River Crossings

Overview

We would like your views on a package of proposed new Thames crossings in east and southeast London, which includes:

- **Gallions Reach Ferry.** A new vehicle ferry at Gallions Reach which could replace the Woolwich Ferry;
- **Silvertown Tunnel.** A new road tunnel at Silvertown

Improving cross-river connections

East and southeast London will be the focus for half of all the Capital’s population and employment growth over the next twenty years. Ensuring that vehicles can easily cross the Thames will be important in achieving this growth.

The existing vehicle crossings – the Blackwall Tunnel, Rotherhithe Tunnel and the Woolwich Ferry – are already under strain. We need to put in place more ways to cross the river so that both people and goods traffic can move efficiently now and in the future.

Public transport improvements

Much has already been done to improve public transport in this area with more on the way. The London Overground, DLR extensions and upgraded Jubilee line have all made it easier to get across the river by public transport. By 2018, Crossrail will provide another connection and the Emirates Air Line cable car crossing for pedestrians and cyclists is due to open in summer 2012.

But we also need to provide crossings for the commercial traffic – lorries, vans and cars – that are important for businesses, goods delivery and servicing. In recent years, investment in the road network has not kept up with increasing demand. The chart overleaf is an overview of public transport and highway crossings in this part of London without the proposed new ferry and tunnel.
Existing crossings under strain

At the moment, the number of routes available to vehicles is limited. There is a width restriction at the Rotherhithe Tunnel and a height restriction at the Blackwall Tunnel. These can lead to tunnel closures and delays for all vehicles. The Woolwich Ferry is ageing and may not be in the best location for current and future needs. Since the number of crossings here is so limited, any incidents or closures mean that people need to make long diversions in order to find an alternative.

This lack of resilience and choice leads to further delay and congestion for drivers - at the Blackwall Tunnel this is on average 20 minutes per vehicle in the morning peak. For businesses, it is an additional cost and can discourage investment. Without action now, these problems will only get worse.

The Mayor’s Transport Strategy sets out a commitment to take forward a package of new river crossings for east and southeast London:

The proposed package of improvements

- **Emirates Air Line.** A new cable car connection between the Royal Docks and North Greenwich. It is a fully accessible link for pedestrians and cyclists currently being constructed and due to be open by summer 2012;
- **Gallions Reach Ferry.** A new vehicle ferry at Gallions Reach between Beckton and Thamesmead. This would improve connectivity and could replace the Woolwich Ferry;
- **Silvertown Tunnel.** A new road tunnel between Silvertown and north Greenwich. This would relieve congestion at the Blackwall Tunnel by
providing an alternative route between the Royal Docks, Isle of Dogs, Lower Lea Valley and Greenwich Peninsula.

Subject to securing the appropriate planning permissions and funding for these proposals, the ferry could be in place in 2017, and the road tunnel in 2021.

Map showing the proposals

Silvertown Tunnel

A new road tunnel here would add more capacity to the road network and offer an alternative to the Blackwall Tunnel. It would also be designed to accommodate tall vehicles, which the Blackwall Tunnel cannot. This would reduce the peak period delays at the existing tunnel and reduce congestion. It would help to realise the potential of the surrounding development areas like the Royal Docks and Greenwich Peninsula (some 13,000 new jobs and 24,500 new homes).

We would carefully manage the traffic and air quality impacts of any crossing locally. The earliest a new road tunnel at Silvertown could be opened is 2021, provided that the necessary consents and funding are available.

Gallions Reach ferry

The ferry and piers at Woolwich will be fifty years old next year. While recent investment means it can continue in the short-term, in the longer term we need new boats and piers. At the same time we can consider where best to locate a new ferry crossing. Options need to take account of where the growth and demand will happen, help relieve existing congestion and be well-integrated with the road network.

A new vehicle ferry crossing at Gallions Reach would improve connectivity for vehicles wishing to cross the Thames between Thamesmead and Beckton and
provide an alternative route into the Royal Docks from the south east. It would be purpose-built to modern standards and be able to carry more vehicles per boat than the existing Woolwich ferry. Its location would provide a more direct route for most traffic, with better queuing facilities and would also help to relieve congestion in Woolwich town centre. It could be delivered by 2017 subject to securing the appropriate consents and funding.

**Paying for the proposals**

In the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement of 2011, the Government indicated its support for new transport infrastructure in London.

The proposed crossings are major schemes and although they would bring significant benefits, they are costly to build and funding beyond our existing business plan would be required. A range of funding options is being considered.

**Have your say**

We would like your views on the proposed package of river crossings and how these might be delivered. This initial consultation is the start of a process which would include further public consultation with local meetings and events later in 2012. Further information will be provided on impacts of the schemes, potential funding streams and the engineering and design aspects as the proposals are developed.

At this stage we welcome your initial views on the proposed package and the importance of this issue.

To have your say, please answer our online questionnaire, send comments by email to rivercrossings@tfl.gov.uk, or write to us using our pre-paid postal address: River Crossings Consultation, RSAK-YAYS-ACKX, Transport for London, Consultation Delivery, 11th floor Palestra, 197 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8NJ.

**Please let us have your views by midnight on 5 March 2012.**

We will update you on the results of this consultation later in the year.