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## Tidal Flow in Blackwall Tunnel Ended



Transport for London (TfL) have announced that the tidal flow system that operates during the morning rush hour at the Blackwall Tunnel is to end – in fact by the time you read this it will have already ceased as there was little notice given and no consultation on it took place. It was announced on the 18<sup>th</sup> April and took effect on the 20<sup>th</sup> April.

TfL claim this was because the Metropolitan Police who monitor the tunnel had noticed an increasing number of dangerous incidents. TfL have released a video showing some of the incidents which can be seen on the following web site: <http://www.newshopper.co.uk/video/videonews/index.var.4182.0.0.php> . A still from one of them is shown above and you can see how the car marked by the arrow has moved out from the left hand lane when entering the tunnel from the south bound slip road and will soon be running head on into a vehicle coming out of the tunnel north bound. The video in fact shows two near misses rather than accidents as in both cases the offending vehicles soon realised their mistake.

The tidal flow system has been in operation for almost 30 years and TfL have not reported on the actual accidents. In addition the contraflow system might well continue to be used when essential maintenance is required to be done within one of the tunnels.

The last time the tidal flow was suspended, which was during a fireman's strike, it resulted in substantial lengthening in the queues of north bound traffic. These queues often stretch for more than a mile almost every day, and the slightest incident such as an "overheight" vehicle or minor traffic accident results in several miles of stationary traffic.

Of course, many people have jumped to a simple conclusion. Namely that this is another example of the Mayor and TfL deliberately making congestion worse so they can argue that a "congestion tax" is really needed. Congestion charging or tolls are already being considered for Greenwich and the Blackwall Tunnel approach road. Then after it is introduced, they can revert to the previous scenario to show how beneficial the tax is. This was alleged by many people to have taken place before the central London congestion charge was introduced. With more road works and deliberate manipulation of traffic light timings before the charge was introduced.

*(Editor's Comments: If you examine the video clips, it is clear that the error of moving into the right hand lane is probably accidental and clearly involves the crossing of a double white line because vehicles coming in from the slip road are prohibited from moving over until further along the road. Therefore the police could easily pursue such offenders if they thought it was deliberate. However, simply putting up a warning sign (even better – one that lights up when the contraflow is in operation), would probably stop these incidents. But no way do they justify cessation of the tidal flow system and I very much doubt that the situation has changed of late.)*

To register your objections to withdrawal of the tidal flow, please write to David Brown, Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London, Windsor House, 42 - 50 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0TL (email: [david.brown@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:david.brown@tfl.gov.uk)) and we suggest you also send a copy to Ken Livingstone at Mayor of London, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA, email: [mayor@london.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@london.gov.uk)

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