



Transport for London The future of freight

Daniel Moore reports on the upcoming changes for freight in the nation's capital

“Freight is essential to London, particularly in a post-Brexit environment, and we need to get it right!” said TfL’s Senior Communications & Engagement Manager, Nikki Ward, as she discussed the organisation’s plans for reducing pollutants in the capital at UROC’s members meeting, last November.

According to TfL, freight constitutes 30% of morning peak traffic in the capital and 1/3 of NOx emissions generated on UK roads. Meanwhile, HGVs account for 78% of cyclists and 20% percent of pedestrian fatalities in London.

As part of the Mayor’s Transport Strategy (MTS), TfL has drafted several daughter documents, which provide detail on specific policies, with the end goal of putting a cap on these issues once and for all.

FREIGHT ACTION PLAN

Launching in Spring this year, TfL’s ‘Freight Action Plan’ is designed to minimise traffic and reduce NOx pollutants in and around central London by working closely with its advisory panel; comprising of senior representatives from London Boroughs and industry, to “not only develop this policy document, but also implement it.”

One of the main objectives, Ms

Ward notes, is collaborating with waste transport/freight operators to create strategic routes for the co-ordination of waste collections and deliveries, that will improve air quality while allowing HGVs to move more freely through London.

She explained: “Following the success of the New West End Company’s (NWECC) Supplier Scheme, which saw a 50% reduction in freight vehicles, we have produced a waste management tool kit to help businesses, business areas and business improvement districts consolidate and reduce the number of vehicles and waste entering the city each day.” Ms Ward continued. We have also launched a new Water Freight Tool Kit for the transportation of goods across the city’s rivers and waterways.”

However, Ms Ward asserts that TfL’s intentions are not to stop freight from operating in London altogether, but rather assist operators with making efficient use of the capital’s network.

DIRECT VISION STANDARD

Running alongside this policy, TfL’s Vision Zero document, sets the “world’s first ever” Direct Vision Standard scheme for HGVs, where vehicles weighing above 12 tonnes will require a safety permit when entering or operating in London from October 2020.

The concept behind this is to significantly decrease the number of

injuries and deaths of pedestrians and cyclists caused by goods vehicles (weighing over 3.5 tonnes). According to the Vision Zero report, 221 people between 2013 – 2016 were either killed or seriously injured “as a result of a collision.”

By using a star system, the DVS provides HGVs with a rating from zero (lowest) to five (highest), depending on how much a HGV driver can see through their cab windows.

HGVs receiving a one-star rating or above would automatically be granted a permit, while those who obtain zero stars would have to meet a safe system, which could include cameras and sensors for additional safety and security. By 2024, only HGVs that obtain a three-star rating will have access to the capital.

With the lead up to the HGV Permit Scheme, TfL and the wider Greater London Authority (GLA) are banging the safety gong to freight operators through numerous ways. One prime example is working alongside the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS), which is a voluntary accreditation programme that promotes safety, security and best practice for commercial vehicle operators, with the opportunity to progress from Bronze to Silver and Gold standards.

The report said: “The GLA family will require all operators in their supply chain with contracts starting from November

2018 to be accredited to a minimum of FORS Silver and by April 2024 FORS Gold,” adding that TfL will encourage “the fitting of speed-limiting technology and Autonomous Emergency Braking to vehicles as a requirement for FORS Gold membership” within the same year.

Safety Permits will be available to waste and transport businesses from October 2019 while TfL and the European Commission begin setting the standards for DVS.

ULEZ

Another challenge for freight is London’s Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), where it will be compulsory for all vehicles travelling through the capital to comply with certain euro emission standards replacing the current toxicity charge.

From 8th April 2019, lorries, coaches and buses, which don’t meet the Euro 6 emission criteria will be obligated to pay £100 for each day they operate within the zone, with cars, taxis and mini buses

paying £12.50 if they’re not Euro 4 or 6 compliant. Congestion charge fees will still apply as an additional charge for all vehicle types entering these areas during the permitted times.

With two months to go, Sadiq Khan is urging drivers and business owners to ensure their vehicles are ULEZ compliant by using TfL’s online vehicle checking tool. He commented: “London’s toxic air is a public health emergency and the introduction of ULEZ is exactly the sort of bold action that is required to deal with it.

“A predicted 45% fall in harmful emissions within the zone should be a great start to improving the lives of millions of Londoners.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Adding to his statement, Nick Deal, Manager, Logistics Development at the Road Haulage Association (RHA), stated that there’s a “growing concern” of Zero Emission Zones across the country.

“These zones are being created without understanding the need for many vehicle types to have access to perform essential tasks – especially specialist vehicles such as those dealing with waste,” he said.

“It will become essential to ensure that specialised vehicles are allowed to access all areas where people and businesses need them without fines and penalties.”

Touching back on London’s ULEZ, Ms Ward said it is likely to impact smaller waste and skip operations compared to larger companies, who have started retrofitting their vehicles or switching over to electric alternatives. “Our major focus is helping small businesses and operators because we are aware that there is a large cost involved to retrofit vehicles,” she noted.

“Freight is essential to supporting a growing city. We need to work together to remain dynamic and innovative to address our joint environmental, road danger and congestion challenges,” Ward concluded.

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