

## **The £25 Congestion Charge**

Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor are keen to screw more money out of motorists despite the failure of the existing central London congestion charge system to cut congestion or improve air quality. So the latest proposal is to introduce a new £25 charge for those vehicles that emit more than 225 gm/km of CO<sub>2</sub> – this basically applies to large luxury vehicles but it also covers some more mundane ones – the CO<sub>2</sub> figures for your own vehicle is present on the vehicle license document.

Vehicles in band G, plus some in band F will be charged £25 instead of £8, and those who currently get a residents discount who own such vehicles will have to pay the full £25. The only beneficiaries will be those who own vehicles in bands A and B and which are compliant with the Euro4 emissions standard. More details are present on the TfL web site (see link below).

### **Why This Proposal is Iniquitous**

As I repeatedly asked Ken Livingstone on national television, “what is the likely saving in emissions from this proposal”? Well the answer is quite clear from the detailed TfL report on this proposal which is perhaps why Livingstone didn’t answer the question - basically there will be negligible impact. In reality it might actually make air pollution worse.

To quote from the report: *“Overall, the direct effects of the proposals on car use in the short term are expected to have a small positive impact on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The short term impact on air quality is expected to be very small; and the whole life impacts is expected to be minimal.”*

It’s actually very simple to calculate the likely impact. As the Mayor has pointed out, only 8% of cars registered in London will be affected. But only about 10% of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in London are created by private cars. So even if all those car owners instantly stopped using them, the benefit might be only 1% (ie. 8% of 10%, allowing for the fact that most vehicles in band G are only slightly higher than the 225 gm/km limit).

In practice, a third might stop driving into London, a third might pay the charge, and a third might switch to a lower emissions vehicle – in the last case they are very unlikely to save more than 50% of emissions as most vehicles in band G only slightly exceed 225 gm/km and they are likely to switch to vehicles that are just under the limit. So adding all this up, the likely benefit is about 0.5%. Who will notice the difference? Nobody!

Offsetting this benefit will be the fact that band A and B vehicles will now be allowed to enter the Congestion Charge zone without paying so they will be likely to increase in numbers. Even if they are producing only 100 gm/km each, if the number of vehicles rises substantially then the net benefit seen from reduced numbers of larger vehicles may be wiped out altogether. It could even go negative.

Also some of the luxury car drivers might simply switch to using taxis which again will not provide any benefit because they are some of the most polluting vehicles in London with high levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In addition if some of the drivers switched to more economical diesel vehicles, emissions from diesel vehicles might rise substantially when these are known to be more dangerous to health and create more total emissions (other than CO<sub>2</sub>) than those from petrol engined vehicles.

There is also no financial benefit overall, except that up to £36 million of extra revenue might end up in the pockets of TfL.

### ***Why This Proposal is Also Illogical***

The charge will be £25 instead of £8 for vehicles emitting more than 225 gm/km. That's more than 3 times the cost, when in reality the additional CO2 emitted might only be a few percent more. Most band G vehicles emit less than 300 gm/km, with many very near the 225 gm/km limit. There is no fairness or consistency in having to pay 3 times as much when you are emitting only a few percent more. Any such scheme should have a graduated scale which is related to the amount of emissions. Otherwise it creates perverse incentives – for example, it will be cheaper to have two cars and use them within the zone, even though you are emitting more CO2 than one larger car.

There is no real need for an additional tax incentive for people to purchase and use lower emitting cars as central Government is already providing that incentive from the vehicle license system. Emissions from cars have actually been falling in recent years as a result.

One particularly unjust aspect of this scheme is the impact on the owners of larger vehicles, many of which are of luxury models and hence would typically normally last for many years. Owners of these vehicles do not normally change them frequently, and the residual second-hand values may drop substantially as a result of this proposal. Why should such vehicle owners suffer in a way they could not have anticipated when they purchased their vehicles a year or two ago?

### ***Make Sure You Object***

Even if you are not going to be personally affected by this proposal, you should object. If the Mayor and TfL can get away with this illogical attack on a small minority of motorists in the false name of “environmental benefit”, then what may they come up with next?

Go to the TfL web site at [www.tfl.gov.uk/CO2Charging](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/CO2Charging) and fill in their questionnaire, or write to Emissions Related Congestion Charge Consultation, J31210, Ipsos MORI House, 79-91 Borough Road, London SE1 1FY. You should also write to your local MP, and your Greater London Assembly representative. And pass on this email to your friends and ask them to respond to the consultation also.

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25/8/2007