The Association of British Drivers

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Press Release – ABD London Region

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ABD OPPOSES LANE RENTAL SCHEME TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF ROAD WORKS

The Association of British Drivers (ABD) always welcomes measures to tackle the impact of road works, particularly in London where their impacts are severe. Traffic congestion in the City of London and West End is particularly bad because of the frequency with which roads are dug up, and it's not likely to get any better with new projects such as Crossrail under development.

But we think that Mayor Boris Johnson's call to introduce a lane rental scheme is misconceived and won't have the required influence on those to blame for this problem. Indeed we believe that there is a hidden agenda here in that the Mayor is looking for other sources of income to plug his yawning budget gap.

The utility companies that are the major culprits certainly have little financial incentive to speed up their work at present. But as these are mainly "regulated" businesses, any charges imposed on them are likely to be passed straight on to their own customers (i.e. to all of us), rather than reduce their profits. Indeed they have already said as much. So we will probably end up with no change in the congestion, but be paying twice over for it – firstly in our lost time and secondly through higher utility bills.

The permit scheme that is being tried out in some boroughs is one step forward. But we suggest that more work needs to be done to introduce "best practice" and to research new technology which would more likely solve the problem than charging utility companies for their use of road lanes.

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Fortunately Mr Johnson needs the approval of central Government to introduce lane rental because he does not yet have the powers to do so. We urge the Government to reject this idea. Regrettably London has major budget problems because of the massive subsidies to bus fares and the rest of the public transport system introduced by Mr Livingstone.

Mr Johnson clearly finds it politically unpalatable to tackle the root cause of this problem, and hence is searching for other ways to plug his budget gap.

Parking Charges – Another Symptom of Budget Strain

Another symptom of the pressure on budgets is the proposal by TfL to charge for parking on their roads which they have not done before. Likewise boroughs such as Croydon and Kensington have recently proposed increases in parking charges – some as much as 100%.

Both the Mayor and these boroughs seem to have forgotten that the legislation that established the ability for London boroughs to regulate and charge for on-street parking made it clear that they could not use these rules to raise money for general funds. This was confirmed in a legal judgment in the High Court in 1995. Parking charges should be used to cover the cost of regulation and enforcement, and should not generate surpluses that are applied to other things. Why should road users be a cash cow for local councils? The ABD suggests that all members of the public should bear the financial strain, not just drivers.

Contact

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About The Association of British Drivers (ABD)

The ABD is the leading independent organisation which represents the interests of private motorists in the United Kingdom. We campaign to protect the rights of individual road users and believe that road transport is a beneficial and essential element in the UK transport infrastructure. We oppose excessive taxation of motorists and are against tolls and road usage charging. We also campaign for more enlightened road safety policies. The Association is a "not for profit" voluntary organisation which is financially supported primarily by its individual members. More information on the ABD is available from our web sites at www.freedomfordrivers.org and www.abd.org.uk

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