MAYOR OF LONDON

Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Chair of the London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA

Our ref: MGLA121115-9005

Date: 02 DEC 2015

Dear Jennette

Re: London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting 4 November 2015 – Petition

Thank you for your letter of 6 November enclosing the petition presented by Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM.

The tram system has revolutionised travel in South London. The current network has some constraints that need to be resolved to allow sustainable expansion to meet demand.

Ridership has more than doubled since 2000 and is expected nearly to double again by 2030. However, current capacity bottlenecks at various places on the network prevent Transport for London (TfL) from running more trams. An example of this is on the line to Wimbledon, where the recent opening of the second platform and double tracking will increase the service by 50 per cent from early next year.

To run more trams and accommodate new developments in the area, such as at the Whitgift Centre, TfL set out proposed improvements to both the network infrastructure and the tram fleet in its Trams 2030 investment strategy, published last year.

Following on from the Wimbledon works, the Dingwall Road Loop is a fundamental part of the strategy. It will provide capability to serve central Croydon with additional tram services to and from the eastern branches of the network, opening up the highly-constrained town centre. Trams using the Dingwall Road Loop would stop at Lansdowne Road, approximately a 150-metre walk to the proposed Westfield development. In addition, TfL is proposing to expand the existing Wellesley Road stop, directly across from the development.

Trams from the west will continue to serve the town centre as they do now, including shopping and transport links at Centrale, West Croydon, Wellesley Road and East Croydon. From the eastern branches, there will still be 'through' services to West Croydon.

The completion of projects in the strategy would allow for the gradual increase of trams on the network, including the potential for longer trams. Running more trams prior to unblocking bottlenecks would mean either turning more trams around on the periphery of where people want to get to in Croydon or running more trams on the existing Croydon town centre route, which is already congested, undermining service performance for customers.

Indeed, with the introduction of the higher frequency on the Wimbledon route, the existing town centre loop will be at its capacity.

Longer trams are included as an aspiration towards the end of the period covered by the strategy. As the network was designed for 30-metre trams, there are a number of significant engineering challenges, particularly in Croydon town centre, where much of the street running is constrained. Operating longer trams would require substantial re-engineering of existing tracks and stops at many locations as well as power supply upgrades and addition stabling. There would also be an impact on other road traffic as the trams would take longer to clear junctions and some pedestrian crossings would need to be altered so that they were not blocked by trams.

The capital investment to change the infrastructure for longer trams is likely to cost around £150m. This does not include the increased operational costs and the purchase of the longer trams themselves, which TfL estimates would add around £100m, depending on the size of the fleet. However, further feasibility work is underway, which will provide firmer cost estimates.

As a result, although longer trams are not ruled out, TfL believes they are only appropriate when other options for increasing capacity have been exhausted.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours ever,



Boris Johnson
Mayor of London