

MAYOR OF LONDON

**Victoria Rance - Stop The Silvertown Tunnel
Coalition**

By email

victoriarance@btinternet.com

Ref: MGLA140519-2589

Date: 30th May 2019

Dear Victoria,

Thank you for your joint letter of 13 May regarding the Silvertown Tunnel.

The Silvertown Tunnel has a clear case based on reducing congestion and the associated harmful emissions in that part of London, as well as providing a much-needed new connection for residents. The Blackwall Tunnel is the least reliable of London's crossings and was closed over 700 times in 2017/18. The lack of alternative crossings east of Tower Bridge has resulted in almost constant congestion and the approach roads have some of the highest levels of air pollution in London. This situation clearly has to change.

By introducing a user charge for both the Blackwall and Silvertown Tunnels and around 37 buses an hour in each direction, all of which we expect to be zero emission from launch, congestion will effectively be eliminated, and the approach roads will in fact see a small reduction in HGV traffic as more of it goes around London using the M25. The user charges will ensure overall traffic volumes and associated carbon emissions do not increase, and air quality will actually be improved overall. Importantly, no schools will see a deterioration in air quality as a result of the scheme. As both tunnels and the surrounding areas are within the expanded Ultra Low Emission Zone, further air quality improvements will be achieved across all of inner London ahead of the new tunnel opening in 2025.

I note your concerns about climate change and the risk of a breach of the flood barrier defence close to a large residential area. I can assure you the Environment Agency has been closely involved throughout the planning of the Silvertown Tunnel. Where appropriate, improvements are being delivered as part of the scheme in order to prevent possible flooding. This includes measures such as improving flood defences and providing Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

As part of the initial assessment of options, Transport for London (TfL) looked at a range of public transport-only crossings, pedestrian and cycle crossings and user charging options including charging of Blackwall Tunnel alone or charging across a greater number of crossings as you suggest. However, none of these options was as effective as the proposed Silvertown scheme in addressing the significant congestion, connectivity and reliability issues at Blackwall, as well as enabling new cross-river bus links. For example, simply charging at Blackwall, or charging at Blackwall, Rotherhithe and Woolwich, would not address the very significant number of incidents and closures that occur at

present, frequently bringing that part of London to a standstill, and would not allow us to introduce double decker buses due to the historic design and height restrictions at the Blackwall Tunnel.

The Charging Policies and Procedures are now enshrined in the Development Consent Order approval for Silvertown Tunnel. This requires that in setting the user charges, TfL must ensure the impacts are no worse than forecast in the Environmental Statement and that it must minimise any adverse environmental impacts, including on health and equality. The Policy and Procedures also detail the method for determining charges and sets out the groups that must be consulted when setting the charges, including the local boroughs listed in your letter.

I understand and appreciate your concerns about whether building a new tunnel is the right way to tackle this issue, but I believe it is the right approach and meets the aims set out in the Mayor's Transport Strategy. It will resolve the current congestion problem, improve overall air quality, support regeneration of connected areas, provide a dramatic increase in cross-river bus services and deliver a range of improvements for people walking and cycling. The contract has been designed to provide the best value for money to TfL and the public purse. By ensuring no money is paid to the contractor until the tunnel is open and meeting performance targets, it places financial risk for construction squarely with the private sector. Importantly, the direct construction and maintenance costs will be covered by the user charge, meaning TfL funds are not being diverted from other infrastructure priorities in London.

I've asked TfL to ensure that it actively engages with you and to keep you updated about the various ways in which the environmental impacts are being mitigated. If you would like a meeting to discuss the project in more detail, please contact David Rowe at davidrowe@tfl.gov.uk or on (020) 3054 4181.

Yours sincerely,



Heidi Alexander
Deputy Mayor for Transport