

Committee(s)	Dated:
Planning & Transportation Policy & Resources (For information)	21 September 2021 14 October 2021
Subject: Congestion Charge consultation	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	9. We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Executive Director Environment	For Decision
Report author: Bruce McVean	

Summary

In June 2020 TfL introduced temporary changes to the Congestion Charge in response to the transport challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic. TfL are now consulting on proposals for permanent changes.

The proposals include (full details are provided in Appendix 1):

- A daily charge of £15
- Reducing the hours of operation from 07:00 to 22:00 each day under the temporary arrangements to 07:00-18:00 Monday to Friday and 12:00-18:00 at weekends and on Bank Holidays
- A discount of 90 per cent for residents living in the Congestion Charge zone

The proposed changes to the Congestion Charge will support the City Corporation's efforts to reduce motor traffic in the Square Mile. However, the approach to charging needs to reflect the recovery challenges facing central London and the potential impacts on places of worship.

The proposed response to the consultation (paragraph 8) seeks to balance these issues and opportunities while highlighting the need for a new, more dynamic approach to road user charging.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to approve the proposed response to the Congestion Charge consultation (Paragraph 8).

Main Report

Background

1. In June 2020 TfL introduced temporary changes to the Congestion Charge in response to the transport challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic. TfL are now consulting on proposals for permanent changes to the Congestion Charge.
2. The approach proposed seeks to recognise the changing context of travel patterns as London moves to the next phase of pandemic recovery while:
 - Delivering policies and proposals of the Mayor's Transport Strategy
 - Ensuring the Congestion Charge continues to meet its primary objective of reducing traffic and congestion in central London
 - Improving London's air quality, reducing carbon emissions and encouraging more journeys to be made by walking, cycling or public transport.
3. Full details of the proposed changes, the rationale for them and a comparison with the pre-pandemic Congestion Charge arrangements prior to June 2020 are provided in Appendix 1.
4. The proposals include:
 - A daily charge of £15 (up from £11.50 prior to June 2020).
 - Reducing the hours of operation from 07:00 to 22:00 each day under the temporary arrangements, to:
 - 07:00-18:00 Monday to Friday (In combination with a £15 charge, this is expected to reduce car kilometres travelled in the Congestion Charge zone by around 4%)
 - 12:00-18:00 at weekends and on Bank Holidays (In combination with a £15 charge, this is expected to lead to a reduction in car traffic of around 15%. Note that traffic levels at weekends are now similar to weekdays)
 - No charge between Christmas and the New Year's Bank Holiday
 - A discount of 90 per cent for residents living in the Congestion Charge zone
5. The City of London Transport Strategy aims to achieve at least a 25% reduction in motor traffic by 2030, and a 50% reduction by 2044. Reductions in all types of motor traffic will be required to achieve this, with the most significant reductions being in the number of private cars and private hire vehicles using the City's streets.
6. The main proposal to achieve this aim is championing and supporting the development of the next generation of road user charging for London; and encouraging the Mayor of London and TfL to accelerate the development of new charging mechanisms. This smarter approach to charging could, for example, be varied according to patterns of demand, vehicle type or by distance travelled.
7. While this approach is being developed the Transport Strategy supports changes to the Congestion Charge that help achieve our traffic reduction aims.

Proposed response

8. TfL are inviting feedback to the consultation via an online survey. It is proposed to respond both to this survey and in writing to the Mayor of London along the following lines:
 - a. The City Corporation continues to support efforts to avoid a car led recovery and to reduce motor traffic in central London, in line with our Transport Strategy and Climate Action Plan.
 - b. The approach to this needs to reflect the recovery challenges facing central London, particularly for the leisure and cultural sectors. The return to 7am – 6pm for the weekday charge is therefore welcomed.
 - c. We recognise the potential for traffic reduction resulting from increasing the charge to £15. However, we question the extent to which this will influence driver behaviour on weekdays, particularly for commercial drivers who will either absorb the additional cost or pass it on to customers. We are not advocating for a higher charge, rather this highlights the need for a new approach to road user charging for London as noted below.
 - d. We support the reintroduction of the 90% residents discount.
 - e. We recognise that traffic reduction is necessary at weekends as well as during the week but would recommend reducing the hours of the weekend charge, for example to 12:00 – 17:00, and reviewing the need for a Sunday and Bank Holiday charge at this time. This would help support the leisure and cultural sectors and address some of the potential impacts on faith communities.
 - f. We are concerned about the potential impacts of the weekend charging hours on places of worship, and particularly members of their congregations that need to use a car to travel but may not be eligible for a Blue Badge discount. Full consideration must be given to the feedback from the City and central London's faith communities on this consultation and we urge flexibility around their requirements.
 - g. The issues with and limitations of the proposed changes to charging levels and hours of operation highlight the need for a smarter, more dynamic approach to road user charging. There will be an opportunity to introduce this when the current contracts for administering the Congestion Charge and ULEZ comes to an end in 2026. We would like to see the Mayor and TfL set out a process and timetable for developing and consulting on a new approach to road user charging within this timeframe.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

9. Strategic implications – Reducing motor traffic in the Square Mile enables more effective and efficient use of limited street space, reduces transport related carbon emissions, improves air quality and reduces road danger. Traffic reduction supports delivery of Corporate Plan Outcome 9: We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive; the Transport Strategy; Climate Action Strategy and the Air Quality Strategy.

10. Financial implications – None
11. Resource implications – None
12. Legal implications – None
13. Risk implications – Reducing motor traffic in the Square Mile helps mitigate Corporate Risks CR20 – Road Safety, CR21 – Air Quality and CR30 – Climate Action.
14. Equalities implications – TfL have undertaken an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) on the proposed changes to the Congestion Charge. This incorporates an Equalities Impact Assessment. The IIA is available online <https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/congestion-charge-changes>
15. Climate implications – Reducing motor traffic supports delivery of the Climate Action Strategy by reducing carbon emissions and potentially enabling street space to be reallocated to climate resilience measures.
16. Security implications - None

Conclusion

17. The proposed changes to the Congestion Charge will support the City Corporation's efforts to reduce motor traffic in the Square Mile and help avoid a car led recovery. However, the approach to charging needs to reflect the recovery challenges facing central London, particularly for the leisure and cultural sectors, and the potential impacts on places of worship and their congregations.
18. The proposed response to the consultation seeks to balance these issues and opportunities. The response will also highlight the need for the Mayor and TfL to set out a process and timetable for developing and consulting on a new approach to road user charging.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Supplementary information for the proposed changes to the central London Congestion Charge

Bruce McVean

Acting Assistant Director (City Transportation), Transportation and Public Realm,
Environment Department

E: bruce.mcvean@cityoflondon.gov.uk