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Peter Bradley
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Dear Peter

RE: Consultation on proposed changes to bus routes on Finchley Road – Routes 13, 113, 82 and 139

Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to comment on TfL's proposals for route changes on Finchley Road. We appreciate that the new proposals aim to address some of Camden's concerns on a previous consultations undertaken in 2015. As I'm sure you will appreciate these proposed changes are of significant interest to Councillors and residents and these proposals were the subject of a discussion at Full Council on Monday 19 September (please see approved motion enclosed).

The Council recognises that TfL should review and revise bus routes to address issues such as delays, poor air quality etc, particularly in light of recent trends such as passenger numbers falling in London, other opportunities for travel, such as moving to faster rail services, including at Finchley Road station, as well as the 'hopper' ticket which will enable more passengers to interchange to other bus services for no additional cost. Camden also understands TfL's constraints and the need to match levels of service to demand to ensure that limited and decreasing resources are used most effectively.

The Council acknowledges the increased frequency of alternative routes (route 13 and 113) and welcomes the extension of route 139, which will hopefully address residents' concerns about dead running on Mill Lane and loss of amenity, and which offers passengers living near Golders Green access to an additional jubilee line station at West Hampstead.

However, Camden still has several concerns about the proposal, in particular for passengers living north of the junction with Hendon Way and the reduction in the number of buses servicing Finchley Road between Platt's Lane and Swiss Cottage tube station. There are particular concerns regarding the peak hours when it is reported that residents have to allow two or three buses to pass until there is capacity to enable them to board. Officers understand that this is a particular problem in the evening peak return journey, and when frequency levels are lower.

The proposals increase the frequency of some of the remaining routes, which together provide a high frequency service on Finchley Road, however it is still a decrease from one bus every 2-3 minutes to one every 3-4 minutes. Bus passengers north of the junction will not benefit greatly from this: our assessment shows that passengers north of the junction will experience an overall loss of seven buses an hour, which equates to an increased wait of nearly two minutes, and effectively a reliance on one bus to get to Finchley Road station and destinations beyond. Camden accepts that rail services will take on more passenger capacity and that route 139 will provide connectivity to another jubilee line station at West Hampstead, as well as and improved Thameslink services in future. However, data provided by TfL shows that currently, on routes 13 and 82, from stops between Golders Green and Platt's Lane to / from stops south of Platt's Lane to Swiss Cottage, 910 passengers per day, out of a total of 4,400, go to/from Finchley Road station. This suggests that approximately 21% get off to use the station, but a significant majority stay on the bus to reach or come from other destinations further south. The extension of route 139 will therefore not be of much benefit to these passengers.

It may be the case that passengers north of the junction are staying on the bus as these journeys are cheaper compared to tube journeys into Zone 1. This is supported by anecdotal evidence which suggests that passengers leave Finchley Road tube in order to use the bus for the onward journey into central London to minimise the total journey costs. A key aim in the Camden Plan, is to reduce inequality: lower cost travel options, especially bus travel, are crucial for accessing jobs, essential services and other opportunities. Maintaining bus connectivity is therefore a major consideration for the Council.

We acknowledge that both the current route 328 and the new route 139 will provide a connection from Golders Green to the junction at Hendon Way, where passengers may interchange at no additional cost to use route 113 which will also increase in frequency. However, only routes 113 and 13 provide the connection to Finchley Road so passengers wanting to get there or destinations further south will still experience a loss of five buses an hour in the peak. Although the loss of service is not so great in the evening for the return journey, frequency is already lower than the morning peak, so it is likely that the further reduction will have a greater impact, especially as there fewer interchange opportunities.

Another concern is that bus demand is likely to increase in the future: evidence of this is already emerging with several new developments on Finchley Road, and this is likely to expand in the future in this part of the borough. Moreover, providing an alternative travel option, particularly buses, is essential to help reduce car use and the negative impacts of carbon emissions, deteriorating air quality and congestion, all of which are both Mayoral and Camden objectives.

There is also a concern about the loss of connectivity between Aldwych and Golders Green via Finchley Road, and that passengers wanting to make this direct journey will

have to make a more indirect journey using route 139 via West Hampstead. However, we accept that the hopper ticket will make bus interchanging more attractive in the future for this journey also.

In light of the above concerns the Council does not currently consider that the proposals represent the right balance between service provision and current use. While we welcome TfL's efforts to increase bus frequencies this does not necessarily take account of actual demand at key times. Camden also has concerns about the impacts of future growth in this part of the borough.

I understand that you are also leaving TfL shortly so may I also take this opportunity to thank you for your support over the years and wish you well in your new endeavours.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Jones', with a stylized, cursive script.

Councillor Phil Jones

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning

Enc. Motion from Camden Council meeting 19 September 2016