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Mr I Brown
Managing Director London Rail
Windsor House
42-50 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0TL

Our ref:
Your ref:
Date: 1 June 2009

Dear Mr Brown

I am writing on behalf of the Transport Committee to request information about the withdrawal of plans for a train service between Victoria and Bellingham after 2012. We understand from recent letters to London TravelWatch that Transport for London (TfL) made a request to the Department for Transport (DfT) that the service should not be introduced in order that the saving of £24 million over ten years could be diverted to phase 2 of the extension of the East London Line.

We understand that TfL's agreement with the DfT included a requirement that "TfL publically proposes the withdrawal of the Victoria – Bellingham service including informing key stakeholders on the route whilst also highlighting the impacts on current journey opportunities, especially at evenings and weekends". I note that the DfT contacted TfL on 26 March 2009 to ascertain what progress was being made in this regard.

The Committee would appreciate clarification of how information about the withdrawal of the service has been made available. It would be useful if you could provide details of meetings with stakeholders where the issue was discussed, copies of letters to stakeholders and any other material made available to interested parties. We are particularly interested in the extent to which information was publically available at the time of the announcement of a funding agreement for the East London Line extension phase 2. I note that the Mayor's press release announcing the funding agreement on 12 February 2009 did not indicate that it required funds to be diverted by the DfT from the intended Victoria to Bellingham service. Neither, as far as I am aware, was this aspect of the funding deal made clear to Assembly Members.

Members of the Transport Committee have expressed cross-party support for the extension to the East London Line. I believe public support for the scheme would be best maintained by the publication of the detail behind your decision that it was a better use of DfT funding than the anticipated Victoria to Bellingham service.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Pidgeon AM
Chair of the Transport Committee