

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
(By email)

Our ref: MGLA280720-9284

Date: 18 August 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request

Thank you for your email which was received by the Greater London Authority on 28 July 2020. request has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

Our response to your request is as follows:

This question relates to the planned removal of zip cards for children travelling on public transport in London.

1. Have any officials from the Mayor's office held discussions about this with officials or Ministers at the Department for Transport in person, by email or in writing?

Yes, Heidi Alexander the Deputy Mayor for Transport has attended meetings (virtually) with officials and Ministers at the Department for Transport at which this has been discussed. The Mayor has exchanged correspondence with the Secretary of State for Transport on this issue and the Deputy Mayor for Transport has exchanged emails with officials.

The majority of discussion about this proposal have taken place in meetings, at senior level and between officials at Transport for London (TfL) and the DfT.

TfL is a separate authority under Schedule 1 of the FOI Act. The GLA, as the authority receiving your request, is only required to undertake searches for information held by the GLA. We are neither required, nor under any legal obligation to conduct searches for information held by other authorities. Where we are aware that information is held by another authority, we inform requesters who to contact. For any further enquiries please contact foi@tfl.gov.uk.

2. If the answer is "yes", please provide the correspondence between the Department for Transport and the Mayor's Office.

Copies of relevant correspondence are included with this reply.

3. Please provide information on the annual savings or likely annual revenue that the Mayor's office will gain or lose by removing zip cards for children travelling on public transport in London.

There will be no financial implications for the Mayor's Office of removing zip cards for children. TfL is responsible for the day-to-day operational running of transport services in London. You may wish to send a further request to TfL at foi@tfl.gov.uk as the financial implications would be borne by TfL.

If you have any further questions relating to this matter, please contact me, ensuring that you quote the reference at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

Information Governance Officer

If you are unhappy with the way the GLA has handled your request, you may complain using the complaints procedure, available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/greater-london-authority-gla/sharing-our-information/freedom-information>.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

Secretary of State for Transport
Great Minster House,
33 Horseferry Rd, SW1P 4DR

Date: 28th May 2020

Dear Grant

I am writing regarding the Government's requirement in its emergency funding agreement with TfL to suspend free travel for under 18s in London.

As you know, I agree with the objective of reducing the numbers of people using London's public transport system during this crisis - especially during peak times. I have been very clear that public transport is for essential journeys only and have taken a series of steps to enable social distancing on the network and help stop the spread of the virus. I also agree that we need to reduce the numbers of children using bus services in particular, in order to ensure that London's precious public transport capacity is available for those who need it most.

However, as my team have made clear through recent discussions, we do not believe that suspending free travel for under 18s in London is the right thing to do. The problems with implementing this proposal have been brought into sharp relief as Transport for London (TfL) has looked in detail at how this change might be operationalised and at the impacts such a change would have. I would urge you now to drop this condition and work with us on other ways of reducing public transport usage by children to fulfil the objectives we both share.

The work TfL has done shows the complexity of the situation we face in trying to make changes to under 18 concessions and the many concerns that would need to be overcome. There is a statutory obligation to provide free travel between home and school where children meet a range of criteria, including in relation to age, distance from school and income. This obligation falls on local authorities rather than TfL, although it is TfL that has historically provided and paid for under 18s concessionary travel.

As well as the bureaucratic and technical complexity involved in removing existing concessions while continuing to meet statutory obligations, it would also create a new cost problem for local authorities if they are expected to fund free travel under new arrangements. We believe that around 30 per cent of children who currently travel to school by bus are eligible statutorily for free travel, which means costs to boroughs would be significant and the effectiveness of introducing bus fares for children as a way of reducing bus usage would be undermined. We of course know that some parents would also choose to pay fares for their children, further undermining the policy objective.


It is abundantly clear that losing free travel would hit the poorest Londoners hardest at a time when finances are stretched more than ever. We know that children and young people in some of the most deprived areas in London are exposed to the highest road danger risk and I am very concerned about the overall equality impact of these proposals. I want to make sure that families who might not have a choice but to use public transport are not further disadvantaged.

I am aware that my Deputy Mayor for Transport is due to meet with your colleagues in the Department for Transport and from Number 10 early next week to discuss the implementation of this condition of the funding agreement. My hope is that this discussion can focus instead on the overriding objective of minimising public transport crowding at peak times and particularly the role that more walking and cycling to school can play in that. TfL stands ready to work with schools, parents and the boroughs to make sure that as many school journeys as possible are walked or cycled. Many schools are also already looking at staggering start times and splitting attendance to limit numbers of pupils in schools, all of which will help relieve the pressure on public transport at rush hour.

I hope you will understand that I am keen to work with you to address public transport challenges during this period but I do feel I need to be honest with you and Londoners about my opposition to the removal of free travel for children and young people.

Given the significant interest in this matter, I am releasing a public copy of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small '2' written below the name.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London



Department for Transport

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
City Hall
London
SE1 2AA

From the Secretary of State
The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: grant.shapps@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

03 June 2020

Dear Sadiq,

Thank you for your letter asking us to drop the temporary suspension of free bus travel for under-18s which you agreed as part of TfL's £1.6bn bailout. My office received it at 10:09. Just over an hour later it was publicly tweeted out by your press team.

Speaking to LBC on 4 May, during the bailout negotiations, you stated: "I think what's really important is the government makes sure that... the journey to and from school is safe.

"What we don't want is children and their parents and carers using public transport during rush hour, leading to social interaction leading to the virus spreading.... If there's any increase at all in passenger numbers that's a big problem for us...

On a normal day before Covid, there are 1.5 million bus journeys from children and 200,000 tube journeys from children. Any increase, even six or ten [per cent], is a challenge for us and we are worried."

We took your views at face value and reflected them in the bailout agreement. I agree with them and I believe we were right to do so. Another thing you have said is that given the need to maintain social distancing, use of the public transport network must be for essential journeys only. I agree with you on this, too.

Before the crisis, young people using the free travel concession made up half of all bus users during the morning rush hour, many of them for extremely short journeys which would not have been made had they not been free (as academic research into the concession makes clear).

Clearly, one important way of avoiding the child use of public transport that we are both concerned about, and of preserving the social distancing that we are both keen to maintain is to no longer subsidise young people to make such journeys.

As you know, and as the bailout agreement also stipulates, essential journeys by children will be protected: any child eligible for free home to school travel under the Education Act 1996 will still be given free travel to and from school. Exceptionally we would also ask you to make local arrangements for travel for vulnerable children that need to engage with services and travel to them. We have made clear to London Councils that the cost of this will not fall on the London boroughs.

We do not agree that identifying those children eligible creates an unacceptable administrative burden, since all councils outside London already do it (and those within London already do it for children who need free Tube or rail travel to school.) We have proposed measures to further simplify the process of identifying those eligible.

We asked your Deputy Mayor for Transport directly, during the negotiations, whether she accepted making the withdrawal of the under-18 concession part of the deal. She said she did.

The purpose of withdrawing the concession is to protect public health and reduce the spread of a highly infectious disease by avoiding dangerous levels of crowding on buses. That is why it is explicitly described as temporary in the agreement.

As we made clear during your call on Monday with Baroness Vere, we are happy for you to work on alternative ways of securing this objective - but given the enormous numbers of children involved we simply do not believe that measures such as active travel plans can have the necessary impact in the time available. Drawing up and implementing a plan for each school would also require further administration work. Staggering school start and finish times may also not deliver the size of impact required.

We therefore ask that any work on alternatives be carried out in parallel with the work to operationalise the withdrawal of the u18 concession to which you have committed in the agreement. I ask that you come up with the operational plan which you have agreed to produce by 10 June at the latest.

I believe it is right that taxpayers throughout the UK are finding significant sums to help London through this crisis. But I also believe, as I have said before, that it is unfair to force taxpayers in the rest of the UK to subsidise benefits for Londoners, such as free travel for children, which they do not get themselves.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

MAYOR OF LONDON

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Date: 8 June 2020

Dear Grant,

Thank you for your letter of 3 June regarding your plans to withdraw free travel for children and young people in London.

You quote my interview on LBC on 4 May, where I talked about the number of journeys done by bus by children and young people and the need to ensure that our precious public transport resource is prioritised for those who have no alternative. At no point in that interview, or indeed subsequently, did I say suspending free travel was part of the answer. That is not the same thing as encouraging more children to walk and cycle to school. I am afraid you are deliberately twisting my words to suit your own agenda.

This applies equally to the assertions you make about my Deputy Mayor later in your letter. We believe you are referring to what was said on a call with Andrew Gilligan and Sir Edward Lister on the afternoon of 14 May – a call that neither you nor I took part in. While we have always agreed with the principle of reducing the number of children and young people using buses during this crisis, we have consistently expressed serious reservations about how complex any suspension of free travel for that group would be.

As you should know, my Deputy Mayor insisted that the words “subject to discussions about how this is to be operationalised” were inserted into the funding agreement in order to allow the more detailed work to be done before any final decisions were taken. As I made clear to you in my letter of 29 May, having completed further work on this, we do not believe this is the right approach.

I would also point out that the first point at which anyone from the Government raised this issue with me, my Deputy Mayor, or TfL officials was late on Monday 11 May, when a draft agreement was shared by DfT officials with TfL – two days before the negotiations had to be concluded. The insertion of this condition came as a total surprise to us after six weeks of

MAYOR OF LONDON

discussions where the subject of free travel for children and young people was not raised at all.

You have never mentioned this issue to me in person, nor did you raise it on your 25-minute call with my Deputy Mayor on Sunday 10 May. Instead it was crowbarred into the agreement at the last minute by Number 10 officials – I have to assume acting on the wishes of the Prime Minister personally.

I have asked TfL to provide you with a summary of the technical constraints with regard to how quickly any changes could be implemented, and to work with local authorities about how a system to verify eligibility for free school travel might be set up. I will provide you with this information as soon as possible, although on the latter I am dependent upon local authority assistance.

As this initiative is your proposal alone, however, it will be for you to set out the following:

- Your proposed fare structure for different age groups (under 5, 5-11, 11-16, 16-18)
- Your proposed criteria for free travel
- Your proposed date of implementation
- Your assessment of the equality impacts of your proposals

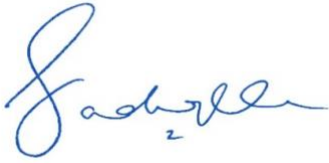
I am still firmly of the view that these changes will hit the poorest hardest and that there are other ways to encourage more children to walk and cycle to school. It will also have a disproportionate impact on the BAME community, which makes up nearly 60 per cent of the under-18 population in London. I am also very mindful of the precarious nature of employment for low-income Londoners at present and thereby the eligibility of their children for free school travel. I do not want poorer children to face additional barriers in returning to education, and I fear your misguided pursuit of this agenda will deliver that.

The recent introduction of maximum passenger numbers on buses in London is designed to enable appropriate social distancing on this form of public transport (one of the factors behind your pursuit of suspending free school travel, as I understand it). I therefore believe that the stated rationale for your desire to cut free travel for children and young people no longer exists.

I look forward to hearing from you.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small '2' written below the 'h'.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

Cc: Paul Scully MP, Minister for London
Sir Edward Lister, 10 Downing Street

From: [Heidi Alexander](#)

To: [Carly Freeston](#)

Cc:

[Jim Steer](#); [Baroness Vere](#)

[sarahdasson](#)

[vernoneveritt@](#)

Subject: Re: Under 18s discussion - follow up

Date: 23 July 2020 09:40:36

Dear Carly

Thank you for your email. I think this is totally unrealistic. I know Andrew Gilligan thinks all matters of administration can be wished away but the reality is much more complex.

I think it is totally wrong to expect schools and colleges in London to be responsible for determining eligibility for free travel when their focus in the coming weeks should be on returning all children and young people to school safely in September, removing not adding any new barriers for them to do so.

I don't see how the timetable for local authority consultation on revised Transport Policy Statements could start and end next week. I am sure London Councils will have a view on this. I have copied Spencer Palmer into this email.

I don't see how for 11-15 year olds you could issue a questionnaire to schools on Monday 10 August and ask for responses back on the same day.

I think there is significant risk inherent in creating a list "by default" of 11-15 year olds not eligible for free travel (upon which TfL would then base their decision to "turn off" operation of their current zip cards). I am not comfortable with such a rapid, loosely defined process and think it could be subject to successful legal challenge.

I would also normally expect to consult on the EQIA for a change of this magnitude. I can't see this built into the timeline? This is totally different in scale and nature to the changes to the congestion charge that Andrew frequently quotes. It is also likely to have a significant impact on low income families and I would expect this to be covered in detail by the EQIA. I believe TfL colleagues have seen a draft EQIA but I haven't yet seen it.

One area we didn't discuss yesterday was whether any new "flash cards" would have a time limit applied to their use? Is it Government's intention that these cards would be valid Monday to Friday only for specified periods in both the morning and afternoon? If so, what time period?

In terms of mayoral decision making, we have a weekly meeting at which mayoral decisions are reviewed and the papers need to be produced a week in advance. From the point at which the proposed process is confirmed by Government (specifically the agreed involvement of schools and colleges in verifying eligibility for free school travel, which seemed to be disputed still by the DfE yesterday), we would need 2 weeks realistically to draft and process a mayoral decision.

As I said on the call yesterday, the Mayor would only ever take a decision to change the fares charged to children and young people in London if a coherent, rational proposal was made to him, which adequately addresses his concerns about equality impacts. Nothing in the attached gives me any assurance about any of that at present. I have to sign off mayoral decision papers before they are presented to him and I can't pretend I have confidence in the Government process that seems to be emerging. As you know, I also don't think the

proposal has adequate justification. It is likely to have a negligible impact on demand and as such, I fear this is less about social distancing and public health and more about scaling back concessionary fares in London as a point of principle.

I regret I have a very busy diary today and tomorrow and so will be unable to attend a further meeting on this subject this week. I will check with TfL officers that they will be there.

Regards

Heidi

Heidi Alexander

Deputy Mayor for Transport

From: Carly Freeston [REDACTED]@dft.gov.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, July 22, 2020 19:00

Subject: RE: Under 18s discussion - follow up

Dear All,

(Sent to all attendees of the meeting on U18 concession today)

Thank you for attending the meeting today on the under 18 concession at short notice.

To follow up on my action, I have set out proposed timelines for implementing the temporary suspension of the under 18 concession, based on the discussion at the meeting and information we have received to date.

We are planning to reconvene the meeting tomorrow and would be grateful for your attendance then too, in order to finalise next steps.

To facilitate this, I would be extremely grateful for your responses to the timelines attached by 10am tomorrow morning so that we can review and make any necessary updates to the proposal ahead of the meeting.

Baroness Vere's office will be in touch to schedule the meeting.

Kind Regards,

Carly

Carly Freeston | Deputy Director, London, South, East and Housing, Department for Transport

3/17 | [REDACTED]

Post to: Great Minster Hse, 33 Horseferry Rd, London, SW1P 4DR

The information in this email may be confidential or otherwise protected by law. If you received it in error, please let us know by return e-mail and then delete it immediately, without printing or passing it on to anybody else.

Incoming and outgoing e-mail messages are routinely monitored for compliance with our policy on the use of electronic communications and for other lawful purposes.

This message has been scanned for viruses by the Greater London Authority.

Click [here](#) to report this email as spam.