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**Secretariat memorandum**

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**Proposed River Crossings**

**1 Purpose of report**

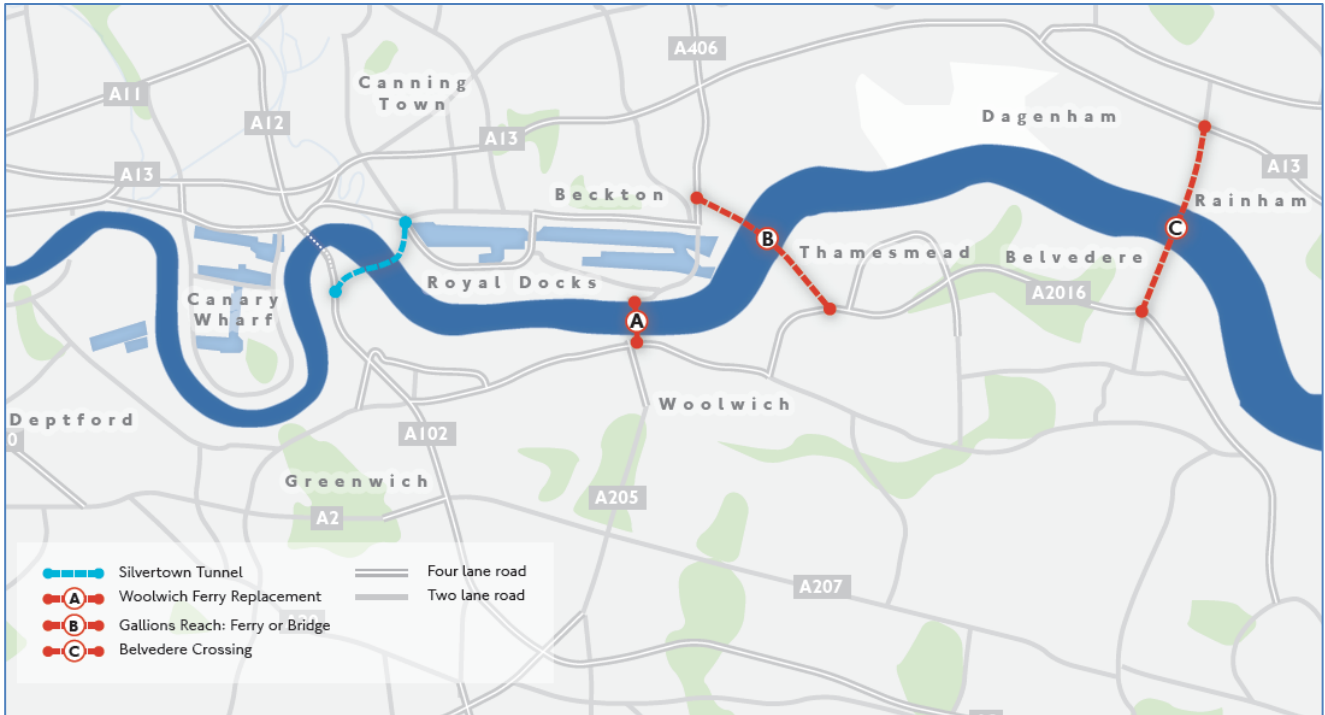
- 1.1 To update members on the latest Transport for London (TfL) consultation on their proposed east London river crossings package and to recommend a response for discussion.

**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 In October 2012 a further consultation was launched. TfL proposed to progress a tolled Silvertown tunnel (subject to further work and consultation) with a spur road off the Blackwall Tunnel Approach Road to the south of the river and connecting with Silvertown Way to the north. The Blackwall tunnel would also be tolled. A new ferry at Gallions Reach was proposed from Thamesmead in the south, but with alternative connections to the road network north of the river. It was 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.

**3 July 2014 river crossing consultation**

- 3.1 Following consideration of the responses to the October 2012 consultation and revised population estimates TfL are undertaking a further consultation on proposals for east London river crossings. The Silvertown tunnel proposal is assumed to be progressing and will be consulted on separately later in the year.
- 3.2 Four options are proposed. All vehicles would be charged to use the crossings in order to dissuade some from using them and manage demand. In this way it will be possible to set a ceiling on the traffic using each of the crossings.



### 3.3 The four proposals are:

#### i) **A new modern ferry at Woolwich (A)**

This would essentially be a replacement for the existing ferry service. There would be some performance improvement. A new ferry could be operational by 2020 at a cost of £100 – 200m with on-going revenue costs.

#### ii) **A ferry service at Gallions Reach linking Thamesmead and Beckton (B)**

A new ferry could be operational by the early 2020s at a cost of £150 – 250m with on-going revenue costs. The crossing time would be 18 minutes. If this proposal proceeded the Woolwich Ferry would cease operation. There would be up to 400 vehicles using the ferry during the busiest period and impacts for local roads. Some roads would see more traffic, some less.

This proposal is said to benefit Thamesmead in terms of access to jobs and for business.

#### iii) **A bridge at Gallions Reach between Thamesmead and Beckton (B)**

This bridge proposal is on the same alignment as the ferry and the previously abandoned Thames Gateway Bridge. It is newly proposed following responses from the previous consultation. The bridge could be opened as early as 2022 and if progressed would mean the Woolwich Ferry would cease to operate and of course there would be no Gallions Reach ferry. It would cost from £350m-£600m to build with some on-going revenue costs.

The bridge would carry two lanes in each direction: one for general traffic, and one for buses and heavy goods vehicles. A planned maximum of 1,350 to 1,600 vehicles per hour in one direction at the busiest time is suggested. This would result in changes in traffic volumes and origins and destinations across large parts of east and south-east London.

This proposal is said to benefit Thamesmead in terms of access to jobs and for business to a greater degree than a ferry.

#### **iv) A bridge between Belvedere and Rainham (C)**

This is a new proposal developed following responses to the previous consultation and the revisions upwards of population growth in London. Because this is an entirely new proposal and the land is not safeguarded in planning terms, the timescale for construction would be much longer and is said to be beyond 2025. It would cost from £500m-£900m to build with some on-going revenue costs. The interaction with the other proposals, particularly the Woolwich ferry is not described. There will be opportunities for public transport to utilise the bridge.

A new bridge at Belvedere could carry up to 1,500 to 1,650 vehicles per hour in one direction at the busiest time. This would result in changes in traffic across a wide area of east and southeast London.

The bridge is said to benefit Belvedere in terms of access to jobs and for business and could also support regeneration in north Bexley and Havering and support the creation of new homes in the North Bexley and London Riverside Opportunity Areas.

## **4 Issues and discussion**

- 4.1 One of London TravelWatch's priorities for the 2012-16 mayoral term is 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 previously considered the issues around a package of vehicular river crossings in east London in November 2012.
- 4.3 At its November 2012 meeting members agreed:

"Previously the London TravelWatch position on the need to provide additional river crossings in east London was neutral. Members had been positive about the use of charging schemes both as funding vehicles and to manage demand. Members hoped the tolling system for the new crossings would be automatic and sophisticated enough to allow for variable charges depending on time of day and type of vehicle.

Members agreed that they were broadly supportive of the new crossing proposals [Silvertown and Gallions Reach Ferry]. However, they noted the need to ensure that the infrastructure at each end of each crossing would be robust enough to cope with the anticipated traffic volumes. In particular, attention would need to be paid to the needs of buses, pedestrians and cyclists, as well as private cars. Members would like to see buses given priority at the crossings in order that they could maintain reliable timetables. In addition, TfL should give some thought to restricting the Blackwall tunnel to cars and buses once the Silvertown tunnel was open, to avoid the problems caused by over-height vehicles.

Members agreed that they would not like to see the Woolwich free ferry closed while there was still demand from users.”

- 4.4 The Board have also previously made the following additional comments for consideration:

**A new ferry crossing at Woolwich**

We would have concerns about the loss of the Woolwich free ferry and so a new ferry service is welcome. 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. We welcome the commitment to maintain the Woolwich ferry until other crossings are in place.

**A ferry service at Gallions Reach**

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 bus services utilising any new crossing and for buses to be given priority access to and onto a ferry. Alternatively good bus interchange facilities should be provided at the ferry terminals.

- 4.5 If the proposals were to proceed the Board has previously said that they would want to see the proposals 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.

### **Protection for buses on feeder road network**

Free passage of buses through the Silvertown tunnel and any new crossings 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 This latest consultation is different from the previous one insofar as the Silvertown tunnel is now assumed to be progressing and the possibility of two new additional road bridges are being consulted on rather than just a replacement ferry for the Woolwich free ferry at a new location - Gallions Reach.
- 4.7 New crossings can provide new journey opportunities and resilience but they can also generate additional traffic. Indeed the research shows that new crossings in built up areas are amongst the type of new road that is most likely to cause traffic generation. London TravelWatch would be concerned that new river crossings in East London would result in more car and lorry traffic on London's already congested roads.
- 4.8 The impacts of the volume of traffic on London's roads is a key concern for London TravelWatch. If new crossings of the Thames were to go ahead (particularly new bridges) then the negative impacts of the additional traffic they will generate should be managed by a combination of i) tolling of general traffic using the crossings, ii) area-wide roads pricing and iii) bus priority.

## **5 Recommended response**

- 5.1 It is recommended that London TravelWatch respond generally as it has done previously to proposals for a package of river crossings and additionally comment on the newly proposed bridges at Gallions Reach and Belvedere:

The bridge proposals would have the potential for significant increases in traffic levels on both banks of the Thames, constrained only by the tolling regime and congestion on the approach roads. For this reason the negative impacts should

be managed by a combination of i) tolling of general traffic using the crossings, ii) area wide roads pricing and iii) bus priority.

## **6 Equalities and inclusion implications**

- 6.1 These proposals are, in part, promoted to regenerate areas of London that are presently deprived in terms of jobs and access to employment.

## **7 Legal powers**

- 7.1 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).

## **8 Financial implications**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.