

**Transport Committee**

**16 January 2020**

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

Councillors Cleary, Councillor S Foulkes, H Howard,  
A Jones, Killen, Councillor A Lavelle,  
Councillor M O'Mara MBE, Councillor K McGlashan,  
Councillor P McKinley, Mooney, Councillor N Nicholas,  
Councillor G Philbin, Councillor J Stockton,  
Councillor H Thompson, Uddin, Councillor J Williams,  
Wiseman and Councillor F Wynn

**Also Attended**

Councillors

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Apologies for absence were submitted by  
Councillor J Dodd, Councillor P Hayes and Councillor C Rowe

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55. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rowe,  
Hayes and Dodd.

56. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair notified the Committee of the sad passing of  
Councillor Chris Blakeley of Wirral Council. Councillor Blakeley  
had been a former member of the Merseytravel Integrated  
Transport Authority and he was a passionate member of the  
Rail Services Committee. Members held a minutes silence in  
tribute to Councillor Blakeley.

The arrival of the first train of the new rolling stock fleet at  
Kirkdale Depot was announced with The Chair in attendance,  
noting that the new train looked fantastic.

It was explained that an additional item was to be considered  
under 'Any Other Urgent Business' at today's Committee  
meeting. The report in question was the Merseytravel Quarter  
Two Financial Monitoring report which ordinarily would have  
been considered at the December 2019 scheduled meeting.

This meeting had to be cancelled due to the snap General Election. He added that the report had accidentally been omitted from the agenda papers due to an administrative error.

57. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received for this meeting.

58. **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

59. **Mersey Tunnels Tolls 2020/21**

Gary Evans, Assistant Director for Customer Delivery presented a report on the Mersey Tunnel Tolls for 2020/21. The report outlined the legal procedure for annually revising the tunnel toll, summarised how the current toll has been agreed and made proposals for the level of tolls payable for April 2020 for the next financial year.

The Committee heard that the proposal was for toll levels to remain the same for 2020/21 and the Liverpool City Region (LCR) members discount for tolls would continue. The LCR members discount set the tunnel toll at £1 for eligible users and it was reported that more than half of the journeys through the tunnel were entitled to that discount.

Councillor Foulkes commended Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram on consolidating the pledge he made to introduce the £1 tunnel toll. Furthermore, it was suggested that the discounted toll had been well received by residents across the LCR who were now able to travel through the tunnel at a lower cost. It was acknowledged that the tunnel was unlikely to ever be free unless it was funded through tax centrally with intervention from Central Government. The ongoing maintenance costs were necessary to ensure the tunnels were in good condition and useable and the economic impact of losing the tunnels was discussed. It was hoped that moving forward, more members of the public could be encouraged to use public transport and more imaginative ways of tolling less polluting vehicles could be explored. Councillor Foulkes commended officers on the readability of the report and its scope for flexibility whilst outlining key benefits like emergency vehicle use of the tunnels and free travel on Christmas Day.

Councillor Cleary asked for further detail on the figures presented in section 3.14 of the report which presented a

historical comparison between tolls, rail and bus charges. He suggested that the discounted toll now showed a 23% reduction in charges compared to rail which had seen a 17% increase and suggested that the discount of the tunnel must have led to an increase in the number of private vehicles using the tunnels. He queried what work had been undertaken to determine whether the reduction in tolls had led to an increase in vehicles.

Gary Evans explained that although no independent assessments had been carried out, through Officer's experience it was felt that the setting of toll levels in multiples of 10pence resulted in a negligible impact on traffic usage. Wider economic issues as opposed to local decision making seemed to have a more significant effect on personal car use such as motoring costs, insurance, car parking. In terms of monitoring the levels of emission produced by vehicles moving through the tunnels, the organisation did capture and assess this information as it was used to adjust the ventilators in the tunnels. The information collected suggested that emissions were reducing year on year through the tunnels because of motorists using more modern vehicles and greener technology.

Councillor Cleary suggested that lowering the tunnel toll would obviously generate more traffic, which led to more road casualties and more Co2 emissions, which led to poorer air quality, and for those reasons he was unable to support the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Foulkes responded to suggest that any votes against the recommendations should be substantiated with an alternative suggestion on tunnel tolls that stated a revised tunnel toll and figure for the number of cars that would be acceptable to travel through the tunnel.

Councillor Howard stated he thought it was an excellent report that was clear and informative. He also stated he was pleased there was not an annual charge for fast tag users like those that they had on other toll roads like the M6. He mirrored Councillor Foulkes comment on the tunnel being tolled until there was an intervention from central government.

In relation to the recommendations, Councillor Howard moved a motion to add the following wording to the recommendation d:

'- chair and vice chair of the LCRCA Transport Committee'

The **motion** was seconded by Councillor Foulkes and **resolved accordingly**.

The Committee voted on whether or not to support the recommendations outlined in the report with 18 voting for and 1 voting against.

Councillor Williams suggested that there would be work done moving forward to address climate change and that raising the cost of the tunnel tolls would have a negative effect on low paid people trying to get to work.

Councillor Robinson supported the recommendations in the report and stated that the fast tag discount for local residents was the realisation of an electoral promise that benefited many people in the city region. The allowance of emergency vehicles through the tunnel and free travel on Christmas day were also commended and he suggested that given the challenges in the local economy, freezing the tunnel tolls was the right thing to do. Furthermore, he proposed that the real problem with the tunnel tolls was the fare charged to go through the tunnel on public transport and that this needed to be addressed as he felt that it was currently unjustifiable.

**RESOLVED** that: -

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) the level of ‘authorised tolls’ for the Mersey Tunnels as determined by the County of Merseyside Act 1980 (as amended by the Mersey Tunnels Act 2004) with details on calculation methods explained in section 3 of this report;
- (iii) the Transport Committee recommend that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) implement a schedule of tolls contained in Table 1 below with effect from Wednesday 1 April 2020 :-

<b>Vehicle Class</b>	<b>Authorised Toll 2020/21 (November RPI)</b>	<b>2020/21 Cash Toll</b>	<b>2020/21 Fast Tag Toll – LCR Resident*</b>	<b>2020/21 Fast Tag Toll – Non LCR Resident</b>
1	£2.10	£1.80	£1.00	£1.80
2	£4.20	£3.60	£2.40	£2.40
3	£6.30	£5.40	£3.60	£3.60
4	£8.40	£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; and

- (iv) the LCRCA allocate up to £500k as per paragraph 3.20 and to instruct officers to explore the opportunities of implementing toll discounts as a trial with the specific aim to encourage cross river public transport use, with the final approval of any specific trial discount be delegated to the Director General, Merseytravel in consultation with the LCRCA Treasurer, Monitoring Officer and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Transport Committee be recommended.

60. **Merseytravel Budget Setting Report 2020/21**

John Fogarty, Director of Corporate Resources, presented the Merseytravel Budget Setting Report for 2020/21, which would be presented at the LCRCA the following week for approval alongside the recommendations made by the Transport Committee on the Mersey Tunnel Tolls 2020/21.

It was explained that the report proposed to increase the Transport Levy by £2million in line with the increase in RPI. The report outlined some of the major transport plans for the Combined Authority such as Rolling Stock and other transport infrastructure schemes that were being developed into a robust pipeline for further rounds of government funding.

Alongside new schemes, the budget report also covered a £30 million investment in walking and cycling under its traditional transport remit. The budget also allowed for further consideration of the options available to the Metro Mayor using devolved bus powers to ensure that bus provided the best possible social benefit to residents of the LCR.

Regarding risk, the report outlined the Merseyrail Network, increase in PWLB interest rates and the reduction in Special Rail Grant as the most significant. Taking these risks into account, the settlement in the budget would allow Merseytravel to continue to operate all of its front-facing services including the current bus network.

Councillor Foulkes stated that this proposal was the first rise in the Transport Levy since 2012 and that an inflationary increase was appropriate. The budget would be tighter and harder to sustain and it was suggested that the LCRCA engage again with Central Government to review the Special Rail Grant.

The Chair thanked the officers for their work on the budget and agreed the raise in the transport levy was modest given the previous years of cuts to the levy and district councils alike. It was acknowledged that the levy was down a third from the rate set in 2010 and it was a testament to the teams in Merseytravel and the LCRCA that they were still able to deliver projects and services.

Councillor Cleary highlighted section 4.14 of the report which discussed pensions and acknowledged the role of the Pensions Committee in fully funding a scheme that was beneficial to both Local Authorities and the LCRCA.

A motion was put forward by the Chair of the Transport Committee to include the following recommendation in paragraph 2.1 of the report, seconded by Councillor Gordon Friel: -

- (a) the Transport Committee note that the 2019 Conservative Manifesto states that they will give City Regions the funding to upgrade their bus and train services to make them as good as London's and in light of this statement, recommends that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority continues to lobby and pursue the Conservative government to make good on their pledge and deliver a significant funding package to the Liverpool City Region to do so.

Councillor Jones wished to show his full support for the motion and offered his assistance with lobbying central government.

Councillor Friel noted that a rail opportunity that was accessible was Burscough Curve which could apply for some funding if it became available as long as the city region wasn't excluded from any opportunities.

The Motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED** that the Transport Committee agree the amended recommendations as follows:

- (i) request the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority approve the 2020/21 operating grants for both public transport and Mersey Tunnels operating activities as detailed in section 4 of the report;
- (ii) the fare/price increases included within this report are considered and approved and that the financial

implications of these fare increases be included within the draft budget for 2020/21;

- (iii) the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority be requested to approve the capital programme as detailed in section 4 of the report; and
- (iv) the Transport Committee note that the 2019 Conservative Manifesto states that they will give City Regions the funding to upgrade their bus and train services to make them as good as London's and in light of this statement, recommends that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority continues to lobby and pursue the Conservative government to make good on their pledge and deliver a significant funding package to the Liverpool City Region to do so.

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

As previously referenced under Chair's announcements, the Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson, reported that there was an item of urgent business to be considered. The report relating to Quarter 2 Performance was not included on the agenda for the meeting in error. The consideration of this item was deemed by the Chair, to be an urgent item, as the Committee were required to consider the report at this meeting as it had been deferred in December 2019.

62. **Merseytravel Quarter Two Financial Monitoring Report**

Sarah Johnston, Assistant Director for Finance presented the Merseytravel Quarter Two Financial Monitoring report, which detailed revenue and capital spend for the period ending September 2019.

The first section of the report detailed the revenue budget for 2019-20 which featured tables depicting the budget and the spend to date and the forecast outturn. It was noted that both tables showed a favourable variance, however the details in 3.3. and 3.5 identified that this clearly related to the Rolling Stock and the Merseytravel Budget had actually gotten tighter.

The second section of the report depicted the capital programme with members noting that although expenditure was low, a significant spend was expected by the end of the year.

The Committee heard that there was a requirement to use reserves due to the reduction in Special Rail Grant but that this had lessened from the previous year.

**RESOLVED** that: -

- (i) Merseytravel's revenue position and performance at the end of quarter two be noted; and
- (ii) Merseytravel's capital position at the end of quarter two be noted.

63. **Quarterly Bus Update**

Laura Needham, Bus Strategy Project Manager presented the Quarterly Bus Update with particular focus on the Green Routes Project which aimed to deliver transformational bus priority measures to the city region.

The report also provided details on the ITS trial which was taking place on the 10 route to improve reliability and journey times for passengers.

It was noted that a Bus Reform Outline Business Case was currently being developed with a report being submitted to the LCRCA on the 28 February 2020.

TravelSafe schemes also featured in the report including Operation Mosca and some work undertaken on stops and shelters.

Councillor Stockton thanked officers for the positive and comprehensive report noting that with regard to electronic ticketing, the real time information had been incredible with 95% accuracy showing great progress. A query was raised regarding how successful the last Operation Mosca had been on 13 December 2019 as previous outings had proven very effective.

Laura explained that each Operation Mosca was successful in showing people who park inconsiderately the error of their ways.

Councillor Nicholas thanked officers for the report and congratulated the Bus Alliance on winning the Improvement in Bus Award in 2019. With regard to RTI screens, Councillor Nicholas asked if there were plans to install them anywhere else in the city region.

Gary Evans, Assistant Director for Customer Delivery explained that the RTI screens were originally being placed in bus stations to ensure the asset was protected and also because those areas have the highest footfall. Once the screens were fitted in Liverpool One further work could be undertaken to assess how to communicate with communities using apps and RIT screens further afield.

The Chair noted that he felt the technology was very reliable and he had used the RTI info on an app recently to get the bus form Lord Street instead of using alternative means of transport. It was explained that the RTI gave passengers the confidence they needed to use bus services safe in the knowledge that a bus was definitely coming. The Chair anticipated the devolution report due in February which could provide new opportunities for the city region.

**RESOLVED** - That the contents of the report be noted.

64. **Long Term Rail Strategy Update**

Tony Killen, Rail Development Advisor (Stations) provided the Committee with an update on the Long Term Rail Strategy that was originally published in 2004.

The arrival of the first Rolling Stock train was announced alongside other improvements like new depots and apprenticeships as part of the Rolling Stock Programme.

The presentation focused on accessibility as well as the aesthetic of the new trains which were bright and airy to ensure they were welcoming to the public.

It was noted that the new train was the first to arrive in the city region with a rolling programme for the rest of the trains to be brought into service once they were tested and the staff were trained. There was also power upgrades, signalling and platform lengthening to be undertaken with Network Rail

Further to the Rolling Stock Programme, work had been undertaken on Halton Curve to provide regular services as well as the rebuilding of Newton-le-Willows station. A station had also been opened at Maghull North and car parking facilities were also improving in the city region to encourage people onto public transport using park and ride. Six stations had been identified as suitable for car park extensions.

A key development identified in the report was the current plans for Liverpool Central Station. The station was being expanded to increase capacity as it was the hub of the Merseyrail Network and it was hoped that the network could reach out to Skelmersdale, Preston and Wrexham.

The report identified potential new stations, particularly the prospect of a station in the Baltic Triangle. The LCRCA was also committed to making stations more accessible using 'Access for All' funding. A study was being developed on how the public can access John Lennon Airport and how freight moves on the rail network.

Looking toward the future, Tony Killen reported that the Liverpool city region needed to remain plugged into the HS2 network and take part in the Northern Power House cross-country improvements from Newcastle to the east coast.

Councillor Williams highlighted accessibility as a serious issue for the travelling public and commended the new trains as a significant improvement for people with disabilities wishing to travel around the city region. The councillors thanked previous members of the Transport Committee for their work on the interior of the new trains and their focus on accessibility. The Chair added that the new layout of the trains allowed for passengers in wheelchairs to travel together side by side which was not possible on the current network. Councillor Nicholas praised the innovative accessibility of the new rolling stock saying that it would be life changing for disabled people across the city region.

Councillor Friel supported the schemes in the Long Term Rail Strategy and commended the Rail team and the Rolling Stock team on their hard work. He reported that Central Station had one of the heaviest footfalls on a platform outside of London and would benefit from the expansion outlined in the Strategy.

Councillor Stockton queried how popular Halton Curve station was since it had been reinstated and Tony Killen endeavoured to provide him with that information, noting that when works were being completed on the Chester Line it had worked well as a station and provided extra connectivity.

The Committee discussed the importance of accessibility improvements to Railway Stations including installing drop curbs and maintaining lifts. Tony Killen advised that works were being undertaken on Prescott Station and that further design work was being prepared for five other stations in case further funding became available.

Councillor Jones requested further information about the Skelmersdale link and was assured that Merseytravel were currently making a contribution to the Lancashire County Council Grip 3 Study. The study would provide preferred options that could then be costed. The Chair reiterated that the next station to be developed by the LCRCA would be Headbolt Lane which would take the Merseyrail network beyond Kirkby.

The Chair noted that the Long Term Rail Strategy was due to be delivered over 30 years and that the progress that had been made so far was phenomenal.

**RESOLVED** - That the report be noted and the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy be supported.

65. **Liverpool City Region Green Sustainable Transport Corridors Project - Update**

Tom Foulkes, Project Officer – Sustainable Urban Development provided an update on the Liverpool City Region Green Sustainable Transport Corridors project, which had previously been presented to the Board when the project had been successful in a bid to enhance green infrastructure in 2019.

The report provided a detailed update on the delivery of the ten work packages in the project with seven of the ten packages in delivery and three stalled due to funding or legal issues. It was hoped that there would be litigation in place and a resolution reached on the legal issues by February 2020.

Councillor Foulkes queried the route of work programme seven which used funding originally attributed to Halton Borough Council. It was explained that although the route was not yet finalised, it would link in with the promenade improvements in Birkenhead using Tower Road.

Councillor Williams thanked officers for the report which highlighted the importance of cycle ways and opening up green space to all service users including runners and walkers. A concern around unsegregated bridleways and cycle paths was identified as potentially hazardous.

Regarding ERDF funding, Councillor Stockton queried if there would be similar funding available after Britain left the European Union. Barbara Wade, Local Transport Plan Development Manager suggested that Government had

pledged to maintain the £8.5million ERDF funding but that the absence of EU funding was something that the policy department of the LCRCA was cognisant of in discussions with government.

Councillor Cleary queried the issue of land ownership for work package six and if there was a timescale for reaching a resolution. It was confirmed that the team were hopefully a few weeks away from resolving the issue.

Councillor Nicholas thanked officers for the report and highlighted walking and cycling as key features of a healthy lifestyle and clean environment.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (i) the progress on the delivery of the Liverpool City Region Green Sustainable Transport Corridors Project be noted; and
- (ii) annual updates on delivery of the Liverpool City Region Green Sustainable Transport Corridors project be requested until January 2022.

66. **Public Question Time**

No valid public questions were received for this meeting.

67. **Petitions and Statements**

No petitions or statements were received for this meeting.