

MTUA Press Release - Meetings on Thursday and Friday on Mersey Tunnels Tolls - Tunnel Users views

The Transport Committee (formerly known as 'Merseytravel' committee) are having their annual budget meeting on Thursday (1st) and the Liverpool City Region are having their budget meeting the next day (2nd). As well as the budget they are to discuss proposals that cash tolls for the coming year go up (cars from £1.70 to £1.80). Tag tolls would stay the same as they are now (cars £1.20) except that between 7pm and 7am Monday to Saturday and all day Sunday there would be a reduction in the tag tolls (cars would be £1.00).

The budget report going to the Authority says (para 5.4.6) that their aim is "to increase overall revenues from the Tunnels."

The Mersey Tunnels Users Association (MTUA) have written to the Council leaders asking that the members of the Authority do not approve the cash tolls increase. They say that the Authority should stop the profit taking and make a substantial reduction in all Tunnels tolls, including the cash tolls.

Dave Loudon, chair of the MTUA said "It is now three years since the politicians said that they would stop the profit-taking and "drive down the Tunnels tolls costs". Since then we have seen not a single penny come off the cash tolls and they are now planning to actually increase them. If the politicians rubber stamp these proposals, then the authority will this year be making over £12 million profit from Tunnel users."

The MTUA accuse the politicians of "taking from the many to benefit the few". They say that since the law was changed in 2004, Merseytravel and the Authority have been building up massive reserves that the public will not be aware of. "As at March 2017, Merseytravel and the Authority had built up reserves of over £200 million. We believe that it is wrong that they are building up reserves, partly at the expense of users of the Tunnels with the damage that this does to the local economy. Everyone else is tightening their belts, but the Authority is going on a spending spree."

"It seems that one of the main items the reserves and tolls are to be spent on is replacing the Merseyrail train fleet. We contacted the Office of the Rail and Road Regulator to see how usual it was for a local authority to be buying trains. We were told by the Regulator that "We are not aware of any other cases where local authorities have purchased trains." The usual system is that trains are bought by Rolling stock leasing companies, who rent them out to the train operator. It seems that we have had to suffer so that the Authority can have its own train set. The cost of this is over £400 million, which is even worse than the £60 million that they spent on the abandoned trams scheme."

The MTUA say that the tolls situation in our area is now far worse than a year ago following the closure last October of the previously free crossing between Runcorn and Widnes and the opening of the tolled 'Mersey Gateway' bridge. They point out that last May in his Mayoral election Manifesto, Steve Rotherham said that we are "The only City Region in Europe where in the future all cross-river traffic movements will be subject to expensive tolls." Dave Loudon says "We do not want more of these 'expensive' tolls and we urge everyone to sign the ['Scrap Mersey Tolls' petition at 38 degrees](#)

"We want all of the tolls on road crossings of the Mersey removed, so that like almost all of the rest of the UK, the roads and river crossings of the Mersey are free to use. Families, friends and businesses should not be divided by the barrier of tolls."

Ends

Copy of doc that MTUA sent to members (the doc also covers a lot of issues that are not mentioned in the press release for space reasons)

Tolls report going to Transport Cttee on Thursday

Budget report (inc tolls) going to Authority on Friday

Mayor's election manifesto (there are various pages where tolls are mentioned, "The only City Region in Europe where in the future all cross-river traffic movements will be subject to expensive tolls" is on page 21