



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

Transport for London
yoursay@tfl.gov.uk

4 June 2020

Dear TfL,

Changes to congestion charge level and hours

I write in response to the proposal to bring in temporary changes to the congestion charge in support of Transport for London (TfL) and the boroughs' response to the coronavirus pandemic. The past few months have been very challenging for Londoners, but the reductions in congestion, and pollution have been striking and should not be lost as lockdown eases.

TfL's reinstatement of the congestion charge, along with the Ultra Low Emission Zone and the Low Emission Zone on 18 May was welcome. I called for their reintroduction to control pollution and congestion on 11 May¹. The Congestion Charge is not a sophisticated tool, but extending the hours to 7AM to 10PM, including weekends, and increasing the charge to £15 are good initial steps to curb motor traffic, and control pollution.

Increasing the daily charge to £15 and removing the £1 Auto Pay and Fleet discounts is fair when considered in the context of a freeze in the congestion charge since 2014, and the need to avoid air pollution during a respiratory pandemic. Extending the charging hours to 07:00-22:00, seven days a week, not only responds to the need to avoid a car-led recovery, but also the evidence that congestion and pollution spikes have been experienced in central London outside the existing charging hours, including at weekends.

There has been a lot of concern about exemptions, and I would support exemptions for those working directly on responses to the pandemic, such as NHS and care home workers. However, these exemptions are not the way to provide safe travel for all key workers, and indeed relying on exemptions to the congestion charge reduces the ability of TfL to manage traffic which causes congestion, demand for parking, and – of course – pollution.

¹ News from Caroline Russell: Bring back ULEZ and Congestion Charge as lockdown lifts
<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/caroline-russell/bring-back-ulez-as-lockdown-lifts>



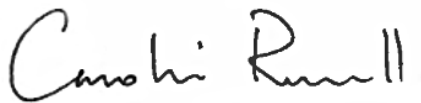
City Hall Green — Caroline Russell AM

caroline.russell@london.gov.uk 020 7983 4388 @carolinerussell

For the foreseeable future public transport will have just one sixth of normal capacity due to the ongoing need for social distancing. There is not enough space on London's crowded streets for even a fraction of those who used to use public transport to drive. Protecting space on our streets for walking, cycling, essential journeys by disabled people and key workers and deliveries will avoid gridlock and worsened air pollution.

The current approach to road pricing is not as smart or fair as it could be. I have called for the Mayor to act quickly to bring in a smart, fair privacy-friendly road-pricing scheme – that's where people pay a small fee per mile and according to their engine emissions – this would be a smart way of tackling congestion and air pollution in an over-crowded city. TfL and the Mayor should work at speed to bring such a scheme forward in the coming months.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Russell
Green Party Member of the London Assembly



City Hall **Green** — Caroline Russell AM

caroline.russell@london.gov.uk 020 7983 4388 @carolinerussell