

# **ROAD CASUALTIES AND STEER DAVIES GLEAVE REPORT**

**Ted Reilly July 31 2009**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

There has been a welcome increase in interest in road safety at the Streets and Walkways sub committee (S&W), but the recent report by the consultants, Steer Davies Gleave (SDG), and the accompanying report by the City's officers suggests that there is little prospect of any early improvement in the City's road safety performance.

The SDG report has some technical flaws (more on this later), but much more worrying is the attitude of officers, which seems to be that nothing can be done to halt the rise in casualties, and rather than seeking solutions to the problem, attempts to explain away the increase in casualty levels on factors outside the City's control.

The City is the worst performing borough in London on most measures of road casualty levels but the response of officers is

*"The most recent collision data clearly indicates that pedestrian and pedal cyclist injuries are increasing in the City. I believe that this trend will continue and that casualties will continue to rise."*

Given the urgent need for effective action the SDG report is a distraction. It appears to have been commissioned to confirm the existing road safety strategy, which is based on Education, Training and Promotion (ETP) rather than examining all the factors, which contribute to the upward trend in casualties. Unsurprisingly, given the restricted terms of reference, the SDG report seems to support the status quo. It has some technical errors and some interesting omissions. However neither the report, nor its shortcomings are very significant. It is discussed in Appendix 2.

There is no doubt that the ETP work of the City's road safety team is excellent. It compares very favourably with the work of similar teams in other London boroughs, and has been applauded by TfL. However it is not sufficient as a foundation for the City's road safety strategy.

The City's current road safety strategy appears to be ad hoc. What is needed is an evidence based and targeted strategic approach to reducing casualties on the City's roads.

The City needs to formulate a real strategy for reducing road casualties and the following sections outline how such a strategy might be developed.

## **2.0 STRATEGY: INFORMATION GATHERING**

### **2.1 Identification of high risk areas**

There is no mystery as to the location of road casualties in the City. My earlier report and now the SDG report show clearly the geography of road casualties in the City.

The demographics and time distribution of the casualties are well documented in both reports.

## **2.2 Analysis of the success of past interventions**

It seems that the City's review of past interventions lacks objective rigour. In the case of ETP this is not surprising, as ETP programmes do not appear to be accompanied by any measurable targets.

In the case of engineering and enforcement interventions there is less excuse. The City does not appear to undertake systematic analysis of the impact on casualties of the various engineering-based schemes. At least there is no evidence that such analyses are carried out in any reports or minutes of the S&W meetings, nor were SDG asked to carry out such an appraisal. The simplicity of carrying out evidence-based analysis for these interventions makes their apparent absence surprising. In Appendix 1 the results of such an analysis of five safety-based engineering interventions in the City is shown. The results are surprising; the intervention at the junction of London Wall and Moorgate seems to have been highly successful, but at the other four locations it is difficult to discern any impact. Indeed at some locations the question arises as to why the work was carried out at all.

### **2.2.1 Recommendation**

The impact on road casualties of all engineering interventions carried out in the City in, say, the past 10 years should be analysed. Using STATS19 this is a simple task. This will help to identify the components of success and could form the basis of a cost benefit analysis system for future interventions.

## **2.3 Audit of available resources**

### **2.3.1 Money**

What resources are available to the City to reduce road casualties?

Is there an annual budget for road safety?

If the City made a reduction in road casualties its top priority, what funds would be available?

There may be some mechanism by which those monies, which are available for road safety, are allocated, other than on an ad hoc basis, but examination of the proceedings of the S&W does not reveal it.

#### **2.3.1.1 Recommendation**

The City should prepare a report identifying the sources and amount of funds that have been used to finance road safety interventions over, say, the last five years. Then future funding sources and amounts should be identified and a budget established. This could be placed in context by comparing this investment with the expenditure on other cost centres. This will include funding from section106 agreements, TfL and other sources.

### **2.3.2 Best practise in other London boroughs**

The worsening situation on the City's roads compares unfavourably with other London Boroughs. It may be we have something to learn from our more successful neighbours.

#### **2.3.2.1 Recommendation**

The City should actively engage with other London boroughs to determine what lessons can be learned from successful road safety strategies. This would probably be best done in conjunction with TfL

### 3.0 STRATEGY: DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN

Based upon the information gathered in the section above a plan should be developed to reduce road casualties in the City. This would involve designing interventions to solve problems in specific locations and with specific groups of road users. These interventions would include but not be limited to ETP, engineering, policing and should involve the active support of TfL.

## APPENDIX 1

### EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS

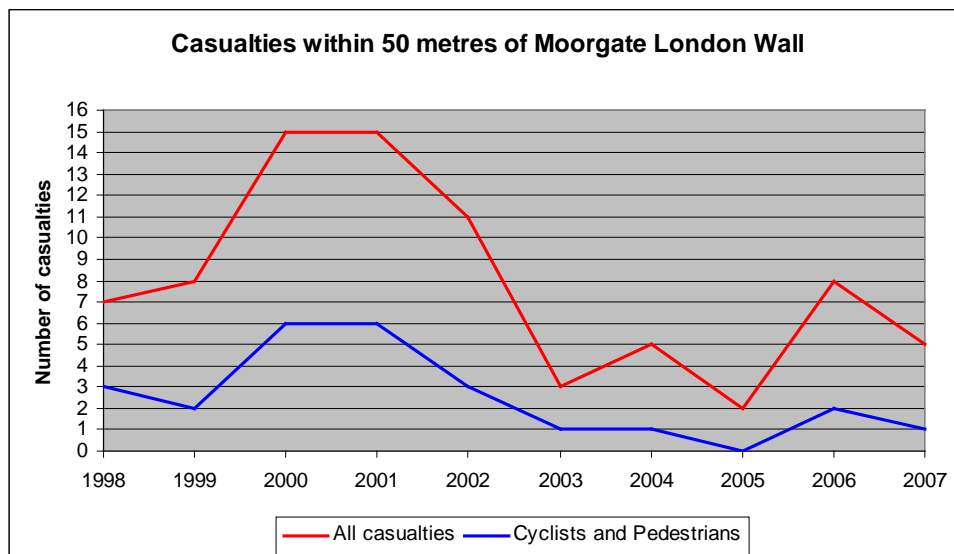
I have carried out an analysis, which shows the number of casualties at specific locations in the City by year over the period 1998 to 2007. The analysis is based on the number of road casualties within 50 metres of each of the selected locations. I have included the results at five locations, which have all been subject to engineering interventions.

The results are surprising; the intervention at the junction of London Wall and Moorgate seems to have been highly successful, with a marked reduction in casualties. At the other four locations it is difficult to discern any impact. Indeed at some locations the question arises as to why the work was carried out at all.

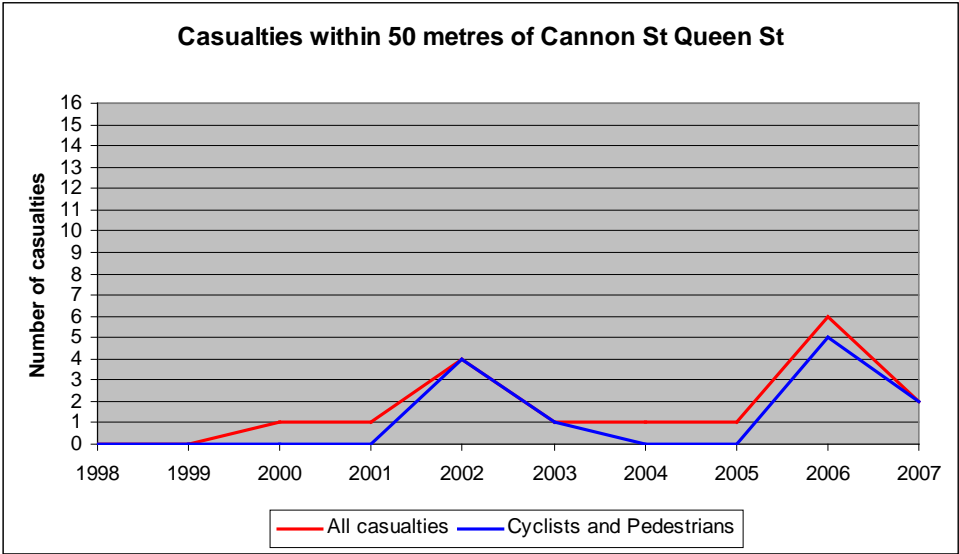
This analysis is simple to complete and understand. It should be provided for any project that is put to the S&W committee. All past engineering projects should be evaluated. This is not a challenging or labour intensive task.

The graphs show the total number of casualties and the number of pedestrian and cyclist casualties at each location and are presented without commentary. The graphs are all drawn on the same scale.

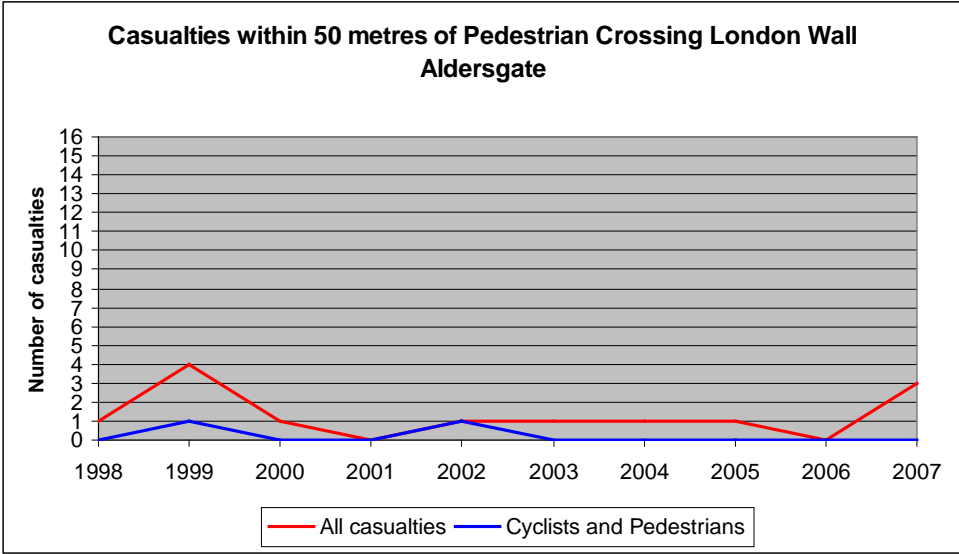
#### A 1.1 Junction of Moorgate and London Wall



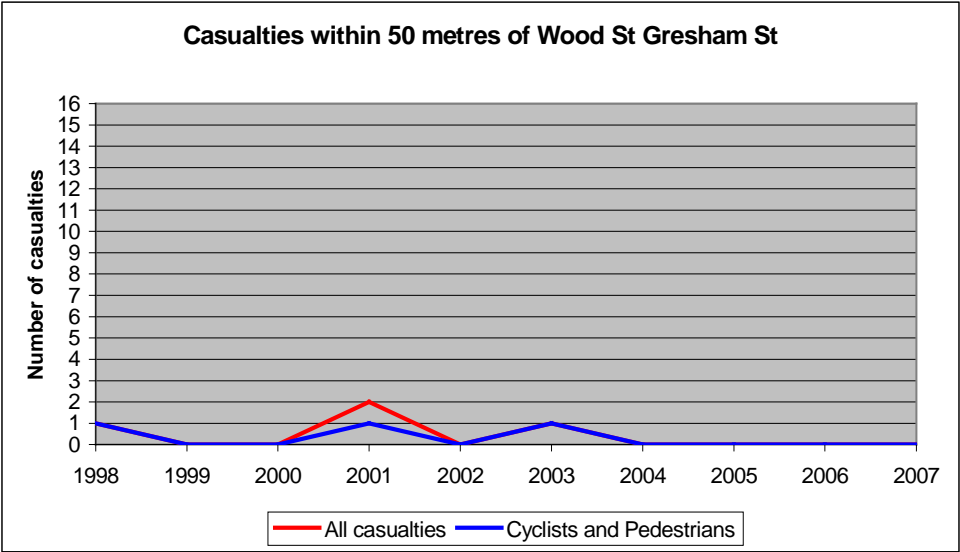
**A 1.2 Junction of Cannon Street and Queen Street**



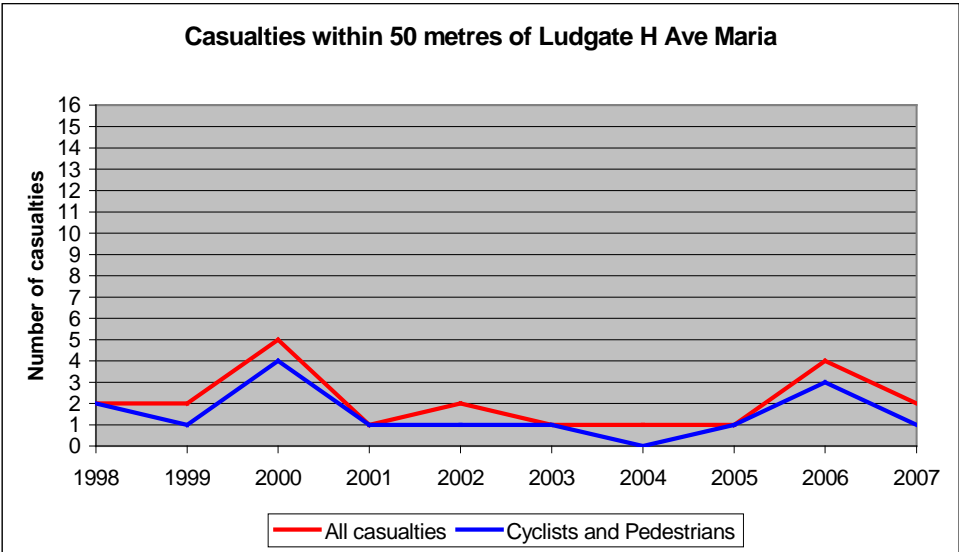
**A 1.3 Pedestrian Crossing at Museum of London on London Wall**



**A 1.4 Junction of Wood Street and Gresham Street**



**A 1.5 Junction of Ludgate Hill and Ave Maria Lane**



## APPENDIX 2

### THE STEER DAVIES GLEAVE REPORT

#### A 2.1 Officers' Interpretation

It is unlikely that any member has had the time to read the 120 odd pages that make up the Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) report, and have most likely relied on the report issued by officers for the 20 July meeting of the S&W sub committee.

The SDG report and the accompanying summary of the report's findings prepared by officers are disappointing. Rather than moving the discussion on strategy in the City forward, the combined import of the two reports appears to be an attempt to provide some evidential support for maintaining the status quo.

The SDG report has some interesting and useful observations but, flaws in its approach raise questions of the utility of the document. More worrying is the report of the officers, which sets out to summarise the SDG report and make recommendations based on its findings. The officers' report appears to support the notion that nothing can be done to prevent casualties from continuing to rise.

***"The most recent collision data clearly indicates that pedestrian and pedal cyclist injuries are increasing in the City. I believe that this trend will continue and that casualties will continue to rise."***

It is difficult to reconcile some the conclusions drawn by officers with the content of the SDG report;

The officers' report states that

***"They recommended we concentrate on education, training and publicity (ETP) initiatives."***

Whereas the SDG report says

*"Given the emphasis in this project on ETP we do not dwell at length on the potential role of engineering interventions in improving the City's casualty performance"*

The officers conclude

***"The way forward is in increased ETP programmes in conjunction with enforcement by the City Police."***

This seems to be in contrast to sections 2.62 to 2.72 of the SDG report, which suggests that pedestrians and cyclists are reluctant to modify their behaviour. For example from the pedestrian focus groups;

*"They seemed unlikely to make any significant behaviour changes themselves."*

and

*"They would only change their route if it were demonstrably shorter and/or quicker."*

and from the cyclist focus groups;

*"...most declared themselves unwilling and unlikely to make radical changes without some additional sanctions or support..."*

## **A 2.2 The SDG report in detail**

It is difficult to say what the objectives of this report are, as unusually, no terms of reference or objectives are included. However the report seems to focus on three areas;

- 1 To provide a statistical analysis of the incidence of road traffic accidents involving pedestrian and cyclist casualties in the City of London
- 2 To investigate the success of two education training and promotion (ETP) campaigns
- 3 To investigate further ETP programmes based upon the outcome of the research and using the expertise of SDG.

The statistical analysis is well executed but completely fails to put the City in context. There is no attempt to compare changes in the City with those of other London boroughs. Further, the choice of 2000 as a base year for calculating trends underplays the increase in casualties. It is clear that after a reduction in casualty levels to 2003, casualties have increased steadily since. (SDG report Figures 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.30, and 3.31).

SDG report difficulties in deciphering the data, which relates to cyclist collisions. (SDG report 3.21). Had they used the original STATS 19 data rather than rely on TfL's interpretation of it no such problem should have arisen.

The techniques used to investigate the success of the ETP campaigns have several technical flaws.

### **A 2.2.1 Sample selection**

The cyclists used for the interviews and focus groups were found on City roads in January. This is unlikely to generate a representative sample of City cyclists.

The HGV drivers were all recruited at City construction sites. This may be an important group, but it would have been useful to have included the rest of the sector

None of the car drivers lived or worked in the City.

### **A 2.2.2 Evaluating success of ETP materials**

Despite claiming that the ETP projects were successful, none of the cyclists or pedestrians accurately identified the intention behind the campaign materials, (SDG report section 3.81). This significant point does not appear in the summary.

Respondents were shown the materials and asked if they recalled them. Around 30% of respondents claimed recall. There is a well-known effect whereby prompted positive response is exaggerated. There are standard techniques to overcome this phenomenon. These include asking for unprompted recall, i.e. before showing the material, or including a dummy or false piece of material during the interview. None of these techniques appear to have been used. This exaggerated response

manifests itself in the observation that “*many respondents were eliding the material with comparable campaigns elsewhere.*” (SDG report 3.77)

It is difficult to provide objective measures of the success of such campaigns, but the fitting of lenses on HGVs would be easy to report. It is a pity that the number of HGVs with lenses was not reported as it seems that this measure was recorded. (SDG report section 3.78).

It would have been helpful if mention was made in the report of exactly which publicity materials were being reviewed. It seems that some, at least, of the materials were of national television campaigns. It was not clear whether City specific or City generated campaigns were evaluated.