

AN INFRASTRUCTURE REVOLUTION

SILVERTOWN TUNNEL UNLOCKING EAST LONDON

The Blackwall Tunnel is one of only two fixed routes across the River Thames between the Dartford Crossing and Tower Bridge. First opened in 1897, its narrow and restricted design has seen it become increasingly congested and inefficient for road users, with collisions and unplanned closures resulting in long delays and unnecessary emissions.

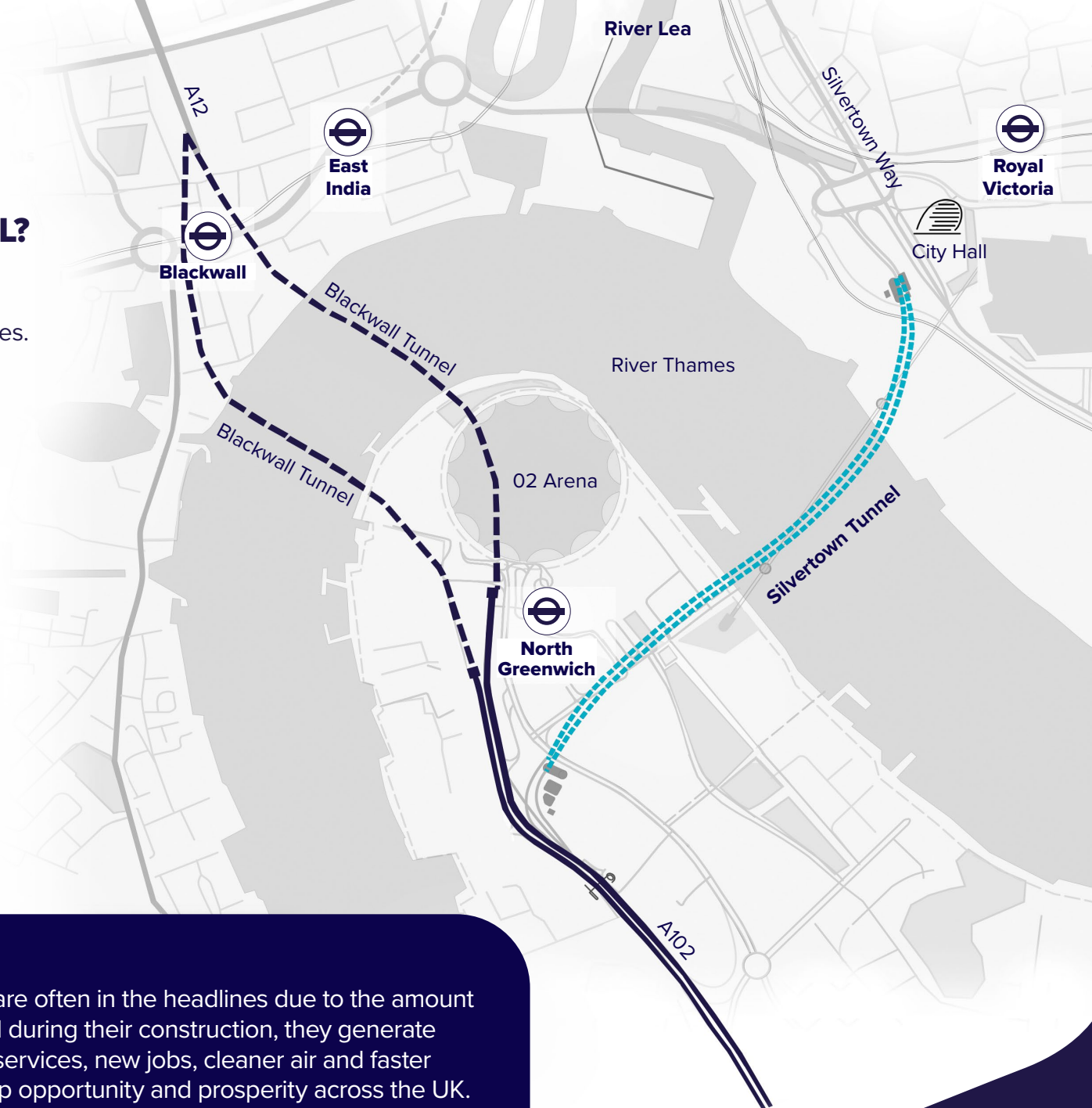
The **Silvertown Tunnel**, which is being constructed beneath the Thames using the largest Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) in the UK, will reduce congestion, improve journey times and make the surrounding area more attractive to businesses and residents, boosting the regional economy.

WHAT IS THE SILVERTOWN TUNNEL?

The Silvertown Tunnel will connect Silvertown and the Greenwich Peninsula in East London via a 0.9 mile tunnel passing underneath the River Thames. The project comprises:

- A road tunnel with two lanes in each direction, one of which will be dedicated for double-decker buses, coaches and HGVs
- Portal buildings at both tunnel entrances to manage and maintain the tunnel, with planting and landscaping on the rooftops and walls to encourage biodiversity
- Improvements for local pedestrians and cyclists, including a new fully-accessible bridge providing safe passage over the A102 to the Thames Path.

The Silvertown Tunnel is expected to cost around £1 billion. Main construction activity began in 2020 and the project has a target opening date of 2025.



Delivering an Infrastructure Revolution

Whilst economic and social infrastructure projects are often in the headlines due to the amount of money spent on them and the disruption caused during their construction, they generate huge long-term benefits. By providing better local services, new jobs, cleaner air and faster connections, modern infrastructure helps to level up opportunity and prosperity across the UK.

Build UK's factsheets cover a range of local and national projects explaining what they are and why they are being built in Britain today.



WHY WE NEED THE SILVERTOWN TUNNEL

The Silvertown Tunnel will provide a critical transport link across the River Thames, relieving pressure on existing routes in East London where the population is expected to rise by a third by 2031. Once completed, the project will:

- Reduce congestion at the Blackwall Tunnel, with journey times up to 20 minutes faster
- Provide more opportunities to cross the river by public transport, with a network of zero-emission buses offering new routes and reliable access to more destinations
- Reduce the environmental impact of traffic congestion on some of London's most polluted roads
- Support economic growth in the area which is projected to create 286,000 new jobs by 2036.

SILVERTOWN TUNNEL IN NUMBERS



£1bn

estimated investment



286,000

new jobs supported



100

apprentices trained

KEY ISSUES

- Concerns have been raised over the impact the Silvertown Tunnel may have on local **air quality** due to the potential for a new road to increase traffic. However, a reduction in idling cars and greater capacity for public transport, combined with the introduction of user charges at both the Silvertown and Blackwall tunnels, is expected to result in an overall improvement in air quality. Transport for London (TfL) will continue to monitor air quality via its network of air quality monitors across South and East London.
- With construction and excavation materials being transported on local roads, some **disruption** will occur at times during the project, although the majority of suitable materials will be transported via barge. The one million tonnes of soil created by the project will also be used to restore sites for ecological benefit and to prevent other major projects from having to excavate further.

WHO WILL BENEFIT?

The Environment

- Public transport capacity will be increased significantly, with a minimum of 20 zero-emission buses per hour across both the Silvertown and Blackwall Tunnels. Capacity will be further expanded by new double-decker bus routes, as the restricted size of the Blackwall Tunnel means only single-decker buses can currently use it.
- TfL modelling shows the existing congestion at the Blackwall Tunnel will be virtually eliminated at peak times following the opening of the Silvertown Tunnel, reducing emissions from idling cars waiting in traffic.
- A charge for private vehicle users will help discourage unnecessary car journeys and increase the use of public transport.

The Economy

- With the local population projected to increase by 650,000 by 2036, economic growth could be restricted without new, reliable routes across the river. 20% of businesses in the area have indicated that they will be able to take on more staff thanks to the project, supporting the creation of an estimated 286,000 new jobs.
- The new twin-lane tunnel will reduce the financial impact of delays, with congestion through the Blackwall Tunnel currently costing an estimated £12 million per year and accidents a further £1.5 million per year.

The Local Community

- A discount for using the Silvertown Tunnel will be available to low-income residents in the host boroughs of Greenwich, Newham and Tower Hamlets. This will be complemented by £2 million in concessions to encourage local people to use the new bus routes.
- A new cycle link and two-way footbridge with step-free access will allow cyclists and pedestrians to safely cross the A102 to the Thames Path, while community gardens and landscaping will ensure the new structures blend into the local environment.

Further Information

Riverlinx (2022) [Virtual Exhibition](#)

TfL (2014) [Silvertown Tunnel Outline Business Case](#)

TfL (2014) [Strategy for User Charging at Blackwall and Silvertown Tunnels](#)

TfL (2020) [Construction Site River Strategy](#)

TfL (2020) [PRS Construction Environmental Management Plan](#)

TfL (2020) [Schedule 10 – Design and Construction Requirements](#)

Find out more
www.TfL.gov.uk

Contact us
www.BuildUK.org

