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News from City Hall – Transport Special

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A lot has happened at the London Assembly on the transport front recently and I thought that, with so much new information around, you might find it useful if I share some of the latest and most important developments with you. I hope you enjoy the read and please let me know if you have any suggestions, ideas or feedback via:

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Tube upgrade misery

On Tuesday the 2nd of February, Members of the Assembly Transport Committee had the chance to voice their concerns about the Tube upgrade works when the heads of London Underground and maintenance firm Tube-lines appeared before the Committee.

Upgrade works either are or will be undertaken on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines but there are serious concerns about Tubelines' ability to finish in time and within the agreed budget.

TfL and Tubelines have been in a dispute over the cost of these works for months now and we are very concerned that passengers are now being stuck between a rock and a hard place. It is also very alarming that the two sides are still at loggerheads over the number of weekend closures with the works due to start in March. One wonders whether this leaves any time to inform passengers and local businesses about proposed weekend and early evening closures affecting them.

As Christian Wolmar, Britain's leading transport Commentator said earlier this week: "The whole way the PPP was designed was to prevent TfL having day-to-day management of these contracts. TfL feel they are totally trapped and can't force Tube Lines into a reasonable regime of closures."

I have written to the heads of LU and Tubelines to seek some clarity about closures as well as alternative travel options such as replacement buses and have highlighted the issues that were raised at the Transport Committee meeting.

After much pressure from Committee members at the meeting to offer some clarity about closures, TfL has now provided me with a list of dates. For now, it looks as if Northern Line stations in North East London will be affected during 35 weekends between December 2010 and November 2011 and that from July this year we will see 16 months of early closures during weekdays with the last trains from Central London leaving at around 22.30pm. You can check the full list of closures on the news section on glalabour.com before you travel.

Assembly tells Mayor to re-examine fare increases

At the most recent London Assembly Mayor's Question Time meeting, Members debated the Mayor's budget proposals in his 2010/11 Draft Consolidated Budget.

Four formal budget amendments were moved at the meeting, on behalf of the political groups. As none of the amendments attracted a simple majority of votes cast in its favour, the 2010/11 budget, as submitted by the Mayor, was deemed by law to have been approved without amendment.

In addition, members agreed two budget related motions, the text of which you can find here:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/assemmtgs/2010/mqtjan27/agenda.jsp>

The first of these motions requested that the Mayor "respond formally to the recommendations made by the political groups. In the other motion, supported by a majority of Members, the Assembly urged the mayor to "Re-examine his fares package and fare increases in order to lessen their impact, particularly on Londoners with low incomes."

During the debate the key point that I brought to the attention of the Mayor and Members was the impact the fare increases will have on my constituents. The fare increase will hit my constituency hard because it has many areas in which buses are the main mode of transport. A 20% rise in the price of weekly bus passes will cost the average couple in North East London who take the bus to work around £200 extra a year.

The Assembly debated the Final Draft Consolidated Budget 2010/11 on the 10th February 2010. After a heated debate about the Mayor's decision to cut police numbers and increase fares, many members voted against the budget. Unfortunately, we lacked the required two-thirds majority needed to stop it.

Mayor's Transport Strategy

The consultation for the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) recently closed and I was happy to see that so many organisations in the Constituency have responded. You can read the Transport Committee's response here:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/transport/response-draft-transport-strategy.pdf>

TfL will now draft a report taking the responses into consideration and make recommendations to the Mayor. The final MTS will be published in spring 2010.

Investigating London's door-to-door transport

There are more than half a million Londoners with mobility impairments, many of whom rely on door-to-door transport services. As a Member of the Assembly Transport Committee, I will be attending meetings at Disability Forums across North East London as part of our investigation into these services. I will talk to users about their experiences with the service and report back to the Committee.

Our review looks at the progress made in addressing more immediate service problems and considers proposals to create a more coordinated, borough-led door-to-door transport service. If you are a user, you are very welcome to contribute via: <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/scrutiny/door-to-door.jsp>

Recommended reading

Report calls on the Mayor to guarantee the future of London's buses

A report by the Transport Committee poses a number of questions to the Mayor about how he will guarantee the future of the capital's world-class bus service despite large cuts to the bus subsidy. It captures a range of views expressed at a seminar hosted by the Committee on 8 December 2009 to debate both the benefits of the bus service and how any changes to it would impact on Londoners.

<http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/transport/buses-future.pdf>

Too close for comfort

Our report into Passengers' experiences on the Underground captures how the stress and frustrations of overcrowding and line closures affect peoples' behaviour and travel choices. It calls for a different approach to how overcrowding and upgrade works are managed by London Underground in order to improve the situation for passengers. You can read the report here:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/transport/too-close-for-comfort.pdf>

Contact my Team

We want to hear from you about any issues concerning our work in North East London. Please also contact me with any Questions you would like me to raise with the Mayor.

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