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CLLR ADAM HUG
Leader of the Council

Grant Shapps MP
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
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Friday 15 July 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

As you will be aware, Transport for London (TfL) has held a consultation on bus cuts over the past month which is due to close on 7 August. The proposed cuts - a direct result of the conditions set by your government - and the further consequences stemming from the lack of a long-term deal for London will deal a devastating blow to some of the most vulnerable communities in Westminster if they go ahead.

Yet another short-term sticking plaster funding settlement is a depressing failure on the part of Government to fulfil its essential stabilising role as London recovers from the pandemic. It is deeply disappointing to the residents and businesses that I represent that Ministers will not even come to the table and discuss this matter to find a long-term solution, or at the very least a plan that will help TfL through to next summer when we will have a clearer idea of post-pandemic travel patterns.

The idea that a £9.7bn company can continue to operate under this hand to mouth funding scheme is not sustainable – as you have recognised in the context of the rail companies – and is clearly already compromising immediate services and the long-term delivery plans to make travel in London safer, more active, and more accessible.

Our communities rely heavily on public transport, whether that's to facilitate their commute, to get home safely from visiting family and friends, or because of a disability. Elderly people in particular have endured some of the most challenging circumstances throughout the course of the pandemic and now face the risk of losing Route 12 despite Freedom Pass use reaching 114% of pre-pandemic levels.

To now remove an accessible means of public transport for many of these residents, who have no viable alternative, are more likely to be excluded from travel by extended journeys and broken journey links – in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis no less - is absolutely unacceptable. This is not a choice that would need to be made with a long-term settlement - across the 12 Westminster routes proposed for withdrawal, total combined demand in May 2022 was only down by 4%.



As the council's partners from the London Property Alliance, who represent hundreds of businesses across the Cities of Westminster and London, advised you in their letter of 22 June, connectivity is at the heart of London's competitive offer. If Government wants London - and the wider UK economy it underpins - to succeed post-pandemic, it must invest in its future by ensuring that we retain a transport infrastructure appropriate for a global city, instead of threatening to rob the UK economy of £12bn by catapulting TfL into a 'managed decline'.

The lack of decision-making is only serving to perpetuate anxiety and uncertainty amongst residents and businesses, who rely on TfL services continuing to run regularly and reliably. In the public interest, I urge you to begin these negotiations in earnest and ensure that TfL, London and ultimately the UK are given the long-term support needed to fuel our economic and societal recovery.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam Hug". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cllr Adam Hug

Leader of Westminster Council

Cc:

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London

Seb Dance, Deputy Mayor of London for Transport

Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport