

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

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Jennette Arnold AM

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Our ref: MGLA131109-6530

Date: 11 JAN 2010

Dear Jennette

Re: Commercial Vehicle Education Unit

Thank you for your letter of 11 November 2009 on behalf of your constituents about the Commercial Vehicle Education Unit (CVEU). I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

TfL advise me that research shows that fewer than one in twenty cycling fatalities involved a defective HGV, whereas over a fifth involved a large vehicle changing lanes to the left or turning left. This suggests that the key priority in reducing cycling fatalities is to reduce the risk to cyclists from left-turning HGVs. This can be addressed by changing the design and use standards for HGVs, encouraging the retro fitting of mirrors and safety sidebars to existing HGVs and raising awareness amongst both cyclists and HGV drivers on the need to travel safely on the road.

On the specific point you raise about 'class six' mirrors, at present only new HGVs are legally required to carry these mirrors. Therefore, vehicles that do not have these mirrors cannot be deemed as defective and would not be picked up by the CVEU. As you may be aware, I have recently written to the Secretary of State, Lord Adonis, on the issue of legislation regarding the retro fitting of safety equipment, including mirrors, to all HGVs and I look forward to working with him to improve the safety of those vehicles operating in London.

HGVs fitted with the best possible safety equipment will not save lives on their own. Drivers must be fully trained in how to use their mirrors, and they must be aware of and actively look out for cyclists and pedestrians. The Freight Operators Recognition Scheme (FORS) is the most effective way of providing high quality training and education for drivers as it is run in partnership with the industry, and helps ensure that the safest vehicles and the highest quality of drivers are operating in London, improving safety for all the capital's road users.

Regarding the current role and duties of the CVEU, as you know, TfL is operating in especially difficult financial times and funding for the CVEU will discontinue on 31 March 2010. As of 1 April 2010, the operator assessment activities previously undertaken by the CVEU will be undertaken by transport specialists in risk assessment and legal compliance contracted by TfL to provide this service.

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Your constituents may be aware that vehicles currently stopped by the CVEU are selected precisely because officers feel these vehicles would be defective. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) plans to continue undertaking roadside stops for prosecution purposes and will, where appropriate, provide instruction and spot check visits to companies. An MPS review of its enforcement services will underpin discussions with TfL on the number of roadside enforcement stops the MPS would like to undertake in the future.

I should also stress that all enforcement duties will remain with the MPS, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, and that the existing or potential FORS delivery partnership will not take over any element of this activity.

Of course, the MPS's Transport Operational Command Unit (TOCU) will continue to investigate companies where freight vehicles have been involved in a fatality – and in respect of serious injury collisions, visits will be undertaken where there is manifest breach of H&S Regulations.

The existing FORS Partnership still includes both the MPS and the HSE and there are no plans to make any changes to the membership as both organisations seek to continue with the delegation of powers following the cessation of TfL funding. This means that they will still be issuing improvement notices under HSE powers to manage occupational road risk.

In summary, the Metropolitan Police will continue to undertake on-street enforcement action in relation to freight operators in London. TfL will continue with its FORS, which, as I have already mentioned above, offers direct safety benefits for cyclists, including bespoke driver and freight planner training, discounted driver-licence checking services and introductory offers for driver profiling. In addition, TfL is setting up a Cycle Safety Action Group to co-ordinate activity relating to cycle safety across London. This follows the publication of my draft Cycle Safety Action Plan that you mention on 23 October 2009. This Group will bring together all the key organisations involved in increasing cycling safety, including representatives from the freight industry and the MPS. TfL and the MPS are also working closely together on these issues including promoting Exchanging Places Events through which cyclists experience the realities of driving an HGV.

I am keen to look at all kinds of innovative solutions that will help improve safety for cyclists as well. That is why I have been lobbying Government to allow London to undertake trials to fit trixi mirrors to lamp posts and to allow cyclists to turn left at some red lights, as this has been shown to be effective in other European cities. I am also interested to see the results of pilot schemes run by boroughs such as The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, who are currently running a trial allowing cyclists to ride both ways up some one-way streets.

Whilst I can understand your constituents concerns, I trust this gives you the assurance that I am committed to the safety of cyclists in London and will continue to improve the safety of freight vehicles by promoting FORS membership and working constructively with these members.

Yours ever,



Boris Johnson
Mayor of London