

MAYOR OF LONDON

Caroline Russell AM

By email: caroline.russell@london.gov.uk

Date: 19th May 2020

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for writing to me with your questions.

Suspending free travel for Older Person's Freedom Pass and 60-Plus card holders during peak times and suspending free travel for children under 18 were conditions that the Government attached to the funding. This was the only deal the Government put on the table, and we felt we had no choice but to accept it in order to keep the tubes and buses running. The specific details around how these changes will be implemented are being worked through with Government. I can assure you that as soon as we have clarity on this, we'll be updating everyone and making sure the rules are as clear as possible.

The funding agreement didn't specifically reference the Disabled Person's Freedom Pass. The Government's Written Ministerial Statement on Monday confirmed it was not their intention that any restrictions should apply to the Disabled Person's Freedom Pass. So, for the avoidance of doubt, I can reassure you that we have no intention to make any changes to the Disabled Person's Freedom Pass, including its hours of operation.

I appreciate concerns about supermarket hours coinciding with the periods in which travel concessions are suspended. TfL is working with supermarkets to make it convenient for older people to shop outside the morning peak hours, and we are continuing to advise everyone to shop locally.

I completely agree that safe routes to school and safe streets around schools are necessary to enable more children to walk, cycle or scoot to school. School Streets are a key tool in our Streetspace plan, which will help ease pressure on the public transport network, especially local bus routes. TfL is currently developing guidance on School Streets for all boroughs, with support from City Hall. The creation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods is another key aspect of the Streetspace plan. They will help provide safer streets for everyone, including for children walking and cycling to school. TfL is encouraging boroughs to include School Streets in all Low Traffic Neighbourhood proposals and to consider linking these with back-street cycle routes to create a broader network of safe streets.

The exemptions are restricted to NHS, ambulance staff and care home workers as they all come into close contact on a regular basis with potentially significant numbers of people who may be infected with coronavirus, or who may be more vulnerable the impacts of infection. Sickness absence in this workforce group will have a significant impact on the ability of the health and care system to deliver much needed services at this time. There are a number of other key workers who would benefit from an exemption. However, the definition of key worker is wide and includes thousands of Londoners. Wide spread exemptions could take up precious road space. We've reintroduced the scheme to prevent significant rises in congestion and pollution, which can lead to severe health problems. It will help to ensure that essential journeys – such as those by emergency vehicles and key workers – are not constrained by mass congestion. I'm sorry that we can't respond as you hoped on this point.

Regarding how the Congestion Charge is applied to private hire vehicles, the scheme requires that a charge is paid for any eligible vehicle entering the Congestion Charge Zone during charging hours. This payment can be made by anyone, but the registered keeper of the vehicle is liable for a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) if the charge is not paid. For private hire vehicles, the registered keeper depends on the business model adopted by the operator and is usually either the operator or the driver. If the registered keeper of the vehicle is the operator, it is the operator's choice how they choose to pass the cost on. Operators may choose to pass the cost on to passengers, pay the charge themselves, pass the cost onto drivers or spread the cost between them. We know that a number of operators have decided to spread the cost between operators, drivers and passengers in this way.

The Mayor's Transport Strategy sets out our approach to paying for road use. Our first priority for road user charging has to be expanding the ULEZ to inner London – an area 18 times bigger than the central zone – in 2021. This will result in enormous benefits for London but will also be a considerable practical challenge. New technologies could offer the potential for even more sophisticated models of paying for road use, but any future proposals would need to be preceded by detailed feasibility work and would be subject to consultation with stakeholders and the public.

Thank you again for writing to me and I hope you are keeping well.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Heidi Alexander', with a stylized, flowing script.

Heidi Alexander

Deputy Mayor for Transport