

WHY LONDON NEEDS SKYCYCLE NOW

LONDONERS AND CYCLING HAVE AT THE BEST OF TIMES NOT BEEN GREAT BED-FELLOWS. BUT WITH NEW PROPOSED TRANSPORT PROJECTS BY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURE, SPACE SYNTAX AND FOSTER + PARTNERS, THESE IDEAS COULD CHANGE THE FUTURE OF TRAVELLING IN THE CAPITAL.

Is SkyCycle London's future? Credit: Exterior Architecture



Just imagine being able to avoid London's traffic and cycle above the city, using elevated cycle paths above already existing railway lines. No buses, no traffic, no hassle. Sounds like a 'cycletopia'?

"The idea developed because our office is very close to the Victorian rail infrastructure in Battersea," says Sam Martin of Exterior Architecture and the brain behind the principle of SkyCycle. "We want to understand how connected all of

London is, if you added another layer of transportation. Rail infrastructure became quite big obstacles as you can't cross these. If you look at London from above, there is a lot more space for us to get around." Even though London's mayor Boris Johnson publicly endorses the idea, finances remain the greatest obstacle.

"IT IS A BIG COST AND FOR TFL TO TRY AND AUTONOMOUSLY BEAR IT. IT IS TOO MUCH AND NEEDS TO BE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING."
- SAM MARTIN

Currently, the government's vast sums of money are

invested in road modernisation. These include major improvement works at locations such as Elephant & Castle Northern roundabout which began in April 2015. The changes and improvements will provide two way traffic and create segregated cycle lanes. But is this the future for London's road safety or a waste of money that should be put into more futuristic ideas like SkyCycle?

According to the Danish-Canadian urban designer and mobility expert Mikeal Colville-Andersen, ground-level routes are way to go: "Ideas like SkyCycle are city killers," he states, clearly not very impressed by the proposals of the British architects. "Bicycles belong at street level. Creating safe, separated infrastructure on our streets is the way forward."

The opinions of the experts differ greatly, whilst actual commuters agree: London needs SkyCycle now. Linda Feis, a student at South Bank University, is also a young and frequent London cyclist who commutes around the city every day. She agrees with Martin over safety issues, which can be off-putting: "I think SkyCycle is a brilliant idea, because it is so much more safer than to cycle on the street. It would save me so much more time when I commute around London."

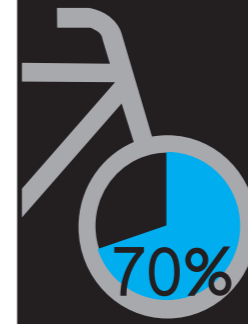
A lot of people actually wish for a much more secured way of biking. In a statement released by Transport for London in 2014:

"THE FEAR OF INJURY IS THE NUMBER ONE REASON WHY LONDONERS DO NOT CYCLE."

The merits are irrefutable as SkyCycle would provide cyclists with 220 kilometres of safe, car free cycle routes, which could be accessed over 200 entrance points. As over six million people are located within the catchment area, the target group remains immense. Over the last decade, the capital's transport network is at its maximum capacity. Right now, an effective solution to this is needed more than ever. Although momentarily it is more economically feasible for the government, it needs to do the best they can and invest in enhancements with companies that can provide alternative and long term solutions.

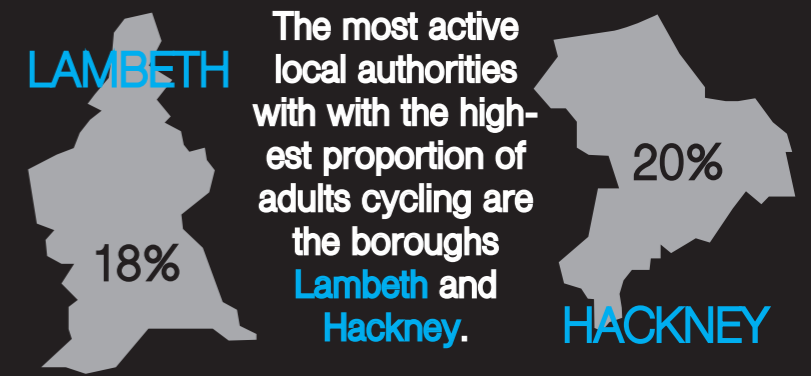
by Monique Mehler

POPULARITY



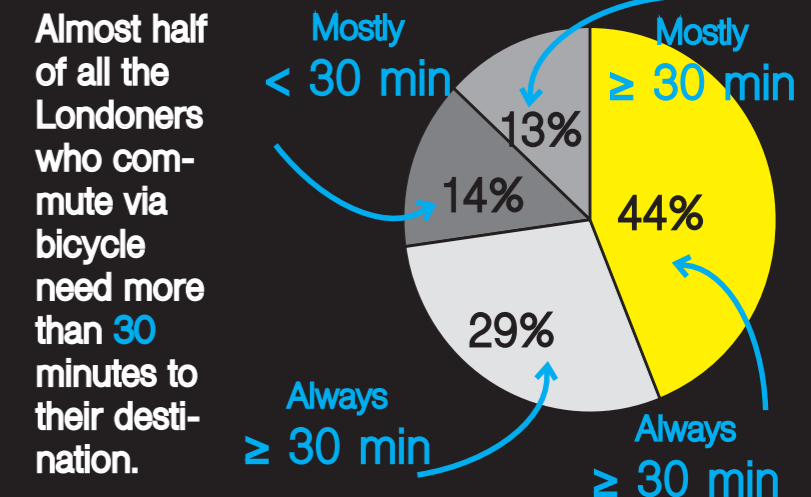
Prices for public transport in London rise annually and gradually. People started to understand the health and environmental benefits of cycling. In the last decade the number of cycles journeys has grown by 70%.

ACTIVITY



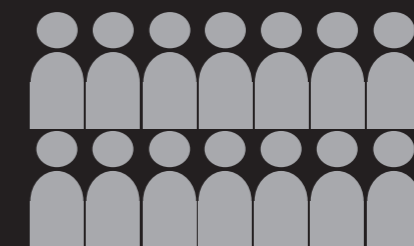
The most active local authorities with the highest proportion of adults cycling are the boroughs Lambeth and Hackney.

DURATION



Almost half of all the Londoners who commute via bicycle need more than 30 minutes to their destination.

DEATHS



In 2013 alone, 14 people got killed due to unsafe roads and junctions that are too hard to overlook.

Source: Transport for London (statements from 2013 to 2014), Gov.uk (statements from 2013 to 2014) & Fosters and Partners (statement from December 2013)