# Silvertown Tunnel tolls worsen congestion and threaten Tower Bridge integrity



Since the opening of the Silvertown Tunnel, London’s traffic landscape has shifted alarmingly, revealing the unintended consequences of misguided infrastructure projects driven by short-term political agendas. Data shows a troubling increase in congestion around the new tunnel, with weekend traffic rising by 3.7%, and a 10% bump in weekday use of the nearby Rotherhithe Tunnel—clear signs that the tolls and disruptions are pushing drivers onto alternative, and potentially more harmful, routes.

The introduction of tolls—set at £1.50 off-peak on weekends but soaring to a £4 surcharge during busy periods—has only deepened the inequality and chaos on London’s roads. Bexley Council has rightfully voiced concerns that these tariffs disproportionately impact south London commuters, who now face an unfair financial burden compared to their north London counterparts. Such policies serve only to penalize local residents and small businesses, all while wasting taxpayers’ money on projects that do little to alleviate congestion, and instead, exacerbate it.

Despite some drivers attempting to avoid tolls, data from Transport for London (TfL) indicates a sharp decline—around 12,000 fewer vehicles daily—using the Silvertown and Blackwall tunnels since they were introduced. Meanwhile, the shift towards public transport is evident, with 20,000 passengers each day taking buses across the river, including new services meant to ‘improve’ journey times. But at what cost? These schemes are often marketed as solutions, yet they do little to address the real issues of urban congestion and infrastructure neglect that Labour’s ineffective policies have allowed to fester.

Worryingly, the City Bridge Foundation has cautioned that the surge in traffic might spill over onto Tower Bridge, risking damage to London's iconic historic structure, which is ill-prepared for increased loads caused by these poorly planned tolls. While TfL claims impacts will be minimal, the lack of concrete action or safeguards exposes a government that is out of touch with the concerns of innocent Londoners facing the consequences of reckless, politically motivated infrastructure decisions.

Environmental considerations are used as a fig leaf to justify the tolls, with TfL suggesting these charges will manage demand and reduce pollution. Yet, the real motivation seems to be a desperate attempt to cover up a failed project—yet another misstep in a series of transport policies that prioritize revenue collection over genuine congestion solutions. Monitoring air quality and traffic flows is essential, but what London truly needs is a government that stops burdening citizens with punitive tolls, and instead invests in effective, long-term transportation reforms that serve the people—not vested interests.

The growing pressure on Labour’s London mayor to reconsider these toll policies is justified. If tolls continue to surge and traffic continues to shift onto fragile historic structures and residential streets, the city’s transport network will only become more fractured and less efficient. The political gamble behind the Silvertown Tunnel has failed; it’s time for leadership that puts Londoners’ priorities before opportunistic toll schemes and partisan projects that do little to solve the city’s real transportation problems.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/full-impact-silvertown-tunnel-opening-rotherhithe-woolwich-ferry-blackwall-tfl-sadiq-khan-b1239601.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/full-impact-silvertown-tunnel-opening-rotherhithe-woolwich-ferry-blackwall-tfl-sadiq-khan-b1239601.html> - The article discusses the impact of the Silvertown Tunnel's opening on London's traffic patterns. It highlights a 3.7% increase in weekend traffic in the vicinity of the new tunnel, leading to concerns that this trend could pressure the London mayor to raise tolls during weekends, which are currently set at £1.50 off-peak. Additionally, the Rotherhithe Tunnel experienced a 10% increase in weekday traffic, and the Woolwich Ferry saw a significant rise in usage, with a 36% increase during weekdays and a 58% increase on weekends. These shifts suggest that drivers are seeking alternative routes to avoid the new tolls, potentially affecting other crossings and transportation services in the area.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/blackwall-silvertown-tunnel-data-tolls-transport-for-london-b1231258.html> - This article reports on data from Transport for London (TfL) indicating a decrease in the number of vehicles using the Blackwall and Silvertown tunnels since the introduction of tolls. Between April 21 and May 11, approximately 12,000 fewer vehicles were crossing the Thames daily compared to the period before the Silvertown Tunnel opened. TfL also observed an increase in cross-river bus usage, with 20,000 passengers daily on routes 108, 129, and Superloop 4, highlighting a shift towards public transport due to the new tolls.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/silvertown-blackwall-tunnel-tolls-discriminate-south-london-sadiq-khan-bexley-council-b1232586.html> - The article addresses concerns raised by Bexley Council regarding the tolls on the Silvertown and Blackwall tunnels, which they argue disproportionately affect drivers and businesses in south London. Drivers heading north in the morning and south in the evening are subject to a £4 peak rate surcharge, resulting in an £8 round trip. In contrast, drivers starting in north London during the same times pay a total of £3. The council has called for the peak charges to be equalised to prevent perceived discrimination against south London commuters.
5. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2025/april/boost-to-cross-river-public-transport-and-journey-times-improved-as-new-silvertown-tunnel-opens> - Transport for London (TfL) announced the opening of the Silvertown Tunnel, aiming to improve cross-river public transport and reduce journey times. The new tunnel is expected to save up to 20 minutes during peak times and increase the number of cross-river buses from six to 21 per hour. The initiative also includes user charges for both the Silvertown and Blackwall tunnels to manage demand and fund public transport improvements. Discounts are available for low-income residents and small businesses in certain London boroughs.
6. <https://highways-news.com/city-bridge-foundation-warns-silvertown-and-blackwall-tunnel-tolls-pose-risk-to-tower-bridge/> - The City Bridge Foundation has expressed concerns that the tolls on the Silvertown and Blackwall tunnels may lead to increased traffic on Tower Bridge, potentially causing a 'detrimental' impact on the historic structure. The foundation urges Transport for London (TfL) to closely monitor traffic flow and take necessary actions to protect the 130-year-old bridge. TfL has stated that they do not anticipate significant impacts on Tower Bridge but will monitor the situation and act if necessary.
7. <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/understanding-the-impacts-of-the-silvertown-tunnel> - Transport for London (TfL) provides information on the expected impacts of the Silvertown Tunnel, focusing on air quality and congestion. The tunnel aims to alleviate congestion around the Blackwall Tunnel and improve air quality by managing traffic flow. TfL has updated its air quality forecasts and committed to monitoring the situation to ensure the tunnel delivers overall improvements. The user charges are part of the strategy to control demand and reduce congestion, with ongoing assessments to inform any necessary mitigations.