



Caroline Russell AM
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
LONDON SE1 2AA

Heidi Alexander
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

15 May 2020

Dear Heidi,

Questions arising from measures announced in government support deal for TfL

I was relieved to see that an agreement was reached with the Government last night to safeguard Transport for London (TfL) services and functions for the next few months. Although the full agreement has not been shared, the details already released raise a few immediate queries that I'd much appreciate an answer to.

The first point of concern is concessionary and discounted travel. The message that older and disabled people may lose their free or discounted access to the transport network at peak times has already spread widely. There is a wide range of cards and methods by which free travel is accessed by different groups. Please will you provide very clear communication of the way that all categories of discounted and free travel will now work, including any difference between bus and tube access and let me know when this will be available.

Many supermarkets are now offering special hours for older and disabled customers in the early morning¹, and some people may be using public transport, especially buses, to help carry groceries home or to reach the shops. Will you discuss with supermarkets in London adjusting these special hours to reduce the demand to travel in the morning peak for people making these shopping trips.

The proposal is also to suspend free travel for under 18s with special arrangements for young people eligible for free travel under the national scheme. I appreciate education is not a City Hall responsibility, but we know many children, particularly at secondary level, have lengthy trips to school that may be easily made by bike, if the conditions are right. Will TfL prioritise safe cycle access to schools across all of London, and urge boroughs to do the same?

¹ <https://www.rnib.org.uk/connect-community/connect-news-and-stories/essential-supermarket-information-and-updates>



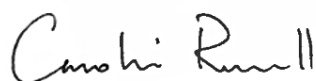
The other major concern that has come up in correspondence from constituents is about the congestion charge. I called for the reintroduction of the charge last week, and am glad that an exemption for NHS and care workers is proposed. However, there are other workers and volunteers who are supporting Londoners through coronavirus such as The Samaritans, based in Soho, who tell me they have qualified as key workers during the lockdown. Given their work, across 24 hours a day, supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Londoners is it possible to include this group of volunteers in the NHS and care worker exemptions?

Private hire drivers tell me they are concerned at the increase in the congestion charge to £15 per day, and the hours that it covers. Is it possible for TfL to investigate applying the congestion charge through operators of private hire vehicles, like Uber, rather than directly on the precariously employed drivers themselves?

The congestion charge is not the ideal, long-term measure for managing traffic in London, and exemptions can only go so far in making it less blunt. This is the time to be developing plans to rapidly deliver smart, fair, privacy-friendly road pricing, so that it can be in operation as our city recovers, controlling congestion, reducing pollution and providing further resilience to TfL finances. I would welcome an update on the current preparedness at TfL to deliver smart, fair, privacy-friendly road pricing.

I'm glad that you are taking actions to avoid gridlock and I'm especially glad to see the scale of the emerging Streetspace plans. Delivering safe space for walking and cycling has never been more crucial as we live with the ongoing threat of coronavirus.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Russell
Green Party Member of the London Assembly



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