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**The Queen's Walk**  
**LONDON SE1 2AA**

Secretary of State for Transport, The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP  
Houses of Parliament  
London SW1A 0AA

25 August 2020

Dear Grant,

### **Measures to enable active travel as schools return**

I am writing to comment on measures to enable active travel as schools return. Space on public transport is going to be limited by physical distancing for the foreseeable future, and from Government guidance and statements from Ministers it is clear that you expect at least half of those young people who were taking public transport for journeys under 2 miles to now walk or cycle to reach their place of education<sup>1</sup>.

The scale of change necessary to enable this shift is large. I welcome the efforts your department has made in providing emergency money to support measures like pop-up cycle lanes, widened footways and low traffic neighbourhoods, both across England in the Active Travel Emergency Fund and in support for Transport for London.

However, I am concerned that with just days until schools return, your department hasn't allocated the second tranche of funding from its pot across England and in London Transport for London has not had any funding to distribute to boroughs since July. Even when more funding is provided, progress in London and beyond is set to be patchy. More investment is necessary to avoid active travel for young people becoming a postcode lottery.

In casework from my constituents I am seeing an increasing number of parents contact me who simply do not know how their children are to get to school. Even where there are new routes, communication of them has been poor. Further, Government guidance on changing school journeys has come only very recently.

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<sup>1</sup> Transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020 – 11 August 2020: *"At a national level, at least 50% of journeys to school of 2 miles or less, and which are currently undertaken by public bus, need to switch to cycling and walking in order to make capacity available for those with longer journeys."*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>



It would be good to see communications explaining to parents and young people the risk of further pollution and gridlock from any growth in motor traffic to places of education. It should be clear that everyone can play their part in reducing traffic on the road in the same way they wear a face mask on public transport or in the shops to reduce the risk of coronavirus.

In London there is an added level of confusion from proposed changes to under-18s travel. Current advice from Transport for London is that *"There are no changes to free travel for children and young people in September. TfL continues to work with Government on how and when any suspension of free travel for under-18s could take effect"*<sup>2</sup>. As a result, parents and under-18s have no idea how or when free travel will change in London.

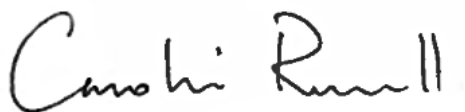
Current communication risks parents and young people expecting they can rely on a support the Government plans to remove. The loss of under-18s free travel will have impacts on disadvantaged Londoners at a time when they can least afford it.

More active travel for the school run is a positive change for the health of young people. However, I am concerned for their safety on the way to school or college and believe that more should be done to reduce their exposure to road danger. Traffic speeds present a serious risk to journeys to school on foot or by bike and you could help sort this out.

The Deputy Chief Medical Officer has been on record this week saying that road traffic probably poses more of a risk to children than coronavirus<sup>3</sup>. The greatest cause of road traffic collisions is speed, and London has seen a continued growth in speeding offences. The lead Vision Zero officer for the Metropolitan Police, Supt Andy Cox is reporting a 58% increase in speeding offences in the most recent week compared to 2019<sup>4</sup>.

I have written to you previously about national default speed limits and the power you have to simply change the urban default from 30mph to 20mph. This could be done without any expense of changing signage as the default limit applies everywhere there is a pavement and street lighting. I urge you to make this change, backed up by enforcement and accompanied by clear messaging about the dangers of speeding. This would make the journeys to school or college of so many young people safer, at a time when they either cannot rely on space on public transport or may lose their free travel.

Yours sincerely,



**Caroline Russell**  
**Green Party Member of the London Assembly**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2020/august/tfl-urges-children-to-walk-cycle-and-scoot-to-school-to-help-children-safely-return-to-the-classroom>

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-risk-of-flu-or-road-accident-higher-than-covid-19-for-schoolchildren-says-deputy-cmo-12055436>

<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/SuptAndyCox/status/1297817148648296448>

