

# News Release



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Jan. 5, 2009

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## **COST-RECOVERY EFFORTS PROPOSED FOR MARYLAND'S TOLL FACILITIES**

*Toll rates could change for large trucks and other multi-axle vehicles;  
E-ZPass<sup>®</sup> service charges proposed*

*Standard (two-axle) and commuter toll rates to remain the same*

BALTIMORE, MD – In the face of a struggling economy, skyrocketing material prices and declining traffic and revenue, the Chairman and eight Members of the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) have proposed a cost-recovery initiative expected to generate approximately \$60 million annually for the self-supported agency that operates Maryland's seven toll facilities. The proposed changes involve an increase in toll rates for large trucks and other multi-axle vehicles and implementation of *E-ZPass* service charges. **Standard (two-axle) and commuter toll rates would remain the same.**

"Today's proposal helps better distribute the costs of operating our system among the different types of vehicles that use our facilities," said Authority Chairman and Transportation Secretary John D. Porcari. "Even with the proposed toll-rate changes and service charges, Maryland still offers some of the most generous commuter discounts in the country, and our truck toll rates are comparable to – and generally lower than – those in the region. I'm pleased that we could preserve our post-usage discounts for truckers."

Maryland's toll-rate schedule was last adjusted in 2003. Within the past year, toll authorities in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia and Ohio have either raised or announced plans to raise tolls. The proposed changes in Maryland would offset the costs of operating the *E-ZPass* system and help ensure that trucks and similar heavy vehicles bear their share of the costs for Maryland's toll facilities.

The Authority's financial self-sufficiency allows its costs to be shared directly among the users of its toll facilities and spares tax payers overall. As a result, available funds to finance, operate, preserve, maintain, improve and protect Maryland's seven toll facilities are directly tied to travel habits.

"Toll revenues are down locally and nationally, while costs for commodities, system preservation and safety are up. Our total revenue is down 6% from July to November alone," said Louise P. Hoblitzell, senior Authority Member. "After experiencing a period of double-digit expense growth prior to 2007, we directed staff to contain costs and expenses are now under control. Even with belt-tightening and deferral of \$200 million in capital projects, it has become necessary to take this step."

Toll revenues fund a \$3.8 billion six-year capital program that includes safety, preservation, customer-service and improvement projects Statewide, including re-decking projects at the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial (Bay) and Thomas J. Hatem Memorial bridges, toll-plaza improvements at the Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial

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## **ADD ONE: COST-RECOVERY EFFORTS PROPOSED FOR STATE TOLL FACILITIES**

Bridge and expansion projects like I-95 Express Toll Lanes<sup>SM</sup> and the Intercounty Connector to help ease some of the largest bottlenecks in the State. Additional improvements include upgraded lighting in the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel, higher-speed *E-ZPass* lanes, a comfort station for truckers at the I-95 Perryville inspection complex and open-road tolling studies, among others.

“These are tough choices, but our policy is to be up front and give our trucking partners and *E-ZPass* customers the most time to plan as possible. We know and understand that any change comes with difficulty for our customers and their families during these times and fully appreciate their sacrifices and understanding,” said Authority Executive Secretary Ronald L. Freeland. “First and foremost is our obligation to keep preservation, safety and customer-service projects fully funded, while supporting capital projects Statewide.”

Specifics of the proposal include:

- Effective April 15, adjusting toll rates for multi-axle vehicles, including trucks with three or more axles and vehicles towing trailers, to help ensure that costs to preserve Authority roadways are allocated proportionately; eliminating the Class 7 toll-rate schedule; and, in its place, implementing an oversize permit charge to use Authority facilities. The proposal includes a \$2-\$5 toll increase per trip depending on the number of axles at the Francis Scott Key Bridge and Fort McHenry and Baltimore Harbor tunnels; a \$4-\$5.50 increase per trip at the Bay Bridge; a \$5-\$13 increase per trip at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway and Hatem Bridge; and a \$3 increase per trip at the Nice Bridge. The cost for A-series commercial tickets at the Hatem Bridge would also increase proportionately.
- Effective April 15, charging \$10 for an Automatic Vehicle Identification decal for the Hatem Bridge and placing a one-year expiration on light-trailer tickets.
- Effective July 1, implementing service charges to help recover *E-ZPass* processing costs, including a \$1.50 monthly account maintenance charge; charging for the cost of new and replacement transponders (\$21 standard, \$33 exterior, \$40 fusion); instituting a \$3 Notice of Toll Due charge; and increasing toll violation charges from \$15 to \$25.
- Effective July 1, changing the duration of *E-ZPass* commuter plans from 60 days to 45 days.
- Eliminating commuter, Shoppers and Travelers tickets and transitioning customers to *E-ZPass*. As part of the transition for Bay Bridge customers, the Authority will create a Shoppers Plan for *E-ZPass* to offer the same percentage discount as existing tickets.

The Authority will consider the Jan. 5 proposal for final action at its regular monthly meeting on Jan. 29. The public can email comments regarding the proposal until Jan. 27 to [mdtatollrates@mdta.state.md.us](mailto:mdtatollrates@mdta.state.md.us) or can send comments to Mr. Ronald L. Freeland, Executive Secretary, Maryland Transportation Authority, 2310 Broening Highway, Suite 150, Baltimore, MD 21224.

When Maryland’s toll-rate schedule was last adjusted in 2003, toll rates doubled for all vehicle types at Baltimore toll facilities and rose by 25% for all vehicle types at the Kennedy Highway and Hatem Bridge.

*The Maryland Transportation Authority is an independent State agency that finances, owns and operates the State’s seven toll facilities. The Authority’s eight Members, appointed by the Governor with consent of the State Senate, serve as the agency’s policy-setting and governing body. Maryland’s Secretary of Transportation serves as Authority Chairman.*

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