

*London Assembly Conservatives
Briefing Note*

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By: Alex Crowley

The Congestion Charge 5th Report- The Facts Behind The Spin

TfL have published the fifth Impacts Monitoring Report for the Congestion Charge, providing information on what effect the charge is having in central London, including preliminary figures for the new western extension.

The key point is that TfL have admitted that congestion in the original central London zone is spiralling out of control. **They admit that congestion has increased by 15% since 2005/06¹, and the congestion rate has increased from 3.5 min/km to 4 min/km since 2003².**

They blame increased roadworks for this, however their own website clearly states that; *“As part of its role, Street Management ensures utility works are effectively coordinated to minimise disruption to surface transport.”* They are clearly failing to do this.

The key details buried in the report about the true extent of TfL’s failure to manage congestion in central London are as follows;

- TfL claim that there has been a 30% reduction in the number of cars entering the zone since before the charge. However, this is over exaggerating the effect of the charge, as there was a 16% increase in ‘non-chargeable’ vehicles entering the zone over the same period³. So the true reduction is only 14%.
- For the first time since the charge began, there has been an increase of cars entering the zone- up 1% last year.⁴
- There has also been an increase in the kilometers driven inside the zone, up by 30,000km per day last year.⁵
- In 2006, just over half of all vehicles entering the zone were ‘potentially chargeable’ (59%). Therefore, 41% were entitled to some exemption, significantly weakening the idea that a charge can deter large amounts of vehicles from driving in a certain area.⁶

¹ P.270

² ibid.

³ p.21

⁴ P.21

⁵ p.26

⁶ p.22

- TfL are underestimating congestion. By their own admission, data taken from the enforcement cameras is a more “*independent measure of congestion*”⁷. This data shows that excess delays (the official congestion measurement) in the zone has almost doubled from 1.4 min/km in 2003 to 2.4 min/km in 2006⁸.
- Congestion has increased on virtually all of the roads surrounding the zone. It has increased on the Inner Ring Road from 2.9 min/km in 2003 to 3.9 min/km in 2006⁹. It has increased on the main radial routes around the zone from 2.5 min/km in 2003 to 3 min/km in 2006¹⁰. It has also increased on the main roads in inner London outside the zone from 2.9 min/km in 2003 to 3.1 min/km in 2006¹¹.
- Traffic in the central zone has already shown a further increase of up to 5% in the first few months of 2007¹², on top of the 15% from last year.
- The increase in the central zone since the introduction of the western extension has been double what TfL expected, at 4%¹³. There has been a 5% increase in congestion on the roads surrounding the western extension.¹⁴
- TfL blame increased roadworks for the increase in congestion, however their traffic management policies have actively contributed to congestion. There is a clear admission that TfL’s policy of rephrasing traffic signals has not been designed with improving capacity in mind. The report states that between 2004 and 2006 there were 100 traffic signal schemes in the central zone. TfL admits; “*The overwhelming balance of these interventions is towards those that would measurably reduce effective capacity of the road network for general traffic, thereby increasing congestion or traffic delays,*” most damningly it goes on to state, “*Few, if any schemes have an objective to increase local network capacity...*”¹⁵
- One of the main aims of the congestion charge is to get people out of their cars and onto public transport, particularly buses. Yet bus performance has dipped significantly in 2006. The increase in congestion was directly responsible for a 28% increase in lost bus kilometers¹⁶, and a drop in the number of bus kilometers operated by 13%¹⁷.

⁷ p.39

⁸ p.40

⁹ p.41

¹⁰ p.42

¹¹ p.43

¹² p.205

¹³ p.247

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ p.52

¹⁶ p.57

¹⁷ *ibid.*

- TfL admit; “*Reliability of bus services in and around the charging zone has seen some deterioration, with excess waiting time increasing by 2% from 2005.*”¹⁸
- There has also been a reduction in average bus speeds in the zone by 11% since 2003.¹⁹
- The recovery of fines from Foreign Registered Vehicles is only 38%.²⁰
- Despite the increase to £8 per day revenue barely changed from 2005/06, with net revenue up slightly from £122 million to £123 million.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ p.59

²⁰ p.100