

THAMES GATEWAY BRIDGE – PUBLIC INQUIRY

POTENTIAL PLANNING CONDITION: TRAFFIC

1 Preamble

- 1.1 In common with all considerations at the Inquiry regarding planning conditions, this note is without prejudice to the Inspector's findings or the decisions of the Secretaries of State.

2 Reasons

- 2.1 TFL's evidence is that the toll regime described in TfL/Proof/04/8 (Mr Smith's supplementary proof of evidence) would regulate traffic on the proposed bridge so that, with the mitigation measures proposed, acceptable traffic conditions would result; and that the toll regime previously described by TFL, with lower peak period charges and a larger discount area, could lead to excessive levels of congestion. TFL considers that, with the toll regime most recently described in evidence, during the peak hour 4525 vehicles would use the bridge (TFL/212, table 3.5) and the proposed mitigation measures are designed on that basis.
- 2.2 The evidence is that the traffic effects of the Scheme and, by implication, its environmental and economic effects would be sensitive to the amount of traffic using the bridge. Those effects of the Scheme should be understood when considering the planning application.
- 2.3 TFL has given evidence that the tolling regime currently proposed might be altered (TFL/22A, section 6). In response to questions, TFL's submission is that there is no power in law to include a minimum toll in a toll order and no power to require a toll to be charged (TFL/127, 4); nor could a planning condition lawfully require the charging of a minimum toll (TFL/127, 9).
- 2.4 The issue here is not the level of the toll or the extent of the discount area, but the amount of traffic that would use the bridge. Variation in that amount could significantly affect the efficacy of the scheme itself and of the mitigation measures.
- 2.5 Since the tolls are expected to have a material effect on the amount of traffic using the bridge, and since there is no firm evidence of what the toll regime would be, then there is no firm evidence of the amount of traffic likely to use the bridge. It currently appears to the Inspectors that this could be relevant in relation to the judgement which Policy 3C.15 (of the London Plan, D610) requires to be made. Confidence is needed in the estimates of traffic that might use the scheme. A way to engender such confidence, at least with regard to the upper limit of traffic volumes, would be to limit the amount of traffic that may use the bridge. This might be achieved by means of a suitable planning condition.

- 2.6 Planning conditions should be, among other things, enforceable, reasonable and precise. It seems unlikely that, when enforcement is considered, long-term traffic surveys could be undertaken without lengthy delay or the possibility of dispute as to the findings or their relevance. For this reason, no condition is proposed regarding the Annual Average Daily Traffic using the bridge, even though that statistic underlies some assessments of the environmental side-effects of traffic.

3 **Potential Planning Condition**

- 3.1 The amount of motor traffic using the bridge other than on the bus lanes shall be such that the number of vehicles passing along the bridge from the northern bank plus the number of vehicles passing along it from the southern bank shall together not exceed 4525 vehicles in any hour.

4 **Enforcement**

- 4.1 The evidence is that, in the long term, the volume of traffic using the bridge could be controlled by varying the toll regime.
- 4.2 In the short term – that is, on a rolling hourly basis – the scheme currently offers no mechanism to directly regulate traffic using the scheme. However, means of monitoring traffic flows are proposed in the Five Boroughs Agreement (TFL/22) and it appears that, for example, peak period traffic signals could be introduced at junctions already proposed on each approach to the bridge (the main southbound carriageway and the southbound merge at the Winsor Terrace junction and the main northbound carriageway and the northbound merge at the Thamesmead junction) which would allow the volume of traffic to be regulated on a rolling hourly basis, in conjunction with that monitoring equipment. This need have no effect on the Orders.

5 **Representations**

- 5.1 The Inquiry is to consider planning conditions on Thursday 30 March 2006. Any representations regarding the potential planning condition set out at 3.1 above should be made to the Inquiry before or during that session.

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