

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS AND MODAL FILTER CELL MYTHS

“DISPLACED” TRAFFIC BUNGS UP THE MAIN ROADS

There is sometimes concern that modal filters will increase congestion and therefore pollution on main roads. The evidence shows this not to be the case. It can take months for traffic patterns to settle, but medium-term “traffic evaporation” (<http://rachelaldred.org/writing/thoughts/disappearing-traffic/>) is well-evidenced. Around 15% of displaced traffic disappears from the area entirely as drivers adjust routes and behaviour – avoiding the area, changing modes or even cancelling journeys. The result is a couple of minutes extra on some resident journeys as they have to drive further round the edge of the cell before entering, but little substantive change to main road congestion (see also Waltham Forest “village scheme” figures here <http://www.enjoywalthamforest.co.uk/work-in-your-area/walthamstow-village/comparison-of-vehicle-numbers-before-and-after-the-scheme-and-during-the-trial/>).

THE “DISPLACED” TRAFFIC MAKES OTHER NEARBY RESIDENTIAL AREAS WORSE

Often the opposite is true, as cut-through drivers give up on a route because it is disrupted by a cell. Where through traffic is an ongoing issue in a neighbouring residential area, the installation of a low traffic neighbourhood nearby can stimulate resident demand for a similar treatment.

RESIDENTIAL SIDE STREETS ACT AS AN “ESCAPE VALVE”

When a main road is disrupted, such as by a collision, the restricted capacity of side streets and the extra turning movements generated to and from such streets and the main road by drivers seeking to avoid the main road generates extra congestion – the end result is there is little benefit from residential areas being open to through traffic during such events.

SCHEMES DISADVANTAGE EMERGENCY SERVICES, THE MOBILITY IMPAIRED AND ELDERLY

Emergency services have generally been very positive about such schemes. They are statutory consultees and typically see no change in response times, with most common concerns raised being placement of lockable bollards for access during extended incidents, and their GPS systems being updated appropriately. The elderly and mobility-impaired may face slightly longer car journeys, as will others, but will also benefit from quieter, less car-dominated streets to cross and use.

MODAL FILTER CELLS CAN INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF CRIME AND SEVERANCE, LIKE CUL-DE-SACS

Many cul-de-sac estate and street layouts feature rear and side public access that can increase risk of burglaries and/or are in developments where car use was designed as the primary transport mode, with severed connections for walking and cycling.

By contrast modal filter cells do not increase side/rear access to properties, but do retain direct cycling and walking routes, while discouraging car use by making car routes marginally more circuitous. So modal filter cells retrofit the experience of kids being able to play out on their streets to more traditional suburban and urban street layouts, without many of the disadvantages that can come with cul-de-sacs.

SCHEMES SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED SIMPLY, CLEARLY AND ENGAGINGLY – SO EVERYONE CAN UNDERSTAND THEM AND THEIR BENEFITS, AND SO RESIDENTS FEEL THEY HAVE A STAKE IN THE SCHEME.

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