

OLYMPIC ROUTE NETWORK

by Sandie Goodwin and Bob Fisher

200 countries are expected to take part in the 2012 Olympic Games, each with its own National Olympic Committee, represented at the Games by its President and Secretary General, together with a number of other staff. Around 10,700 athletes, accompanied by around 7,170 team officials, are likely to be transported by dedicated coach or bus services between their accommodation, competition and training venues.

The Olympic Delivery Authority is the public body responsible for developing and building the new venues, as well as the infrastructure for the Games and their use after 2012. The Olympic Delivery Authority was established by the London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Act, which received Royal Assent in March 2006. With headquarters in Canary Wharf, along with the London 2012 Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG), it is led by Chairman John Armitt and Chief Executive David Higgins. Together with responsibility for building the Olympic Park, the Olympic Delivery Authority has the task for both the planning and delivery of the transport infrastructure and services for the 2012 Games. The LOCOG is chaired by Sebastian Coe.

BACK THE BID

When the original bid campaign was launched, taxis played a highly significant visible role. LTI Vehicles also spent a substantial sum of money providing wrapped cabs and sending these cabs with drivers on various promotional events. When the Back the Bid campaign was launched, many people asked how the transport logistics would work and were told that an Olympic Route Network would be set up. At the time the taxi trade was encouraged to believe that this could be a busy time for the trade and their support for the Back the Bid campaign was crucial. Now it is not clear what role taxis will play, although the Olympic Delivery Authority is saying that taxis will have an important role to play.

In this report we take a look at how the Olympic Route Network is being set up. Until final details are announced, it is difficult to know what impact the Olympic Route Network will have on London's taxi trade.



OLYMPIC FAMILY CAR FLEET

National Olympic Committee personnel will be entitled to a car and driver from the Olympic Family car fleet. This car fleet will be sourced by The London 2012 Organising Committee Board (LOCOG) and drivers will be recruited - these are expected mainly to be volunteers. The Games bus and coach fleet will be hired, with drivers, from operators across the UK. LOCOG and the Olympic Delivery Authority will decide on the most cost effective way of procuring these vehicles, as well as setting the standards for vehicle quality, accessibility and emission levels. All Games Family vehicles entering any Low Emission Zone will be compliant with the appropriate regulations in force at that time, with the use of emerging 'green' technologies encouraged. LTI Vehicles have been working on the electric taxi project, keeping 2012 in mind.

Around 21,300 accredited media personnel will be present for the Olympic Games, again transported by dedicated coach or bus services operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



OLYMPIC ROUTE NETWORK CONSULTATION CLOSES

The consultation document seeking views on proposals for the roads to be included in the Olympic Route Network has now closed. The Olympic Route Network of roads is primarily in London, but also includes links to venues outside London. Athletes, officials, and media will all need to be able to move efficiently during the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, but with the least possible impact on the normal running of London. In Beijing a 6 lane super highway was built to accommodate the Games, but here in London there is no space to build on so a network of existing roads will link all competition and key non-competition venues, creating the Olympic Route Network. On the busiest sections of the Olympic Route Network, traffic lanes will be reserved for Games vehicles. Concerns have been voiced that there could be fines of as much as £5000 for straying into some of the Olympic Route Network lanes, together with reports that this could be a criminal conviction.

When the consultation was launched, Transport Minister, Jim Fitzpatrick, said: "The Olympic Route Network will be vital for transporting the Games Family and keeping our country moving during the Games. We shouldn't underestimate the scale of the challenge, the Olympic and Paralympic Games are 20 times the size of the Football World Cup. That is why we are planning the best ways of getting everyone from A to B now. Good transport will be absolutely vital to ensure everyone can enjoy the 2012 events, whilst still allowing Londoners to go about their normal business."

It is hoped that the Olympic Route Network will leave behind a positive legacy for London once the Games are over. This includes permanent improved traffic signalling; the creation of a new Traffic Control Centre; new traffic signals; and new CCTV and junction upgrades. Olympics Minister Tessa Jowell said: "A dedicated transport route is essential to the smooth running of an Olympics and London 2012 will be no different. Good reliable transport is at the heart of our ambition for London 2012 - we are absolutely determined to ensure that athletes spend their time competing and not commuting during the Games, worrying about how they will perform, not about whether they'll get to their venue on time."

Mayor Boris Johnson said: "Our aim is to bolster the reputation of London and the UK, and secure the long-term benefit of new insight in to how to manage traffic smoothly. The Olympic Route Network will only apply temporarily to a limited number of roads, in certain parts of London."

DELIVERING THE BEST SOLUTION

Following the consultation and analysis of the responses, the Transport Secretary will formally designate the Olympic Route Network this summer, giving the Olympic Delivery Authority the legal authority to implement traffic regulation orders to manage the Olympic Route Network. Then the Olympic Delivery Authority and its partners will engage and consult closely with local residents, businesses and road users to ensure that the measures deliver the best solution possible for the Games, the local area, and the road network as a whole.

Today around 3,000 sets of London's traffic signals can be controlled and signal timings adjusted remotely. Over 1,800 key sets of traffic signals have what is known as the Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Tool, which is an adaptive software programme that constantly monitors traffic flows and adjusts signal timings at each junction. Traffic signal timings will be developed for Games-time in order to provide greater capacity and journey reliability to Games vehicles. Where required, temporary banned turns will be implemented to improve traffic flow along the Olympic Route Network. It may also be appropriate to lift existing bans temporarily, where there is a benefit to either Games or other traffic.

Those allowed to use the Olympic Route Network will be:

- Athletes
- Technical officials
- The media
- The International Olympic Committee - including the World Anti-doping Agency, Medical Commission, and medal ceremonies officials; and Games Partners.

Recent discussions on the Olympic Route Network on radio phone-ins have included the fact that fines for straying into the Olympic lanes could prove costly. These fines are set out in the LONDON OLYMPIC GAMES AND PARALYMPIC GAMES ACT 2006 (c.12).



SECTION 15: TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS: ENFORCEMENT PARA 44

This section provides for the enforcement of traffic regulation orders made for Olympic purposes. Subsection (1) allows for infringements of traffic regulation orders made by the Olympic Delivery Authority over the Olympic Route Network for the purposes of the Olympics to be punishable with an increased fine (i.e. a maximum of £5,000; the standard fine is a maximum of £1,000). However, it is expected that the Traffic Management Act 2004 will have been implemented before 2012 and subsection (2) allows for the application of the civil enforcement regime to all Olympic traffic regulation orders. It will be the Olympic Delivery Authority that will set the level of charge for a contravention of traffic regulation orders made for the purposes of the Olympics (subsection (3)); local authorities, and Transport for London, will remain the 'enforcement authority' for all other purposes.

45. To ensure that the Olympic traffic regulation orders are enforced appropriately, subsection (4) gives the Secretary of State a power of direction over enforcement authorities for Olympic purposes, though directions may not be given to Transport for London without the consent of the Mayor of London (subsection (5)). If an enforcement authority does not comply with a direction by the Secretary of State, the Olympic Delivery Authority may 'step in' to exercise the relevant enforcement powers with the consent of the Secretary of State and the enforcement authority will bear the costs of the Olympic Delivery Authority doing so.