# Silvertown tunnel officially opens, stirring controversy over environmental impact



A new multi-billion-pound road tunnel, the Silvertown tunnel, officially opened to traffic on Monday, linking Greenwich and Newham across the River Thames in east London. This 1.4km (0.9-mile) tunnel is set to charge car drivers up to £4 per crossing as part of a project that is anticipated to improve transport across the capital. Mayor Sadiq Khan and Transport for London (TfL) officials have positioned the tunnel as a solution to transport congestion and air quality challenges, claiming it will provide faster, more reliable journey times and improved links for zero-emission buses.

Despite the government's assertions, the £2 billion initiative has faced significant pushback from diverse groups, including local residents, politicians, climate scientists, and health professionals. Critics argue that the tunnel is redundant and will inadvertently lead to increased traffic and air pollution, particularly in deprived areas already impacted by poor health outcomes. The introduction of the tunnel has sparked concerns about its potential to perpetuate reliance on fossil-fuel-driven vehicles for years to come.

Victoria Rance, founder of the Stop the Silvertown Tunnel Coalition, expressed her discontent regarding the tunnel's implications. Speaking to The Guardian, Rance remarked on the frustration among those who oppose the project, labelling it as an outdated solution to modern transportation issues. “As cities across Europe invest in public transport or active travel – real green transport infrastructure – we are left with what is effectively 1970s technology … a highly polluting road tunnel that will be out of date the moment it opens,” she stated. Rance called for the tunnel to be repurposed to accommodate public transportation and cycling, drawing a comparison with previous adaptations of tunnels such as the Blackwall and Brunel Rotherhithe.

In response to the concerns, Mayor Khan maintained that the Silvertown tunnel will transform travel in the south and east of London, highlighting additional pros such as discounts for residents and dedicated lanes for zero-emission buses. He assured the public that the project aims to enhance access while promoting greener transport options, with expectations for a free cycle-shuttle service intended to encourage cycling in the area.

Further exacerbating concerns, opponents of the project, including Caroline Russell, a Green party member of the London Assembly, have raised alarms over the implications of logistical changes that the tunnel will introduce. Russell described the opening of Silvertown as an illustration of resources wasted on a project lacking genuine support from the public. She stated, “Londoners needed river crossings that prioritise clean air, safe walking and cycling with affordable public transport rather than this traffic-inducing road tunnel.”

Additionally, Russell dismissed the proposed cycle-shuttle service, labelling it as “a half-baked impractical solution.” She critiqued the expectation of cyclists to switch to buses while negotiating potentially hazardous conditions surrounding the tunnel area.

With the tunnel now operational, the debates surrounding its impact on transport, the environment, and public health continue, reflecting broader conversations about how urban infrastructure should adapt to address the challenges of the 21st century.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOC_hU_D4K8> - This YouTube video explains the Silvertown Tunnel's opening, focusing on its impact on transport, including bus changes and the effect on cyclists and motorists.
* <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/silvertown-tunnel> - This webpage from Transport for London details the Silvertown Tunnel project, including its purpose to improve transport by reducing congestion.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silvertown_Tunnel> - Wikipedia provides detailed information about the Silvertown Tunnel, including its construction, purpose, and controversies surrounding its environmental impact.
* <https://www.wearepossible.org/latest-news/car-free-tunnel> - This article discusses concerns over the tunnel's environmental impact and advocates for prioritizing green transport options, aligning with criticisms from groups like the Stop the Silvertown Tunnel Coalition.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/> - The Guardian would typically cover statements from activists like Victoria Rance, who express frustration over the project's perceived outdatedness and environmental consequences.