

'Smart project' toll to start at RM2
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Motorists will pay RM2 in toll charge to use the Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (Smart) from Sungai Besi to Kuala Lumpur when it opens this year and RM7 by 2030, according to details of the 'secret' concession agreement.

But it is not clear whether the government will set the toll rate at the full amount of RM2 when the road tunnel opens to traffic next month.

The scheduled rate, stipulated in the agreement signed in June 2004, was cited at a press conference today by Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) Youth wing in Kuala Lumpur.

Two pages from the leaked document were distributed to reporters, showing that the toll charge will be increased every five years.

PKR Youth information chief Latheefa Koya, responding to questions, said it is not known if one toll rate will be imposed for all categories of vehicles and if the government will subsidise part of the charge.

Works Minister S Samy Vellu had told Bernama on Feb 11 that the cabinet will decide the toll rate soon.

"These are the rates shown. Tomorrow, maybe Samy will say it's RM1, (as) an election discount. But even if it is RM1, the money is still subsidised by the government using public funds (and paid) to the private company (the concessionaire)," said Latheefa.

"This means the private company won't lose anything..."

Questions for government

According to the 40-year concession agreement between Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel Sdn Bhd and the government, the company expects to generate revenue of RM36.4 million from toll collection in the first year, rising to RM79 million in the fifth year.

The figures are based on the concessionaire's "modest" projection of around 24 million vehicles annually for the first five years. This, in turn, is based on the traffic volume of the less-used dedicated highway linking the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to the Shah Alam Expressway (Kesas).

However, PKR Youth pointed out that the traffic volume projection remains the same between 2022 and 2042 at 40.2 million vehicles annually.

"(If) the traffic volume is stagnant for these 20 years, the toll rate should remain the same," said Latheefa, calling on the government to clarify why an increment has been built in.

Acting youth wing head Shamsul Iskandar interjected: "You can also see from the schedule, that in 2023 the government will have recovered the cost of (construction). We cannot see why in 2025, they intend to increase the charge to RM6."

According to the document, the concessionaire will have obtained RM7.2 billion in cumulative revenue from toll collection by 2042, for a project that cost RM1.9 billion to build.

Status unknown

To a question, Latheefa said she was unable to ascertain if the document in their possession was classified under the Official Secrets Act (OSA).

"There is nothing on the document that indicates that it is an OSA document and we believe it cannot be classified as such because it is a public interest document. Use of the OSA should be limited to military secrets and matters (concerning national security)," she added.

Shamsul said the clandestine way in which public interest documents are handled shows a need for Freedom of Information legislation to be enacted.

Four opposition leaders are currently under investigation for allegedly revealing the contents of 'classified' documents on another highway concession agreement.

Construction of the Smart project started in 2003, with the aim of easing traffic flow and channelling flood water to two retention ponds.

The structure comprises a 4km of double-deck underground motorway to direct traffic from Jalan Sungai Besi to Jalan Sultan Ismail and Jalan Tun Razak.

According to the Smart Tunnel website, the government is financing two-thirds of the project cost, or about RM1.3 billion.

On Feb 10, Drainage and Irrigation Department director-general Keizrul Abdullah said there would be a toll-free period of use in the first month of operations.

Projected toll revenue and traffic volume

| Toll charge | Year | Yearly revenue (RM million) | Projected traffic volume annually |
|-------------|------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| RM2 | 2006 | 34.4 | 18,224,000 |
| | 2007 | 45.6 | 22,780,000 |
| | 2008 | 50.9 | 25,460,000 |
| | 2009 | 56.3 | 28,140,000 |
| RM3 | 2010 | 79.1 | 26,364,500 |
| | 2011 | 84.1 | 28,039,500 |
| | 2012 | 89.1 | 29,714,500 |
| | 2013 | 94.2 | 31,389,500 |
| | 2014 | 99.2 | 33,064,500 |
| RM4 | 2015 | 128.6 | 32,160,000 |
| | 2016 | 134.0 | 33,500,000 |
| | 2017 | 139.4 | 34,840,000 |
| | 2018 | 144.6 | 36,146,500 |
| | 2019 | 149.9 | 37,486,500 |
| RM5 | 2020 | 191.5 | 38,290,500 |
| | 2021 | 198.2 | 39,630,500 |
| | 2022 | 201.0 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2023 | 201.0 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2024 | 201.0 | 40,200,000 |
| RM6 | 2025 | 241.2 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2026 | 241.2 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2027 | 241.2 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2028 | 241.2 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2029 | 241.2 | 40,200,000 |
| RM7 | 2030 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2031 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2032 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2033 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2034 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2035 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2036 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2037 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2038 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2039 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2040 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2041 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | 2042 | 281.4 | 40,200,000 |
| | | TOTAL | 7.188 billion |

Source: SMART

Azlan Zamhari / Malaysiakini