

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Grant Shepherd and I am writing in regards to the proposed user charging of motorcycles for the new Silvertown crossing and how it will affect me as a local motorcyclist, a student at University of East London, a worker and others alike.

I use the Blackwall tunnel each and every day to commute to University and to work. I work in various different schools and locations as a sports coach and PE teacher. No matter where or when I am traveling I always use my motorcycle as I find it to be the cheapest and most efficient way of commuting, especially all over London.

Being a student at the moment in this country is not easy. The funding and support given is not enough and university fees are only getting higher, and those of us studying at University are struggling to fund what we have to do as it is. At University of East London around 30-50 individuals including students, lecturers and general staff commute into University on a moped/scooter or motorcycle, some of us traveling a great distance. With public transport being too slow and unreliable for people to get to University and/or work on time, how can it be right to expect for students like myself who commute on a motorcycle to be able to afford to use the new Silvertown crossing?

As well as students, most other people who ride a motorcycle do so because it is the cheapest quick way to commute. For a lot of motorcyclists their motorcycle is their only sensible mode of transport with most of us not being able to afford cars or other vehicles, even if congestion wasn't such a problem. However that is not the case and many workers can't afford to spend a lot more time and money to travel in any other way. Couriers such as 'Blood Bikers' rely on the cheap and efficient method of motorcycling in order to get them to and from work on time each day and to do their work as well.

The new Silvertown crossing I believe is a good idea in order to reduce congestion at Blackwall Tunnel. However, charging motorcyclists like myself to use the new crossing is unfeasible and unfair. Bikes are efficient and tiny compared to cars taxis and buses and motorcyclists do not contribute a significant amount of pollution to the environment and so I do not believe it to be fair that Transport for London (TfL) have listed it as one of three reasons for charging motorcyclist to use the new crossing. They haven't provided any evidence that I could find to back up what they've said about motorcycling and pollution. What I do know is that other vehicles which do create a lot more pollution won't be paying and it shows that this reason is not one which can be used to charge bikers which are so clean that they aren't usually even included in lists of where pollution in London comes from.

The same also goes for the other two reasons TfL have listed, namely that motorcycles cause congestion and damage to road surfaces. Every biker knows that these are untrue. Motorcycles are able to filter through traffic safely even throughout the Blackwall Tunnel when traffic is stationary. If there were fewer bikes there'd have to be more of other types of vehicles which do cause congestion. So fewer bikes means more congestion, not less. I think that's probably obvious to anyone who thinks about it and I don't understand why TfL have made the opposite claim which goes against one of the best reasons to ride a bike: you don't get stuck in traffic and you don't cause congestion, you escape from it. In terms of damaging the road surfaces I find this highly unlikely due to how little a motorcycle weighs in comparison to other road users. In fact, I find it harsh considering that the damage caused to the road surfaces such as potholes, diesel spills, manhole

covers and paint toppings by other road users such as cars, vans and other big commercial vehicles and so on. The damage to roads is actually the cause of a lot of motorcycle accidents in London and around the UK but I've never seen bikes damaging the roads themselves. Also, if causing damage to the roads is a reason to charge bikers, why aren't electric cars being charged as well when they're massively heavier than bikes and therefore, according to TfL's logic, they're obviously going to damage the road surface a lot more? The same goes for buses which will do even more damage. The road damage argument can't be applied selectively to bikers when it's not being applied to other traffic.

To conclude I again state that I believe the proposed charging of motorcycles to use the new Silvertown crossing to be both unjust and unfair, as it will offer no benefit to motorcyclists whatsoever because we'll need to find another way to cross the river, or move or give up the reasons we're crossing. I'll be stuck with finding another way to get to and from work and college and that would mean longer journeys. If there was any benefit from that I might even accept this. But in the terms of the things we were discussing at the meeting there doesn't seem to be any proper arguments to show what good fewer bikes on the road is. On the other hand, as I hope I've explained, bikers reduce traffic jams for everyone, pump out very little emissions and honestly don't damage the roads.

As far as I could see, on all these points TfL didn't seem to be able to come up with any information to show why they are right and all the bikers in London are wrong. If you asked riders, they'd all say the same as I do because all of this is common knowledge to bike users. They just don't understand why this charge is even being suggested and it's creating a lot of worry because most of us can't afford the extra cost and I don't know what people will do if TfL try to impose any charge for the crossings. I doubt TfL would make much at all from the measure but they'd certainly mess things up for us in the process, by making commuting much more costly for bikers, by which I mean something like three or four times more than I'm paying to get around each day at the moment, and I feel that can't be right.

I sincerely hope that the points made are considered before deciding whether motorcyclist should be charged or not to use the new crossing.

Regards.

Grant Shepherd