



Funding gap delays Rotherhithe Tunnel upgrade Free 271224

Description



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Plans to close and repair a 116-year-old road tunnel under the River Thames are on hold due to a lack of funds.

Despite being allocated £485m in Chancellor Rachel Reeves' recent Budget for the next financial year – almost double the £250m committed for the current year by her Tory predecessor Jeremy Hunt – Transport for London (TfL) said that it still needs “long term” funding to start the repairs.

TfL said it hopes that multi-year funding will be announced in the Chancellor's comprehensive spending review, which is expected to take place in June 2025.

But City Hall Conservatives said the continuing deterioration of the Rotherhithe Tunnel only inflates any cost of repair.

‘Londoners have no clue’

The tunnel, which links its eponymous south London neighbourhood with Limehouse, in east London, is suffering from a range of issues affecting its mechanical, electrical and communication systems.

In 2020 the total cost of repairs was estimated to be between £116m and £178m, though the cost will have risen substantially due to sharp inflation since the pandemic.

TfL said last year that refurbishment could potentially take place as early as 2025, after the new Silvertown Tunnel opens in the spring.

However it now says the tunnel's nine-month closure will only take place from April 2026 at the earliest.

The transport body added its current work on river crossings was “absolutely essential in the short-term to keep the network operating, while also planning the work required in the future to ensure they remain open in the long term”.

Keith Prince, City Hall Conservatives' transport spokesman, said: “We have asked the mayor time and time again to tell us what he has asked the government for and he won't tell us, so Londoners have no clue what representations he has made about the need to carry out this work.”

A Department for Transport (DfT) spokeswoman said: “TfL is responsible for the maintenance of the Rotherhithe Tunnel, as transport in London is devolved.

“The success of London's transport network is vital for both the capital and the UK's economy. That is why the chancellor announced nearly £500m in additional funding for TfL at the Budget.”

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