

State of the City report: London's Highways 2020

London boroughs and Transport for London are responsible for the capital's highways. This is their fourth annual report on the state of the network. It provides key information on asset numbers, condition and funding – and the growing maintenance backlog of over £1 billion.

2020 was a challenging year for everyone. The coronavirus pandemic has created, for now, a new 'norm'. A key feature of London's new norm is the reliance we are all placing on the highway network – figures throughout 2020 have shown that we are turning to the roads to make safe journeys – be it walking, cycling or driving. Even those using public transport are returning to the buses in greater numbers than the rail and tube networks. Be it personal, commercial or emergency vehicles, we know that roads are our transport cornerstone for now and our recovery.

However, the virus has impacted our plans for highway maintenance in 2020:

- Pushing back works in the early months of the virus as we established safe working practices;
- Material shortages and delays and increasing costs to safeguard operatives on site.
- Borough budgets further reduced because the pandemic has hit income, such as parking.
- Reducing TfL budgets because of diminished ridership – TfL financially supports borough principal roads and bridge strengthening.

Unfortunately, this means our maintenance backlog has grown once again, as shown below.



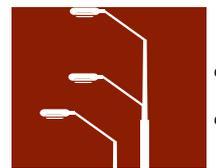
17,000km covering 111km² Equivalent in size to Jersey; 7% of London's total surface area is in fact roads



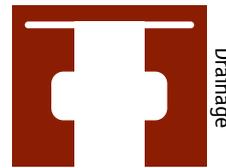
27,000km covering 55km² Long enough to put a footway around the whole coastline of mainland UK



4,300 structures with an area of over 1,000,000m² End-to-end they would easily bridge the Irish Sea ... twice



Over 600,000 lights using over 230 GWh (million kWh) of energy Enough to power over 55,000 homes for a year



Over 670,000 pipes and gullies They would be able to drain two Olympic swimming pools every second



Over 720,000 street trees Producing over 80,000 tons of oxygen per year

Chart 1 Increasing backlog of highway maintenance in London

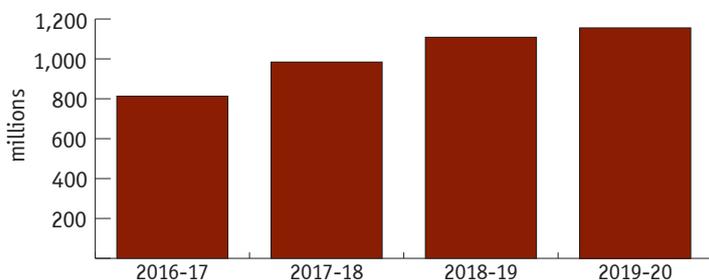
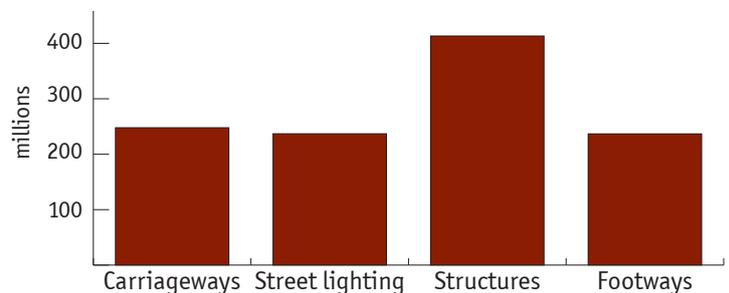


Chart 2 Maintenance backlog by asset type across London



The London Technical Advisors Group (LoTAG) is a network of highway and transport officers that represent all boroughs and Transport for London. It promotes and encourages innovate and collaborative asset management and supports highway professionals to make best use of limited budgets.



Is there hope for our highways?

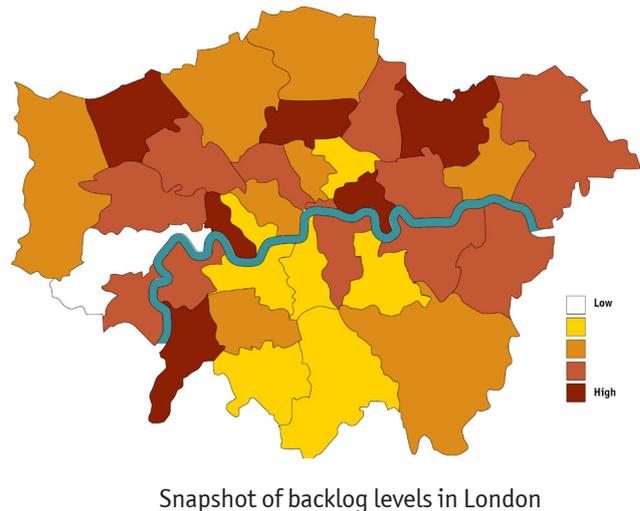
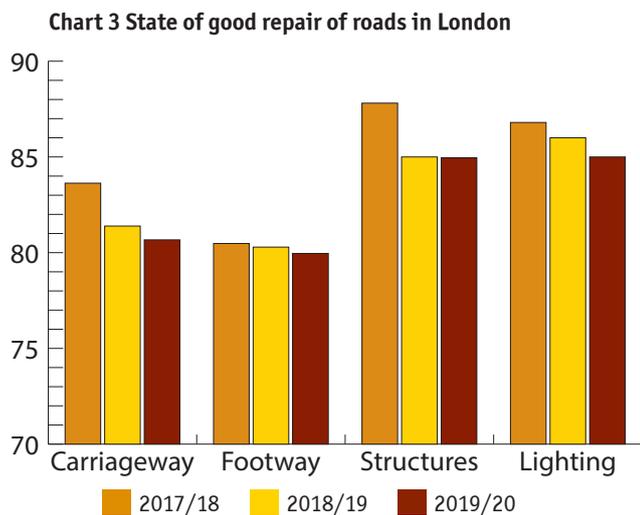
As it stands, the outlook is bleak and the pattern of declining State of Good Repair will continue, shown in the chart below. Bridges will continue to degrade and more will be closed. Active travel choices of walking and cycling will be unattractive because footways and roads will have potholes and defects.

We need help. But London boroughs don't have access to Government funds that are open to other English local authorities. Instead, boroughs rely on the Mayor and TfL to provide funding.

Given the enormous fiscal challenges created by the coronavirus pandemic, it is clear that London's local government cannot fund highway maintenance without our fair share of the national Vehicle Excise Duty (VED). Although Londoners pay around £500 million a year in VED, we receive none of this back.

We therefore call on the Government to devolve London's portion of VED back to the capital and make national funding schemes available to London boroughs to address the large backlog of road maintenance.

London boroughs and TfL have been working tirelessly to find the best ways of using our limited resources for a fair and swift recovery from Covid-19. Now we need the Government's support to continue this work.



We need your help

We are asking London's MPs, Assembly Members and local councillors to support the call for a fair deal for London. This report gives you the high level figures, please use them to highlight the plight of London's highways.

What next?

LoTAG and London Councils will continue to make the case for London's highways, continuing the call for a fair settlement for London. LoTAG will continue to support boroughs and collect the information that shows the state of London's highways. A key aim for 2021 is to add the condition of our extensive highway drainage network.

For more information, please contact: angela.wilson@lotag.co.uk