

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

To: The Chair and Members of the Transport Committee

Meeting: 10 October 2019

Authority/Authorities Affected: All

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: No

REPORT OF THE SENIOR HEAD OF SERVICE OPERATIONS

MERSEY TUNNELS LONG TERM OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out a draft Mersey Tunnels Long Term Operations and Maintenance Strategy for consideration and endorsement by members of the Transport Committee, ahead of its consideration and approval by the Combined Authority at its meeting on 1 November 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. It is recommended that the Transport Committee:

- (a) considers and endorses the Mersey Tunnels Long Term Operations and Maintenance Strategy, Appendix One to this report, which sets out a number of short, medium and long term actions needed to secure the effective and sustainable management of the Mersey Tunnels; and
- (b) agrees that the draft Strategy is presented to the Combined Authority for consideration and formal approval at its next meeting on 1 November 2019.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Mersey road tunnels, Queensway and Kingsway, are owned by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and operated and maintained by Merseytravel. As they were built as a joint venture by the Borough of Birkenhead and the City of Liverpool, their upkeep and maintenance remains outside of the national highway network, and is governed by the County of Merseyside Act 1980 (as amended by the Mersey Tunnels Act 2004).
- 3.2 To ensure that the Mersey Tunnels remain a sustainable and efficient asset to help support and grow the local and wider economy, a robust long-term strategy is required. By reviewing Mersey crossing demand, including upcoming developments across the city region, asset management considerations, the impacts of future technology, and various environmental factors, this Strategy seeks

to establish a set of practical responses, and from these a number of short, medium and long term actions to be undertaken in order to plan and manage the tunnels to meet future requirements. The adopted Strategy will be regularly reviewed, and updated as necessary.

- 3.3 Transport plays a key role in achieving strong and sustainable economic growth by connecting people and businesses to opportunities, reducing congestion and increasing economic productivity. Ensuring that our communities are well connected is essential for the quality of life and economy of the city region. The Mersey Tunnels make a significant contribution to these goals, providing the only direct vehicular links across the lower Mersey for public, private and commercial vehicles between Liverpool and Wirral. They are a safe and reliable means of crossing the river, underpinned by significant infrastructure works and robust maintenance regimes.
- 3.4 The Mersey Tunnels are major thoroughfares; over 27.5 million vehicles travelled through them during 2018/19. They are also important bus corridors for all cross river bus services, used by over 60 buses an hour during the daytime, which further highlights the vital role the tunnels play in ensuring that people can conveniently travel from one side of the river to the other.
- 3.5 They form part of a complex estate of approach roads, entry/exit points, bridges and gantries, all of which are central to the efficient operation of the tunnels. The Strategy considers a whole range of maintenance interventions and improvements, from the operational assets such as the ventilation systems, to toll collection systems and the impact of automation (e.g. electric or hydrogen propelled vehicles), to consider how best the tunnels can continue to keep the city region connected.
- 3.6 A number of actions have been identified as central to the delivery of the Strategy, each accompanied by a number of risks and blockages, which will need to be considered as the detail for each action is determined. The action plan is accompanied by an indicative Medium to Long Term Capital Investment plan.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Financial

4.1.1 There are no direct implications or costs associated with the development of the Strategy itself. The Strategy sets out the legislative background for tolling, insofar as the Mersey Tunnels Act 2004 authorises toll income to be used for, in priority order:

- a) Managing, operating and maintaining the tunnels
- b) Debt repayment
- c) Contributing to a reserve and renewals fund
- d) Supporting the Mersey Ferries
- e) Supporting transport projects in general.

4.1.2 In terms of ensuring targeted maintenance to prolong the lifespan of the tunnels, an indicative 10 year capital programme is set out in the Strategy. Given their age, the maintenance requirements will become more substantial over time. Should funding

requirements exceed that provided through tolling, funding may be required from the Combined Authority's Strategic Investment Fund, and as such would follow the process set out in the Assurance Framework.

4.2. Human Resources

There are no direct implications or costs associated with the development of the Strategy, as it has been developed utilising existing staff resources. There may be staffing implications in the future but such matters will be considered in more detail and subject to a separate report.

4.3. Physical Assets

The Mersey Tunnels are ageing but vitally important physical assets owned by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The draft Mersey Tunnels Long Term Operations and Maintenance Strategy clearly articulates why, and how, these assets must be maintained in order to meet cross river travel demand.

4.4. Information Technology

The Strategy recognises that effective information and communication systems are important elements of the tunnels' operations, both for the customer and in terms of managing the efficient operation and maintenance of the tunnels. The need to maintain and develop these systems is fully addressed within the Strategy.

5. **RISKS AND MITIGATION**

The Strategy identifies the significant pressures on the Mersey Tunnels, by considering demands led by the Liverpool City Region's growth; demographic changes; service level expectations (in terms of throughput, safety and efficiency); environmental sustainability; future resilience; and the condition of the existing assets. A risk based approach has therefore been taken in identifying critical intervention works to ensure the continued, safe operation of the tunnels.

6. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

No Equality implications have been identified. Equality Analysis will be completed as part of any commissioning process, ensuring any negative impacts are fully mitigated.

7. **PRIVACY IMPLICATIONS**

None at this stage.

8. **COMMUNICATION ISSUES**

There are clear positive messages in terms of the commitment to maintain and develop the tunnels to ensure the river is not a barrier to the effective movement of

people and goods across the city region, and in supporting business growth and ease of movement. As the action plan is delivered, it will have a potentially significant impact on stakeholders thereby requiring specific communications.

9. CONCLUSION

The Mersey Tunnels Long Term Operations and Maintenance Strategy sets out a robust long term approach to ensuring the tunnels remain a sustainable and efficient asset to support and grow the local and wider economy.

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Appendices:

Appendix One – Mersey Tunnels Long term Operations and Maintenance Strategy

Background Documents: