

Greenwich,
30 May 2023

To Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London
and Seb Dance, Deputy Mayor for Transport

Dear Sadiq Khan and Seb Dance,

Transport emissions reduction / Silvertown Tunnel

We write to draw your attention to the results of a research project on greenhouse gas emissions from the urban transport sector, conducted at Imperial College with the support of the government's Climate Compatible Growth programme.

The research was summarised in an article in *Nature Communications*¹ (copy attached). It investigated the severity of actions needed for the transport sector to stay within carbon budgets that comply with the decisions of the Paris climate conference in 2015.

The researchers used London as a case study, and found that "current policies are insufficient to meet climate targets". They concluded that "as well as implementation of emission-reducing changes in vehicle design, a rapid and large-scale reduction in car use is necessary to meet stringent carbon budgets and avoid high energy demand" (page 1).

The researchers highlighted the need for rapid reductions in the vehicle-kilometres driven (vkm) by cars in London. They found that the 27% reduction in vkm by 2030, recommended by Element Energy in connection with the Mayor's "net zero by 2030" target,² could reduce cumulative transport sector emissions up to 2050 by 31.6%, roughly in line with the carbon budgets associated with the Climate Change Committee's 1.5 degree pathway.

They further found that reductions in vkm of 80% would be required to achieve emissions reductions compliant with carbon budgets calculated for London by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research (page 4).

The researchers found that all policies directed towards vehicle design (e.g. electrification, retrofitting, scrappage schemes, lightweighting, etc) would produce much fewer, much slower reductions in emissions than policies directed to reducing car travel activity (pages 5-6). They emphasised the risk of policies failing, and urged that this be taken into account (page 7).

The researchers pointed out that current infrastructure in many cities renders rapid reductions of car use unfeasible, as many people do not have the choice of sustainable transport. Taking climate targets seriously "opens a window of opportunity for an entire transformation of the current urban landscape" to prioritise people, rather than cars (page 8).

As well as car-free zones, dynamic road user charging and planning regulation to reduce the need for trips, the researchers emphasised the need for:

An immediate halt in urban road building projects and existing roads repurposed to prioritise active transport, such as the Barcelona 'Superblock' model. In London, this

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¹ Lisa Winkler et al, "The effect of sustainable mobility transition policies on cumulative urban transport emissions and energy demand", *Nature Communications* (2023) 14:2357

² Element Energy, *Analysis of a Net Zero 2030 Target for Greater London. Final report for the GLA* (18 January 2022), pages 14-20

would include a halt to projects such as the Silvertown tunnel built to facilitate more river crossings in cars.

All in all, the research underlines the need to review the Silvertown tunnel project in the light of emissions reduction requirements. Such a review could facilitate consideration of alternative uses for the tunnel (i.e. for electrified public transport and alternative modes, as opposed to cars and lorries). Newham council has already been in touch with you about this, and we understand that the issue may be discussed in Greenwich council this month.

Given your commitment to addressing the climate emergency, and to taking climate scientists' work into account when formulating policy, we urge you not to delay further, and to initiate such a review, that will take into account the new research from Imperial College, as well as other previously published work on formulating and meeting carbon budgets for the transport sector.

We ask you to meet us to discuss this, as a matter of urgency.

Victoria Rance,

on behalf of the Stop the Silvertown Tunnel Coalition.