

**Bay Area Toll Authority
Oversight Committee**

January 12, 2022

Agenda Item 6a - 21-1635

Update on Bay Area Tolling Equity Action Plan

Subject:

An update on the Bay Area Tolling Equity Action Plan.

Background:

At the May 2021 BATA Oversight meeting, staff unveiled an ambitious strategy to make the Bay Area FasTrak® program more equitable through its Equity Action Plan. Staff provided an update on that plan at the October and November 2021 BATA Oversight meetings. At those meetings, staff heard from Commissioners about the need for customers to be able to resolve issues and manage debt, to urgently focus on those who need it most, and to include baseline data and cost/benefit analyses in assessments of potential policy changes. In response, staff proposed and BATA approved the set of significant changes described below.

- On December 1, 2021, violation penalties for unpaid BATA bridge invoices were reduced from \$25 to \$5 for the first notice and from \$45 to \$10 for the second notice.
- Effective March 31, 2022, are additional changes: reducing tag deposits from \$20 to \$5; reducing the pre-paid balance required for cash-paying customers to open a FasTrak® account from \$50 to \$25, the same as credit card customers; and eliminating cash payment network fees.

Future Policy Assessments

The policy changes approved in October and November are just the beginning. In performing the background work, staff realized that BATA cannot address problems it does not fully understand, and that decisions about policy changes must be based on data and not solely anecdotal information.

One way BATA staff are approaching problem and solution assessments is to create hypothetical descriptors that help clarify important user distinctions affecting ability to pay. For example, the solutions considered may be very different for someone whose household income is \$20,000 versus someone whose household income is \$200,000. Questions staff need to answer are:

- How are we defining problematic unpaid tolls/violations/penalties?
- Who are we trying to serve?
- Who is having the most difficulty?
- What are the main reasons for the accumulation of unpaid tolls and violations/penalties?
- What data-based actions can be taken in the short and long term to address the problem?

While much of the research can be compiled from data from the Regional Customer Service Center (RCSC) as well as Census data, some information can only be gleaned by talking to affected individuals and trying to better understand their answers to our questions. For example:

- Why are they not paying?
- Can they not afford to pay at all or can they not afford it temporarily?
- Did they forget to pay, or are they choosing not to pay?
- Are there barriers to entry?
- Do they have a credit or debit card for an auto-reload account?
- Do they have access to Cash Payment Network locations?
- Are they aware of Cash Payment Network locations?

While hard data collection can be done more quickly, community engagement is more time consuming. Staff now has a consultant on board from the MTC Equity Bench to conduct the community engagement, and they are working on developing tactics to reach people.

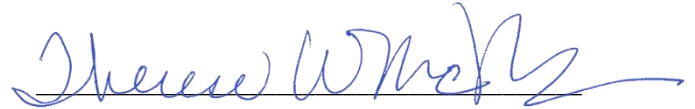
Over the coming months, staff will return to this Committee to report on the impacts of the reduced violation penalties, share findings from the data analysis and community engagement and proposed policy changes to address the most pressing issues identified through both. We expect this to be a staged process, where some solutions can be developed and pursued earlier than others, but establishing priorities will aid in sequencing efforts and outcomes.

Recommendations:

None.

Attachment:

Presentation Slides

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Therese W. McMillan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Therese W. McMillan