

Transport Committee

31 January 2019

Present: Councillor L Robinson, Chair
Councillor G Friel, Deputy Chair

Councillors A Carr, J Dodd, S Foulkes, P Hayes,
H Howard, D Johnson, A Lavelle, P McKinley,
N Nicholas, M O'Mara OBE, G Pearl, G Philbin,
K Roberts, J Stockton, C Rowe, H Thompson,
J Williams and F Wynn.

84. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ron Abbey Dennis Baum, Jimmy Jackson and Susan Murphy.

The Chair informed the Committee about the Transport for the North press release.

The Chair also informed the Committee that Councillor Ron Abbey's wife and Councillor Susan Murphy had not been well recently and on behalf of the Committee passed on his best wishes.

85. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Helen Thompson declared a pecuniary interest in Item 6 Quarterly Bus Update and Item 7 Public Question Time and left the room when both items were being considered, by virtue of being a member of the Liverpool City Council Planning Committee.

86. **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Transport Committee held on 10th January 2019, be approved as a correct record.

87. **Mersey Tunnel Tolls 2019/20**

The Transport Committee considered a report presented by the Head of Customer Delivery, Gary Evans that outlined the legal procedure for revising the level of the tolls, summarised how the current level of tolls were arrived at and made proposals for the level of tolls payable in 2019/20.

Members asked questions and commented on the following relating to the Mersey Tunnel Tolls 2019/20 –

- Clarification on how the Fast Tag was going to be cost neutral and the increase in cost to non-residents of the LCR;
- What was the historic debt and when it will be paid;
- Congratulated the Finance Team for balancing the budget and the work done to produce the paperwork; and
- Congratulated the Metro Mayor, Steve Rotheram for delivering the promises made to LCR.

Gary Evans informed the Committee that the proposals are cost neutral, as there was an expected reduction in income which was directly offset by an increase in income from non LCR residents with the existing usage continuing. It was also difficult to predict how people would behave and how those people made choices of travel through the tunnels in comparison to ferries, trains and buses. Use of the Tunnels is also dependable on the fuel costs, demographics and other factors. He stated that the historic debt is linked to the Tunnels Act 2004 and is expected to be repaid by 2048. The Tunnels Act states that in 2048, it was up to the Liverpool City Region to decide what happened with the tunnel tolls moving forward.

Councillor Steve Foulkes (Finance and Organisational Development Lead) congratulated the Metro Mayor, Steve Rotheram as one of the few politicians who has made a manifesto pledge and stuck to it and that this has restored faith in politics. He commented that the actual delivery of the promises puts to bed some of the accusations about the tunnels being a “cash cow” and that there would always need to be some form of income to pay for the tunnels, its operations and maintenance. He stated that residents who lived outside of the Liverpool City Region would not be pleased, but the residents of the Liverpool City Region had built it, maintained it and supported it and its was some good news for the people of the Liverpool City Region and for its economy.

Councillor Paul Hayes proposed the following amendment to the recommendations in the report: -

- Add to the end of recommendation a) - “and welcomes any reduction in tolls for residents of the City Region.”
- Replace recommendation c) with - “This committee expresses concern that in its current form the proposals would mean those who contribute to our public services and local economy, but who happen to live just outside the City Region will have to pay more to get to work. It asks the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to consider this before implementing the schedule of tolls contained in Table 1.”
- Add to the end of recommendation d) - “The Tolls on the Mersey Tunnels harms our local economy. This committee takes this opportunity to express its view that the Mersey Tunnels should be toll free and commits to work with all decision makers to achieve both the political will and resources to achieve this.”

There was no seconder, so the amendment fell.

The Chair, Councillor Robinson stated that in order to seek support for the amendment, it should have been shared with members of the Committee in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Nathalie Nicholas (Tunnels, Highways and Key Route Network Lead) thanked the team for all their hard work and producing the report and wanted to echo the comments made by Councillor Foulkes.

The Chair, Councillor Robinson proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Gordon Friel, to insert at the end of recommendation (d): -

“and calls upon the Conservative Government to make good on their manifesto pledges to reduce tunnel tolls for local residents, with the aim of the tunnels being ultimately free to use, and for them to fund this in its entirety.”

A vote was taken on the Amendment and it was unanimously agreed.

A vote was then taken on the following Substantive recommendations and it was unanimously agreed: -

RESOLVED that the Transport Committee:

- a) note the contents of this report;
- b) note the level of “authorised tolls” for the Mersey Tunnels as determined by the County of Merseyside Act 1980 (as amended by the Tunnels Act 2004), with details on calculation methods explained in section 3 of this report;
- c) recommend that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority implement a schedule of tolls contained in Table 1 below with effect from Monday 1 April 2019: -

Vehicle Class	Authorised Toll (November RPI)	2019/20 Cash Toll	2019/20 Fast Tag Toll – LCR Resident*	2019/20 Fast Tag Toll – Non LCR Resident
1	£2.00	£1.80	£1.00	£1.80
2	£4.10	£3.60	£2.40	£2.40
3	£6.10	£5.40	£3.60	£3.60
4	£8.20	£7.20	£4.80	£4.80

*Liverpool City Region (LCR) resident defined as living within the electoral boundaries of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral.

- d) recommend that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority continue to offer the discounts set out in paragraph 3.19 of the report for 2019/20 and calls upon the Conservative Government to make good on their manifesto pledges to reduce tunnel tolls for local residents, with the aim of the tunnels being ultimately free to use, and for them to fund this in its entirety.

88. **Budget Setting Report 2019/20**

The Committee considered a report presented by the Director of Corporate Services, John Fogarty relating to the draft revenue budget and capital programme for Merseytravel, the price/fare increases proposed for 2019/20 and the revenue grants payable to Merseytravel in respect of general operations and Mersey Tunnels for 2019/20.

Members asked questions and commented on the following relating to the Budget Setting Report for 2019/20: –

- Congratulated the Finance Team for the work done to balance the budget;
- Enquired about the equality and diversity implications;
- The expenditure in the Programme Management Office;
- The Prescott Lifts and the Capital Programme;
- The Mersey Ferries cruise services and the increased in charges by multiples of 50p;
- The Supported Bus Service Fares increase to the adult fares by 10p, no change to the children's supported fare but no increase in charges to the bus operators for departure charges; and
- The Mersey Ferries Charter programme.

Councillor Steve Foulkes (Finance and Organisational Development Lead) informed the Committee that there was a freeze last year and the year before was a 5% cut so things are in an amazingly good place, despite the Government austerity. He stated that it has been quite clear that the region has been targeted for more cuts than any other region across the UK and that money has been moved away Metropolitan Councils to “Shires” owned by Conservative Governments. He commended the proposed budget to the Committee and thanked the officers for working so diligently to set the budget and produce the papers.

John Fogarty informed the Committee that there were no planned changes and that Merseytravel needed to make routes more viable and more attractive to commercial operators and to develop a strategy to support the bus network to get more people to use the routes.

Gary Evans informed the Committee that the Mersey Ferries Charter produced about 4/5 years ago established a single charge, but year on year there has been an increase in line with inflation. There has been a huge growth over the time in the cruise programme and work was underway to develop more programmes to bring to market. Own programmes have significantly increased.

The Chair, Councillor Robinson stated that there were challenging budgetary times and any fares increase was never popular, but it was still cheaper than Stagecoach and Arriva. Officers would be looking at the bus station departure charges and would be bringing back proposals

to the Committee for an increase in charges at a future meeting. He thanked both John Fogarty and Sarah Johnston for their hard work in pulling the budget together in such an easy to digest format, which was open and transparent and honest to the public and also thanked officers for managing much of the reduction in the back office having to make some difficult decisions.

The Transport Committee unanimously agreed the following recommendations including a revised version of Appendix C that was tabled at the meeting and as appended to these minutes: -

RESOLVED that the Transport Committee: -

- a) requests Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to approve 2019/20 operating grants for both public transport and Mersey Tunnels operating activities as detailed in section 4 of the report;
- b) approves the fare/ price increases included within the report and, subject to approval, seek that the financial implications of these fare increases are included within the draft budget for 2019/20; and
- c) approves the Capital Programme as detailed in Section 4 of the report.

89. **Quarterly Bus Update**

The Committee considered a report presented by Laura Needham (Bus Strategy Programme Manager) relating to the Third Quarter of 2018/19 with regard to achievements of the LCR Bus Alliance, the latest progress on improving the procurement management and quality of supported services through a series of reforms, progress on developing the commitment of the LCR Devolution Deal in respect of improving bus services and other key initiatives delivered to improve the bus offer across the region.

Members asked questions and commented on the following relating to the Quarterly Bus Update: -

- The 153 bus that runs through Eccleston in St Helen's that is not picking up anyone when it goes into the bus station having waited for 10 minutes;
- Were officers aware of the issues relating to Avon and the financial concerns and why wasn't anything done to support or assist Avon;

- Do the Bus and Legal Teams referred to in paragraph 3.4.1 of the report, address the social value concerns when agreeing contracts for the supported bus services;
- Can any assurances be given that consultation with passengers and local residents will take place in advance while the Bus Rerouting Strategy is being planned and implemented;
- The Key Route Network (KRN) is not mainly used by buses, but yet the Bus Network Performance Survey Team is due to undertake surveys on stops and shelters across the KRN and roads, why is this;
- Would like to see more social impact analysis information included in reports in future; and
- There needs to be more consultation and information sharing with passengers, too many times things are done retrospectively, for example, Arriva changed its bus schedule for the No. 9 bus which affects NHS staff including nurses. There was no consultation, no information, no notices or timetable changes on the bus shelters.

Laura Needham informed the Committee that she didn't have responses for all the questions asked and would be happy to provide responses in writing to the Committee following the meeting. She stated that in relation to the Bus Rerouting Strategy that it was led by Liverpool City Council and that a consultative forum had been arranged and letters have been sent to local residents. She also commented that in relation to the KRN that it was being used due to it being suggested in the passenger survey and was being used as part of the trial.

Frank Rogers informed the Committee that Merseytravel had to be incredibly careful about what is said and done with bus operators and that Merseytravel couldn't pre-determine what would happen with Avon and then take action as Merseytravel could be liable and action could be taken against Merseytravel. He further stated that the team did everything they could to re-instate services in light of the financial position of the organisation, but it was not for Merseytravel to get involved in another organisation to figure out the outcome. He commented that Merseytravel were looking to increase the services and promote the use of the bus for young people, by increasing quality control standards and making them think of the use of the bus, but it does not yet include social value in terms of the service.

Steve Foulkes (Finance and Organisational Development Lead) informed the Committee that Merseytravel did well to reinstate bus

services as best as possible given the financial circumstances to the organisation, but consideration needed to be given to the ripple effects of bus services, for example, housing estates and housing offers where there are no bus services, which could have a negative impact on communities.

The Chair, Councillor Robinson informed the Committee that things are done through proper consultation, but there are elements that are still subject to planning applications. People don't just get on the bus for nothing, they have a purpose, whether it is to get to work, or go shopping and do things, but it is about the understanding of what's going on and how to provide the service to match it. He stated that he was a bit worried about changes to routes and services without consultation or information and that he would bring it to the attention of the Bus Alliance which was part of their agreement.

90. **Public Question Time**

The Committee received four questions from Mr Andrew Wennell and Mr Mark Magill:

Mr Wennell's questions: -

Question 1

Back in 2018 once the upgrade work to Lime Street was completed we would be having 3 new train routes. But it's now January 2019 and still no new routes have materialised. When are we going to see the 3 new routes from Liverpool Lime Street commence?

Question 2

We have various express bus routes running from Liverpool X1, X2, X3, X5 & X8. Which are all good bus routes to get to places quicker. But only the X2 & X8 run 7 days a week. The others only run Monday to Saturday. So why are places like Kirkby, Widnes and Runcorn left with the slower bus routes on a Sunday?

The Chair thanked Mr Wennell for submitting his questions and for attending the meeting and informed him that a formal response would be provided within 10 working days.

Mr Magill's questions: -

Question 1

What is the nature of Merseytravel's involvement in the proposed bus hub development at Old Haymarket? Is it purely advisory in terms of questions about bus traffic or is the relationship deeper?

Question 2

In the planning documents, the Council estimates that circa 1,700 buses per day will use the facility, with 120 using it an hour in peak. Does Merseytravel have any specialist knowledge on how this amount of buses can safely and efficiently use the facility?

The Chair thanked Mr Magill for submitting his questions and for attending the meeting and informed him that a formal response would be provided within 10 working days.

91. **Petitions and Statements**

No petitions or statements were submitted for this meeting.

92. **Any Other Urgent Business Approved by the Chair**

There was no other urgent business.

CHAIR