

Proposed Changes to the Congestion Charge

18 September 2018

Context

As vehicle technologies improve, more vehicles are eligible for the Ultra Low Emission Discount, potentially leading to increased traffic in the Congestion Charge zone. The current discount also does not align with the requirements for the new Ultra Low Emission Zone.

The stated purpose of the consultation is to tighten the discount allowing TfL to introduce a phased discount from April 2019 with the intention of encouraging drivers, including private hire vehicle drivers, to switch to zero emission vehicles ahead of the introduction of a zero emission zone in central London in 2025, when it is proposed that any discounts for cleaner vehicles would cease.

In recent years, London has seen a substantial increase in the number of private hire vehicles. More than 18,000 different private hire vehicles now operate in the Congestion Charge zone each day during charging hours. These vehicles are currently exempt from paying the charge. TfL is proposing to include private hire vehicles in the Congestion Charge to help tackle the congestion challenge facing London.

TfL also propose to amend the Congestion Charging boundary at Old Street, as they will soon begin work to transform the Old Street roundabout into a more ‘pedestrian and cycle friendly’ environment.

Consultation format

The main body of the consultation takes the form of 2 substantive questions. The deadline for response to the questionnaire is Friday 28th September.

Questions

- On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being not important at all and 10 being very important), how important do you believe it is that TfL should:

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Take steps to reduce traffic in central London, to the benefit of everyone who lives or works here? | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Require private hire vehicles to pay the Congestion Charge if they enter the Congestion Charge zone during charging hours (Mon – Friday, 7am to 6pm) as a | | | | | | | | | | X |

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| way of reducing traffic in the zone? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Replace the Ultra Low Emission Discount (ULED) with a new phased Cleaner Vehicle Discount (CVD)? | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Remove the Ultra Low Emission Discount entirely in 2025? | | | | | | | | | | X |

Please use the space below for further comments about the proposals for the changes to the Congestion Charge.

The proposed changes are strongly welcomed as a means to discourage and reduce congestion in central London.

However, whilst we support the extension of the Congestion Charge to private hire vehicles, we remain concerned that this may lead to additional traffic on the Inner Ring Road, particularly the Marylebone Road, Edgware Road, Park Lane, Bressenden Place and Vauxhall Bridge Road as PHV drivers seek to avoid the charge and we ask that this be monitored, along with air quality, to assess whether this leads to significant more traffic and air pollution, and reduction in bus speeds, in advance of the ULEZ coming into effect in 2021.

We would also ask that any such increases should not impact on plans for improvements for pedestrians and cyclists along the Inner Ring Road and that these improvements are prioritised and brought forward.

Lastly we recognise that the number of licensed private hire vehicles has increased significantly in recent years, whilst the number of licensed taxis has remained relatively steady. However, we consider that more could be done to encourage and assist licensed taxis to also move to a zero emission basis as soon as possible. Whilst a licensing regime has been introduced requiring new taxis to be zero emission from this year, we remain concerned that with a 15 year age span, less efficient licensed taxis could continue to operate on central London’s roads until 2032, which we believe to be too long.

2. Do you believe that our proposals would create any particular hardships for any group of road users? If so, please explain these below and specify whether your comments relate to our proposals for remove the exemption to the Congestion Charge for private hire vehicles, replacing the ULED with a new, phased CVD, amending the Congestion Charge zone boundary at the Old Street roundabout or any of the other minor changes we propose to make to the Congestion Charge scheme.

We have concerns that the proposals would lead to additional congestion on the boundary of the Congestion Charging Zone that could have an effect upon air quality in that area, impacting upon surrounding businesses, neighbouring residents, cyclists and pedestrians.