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Dear John

TOLLED BRIDGES REVIEW PHASE TWO CONSULTATION PAPER

Thank you for sending me a copy of the Tolled Bridges Review consultation paper, I am attaching ATCO (Scotland)'s response and the respondent information form,

Yours sincerely

David Taylor

David Taylor
ATCO (Scotland) Chair

Enclosed

ATCO RESPONSE TO TOLLED BRIDGES REVIEW PHASE TWO CONSULTATION PAPER

Exemptions for Disabled Drivers/Blue Badge Holders/Emergency Vehicles

QUESTION 1 - Do you think that the system for verifying Blue Badge exemptions should be changed? If so, can you suggest what these changes should be?

ATCO support MACS view for continual and improving procedures to allow Blue Badge holders to benefit from exemptions from tolls.

ATCO feel that Blue Badge holders having to pre-register before gaining an exemption inhibits many from claiming to avoid the embarrassment of causing a delay. However ATCO recognise the need to ensure that some form of verification is required to avoid abuse of the system. ATCO therefore recommend that the Scottish Executive consider a separate 'Toll Card' to be issued by the local authority on a similar basis to the current clock system as used in England & Wales.

QUESTION 2 - Do you consider that the exemptions for emergency service vehicles should remain limited to the Ambulance, Fire and Police Services, or should we consider extending this to cover other key services?

ATCO believe that the current exceptions should remain the same.

QUESTION 3 - Vehicles used by bridge authorities to respond to breakdowns on each bridge are exempt. Do you see a case for extending exemptions to the AA, RAC or other commercial breakdown services responding to breakdowns on the road network other than where this is the responsibility of the bridge authorities?

If there is to be an extension to all commercial breakdown services it must be done in a fair and transparent way to all commercial breakdown operators.

QUESTION 4 - Should public transport vehicles and multiple occupancy vehicles be considered for exemption from bridge tolls?

ATCO believe that public transport vehicles (vehicles above 9 seats) should be exempt from tolls. Other multiple occupancy vehicles should be subject to discounts rather than full exceptions dependant on local circumstances.

Discount Schemes

QUESTION 5 - Should tolled bridges offer multiple crossing discount vouchers to all bridge users, or particular classes of users such as buses or multiple occupancy vehicles? If so, why should this be?

ATCO believe public transport vehicles should be fully exempt from all tolls, but discounts should be available to multiple occupancy vehicles e.g. car sharing schemes.

It is not considered that discount should be offered to all such as single occupancy car users.

Classification of Vehicles

QUESTION 6 - What are your views on a common vehicle classification system for levying tolls at all Scotland's tolled bridges?

ATCO believe that it is important that public transport is not hindered by levying tolls on the operators therefore any common vehicle classification should reflect this.

Reducing Traffic and Congestion on Tolled Bridges

QUESTION 7 - Should we encourage modal shift from single occupancy cars to public transport and multiple occupancy vehicles on all tolled bridges? If so, how might this be achieved?

ATCO would support a system that would penalise single occupancy cars in favour of public transport. However ATCO is concerned that a revised pricing structure that benefits multiple over single occupancy can only be achieved by a considerable investment in unproven technology.

QUESTION 8 - Do you think that raising tolls at peak times would result in less congestion at those times?

ATCO believe peak price differentiation could work in theory to reduce congestion but there are concerns in practice that adopting the policy. ATCO would favour other methods of reducing congestion such as P & R services.

Tolls Reflecting Cost of Wear and Tear

QUESTION 9 - Should tolls reflect the impacts of different vehicle types on the need for maintenance, repair and strengthening programmes? If so, do you have suggestions for how this might be done?

ATCO believe that it is important that levying tolls on public transport operators does not hinder them. As buses impact would be greater than cars then it can be argued that tolls should reflect the impacts of different vehicle types, however this would favour the car user and therefore not reduce the long-term aim to reduce overall capacity and therefore congestion.

Procedure for Changing Tolls or Charges

QUESTION 10 - Do you think the current process involving Public Local Inquiries (PLIs) is appropriate for making changes to tolls or charges to meet the costs of managing, maintaining and operating a bridge?

ATCO believe this is the correct process

QUESTION 11 - Do you consider that final approval by Scottish Ministers is an essential safeguard for toll/charge payers or do you think the final decision is a matter for the management authority for the bridge?

ATCO believe the final approval should lie with the Scottish Ministers.

QUESTION 12 - Do you consider all tolls should be subject to increases linked to an inflation index?

ATCO believe that all tolls should be subject to a standard inflationary increase but in doing so operators should not be hindered in favour of other private transport. If tolls are levied on public transport operators to alleviate congestion ATCO believe that a different inflationary index should be adopted.

Executive/Transport Agency

QUESTION 13 - What advantages and disadvantages do you see if any or all of the tolled bridges were to be managed by the Scottish Executive or the national transport agency?

ATCO believe that management of the tolled bridges is a national issue and therefore should be handled nationally. However many of the issues identified are particular to local circumstances. It is therefore felt that issues can have important bearing on local transport strategies. ATCO therefore conclude that policy and setting of tolls should be set nationally but management of tolled bridges can be on a local basis through the appropriate Regional Transport Partnerships or Joint Boards.

Regional Transport Partnerships

QUESTION 14 - Should we consider transferring some or all of the powers and functions of current bridge authorities to Regional Transport Partnerships in future?

As question 13

QUESTION 15 - As the Erskine Bridge functions both as a key national and strategic link for the West of Scotland as well as an important local link for communities north and south of the River Clyde, do you see any argument for de-trunking it so that it could become the responsibility of the RTP for the West of Scotland?

As question 13

Joint Board (FETA Model)

QUESTION 16 - Do you have any views on the advantages or disadvantages of the FETA model, for any or all of the bridges?

As question 13

Joint Board (TRBJB)

QUESTION 17 - Do you have any views on the advantages or disadvantages of the TRBJB model, for any or all of the bridges?

As question 13

Single Tolled Bridges Authority

QUESTION 18 - Do you think there would be any merit in having a single body responsible for operating and managing all tolled bridges in Scotland?

There are local circumstances that affect each bridge, however ATCO believe that the new Transport Agency is in the best place to be a single body responsible for setting the policy on all tolled bridges in Scotland while the Joint Boards or RTP's are in a more suitable placed for managing them.

QUESTION 19 - If you think all bridges should be run by one body what form, powers and functions should this body have?

N/A

QUESTION 20 - Are there any other management options that you would like to suggest?

None