

Central London Bus Review Transport For London

August 7th 2022

Dear Sirs,

Proposed changes to bus routes in the West London Area – Earls Court and South Kensington

This is a joint response to your consultation on the Central London Bus Review from Knightsbridge Partnership and the King's Road Partnership, the two BIDs that represent over 600 businesses on and around the Brompton Road and the King's Road.

The two roads are major destinations, both for Londoners and for visitors from throughout the UK and around the world. Knightsbridge is one of only two designated International Centres in the Mayor's London Plan and is a major attraction for international visitors.

The King's Road has an iconic status as a centre for avant-garde fashion and art and has several major visitor attractions on it or nearby, including the Saatchi Gallery, the National Army Museum and the Chelsea Hospital. Three major hospitals are close to The King's Road - The Royal Brompton Hospital, The Chelsea and Westminster Hospital and The Royal Marsden Hospital.

The two BIDs are linked by Sloane Street, part of the International Centre.

The areas within which the BIDs sit have high residential densities.

The bus routes being considered in this consultation therefore serve a mix of residents, visitors in larger numbers than most London districts and a wide mix of employees, including those working in retail and hospitality, nurses and other medical staff. These employees often work long and anti-social hours and are dependent on the bus services as an affordable and safe means of transport.

We appreciate the financial pressures under which TfL is operating as a result of the drastic reduction in fare revenue during the pandemic, and the conditions which you have agreed with the Government as part of a funding agreement. However, we are concerned that the proposals in the review will leave the districts poorly served by public transport.

The districts are served by just one tube station each – Knightsbridge and Sloane Square.

Private car use is extremely difficult in this part of London. It is prohibitively expensive, both because of the increasing cost of fuel and because of the charges imposed by the Mayor to deter driving in central London for congestion and environmental reasons. This is especially the case for those working in the health service, retail and hospitality. Even if private car use was less expensive, there are very few parking spaces in this central London district.

This means that the bus routes are the most important elements of transport in our districts and any major reduction will have a disproportionately high impact on residents, visitors and employees.

Knightsbridge Partnership

Business Improvement District

KING'S ROAD

It will also impact on the vitality of businesses in these important shopping, hospitality and cultural centres. Our shops and restaurants are already suffering from the impact of the pandemic, particularly because of their reliance on international visitors, who are only now starting to return. TfL's plans to reduce the service level of our districts' main public transport facilities, so making it more difficult for visitors to access Knightsbridge and The King's Road, will be an additional blow to these businesses.

Considering the importance of Knightsbridge and the King's Road to London's attraction as a global city and the large number of visitors they attract, the concentration of hospitals around the King's Road and the limited alternative public transport, we ask that you reconsider your proposals to close or reduce the bus services along the Brompton Road and The King's Road.

We have seen the response from Cadogan regarding the No 19 route, and we support their views on the need to retain this vital service.

The consultation also proposes enhancement of bus stops and shelters as well as introducing priority measures to reduce bus delays. Bus shelters on both the Brompton Road and the King's Road have long been neglected and we would appreciate the opportunity to discuss with TfL how these can be improved as part of the BIDs' wider programme of enhancement.

We also believe that there are opportunities on the Brompton Road for improvements to traffic flow to create an environment more fitting for an International Centre. Again, we would like to explore with TfL any short- and long-term options for improvements.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Medway

Chief Executive
Knightsbridge Partnership
King's Road Partnership