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Lower Thames Crossing to boost road capacity by 90 per cent

A major new road linking Kent, Thurrock and Essex would nearly double road capacity across the river Thames and almost halve northbound journey times at Dartford Crossing, under updated plans released by Highways England today.

The multi-billion pound project will connect communities, boost the economy and add vital extra resilience to the road network while reducing pressure on the existing Dartford Crossing. It is set to be the most ambitious road project since the M25 opened 30 years ago and will include the UK's longest road tunnel.

47,000 people had their say in a previous consultation on the proposals – a record for a UK road scheme. A new, ten-week consultation on the latest designs for the improvements will start on Wednesday 10 October and run until Thursday 20 December.



Caption: How the southern portal of the Lower Thames Crossing, in Kent, will look

The improved proposals published today include:

- Making the whole route a three-lane dual carriageway to improve traffic-flow;
- A new rest and service area to the west of East Tilbury;
- A new design for the Tilbury junction, removing the proposed Tilbury link road to reduce traffic on the local road network, and;
- An improved junction with the A2.

The 14.5 mile route connecting Gravesham in Kent and Thurrock in Essex is expected to reduce traffic at Dartford by 22 per cent with 14 million fewer vehicles using it every year. It will almost halve the morning peak average journey times between M25 junctions 1b and 31 from nine minutes to just five.



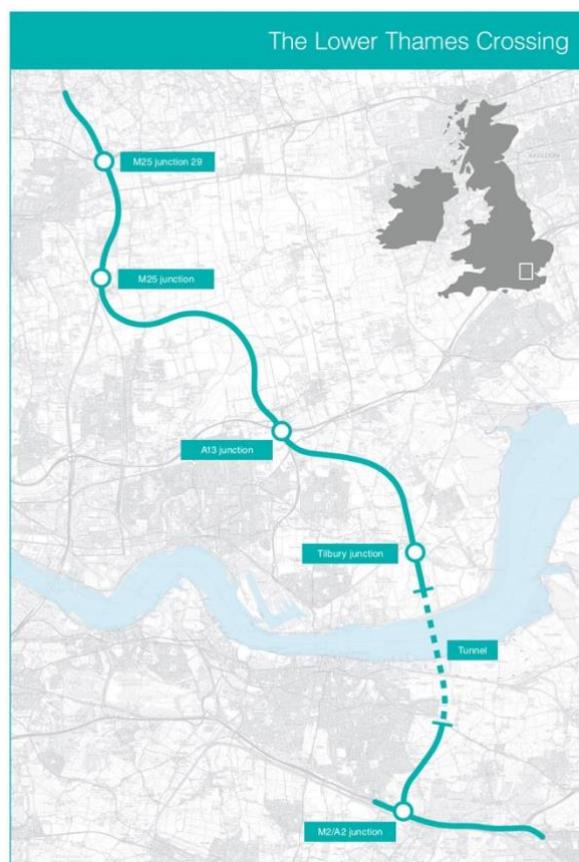
Caption: How the Lower Thames Crossing junction with the M25 in Essex will look

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

“We are making the biggest investment in improving our roads since the 1970s, ensuring journeys are quicker and safer.

“The Lower Thames Crossing will help transform journeys, create new business opportunities in Kent and Essex and unlock productivity across the UK.

“It will also cut congestion at the Dartford Crossing and improve connectivity from our industrial heartland to our ports in the South East.”



Caption: The latest proposed route of the new Lower Thames Crossing

Tim Jones, Project Director for Lower Thames Crossing, said:

“For too long the Dartford Crossing has been the only way to get across the Thames east of London. It is a vital gateway, but carries more traffic than it was ever designed for and drivers there suffer from regular delays, severing communities and holding back economic growth.

"The Lower Thames Crossing is the most ambitious project of its kind ever in the UK and the biggest single road upgrade since the M25 was completed more than 30 years ago. It would almost double road capacity across the Thames cutting congestion, significantly easing pressure at the Dartford Crossing and boosting the resilience of the whole road network. This consultation is an important opportunity for people to share their views on our proposals and I urge anyone who has an interest to have their say."



Caption: How the northern portal of the Lower Thames Crossing, in Essex, will look

The project will create a new, three-lane dual carriageway connecting the M2 near Rochester and the M25 in Essex between North and South Ockendon. It would include a 2.4 mile-long tunnel under the Thames between Gravesend and Tilbury – the longest road tunnel in the UK – and, at over 50 feet wide, the third largest bored tunnel in the world.

The plans published today include an updated, more detailed design which aims to maximise the project's huge benefits and includes significant changes to minimise the impact on local communities and the environment.

Numerous measures have also been included to reduce the impact that the new road will have on local communities, including:

- Extending the tunnel so the tunnel entrance in Kent is 600 metres further south to reduce the visual impact and protect access to a community church;
- Lowering road by five to six metres in places to reduce its visual impact;
- Moving the road 80 metres further east where it passes Chadwell St Mary to increase the distance from residential properties.



Caption: How the Lower Thames Crossing viaduct over the Mardyke Valley will look

The preferred route was announced last April by Transport Secretary Chris Grayling.

Some 25 public information events are being held across Kent and Essex, as well as 30 visits to local communities to help people understand more about the proposals and put any questions directly to the project team. At each event, specialists will be on hand to explain the proposed route, how it would be built and operated, and how Highways

England plan to minimise the impact on the local environment and community. All information is also available online at www.lowerthamescrossing.co.uk/haveyoursay

The consultation starts today and runs for ten weeks.

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Highways England is the wholly government-owned company responsible for modernising, maintaining and operating England's motorways and major A roads.
2. Details of media interview opportunities were published on Monday 8 October. To bid please contact Highways England press office on the number at the foot of this release.
3. Details on how to take part in the consultation will be found at www.lowerthamescrossing.co.uk/haveyoursay
4. The following are quotes from business groups who have shown their support for the new Lower Thames Crossing:

SELEP (South East Local Enterprise Partnership)

Christian Brodie, Chair of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), said:

"This marks the important next step for this urgently needed and game changing project which will help us drive forward the economy of the South East. I would urge every business to back this vital investment in infrastructure and participate in the consultation."

Essex Chambers of Commerce

Denise Rossiter, Chief Executive Officer of Essex Chambers of Commerce, said:

'We are extremely pleased that this important Consultation has been launched for a ten-week period. Essex Chambers have strongly supported the need for a Lower Thames Crossing from the very start. The time now is for businesses to have their say and we would encourage you to visit the Lower Thames Crossing Website to learn more about this fantastic project that will help Essex prosper economically, logistically and be a global leader.'

Kent Chambers of Commerce

Jo James, Chief Executive Officer of Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, said:

"The Lower Thames Crossing will open up new opportunities, enabling businesses across Kent and the wider South East to achieve their growth potential and will have a significant impact on our future prosperity."

As the ten-week consultation opens, I would strongly urge businesses to put their views forward by responding to the consultation.”

Freight Transport Association

Malcolm Bingham, FTA’s Head of Road Network Policy, said:

“FTA, which represents more than 17,000 logistics businesses, urges government to press ahead with construction of the Lower Thames Crossing as soon as possible to ease congestion and improve road capacity in this area. Traffic congestion at the Dartford Crossing is already unbearably high and it is predicted to return to pre-Dart Charge levels by 2020. The M2 / M25 route is a vital cog in the country’s freight machine and it must continue to work as smoothly as possible to ensure that British companies can trade without delays both domestically and internationally.”

Port of Dover

Richard Christian, Head of Policy & Communications, Port of Dover, said:

“The UK’s reliance upon continued frictionless trade at the Port of Dover has been accepted at the heart of Government. So has the need to preserve it. For a port handling £122bn or 17% of the UK’s trade in goods, and with half of that trade moving beyond London to keep factories busy and shops full in the Midlands and the North, the Lower Thames Crossing is an investment in the long-term economic success of the UK as a whole. The Port continues to press hard for a Government commitment to other complementary strategic investments such as the dualling of the A2 to Dover which, together with the Lower Thames Crossing, will help protect jobs and livelihoods, keep traffic flowing and prices low for British consumers.”

Stobart Group London Southend Airport

Glyn Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Stobart Aviation, said:

“Stobart Group is proud to support this visionary and important infrastructure project. It will make a major contribution to sustainable growth and significantly enhance mobility for both people and goods across the river. We look forward to working with colleagues in the LTC team to help deliver this transformational scheme.”

5. Details of the public exhibition events are as follows:

- Orsett Hall Hotel, Prince Charles Avenue, Orsett, RM16 3HS on Tuesday 16 October from 2pm to 9pm
- Bluewater Shopping Centre, Bluewater Parkway, Greenhithe, DA9 9ST, on Saturday 20 October from 9am to 9pm, and Sunday 21 October from 11am to 5pm
- Chalk Parish Hall, Pirrip Close, Gravesend, DA12 2ND, on Monday 22 October from 2pm to 9pm
- Mick Jagger Centre, Shepherds Lane, Dartford, DA1 2JZ, on Tuesday 23 October from 2pm to 9pm
- West Horndon Village Hall, Thorndon Avenue, West Horndon, CM13 3TP on Wednesday 24 October from 2pm to 9pm

- Lakeside Shopping Centre, West Thurrock Way, Grays, RM20 2ZP on Saturday 27 October from 9am to 9pm, and on Sunday 28 October from 11am to 5pm
 - Tilbury Community Association, Civic Square, Tilbury, RM18 8AA on Tuesday 30 October from 2pm to 9pm
 - Cascades Leisure Centre, Thong Lane, Gravesend, DA12 4LG, on Thursday 1 November, from 2pm to 9pm
 - Shorne Village Hall, 16 The Street, Shorne, DA12 3EA, on Saturday 3 November from midday to 6pm
 - Civic Hall, Blackshots Lane, Grays, RM16 2JU on Tuesday 6 November from 2pm to 9pm
 - Linford Methodist Church, East Tilbury Road, Linford, SS17 0QQ on Wednesday 14 November from 2pm to 9pm
 - Brandon Groves Community Club, Brandon Groves Avenue, South Ockendon, RM15 6TD on Friday 16 November from 2pm to 9pm
 - The New Windmill Hall, St Mary's Lane, Upminster, RM14 2QH on Saturday 17 November from midday to 6pm
 - Holiday Inn Basildon, Cranes Farm Road, Waterfront Walk, Festival Leisure Park, Basildon, SS14 3DG on Monday 19 November from 2pm to 9pm
 - Gravesham Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend, DA12 1AU, on Wednesday 21 November from 2pm to 9pm
 - St Mary Magdalene Church, Church Lane, Upminster, RM14 3QH on Thursday 22 November from 2pm to 9pm
 - Havering College of Higher and Further Education, 42 Ardleigh Green Road, Hornchurch, RM11 2LL, Monday 26 November, 2pm to 9PM
 - Holiday Inn Brentwood M25 junction 28, Brooke Street, Brentwood, CM14 5NF on Wednesday 28 November from 2pm to 9pm
 - Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford, RM1 3BD on Friday 30 November from 2pm to 9pm
 - Doubletree Dartford Bridge, Masthead Close, Crossways Business Park, Dartford, DA2 6QF, on Monday 3 December from 2pm to 9pm
 - Dover Town Hall, Biggin Street, Dover, CT16 1DL, on Tuesday 4 December, from 2pm to 9pm
 - Rochester Corn Exchange, Northgate, Rochester, ME1 1LS, on Wednesday 5 December, from 2pm to 9pm
 - Chadwell Village Hall, Waterson Road, Chadwell St Mary, RM16 4NX on Friday 7 December from 2pm to 9pm
6. To see and download more pictures of the Lower Thames Crossing, visit:
<https://1drv.ms/f/s!AoeN9MzdoO48IV6YbZ58FwAPouQG>
7. You can download the latest Lower Thames Crossing fly-through video here:
<https://wettransfer.com/downloads/6c87dc224699033d36c3274275d1041b20181009082709/b9383a8f2510782f36162fe6b3047e3820181009082709/238e20>
8. **Real-time traffic information** for England's motorways and major A roads is available:

- From the web at www.highways.gov.uk/traffic or from a phone or mobile device at m.highways.gov.uk
- By phone from the Highways England Customer Contact Centre on 0300 123 5000 at any time. (Calls to 03 numbers are charged at no more than a national call to a 01 or 02 number and are included in all discount schemes and call allowances. This applies to all landlines, mobiles and payphones. Call costs will vary depending on your landline or mobile supplier.) Make sure it's safe and legal before you call. Before using any mobile, find a safe place to park. Never stop on the hard shoulder of a motorway except in an emergency.
- On Apple and Android mobile devices via the [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play Store](#).
- From **Twitter** – there are eight feeds with live traffic information provided by region. For information on roads in the East of England follow us at [@Highways EAST](#) or for the full index visit www.highways.gov.uk/twitter.

Issued by Highways England.

For further information please contact SE&Epressoffice@highwaysengland.co.uk, 0300 470 4860. Media enquiries out of hours should be made to Highways England's National Press Office (24hrs) on 0844 693 1448.