Heidi Alexander
Deputy Mayor for Transport
City Hall, The Queen’s Walk
London SE1 2AA 9th October 2020

Dear Deputy Mayor,

**533 Bus - Hammersmith Bridge Replacement Service**

Further to the letter sent on September 29th by Hammersmith Bridge SOS, and as a resident directly affected by the closure of the bridge, I would like to ask that you urgently improve bus services between Barnes and Hammersmith.

I am sure you know that up to 16,000 residents crossed the bridge each day on foot or by bike before it was closed entirely on the 13th August 2020. Many of the pedestrians used the 209 bus, (with a capacity of over 600 people per hour) to get to and from the bridge.

It can be no great surprise then to learn that the current capacity of the 533 bus, at only 56 people per hour maximum, is utterly inadequate to meet the needs of residents trying to get to and from Hammersmith. Indeed, even the scheduled 4 buses per hour regularly fail to materialise, adding further to the difficulties. What is more, unlike in many other areas of London, no dedicated school service has been provided on this route. The distress at the bridge closure is being compounded by this limited and unreliable transport provision, with children and commuters often waiting for more than an hour to get on to a bus. Not infrequently, we are told, drivers take pity on desperate waiting passengers and allow buses to fill up - thus providing some respite but bringing with it an undesirable Covid risk.

To suggest, as TFL has, that we deal with this unprecedented situation by taking a lengthy journey via Putney first by (another unreliable) bus, then by foot and finally tube, changing at Earls Court, is genuinely insulting to the thousands of people struggling to continue their day to day lives in the face of the closure. What might have been a reasonable suggestion when the bridge was only closed to vehicles - to allow the 533 bus to be prioritised for elderly and those with disabilities - is simply an impossible request when thousands are stranded and have no other reasonable route to and from Hammersmith.

While we appreciate the pressures on the TFL network in this year's difficult circumstances, the response to this local crisis is simply not adequate or justifiable. Furthermore, you must be aware that the lack of buses is forcing local residents reluctantly back into their cars, adding to gridlock and pollution in Barnes, Mortlake, Fulham and Chiswick, and directly undermining the Mayor's campaign to reduce car journeys in London.

I would therefore urge you to categorise the Hammersmith Bridge closure as the emergency situation it indeed is and prioritise bus services for affected residents - ideally by increasing the 533 to at least every 6 minutes. The problems outlined above will only get worse over the coming weeks as the weather worsens and when the clocks change. Action must be taken now.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Yours sincerely,