

# HIGHWAYS, INFORMATION?

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I recently had the opportunity to read a [article](#), in newsprint, about the protests of the **#novullpagarr** movement and the "warning call" that the government has made regarding the **possibility of establishing payment on certain highways** with the objective of sustaining the maintenance of the roads.

Among the data, opinions and interpretations that were provided, I was struck by the data provided by the employers' association of ASETA concessionaires, which estimates that toll motorways generate around **330 million euros** of income for the state, by way of **18% VAT**. Although it may seem strange, this piece of information caught my attention and a question immediately crossed my mind. Why does this employer offer VAT data and not the total billing or the investments made thanks to the tolls on the **3,016 km of highways in Spain**?

Calculator in hand and according to this figure provided by ASET, through the tolls, the **concessionaires** themselves enter **1,500 million euros**, not including the aforementioned VAT.

Taking into account that in Spain there are 3,016 km of highways, this means that the concessionaires earn an average of 498,000 euros for each kilometer. In other words, **the cost of each kilometer of highway for its users is €498,000 plus VAT**.

But what is the maintenance cost of each kilometer of motorway? According to the [DGT](#), the maintenance of each kilometer of dual carriageway ranges between **€19,000 and €42,000**. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that the maintenance of each kilometer of dual carriageway and motorway should be similar. Let's take the most burdensome case and suppose that the maintenance of each kilometer of highway is around €42,000. This leaves a margin for the concessionaires of **€456,000** for each kilometer of motorway that I suppose will be distributed among concepts as disparate as the **amortization** of the investment made, **interest**, **payroll**, **the structure of the concessionaires and the employees who manage the tolls**, **leaving space for benefits**.

Regarding the construction cost of each kilometer of dual carriageway, the [DGT](#) also provides us with a reference: on flat and interurban terrain, the cost is **2 million euros**, but it reaches **8.5 million** if the orography is very rugged. Assuming that for every flat kilometer a kilometer of rugged geography is built, the average cost could be around 5 million euros per kilometer built. The concessions are usually granted for a period of **25 years**, which means that each year the concessionaire will amortize €200,000. In other words, the concessionaires have **€236,000** per kilometer of motorway and per year to meet the **payroll** and distribute **benefits**. In other words, of the toll paid by citizens, roughly **50% is allocated to the construction of the highway and its maintenance**, and the other 50% to the structure of the concessionaire itself and its benefits.

And what budget does the State allocate to the maintenance of the road network under its responsibility? The [Budgets of the State for 2012](#) contemplates spending on road maintenance of **873 million euros**, which is 20% less than in 2011. Understanding that this budget is allocated to the maintenance of the road network in charge, a total of **11,096 km**, which means that each kilometer of the road network in charge of the state costs all Spaniards **€78,680**. Even though it is a significantly higher figure than that provided by the DGT, and that provided by [Spanish Highway Association](#), does not reach the annual cost of each kilometer of highway, from the point of view of its users.

But according to [studies by the sector](#) would require "**5,500 million euros** for the roads to be in the necessary state". In this case, and if this budget has to deal with the maintenance of the entire road system with the exception of the motorways, that is to say, the 12,605 kilometers of other roads,

that would imply a cost of **€436,330** per each kilometer, curiously a figure that is close to the cost of each kilometer of motorway. Does anyone agree?

And you will wonder, after this string of data, what conclusions can we draw?

I am going to tell you mine:

First: there is no clear attitude on the part of the concessionaires for offering the **construction and maintenance costs of each kilometer of motorway**.

Second: The DGT, the benchmark for traffic issues in Spain, talks about maintenance costs that in no case exceed €50,000 per kilometer. However, both the state budgets themselves and other interlocutors in the sector raise this cost to 78,000 and 436,000 euros per kilometer, respectively.

Third: even being in favor of a more sustainable, less polluting and more efficient transport, the truth is that for years it has opted for the creation of high-speed highways that would allow the movement of people and goods and that it has acted accordingly, and continues to act as part of the economic engine of the country, in addition to contributing to the reduction of traffic accidents. Therefore, before launching any measure with the aim of collecting revenue, it would be convenient to evaluate the true economic impact that it may have.

Fourth: despite this small investigation carried out, many figures remain clear or are not equivalent depending on the actor who wields them. *And it is this lack of information that we citizens should not tolerate in a democratic state.* It is not possible that reforms, laws, plans are being decided on our behalf and supposedly for the benefit, and clear information is not offered or provided as to the **reason for the situation** that is intended to be remedied and the **strong>implications and consequences of each proposal**. In this case, that of motorways, and according to the data collected and from the point of view of the cost to citizens, the establishment of toll roads would be more inefficient. In addition, it would be necessary to study the impact on the transport of merchandise, exports,... Of course, the State's income from VAT would increase... how strange.

You can consult related information at:

- [State Budget for 2012](#)
- [DGT](#)
- [Technohighways](#)
- [Spanish Highway Association](#)

Photographs by Leandro Pérez and Juan Francisco Marrero

**There are no comments yet.**