
Secretariat's memorandum

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Agenda item: 11

LTW424

Drafted: 12.11.12

Proposed River Crossings

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update members on the recent Transport for London (TfL) consultation on their proposed east London river crossings and to recommend a response for discussion.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Mayor's Transport Strategy, published in May 2010 took a fresh look at the issue of east London vehicular river crossings. The Thames Gateway Bridge between Thamesmead and Gallions Reach was dropped. The Silvertown Link, a tunnel between the Greenwich Peninsular and Canning Town, was retained along with a new ferry between Thamesmead and Gallions Reach and the upgrading of the Woolwich Free Ferry.
- 2.2 In February 2012 TfL undertook an informal consultation regarding vehicular river crossing proposals. The Silvertown Link and the new ferry at Gallions Reach were proposed, but it was unclear as to what would happen regarding the Woolwich Free Ferry.
- 2.3 Our response to the February 2012 consultation is appended.

3 The October 2012 River Crossing consultation

- 3.1 In October 2012 a further consultation was launched. TfL proposed to progress the Silvertown Link (subject to further work and consultation) with a spur road off of the Blackwall Tunnel Approach Road to the south of the river and connecting with Silvertown Way to the North.
- 3.2 A new ferry at Gallions Reach is proposed from Thamesmead in the south, but with alternative connections to the road network north of the river. It is suggested that if the Gallions Reach ferry were to proceed then TfL would seek to remove its legal obligation to run the Woolwich Free Ferry, but a decision on its future would be made at a later stage. TfL say a Gallions Reach Ferry would allow areas for queuing vehicles, unlike at Woolwich where delays to boat departures cause tailbacks and congestion on the surrounding road network.

- 3.3 TfL says that the new infrastructure will assist economic growth in east London and make the area more attractive. They say there would be the opportunity to improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians. TfL suggest there have been improvements to public transport infrastructure, but that not all journeys can be made by public transport.
- 3.4 TfL says the proposal seeks to tackle:
- i) regular long delays;
 - ii) frequent closures of the Blackwall tunnel and the impact of closures;
 - iii) the need to replace the Woolwich Free Ferry;
 - iv) a need for additional road connections to support growth
- 3.5 The key new proposal, as part of this consultation, is to suggest a charge for the use of the new crossings in order to pay for construction and to manage the volumes of traffic. As a knock on effect it would be necessary to charge for the use of the existing Blackwall tunnel. Though charging would go some way to dealing with the existing congested conditions at Blackwall it is not proposed to charge for the existing crossings, prior to the opening of a Silvertown tunnel.

4 Issues and discussion

- 4.1 One of London TravelWatch's priorities for the 2012-16 mayoral term was that there should be a coherent plan to address the issue of congestion on London's roads. Any new river crossing proposal should be developed in the context of the transport issues in the wider area of east London.
- 4.2 London TravelWatch has previously considered the issues around a vehicular river crossing in east London in relation to the Thames Gateway Bridge proposal. This consideration was the basis for the submission made in response to the February 2012 consultation. Officers propose that the Board discuss the following as a basis for its submission to this latest consultation.
- 4.3 **Silvertown Tunnel**
London TravelWatch recognises that the proposed Silvertown Tunnel offers the prospect of enhancing the availability and ease of transport for many residents and workers in east and south east London – and, potentially, for those making journeys from further afield. It would have the potential to improve access, shorten journey times, and create new travel opportunities for public transport passengers as well as those using private vehicles. Being a larger tunnel than the Blackwall tunnel the issue of over-height vehicles leading to temporary closure will be reduced. These effects are intended by its promoter to assist economic regeneration.
- 4.4 However, any such infrastructure will risk generating additional flows of traffic on the existing road network on both banks of the river, potentially increasing the congestion, noise, air pollution and danger to which these areas are already subjected. This could affect the journey times and reliability of many journeys that that are not using the tunnel. Therefore any proposal needs to take account of the need to mitigate the effects on other users, and also to minimise any environmental damage in the immediate vicinity.

- 4.5 In a similar manner to that which London TravelWatch adopted regarding the Thames Gateway Bridge it is suggested that the Board takes no collective view on the intrinsic merits of the scheme itself. However, if the scheme is to proceed, London TravelWatch's position should be that the development of the proposal be conditional upon suitable safeguards and assurances which are outlined below.

Bus service frequency

A guarantee of the minimum frequency and capacity of public transport links to be operated through the tunnel (e.g. not less than 20 crossings per hour in each direction during weekday peak periods, and not less than 10 at other times)

The frequency suggested is illustrative of that needed to encourage maximum use of public transport by offering a "turn up and go" service which minimises waiting times and therefore maximises its attractiveness to users.

Bus lanes

The proposal should include bus lanes and other means of giving priority to buses. Bus passengers tell us that they see the improvement in journey times and the reliability and consistency of these as their priorities for improvement. See <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/4152>

A tolling regime and measures to prevent release of suppressed demand on parallel links

There would need to be a tolling regime to ensure, as far as is practicable, that congestion levels in the tunnel and its approaches are managed and that the benefits of the additional capacity results in more reliable journey times for both public and private transport. Appropriate measures may also be needed on any adjacent crossings. It is suggested by TfL that the Rotherhithe tunnel would not see any displaced traffic from the charged crossings.

Protection for buses on feeder road network

Free passage of buses through the tunnel will be of limited value if they are prevented from reaching it unhindered by other classes of vehicular traffic. An area-wide traffic management scheme (with bus priority) is therefore required, both on Transport for London's and the boroughs' roads, to ensure that the entire network operates with maximum efficiency, free from conflicts with other road users.

Improvements and protection for cyclists and pedestrians on the feeder road network

There needs to be a full evaluation of the effect of the scheme on cyclists and pedestrians using the feeder roads to the tunnel to ensure that current safety measures are either not compromised or hopefully improved.

4.6 **Gallions Reach Ferry**

The issues of traffic generation and wider impacts will be similar, but of a lesser scale given the much lower capacity of a ferry crossing. However, the same issues described with respect to a Silvertown tunnel are pertinent.

We would want to see public transport service utilising any new crossing and for this service to be given priority access to and onto a ferry. Alternatively good bus interchange facilities should be provided at the ferry terminals.

4.7 Woolwich Free Ferry

We would have concerns about the potential loss of the Woolwich Free Ferry, although the pedestrian tunnel and the Docklands Light Railway are alternative routes for foot passengers. Any change to the Woolwich Free Ferry needs to be clearly thought through before being progressed. London TravelWatch would want any decision on closure be taken after the opening of a ferry at Gallions Reach.

5 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 5.1 There are clear equalities and social inclusion issues regarding how London's road network develops. The bus network (including the Dial-a-Ride service) is presently the most accessible and socially inclusive public transport mode and will remain so. Walking is the mode generally accessible to all, although to be truly accessible detailed work to improve the streetscape and the management of streets and public spaces is necessary.

6 Legal powers

- 6.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider – and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight).

7 Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. The costs of conducting the closure process have been considered previously by members

Appendix

River Crossings Consultation
RSAK-YAYS-ACKX
Transport for London, Consultation Delivery
11th floor Palestra
197 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

5 March 2012

Dear Sirs

River crossings consultation

Thank you for consulting with us on these proposals and inviting our views.

London TravelWatch is the statutory watchdog representing transport users in London.

Our Board has not formally discussed these proposals as the timescales for the consultation have been short. However, London TravelWatch has previously considered the issues around an east London river crossing in relation to the Thames Gateway Bridge proposal. Our response is based on these deliberations and the debate we have had to develop our transport users' priorities for the next Mayoral term.

Congestion on London's roads affects all travellers and is forecast to worsen as the population grows and economic activity increases, particularly in outer and east London. London TravelWatch wants to see a coherent plan to address these pressures.

Any new river crossing proposal should be developed in the context of the transport issues in the wider area of east London.

Silvertown Tunnel

London TravelWatch recognises that the proposed Silvertown Tunnel offers the prospect of enhancing the availability and ease of transport for many residents and workers in east and south east London – and, potentially, for those making journeys from further afield. It would improve access, shorten journey times, and create new travel opportunities for public transport passengers as well as those using private vehicles. These effects are intended by its promoter to assist economic regeneration and development. Any such infrastructure will risk generating additional flows of traffic on the existing road network on both banks of the river, potentially increasing the congestion, noise, air pollution and danger to which these areas are already subjected. This could affect the journey times and reliability of many journeys that would not necessarily need to use the tunnel. Therefore any proposal needs to take account of the need to mitigate the effects on other users, and also to minimise any environmental damage to the immediate vicinity.

The Board has adopted no collective view on the intrinsic merits of the scheme itself. However, if the scheme is to proceed, London TravelWatch therefore believes that the development of the proposal should be conditional upon suitable safeguards and assurances which are outlined below.

Service frequency guarantee

A guarantee of the minimum frequency and capacity of public transport links to be operated through the tunnel (e.g. not less than 20 crossings per hour in each direction during weekday peak periods, and not less than 10 at other times)

The frequency suggested is illustrative of that needed to encourage maximum use of public transport by offering a “turn up and go” service which minimises waiting times and therefore maximises its attractiveness to users.

Bus lanes

The proposal should include bus lanes and other means of giving priority to buses. Bus passengers tell us that they see the improvement in journey times and the reliability and consistency of these as their priorities for improvement. See

<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/4152>

A tolling regime and measures to prevent release of suppressed demand on parallel links

There would need to be a tolling regime to ensure, as far as is practicable, that congestion levels in the tunnel and its approaches are managed and that the benefits of the additional capacity results in more reliable journey times for both public and private transport. Appropriate measures may also be needed on any adjacent crossings.

Protection for buses on feeder road network

Free passage of buses through the tunnel will be of limited value if they are prevented from reaching it unhindered by other classes of vehicular traffic. An area-wide traffic management scheme (with bus priority) is therefore required, both on Transport for London's and the boroughs' roads, to ensure that the entire network operates with maximum efficiency, free from conflicts with other road users.

Improvements and protection for cyclists and pedestrians on the feeder road network

There needs to be a full evaluation of the effect of the scheme on cyclists and pedestrians using the feeder roads to the tunnel to ensure that current safety measures are either not compromised or hopefully could be improved.

Gallions Reach ferry

The issues of traffic generation and wider impacts will be much less given the much lower capacity of a ferry crossing. However, some of the issues described above are pertinent.

We would want to see a either public transport service utilising a new crossing and for this service to be given priority access to and onto a ferry, or good bus interchange facilities to provided at the ferry terminals.

We would also have concerns about the potential loss of the Woolwich Free Ferry, although the pedestrian tunnel and the Docklands Light Railway are alternative routes for foot passengers. Any change to the Woolwich Free Ferry needs to be clearly thought through before being progressed.

If you have any questions please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bellenger
Director of Policy and Investigation