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### **Thames Gateway Bridge – Call by opponents to reopen Public Inquiry**

We understand from recent press reports that objectors to the Thames Gateway Bridge (TGB) have asked for the public inquiry to be re-opened to take account of the increase in tolls at the Dartford crossing, proposals for a road user charging scheme in Greenwich and local road widening associated with Crossrail. We believe that none of these factors would justify re-opening the inquiry.

The provision of new housing and job creation in the Thames Gateway are heavily dependent on good accessibility. Without adequate infrastructure, private investment will be stifled. The construction of TGB is long overdue to support regeneration and we are strongly opposed to any further delay for reasons we consider to be spurious. We would like to make several points in response.

#### **Potential for extra traffic due to increased toll levels at Dartford crossing**

We believe that the argument promoted by opponents that raising the charges at Dartford by between 20p and £1.10 will contribute to significant extra traffic on a tolled crossing some distance away is unsupported.

The Dartford crossings and the TGB are approximately 10 miles apart. Previous TfL analysis has examined the interaction of traffic flows between TGB and the proposed Silvertown crossing, which is less than 4 miles away, i.e. considerably closer to TGB than the Dartford crossing. Their findings demonstrated that traffic volumes and patterns in this region are not particularly dependent on the presence of an adjacent crossing.

Also, the level of tolls on TGB will be significantly higher than those charged for use of the Dartford crossings. TfL has proposed that the toll for a car to use TGB will be twice as high as those charged for use of the Dartford crossings.

### **Potential for extra traffic due to proposed Greenwich road charging scheme**

The potential implications for infrastructure investment of proposed local and national road user charging schemes are considerable and extend far beyond the advancement of TGB. To reopen a lengthy Public Inquiry on this basis would appear spurious and at odds with similar projects across the UK where road user charging schemes are being considered and detailed studies are on-going.

At present the Greenwich scheme is highly speculative. We understand that only initial attitudinal surveys have been completed and traffic modelling is on-going. Scheme options have been identified but not agreed, the scheme is unfunded and no formal discussion has been held at council level. Local opposition is likely to be considerable.

### **Potential for extra traffic created by road widening due to Crossrail**

Opponents' concerns appear to ignore several important factors. Firstly, Crossrail will provide additional capacity and a real alternative to road use for many. Secondly, as TGB will be tolled, traffic levels can be influenced by the tolling regime applied. The objectors' argument that more roads mean more traffic is inappropriate for use in a demand managed environment. Thirdly, Crossrail will not be operational until four years after TGB is due to open. At this point, real traffic data would be available and adequate mitigation of any traffic growth through tolling and traffic management measures could be considered.

In conclusion, we firmly believe on the strength on the traffic modelling undertaken by TfL, the thoroughness of the inquiry and the speculative nature of the issues raised by the objectors, that their concerns do not raise issues that warrant reopening of the inquiry.

**Baroness Jo Valentine**  
**Chief Executive**