parliament, and Government agencies through the National Motorcycle Council which deals specifically at present with the delivery of the "Governments National Motorcycle Strategy"⁷

MAG is organised through a national structure of twenty regions with riders represented locally by local groups. In this case the North West region is represented by Blackpool Area - Liverpool & West Lancashire - Red Rose - Wirral & Chester and Manchester Local Groups.

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¹ www.gmfuturetransport.co.uk

² In this document, the term motorcycle is intended to include all powered two wheelers: motorcycles, scooters and mopeds.

³ Durham has had its own mini-congestion charge since 2002, making it the country's first. The scheme, which was intended to control traffic on one street in the heart of the historic cathedral city, has won a number of traffic management awards.

⁴ Edinburgh in their proposal for a congestion charging scheme in 2005 excluded motorcycles from charges.

⁵ <http://www.roadtraffic-technology.com/projects/stockholm-congestion> Exemptions to the charge include emergency vehicles, buses, diplomatic vehicles, disabled persons vehicles, military vehicles, hybrid or electric cars, motorcycles and mopeds, and foreign-registered vehicles

⁶ FEMA www.fema.ridersrights.org

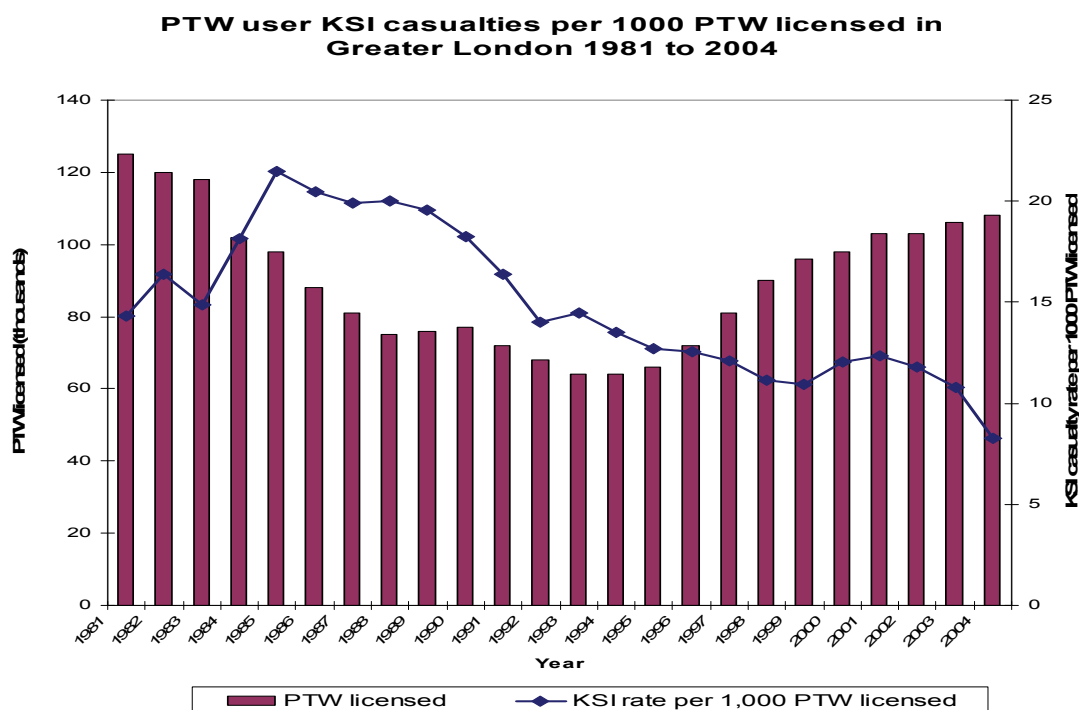
⁷ National Motorcycle Strategy Document <http://www.mag-uk.org/content/pr/2005/february/DFTMotorcycleStrategy.pdf> pdf 343KB

Background to congestion charging and the exemption of motorcycles

Congestion charging schemes currently exist in Central London and Durham. (Consultation is on-going about a proposed western extension to the London congestion charging zone). In both schemes motorcycles are exempt from the charge because it has been recognised that this form of transport effectively reduces congestion.

A motorcycle occupies far less of the road-space than a car. It also causes negligible damage to the road surface, unlike heavier vehicles. In their representations to Transport for London regarding the London Congestion charge, MAG successfully argued that motorcycles can cause less congestion than a slow-moving bicycle in a narrow traffic lane as the bicycle can cause delays to other vehicles behind it, whereas the motorcycle is capable of moving at the speed of the prevalent traffic flow.

Since the introduction of the congestion charge in London, there has been an increase in motorcycle use, and a decrease in motorcycle casualties, not just in the C-charge zone, but throughout Greater London. Research highlights that this is because there are fewer cars to collide with motorcycles, which is the most common cause of urban motorcycle accidents. This suggests that there are substantial safety benefits to motorcycle users if congestion-charging schemes are introduced.



Source: TfL: (2004a) *Accidents and casualties on London's roads 2003*; TfL: (2005) *Casualties in Greater London during 2004*; TfL. London.) Ref. G. Livett
N.B. PTW includes motorcycles, scooters and mopeds

Local Transport Plans (LTPs)

Guidance issued by the Department for Transport on the second round of Local Transport Plans, states, in Part 2, paragraph 45: "In developing their programmes, local transport authorities are expected to show that they have considered the services and facilities they provide to all users of local transport networks. LTPs must therefore not only provide solutions and opportunities for drivers, walkers, cyclists⁸, and bus and tram users, but also taxi and private hire vehicles, freight and distribution vehicles, coaches, motorcyclists, wheelchair users and equestrians."

Modal Choice

The European Parliament's RETT (Transport Committee) supports the use of all forms of public transport and improved mobility or pedestrians, including those facing barriers to access to transport, notably disabled persons and older/elderly persons, motorcyclists and cyclists, through institutional investment, subsidies and

⁸ Significant emphasis has been given to cycling to work as an alternative means of transport, however this does not consider statistical evidence that only 2-3% of adults use a bicycle on a nearly daily basis. Most bicycle journeys are quite short; one quarter is of less than a mile, while the mean distance is 2.4 miles. (Assessing the actual risks faced by cyclists *Malcolm Wardlaw BSc MBA. December, 2002*)

legislation reflecting this preference; emphasises the vitally important role played by local passenger services in terms of mobility and sustainable transport in towns and cities and regions, and stresses the major responsibility of local authorities in this connection.

For many people a motorcycle is a transport mode of choice. Many parts of the country are inaccessible by public transport and for some journeys, private transport is the most practical modal choice. While many urban areas have excellent transport links, not everyone who travels there enjoys the same access from their journey's starting point, especially those who live in rural areas -- will always require personal powered transport.

Motorcycles are ideally placed to be part of an integrated transport strategy, providing an ideal transport solution for many who live too far from work to cycle in a reasonable time frame and who have little or no access to the current, poorly funded, public transport arrangements. They provide the viable alternative that many will need if they are to make the successful transition away from motor car use. There are very good reasons why motorcycles should be included in an integrated urban transport policy - and no compelling reasons why they should not.

Motorcycles cause a fraction of the damage to roads compared to other motorised transport, and thus are responsible for only a tiny percentage of the maintenance costs. Increased motorcycle use would require few changes to the current roads infrastructure. Land given over to car parking space can be used more efficiently.

Motorcycles occupy far less space on the road and three or more motorcycles can be parked in a single car parking space. Motorcycles play an essential role as the most practical means of personal transportation for those who cannot afford a car. Mopeds and other small commuter machines can return up 100 or more miles per gallon. Motorcycles consume between 55% and 81% less fuel than cars on the same journey and they require far less use of resources to manufacture (1/7th).

The contribution that motorcycles can make to a reduction in congestion

While the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority has stated that congestion charging is linked to improved public transport, the majority of vehicle users want to ensure they are able to preserve their freedom of movement and continue to be able to have the transport flexibility that many of them need, including the provision to carry a reasonable amount of personal cargo.

Motorcycles provide a convenient, economical and environmentally friendly form of personal powered transport, providing the ideal 'half way house' between the present traffic chaos and the transportation vision of the future.

As argued by government in response to the Select Committee Hearing on The Government's Motorcycle Strategy, motorcycles have lower emissions than cars⁹. Indeed, new motorcycles now have to meet strict emissions limits as laid down by an EU Directive. When this came into force in June 2003 several popular models were discontinued by the manufacturers as they did not comply with the Directive.

The other advantage that motorcycles have over cars is that they spend less time in traffic jams and therefore not only produce fewer emissions while idling and use less fuel. According to Motorcycle Industry research, journey times in London have been reduced by between 40-60% when travelling by motorcycle, moped or scooters¹⁰

Technological developments by all manufacturers mean modern motorcycles are among the most fuel efficient vehicles on the road today which, along with their space saving capabilities and improved safety record, means they provide a credible alternative to four wheeled personal powered transport.

Unfortunately, the motorcycle remains a largely misunderstood mode of transport, for far too long shrouded in clouds of misconception about both the nature of the machines themselves and the nature of the people who ride them. The reality is that motorcycles have long since evolved and modern motorcycles are clean, quiet, well designed and come in a variety of different styles.

⁹ Government's response to the Select Committee, June 2007

¹⁰ Ref: SMART guide, MCIA 2002.

Research carried out on behalf of Transport for London shows that in general, London motorcyclists have the following characteristics that *differentiate* them from other motorcyclists:

- They are slightly younger, but despite their age, they have a higher employment status and an associated higher income.
- but are more likely to own machines with an engine capacity less than 250cc.
- They are three times as likely to be commuter/work riders and half as likely to be leisure only riders.
- They are less likely to be riders who are returning to motorcycling after a break.
- They report choosing to ride a motorcycle mainly to avoid congestion and cite financial reasons for running a motorcycle.

Figures released by the Motorcycle Industry Association show that sales in the UK have tripled during the last five years. The encouragement of public transport is essential, but transport planners must understand that if the aims of to reduce congestion are to be realised, they need to recognise that the majority of people are unwilling to give up personal powered transport without a significant investment in the public transport infrastructure.

A motorcycle takes approximately 16 - 46% less time to cover the same trip through traffic congestion as a car. Even on longer trips a motorcycle can provide significant time savings for commuters. A medium capacity motorcycle is capable of undertaking long distance commuting, maintaining traffic speeds on main roads and motorways while being less affected by traffic congestion at peak times.

Given that stretches of main road and motorway have either reached or are fast approaching gridlock during peak commuter periods, an increase in motorcycle use can assist in reducing traffic levels without having to resort to environmentally damaging road building/improvement schemes. Motorcycles can in most cases easily extricate themselves from congested areas and in the event of breakdown they can be easily moved out of the traffic flow, further reducing incidents of congestion.

Conclusion

In this document, MAG has aimed to set out all the reasons why motorcycles need to be exempt from Congestion Charging in Manchester.

There is compelling evidence that this form of transport can alleviate and offer an effective and efficient solution to the problem of congestion.

According to the Governments National Motorcycle Strategy, "The principal aim (...) is to 'mainstream' motorcycling, so that all the organisations involved in the development and implementation of transport policy recognise motorcycling as a legitimate and increasingly popular mode of transport. We want to see an end to old stigmas and stereotyping – motorcycling can be a modern, practical way of getting around, and we all need to recognise it as such."

FEMA's Green Paper On Urban Transport states that "motorcycling is an ideal means of transport in modern traffic, which offers major advantages to the transport mix as well as solutions to many problems present in urban centres" which is as pertinent in Manchester as anywhere else in Europe.

MAG believes that motorcycles can fulfill a significant role as part of an integrated transport policy by relieving traffic congestion and pollution, whilst enhancing commercial efficiency through cutting the length of journey times to work.

Overall MAG is surprised that the authorities in Manchester have even considered charging motorcycles, when the London congestion charging scheme has proved successful especially regarding motorcycles and hopes that common sense will prevail within the AGMA by exempting motorcycles from congestion charging.

Motorcycle Action Group MAG UK

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