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MEMORANDUM

TO: Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) Board
FROM: Bruce Gartner Acting Executive Secretary
DATE: November 22, 2013
SUBJECT: I-95 Express Toll Lanes Tolling Plan Staff Recommendation

The I-95 Express Toll Lanes tolling plan was released for public comment on September 19, 2013. MDTA held three public hearings in the jurisdictions impacted by the proposed tolling plan:

- October 7 - Baltimore City - Patterson High School
October 10 - Baltimore County - Perry Hall Middle School
October 15 - Harford County - Patterson Mill High School

A total of 17 people attended the three hearings combined, included one elected official. There were a total of 73 public comments on the tolling plan through the end of the public comment period on November 4, 2013 at 5:00 p.m.

A public awareness survey conducted by MDTA reveals that two-thirds (67%) of total survey participants have seen, heard, or read something about improvements being made on I-95 in the Baltimore area, and just under three quarters (73%) of total survey participants have seen, heard, or read something about improvements being made on I-95 specifically between the I-95/I-895 split and White Marsh. More than half of the survey participants (55%) reported being aware of the fact that these improvements include adding in toll lanes next to the general travel lanes on this section of I-95. Harford County residents are the most aware of the improvements overall.

ANALYSIS

The most prominent theme in the comments was general opposition to an additional tolled facility, with numerous references to the recent toll increases and the gas tax increase. Given the high level of awareness of that the lanes are to be tolled, the limited attendance at hearings and the comparatively small number of comments submitted suggest that the proposed tolling plan has not raised significant concern for most commuters in the corridor.

Response: The ETL is a transportation facility project funded fully through tolls collected by MDTA. Under the provisions of the Trust Agreement free passage is generally not permitted. In addition, the ETL are the subject of a Value Pricing Agreement with FHWA, which specifies that tolls are being collected to manage traffic and establishes certain reporting requirements.

A smaller number of comments expressed the opinion that the tolls proposed were too high and that usage of the ETL would not be sufficient to relieve congestion in the general purpose lanes.

Response: The traffic volumes and revenues projected for the proposed tolling plan are based upon the study prepared by the consultant and posted on the MDTA website for review. While ETL traffic volumes in the early years of the facility are not large, they are projected to be sufficient to reduce congestion in the general purpose lanes. The report and recent research also indicate that some users of express toll facilities are motivated by factors besides congestion including a reliable trip time, perceived safety, and a preference for lanes with less truck traffic.

One commenter noted an anomaly in one table in the traffic and revenue report posted at the time of the announcement of the toll plan. This error has been corrected and the revised report has been posted to the MDTA website.

There were some individual comments recommending changes to the plan including reduced rates for commuters or those using both the ETL and one of the Harbor Crossings, and elimination of tolls during overnight or off-peak hours.

Response: Discounts on the ETL are based on the time of travel rather than frequency of travel as a matter of policy. Free passage on the ETL is generally not permitted under the provisions of the Trust Agreement. Options to close the lanes during overnight periods were evaluated by the staff and determined to be more costly than leaving the lanes open. Free passage on the general purpose lanes continues 24 hours a day.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the staff analysis, I am recommending no change to the plan released for public comment on September 19, 2013. The attached public notice contains the details of the tolling plan now proposed for adoption by the MDTA Board at the December 12, 2013 meeting.

REVENUE ESTIMATES

MDTA will not receive a full twelve months of toll revenue from the I-95 Express Toll Lanes for FY 2015 since the Lanes are not scheduled to open until late in calendar 2014. The partial year revenue for FY 2015 is forecasted to be \$3.1 million, based on a December opening. The first full year of revenue will be FY 2016. The revenue forecast for FY 2016 is \$6.1 million. A chart showing the projected traffic and toll revenue is shown below:

I-95 ETL Annual T&R Estimates (Millions)

Fiscal Year	I-95 ETL Estimated Annual T&R	
	Transactions	Gross Toll Revenue
2015	1.8	\$3.1
2016	3.6	\$6.1
2017	4	\$6.8
2018	4.2	\$7.1
2019	4.4	\$7.5
2020	4.6	\$8.2
2021	4.7	\$8.7
2022	4.9	\$9.6
2023	5	\$10.6
2024	5.2	\$11.0
2025	5.4	\$11.5

PUBLIC COMMENT

A summary of the public comments received was posted to the MDTA website on November 14, 2013.

ATTACHMENTS

Tolling Plan Public Notice