

Tube lines could be sponsored to freeze fares, say Tories

Sponsorship deals to rename London Underground lines and stations should be considered as a way to fund a freeze in fares, Tory politicians have said.

A report by the Conservative Party on the London Assembly said if £136m were raised in sponsorship it could freeze fares for a year.

And it claimed £204m would cap rises at inflation for the next three years.

Transport for London (TfL) said the cost of changing maps and signs made a deal of that kind unfeasible.

The report, called [Untapped Resource: Bearing Down On Fares Through Sponsorship](#), claimed a poll of 531 Londoners showed only 18.5% were opposed to any additional sponsorship but just 16% wanted an entire line renamed and 34% supported the long-term renaming of a station.

'Behind the curve'

London Mayor Boris Johnson would have the power to agree such a policy but has previously ruled out station renaming.

Gareth Bacon, the report's author and Tory London Assembly member, said: "TfL is well behind the curve on this one.

"We have the potential to command tens, if not hundreds of millions of pounds through sponsorship deals on stations, lines, trains and bus routes.

"Sponsorship is already used on metro systems across the world in places like Madrid, Dubai and New York.

"TfL must follow in these footsteps if London's transport network is to remain as one of the best too."

Ruled out

Fares on London transport increased by an average of 4.2% this year.

Graeme Craig, TfL's director of commercial development, said it had secured £3.4bn in commercial revenue for coming years and had sponsorship deals already in place, such as the contract with Barclays for the capital's cycle hire scheme and with Emirates for the cable car across the River Thames that opened last year.

He said: "The mayor has in the past ruled out the renaming of stations, largely due to the cost of changing the thousands of signs and maps across the network.

"We already do deals short of actually renaming stations or lines, including giving over whole stations like Canary Wharf to advertising by one organisation.

"Every penny of this and our other revenue goes towards keeping fares as low as possible, while improving transport and supporting jobs and growth across the UK."

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