



The Office of Louie French,
Member of Parliament for Old Bexley and Sidcup,
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
Kamal Chunchie Way
London
E16 1ZE

By email: TC-yourview@tfl.gov.uk

3rd September 2024

Dear Mr Khan,

I am writing to formally object to your and Transport for London's (TfL) proposed charges for the Blackwall Tunnel. I am writing on behalf of the 6,062 concerned local motorists and constituents who signed my petition opposing the toll.

The Blackwall Tunnel is a crucial crossing in the east of London, with an estimated 100,000 journeys through the Blackwall Tunnel each day, which have been free since opening in 1897. The decision to toll the crossing and the multi-billion PFI style contract you have entered into for the construction and maintenance of the Silvertown Tunnel are political decisions that you have made as the Labour Mayor of London and are responsible for.

You have again decided to add further charges to hardworking drivers in the east and south-east of London, who have limited alternatives to cross the river, especially compared to the many free crossing opportunities in the west of London. This is unfair on drivers in the east and south-east of London and again highlights your two-tiered approach to Londoners.

Motorists already pay for our nation's road network through Vehicle Excise Duty and Fuel Duty. These two taxes raise over £30 billion nationally. Today, drivers in London pay even more on top of these national taxes because of your political decisions to hammer motorists at every opportunity. For example, last year alone, TfL received £172 million in Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) charges, with an additional £61 million in fines against drivers for falling foul of the newly expanded zone, which you introduced against the wishes of people in outer London.

Adding new toll charges for the Blackwall Tunnel would be another burden on families, working people and small businesses. Those who commute to work by car using the tunnels would face an annual bill of up to £2,080. For larger van drivers, the cost is up to £3,380. This is simply unaffordable.

The situation worsens considering that as Mayor of London, you hiked the Congestion Charge to £15 and expanded the daily £12.50 ULEZ charge across outer London. Van drivers who already have to

Constituency Office:

19 Station Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA15 7EB.

Tel: 020 7219 5446 Email: louie.french.mp@parliament.uk

Website: www.louiefrench.org.uk



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pay these two road charges on top of the proposed toll would pay £40.50 a day, while those driving a car face £35.50. This is an unacceptable burden to place on people and small businesses.

There's no denying who these proposals would hit hardest. As TfL's 2019 Travel in London report showed, a majority of people earning as little as £10,000 a year own a car in outer London. I already know of many families that you have forced to give up their cars and small businesses in my constituency that stopped deliveries or closed because of the ULEZ expansion. This proposal adds insult to injury to those who use the Blackwall Tunnel crossing.

The discount you propose for impacted small businesses and charities excludes those in Bexley, while the low-income discount only applies to people who receive particular benefits. These concessions simply do little or nothing to help Bexley residents who are reliant on the tunnel.

London's motorists are already overtaxed. TfL is making our city even more unaffordable by introducing another road pricing scheme. It is especially unfair to ask drivers in the east and south-east of London to pay for something west London receives for free.

As Mayor, you are not being forced to impose a toll. The Silvertown Tunnel Order 2018 specifies that "TfL may determine different charges (including a nil charge)". You have not been ordered to introduce a toll but have instead chosen to do so.

Additionally, setting such an expensive toll compared to the £2.50 Dartford Crossing charge and the free Rotherhithe Tunnel will likely have unintended consequences on traffic flows. Reportedly, 20,000 fewer drivers will use the two tunnels because of the toll. This will likely result in congestion elsewhere and/or reduce the policy's economic impact, with the toll limiting the great potential of connecting more businesses and workers between east and south-east London boroughs.

Bexley deserves more from the Mayor than more road pricing and being treated as second-class citizens in London. You must recognise the high contribution motorists are already making and how little they receive back from your administration. I therefore urge you and TfL to reconsider these plans to impose tolling on the Blackwall Tunnel.

Yours sincerely,

Louie French,
Member of Parliament for Old Bexley and Sidcup.