

Seb Dance
Deputy Mayor for Transport
City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
London
E16 1ZE

5th October 2023

Dear Seb,

Thank you for your reply, dated 13th September. I'm grateful for the comprehensive response. In particular, confirmation that TfL has no plans to introduce road user charging at Rotherhithe Tunnel or Tower Bridge.

You'll know that in recent weeks there have been multiple news reports about what charges might apply to the Blackwall Tunnel. It's been reported that cars will be charged £4 per crossing, with other vehicles being charged up to £8.50 per crossing.¹ As most drivers will be making a return journey, this would mean them paying between £8 and £17 each day.

In all honesty, I'm uncomfortable with plans to charge drivers for use of a tunnel that was previously free.

In your letter, you've made the point that a Blackwall Tunnel user charge has been on the table since plans for the Silvertown Tunnel were put forward more than 10 years ago. However, this ignores the fact that these plans pre-date the introduction of ULEZ and at the time, the Congestion Charge was significantly less than it is today.²

Circumstances have changed and we can't stick rigidly to plans drawn up a decade ago.

Following recent news stories speculating on possible charges, I'm especially worried about the impact a user charge would have on families, businesses and charities.

If recent reports are correct, some drivers would be paying **£44.50 a day** just to drive in London, or around **£11,000 per year**.³ That is a ruinous amount.

Earlier this month I attended a meeting of the Silvertown Tunnel Community Liaison Group where a TfL representative confirmed that if plans for a user charge do go ahead, help will be made available to residents and businesses, and this will be extended to drivers using the Blackwall Tunnel too.

However, as you mention in your letter, TfL only plans to share further information as to exactly what support will be available, along with the amount of any user charges, closer to the Silvertown Tunnel opening in 2025.

¹ Note, a £4 car charge would be 60% higher than the Dartford Crossing car charge, which is only £2.50.

² £10 from January 2011, increasing to £11.50 from June 2014, and £15 from June 2020.

³ £17 to cross the Blackwall Tunnel each way, plus the £15 Congestion Charge and £12.50 ULEZ charge.

This uncertainty, fuelled by understandable press speculation, is extremely unhelpful for families, businesses and charities who need to use the Blackwall Tunnel, many of whom are already experiencing cost of living pressures.

I would, therefore, urge the Mayor and TfL to come forward with clear and detailed plans as soon as possible so people can start planning. These plans should include expected charging levels; support packages for local people and businesses, such as discounts and exemptions; and alternatives to per crossing charging, for example, return journeys and weekly/monthly/annual travel passes.

Yours sincerely,

Freddie Downing

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Conservative candidate for City and East