



Why a new Tyne crossing

The existing Tyne Tunnel has long been a major bottleneck in the road network of Tyne & Wear.

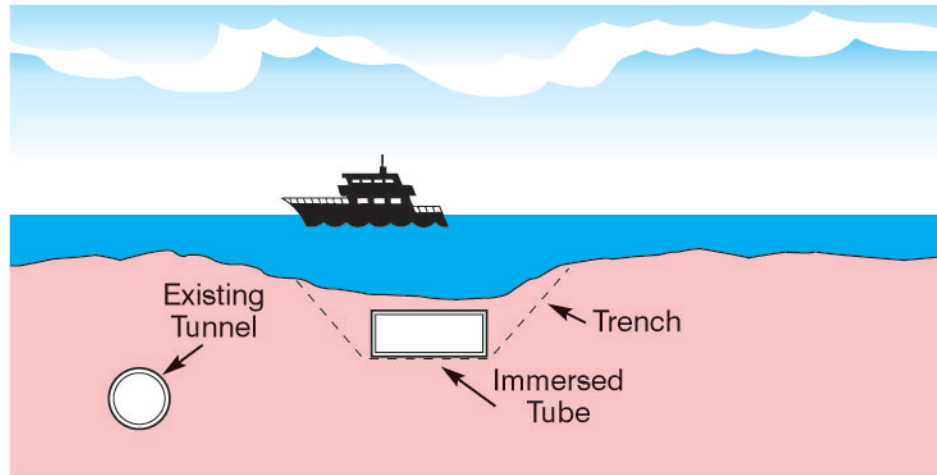
Designed to carry 24,000 vehicles a day, the existing vehicle tunnel currently carries nearly 35,000 a day. At peak times, vehicles can wait up to an hour to go through the toll booths. This increases noise and air pollution, as well as congestion on neighbouring roads if drivers rat-run to avoid the jam.

The new crossing is a vital link between people and job opportunities in Tyne and Wear.

The A19 corridor between the Tyne Tunnel and north to the A1 junction at Seaton Burn will be the focus of major business investment over the next few years, creating thousands of jobs. South Tyneside has one of the highest unemployment rates in the UK and no land suitable for development.

The New Tyne Crossing will remove a major barrier to linking people with job opportunities.

The construction method



Immersed tube tunnelling is a relatively new method of construction, but it has significant advantages over boring through rock - it will cost around 20% less and can be constructed more quickly.

Immersed tube technology involves building pre-fabricated concrete sections in a dry dock, floating them into position, then lowering them into a trench in the river bed. At the moment it is not known where the tunnel sections will be made, but the PTA's advisers are hoping they can be built on the Tyne.

Other tunnels in the UK built using the immersed tube method are the Conwy and the Medway.

The north and south banks at either end of the immersed tube will be cut into and the new tunnel constructed conventionally. Once completed, the tunnel will be covered and the ground reinstated,

leaving land which may be suitable for development, community use and open space particularly on the south side of the river.

The north entrance to the new tunnel will be near the existing roundabout to the east of the current toll plaza. Because the new tunnel will not be as deep as the existing vehicle tunnel there is no need for the road to spiral down.

The south entrance will be next to the existing tunnel entrance.

This will mean that around 50 properties in the line of the tunnel will have to be demolished, including St Peters School and the Grange Nursing Home in Jarrow.

The school is being merged with Ellison Street School where new buildings are on target to be ready for the children from September 2001.

Changing places



The construction of a new tunnel will involve changes to the local road network on both banks during building work and after.

On the north bank, a new toll plaza for southbound traffic will be built just south of the A193 junction. This means that access to the southbound tunnel from the north will only be possible from the A193 junction or the A19 itself.

Northbound traffic will continue to use the existing plaza which will be improved.

On the south side, the entrance will be next to the existing tunnel entrance. The existing roundabout at the south entrance to the tunnel will be replaced by a new interchange. The exact layout and location of this junction has still to be decided. One topic of the exhibition concerns this junction and views of local people will be sought on the best option during consultation in the next few months.



People and wildlife

A major part of the work to date has involved the PTA's advisers looking at the impact of the new crossing on people, businesses and wildlife.

Experts have looked at all the environmental aspects surrounding the construction and use of the tunnel. Most of the impact will occur during construction, but every effort will be made to reduce this to a minimum by ensuring best use of construction methods and restricting working hours.

During the environmental studies, experts discovered a population of water voles in the Don Valley. They will be monitored during construction of nearby roads to ensure they are not disturbed by the work.

PTA lead adviser Arup has also appointed an independent expert on fish to help minimise the impact of construction on migrating populations of salmon, trout and other fish species in the River Tyne.

Once the tunnel is built, it is not expected that the increase in traffic will lead to any increase in noise and air pollution because traffic will flow much more freely than it does at present.

The new timetable

June-October 2001 Public exhibitions & consultation

October Transport & Works Order

Early-late 2002 Preparation of Concession agreement

Late 2002 Tender goes out to possible concessionaires

Mid 2002 Possible Public Inquiry

Mid 2003 Secretary of State decides

Late 2003 Concession awarded