



# Tyne & Wear Passenger Transport Authority

Minutes of the 82nd meeting of the PTA TYNE TUNNEL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE  
12TH JUNE 1997  
(10.30 a.m. – 11.21 a.m.)

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## PRESENT:

Councillor P.V. Conaty (in the Chair)

Councillors: Hanson, Holt, Moore, Murray, Nugent, Ord, Russell, Wood and Young.

## IN ATTENDANCE

R.H. Warne, J.F. Miller, B. Middleton, P. Hedley, G. McCauley and S. Wilson.

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bate, Bohill, Keating, Marshall and Spring.

### 2. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th April 1997 be confirmed and signed as a correct record, the Tunnel Manager having advised in connection with Min.No.70 that negotiations were currently taking place with Leeds City Council on the overnight use of the Tunnel Washing Vehicle.

### 3. SALVE

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Young who was attending his first meeting of the Committee since being appointed to the Authority by the City of Sunderland and also Henry Warne on his first visit to the Tunnel.

### 4. TOLLS: DISCOUNTS FOR REGULAR USERS

**Submitted:** Report of the Deputy Clerk and Legal Adviser and the Engineer reviewing the possible introduction of discounted tolls for regular users as mooted at the previous meeting.

It was explained that in the interim the opportunity had been taken to raise the possibility of introducing discounts with the Department of Transport who had expressed concerns regarding the effect of any proposals on the projections of traffic flow, income and debt repayment used in support of the recently-agreed application for a tolls increase. In order not to delay consideration of the application, which would be formally submitted once consultations with the five district councils were completed, it was suggested that the subject be dealt with as a separate exercise once the tolls increase had been approved.

While the matter might possibly be more appropriately considered in conjunction with the proposed electronic pre-paid tolling system as the offer of an appropriate discount could assist in successfully marketing the initiative, it was accepted after discussion that the two issues needed to remain discrete but could be pursued in parallel. However, there appeared to be no reason why the ability of the Authority to offer discounts in the future should not be explored further with the Government in the context of previous representations regarding toll charging procedures.

**RESOLVED** – That, as recommended in the circulated Report of the Deputy Clerk and Legal Adviser and the Engineer, no discounts on toll payments be offered to tunnel users in the short term but that lobbying of the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions in line with the Committee's previous response to Government consultations on the streamlining of the toll review process be continued including the possible future introduction of discounts.

5. **REVISION OF BYLAWS**

**RESOLVED** – That it be recommended to the Passenger Transport Authority that the Tunnel Bylaws be revised as proposed in the circulated Report of the Deputy Clerk and Legal Adviser and the Engineer and submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions for confirmation.

6. **BUDGET OUTTURN 1996/1997**

**Submitted:** Report of the Engineer and the Treasurer detailing the outturn position on the Tunnel's budget for the year ended 31st March 1997.

Having been advised that financing charges accounted for 44% of the Tunnel's budget, it was proposed that the Government should again be requested to write off the outstanding debt. However, as it would probably be argued that the amount still owed was insignificant in terms of the total owed by estuarial crossings nationally and therefore required no special treatment, it was suggested by the Engineer that, as the costs of the Tunnel were now being met entirely by its users, the proposal should be put forward in connection with the New Tyne Crossing project as a means of reducing the tolls which would otherwise have to be charged to finance its construction.

**RESOLVED** – That the budget outturn position for 1996/97 as detailed in the circulated Report of the Engineer and the Treasurer be noted and that the case for debt write-off be taken up with the Government in the context of the New Tyne Crossing project.

7. **TOLLS INCOME 1997/1998**

**RESOLVED** – That the circulated joint Report of the Engineer and the Treasurer detailing the likely outturn position on tolls income from usage of the Vehicle Tunnel together with the tabled appendices showing weekly and monthly traffic flows be noted.

8. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 1996/97 AND 1997/98**

**RESOLVED** – That the circulated Report of the Engineer advising of an outturn position of £1,018,000 on the Capital Programme for 1996/97 be noted and that the revised proposals projecting expenditure of £706,000 in 1997/98 be approved.

9. **PERMIT PRE-PAID TOLLING SYSTEM: TENDERS**

**Submitted:** Report of the Engineer advising of the projected timescale for receipt and consideration of tenders in order to complete installation of the system by September 1997 when it was anticipated that the current supply of pre-paid toll tickets would be exhausted.

Given the nature of the technology involved, it was queried whether the timescale was sufficient to allow for adequate testing. It was felt important that the initiative was seen to be successful from its inception and that effective arrangements should be put in place to ensure that it was fully publicised with advantage being taken of any marketing opportunities including off-site sales.

**RESOLVED** – That the matter be considered further at the next meeting.

10. **REVISION OF BREAKDOWN AND ABNORMAL LOAD CHARGES**

**RESOLVED** – That Breakdown and Abnormal Load Charges be revised as proposed in the circulated Report of the Treasurer and the Engineer for implementation at the earliest practicable date and that details thereof be publicised amongst local haulage companies.