

BATA Item 4a 24-1575 BATA Resolution No. 184 Toll Increase and Changes to High Occupancy Vehicle Policies for BATA Bridges

Updated Summary of Public Comments for Comments Received after December 11, 2024

A 45-day comment period, beginning November 4, 2024 was provided for the public to submit comments. A total of 197 comments from the public were provided through noon on December 11, 2024 and are included in the materials for Agenda Item 4a 24-1575. Since December 11, three additional public comments were provided for the toll increase – one opposed (theme of Call for Alternative Solutions), one supporting, and one undecided (theme of Government Accountability) – for a total of 200 comments provided through noon on December 17, 2024. This document updates the totals provided in Agenda Item 4a 24-1575 with these new comments.

Of the 200 comments, 174 comments opposed a toll increase on the state-owned bridges, 12 supported a toll increase, and 14 were undecided about the toll increase. The major themes raised in the public comments are summarized below. Many comments contained multiple themes. The table below provides a summary of all comment themes received and staff’s responses. Public comments are available on MTC’s website at <https://mtc.ca.gov/digital-library/5037260-bata-public-comments>.

	Theme	Response
1	Economic Burden (121): Opposition to the proposed toll increases, highlighting the financial strain on working-class families and questioning the necessity of such hikes.	While BATA is sensitive to financial strains and the rising cost of living, BATA is required to keep the bridges in a state of good repair, and tolls are the only reliable funding source available to BATA. BATA has designed the toll increase at \$0.50 increments each year to minimize the annual burden to toll payers.

	Theme	Response
2	<p>Government Accountability (37): Many comments appreciate the importance of transparency and call for clear and detailed financial documentation to help justify any proposed toll increases.</p>	<p>Please refer to MTC’s Digital Library (https://mtc.ca.gov/digital-library) for the following:</p> <p>See this link on MTC’s website with an overview of how BATA bridge tolls are used: https://mtc.ca.gov/funding/regional-funding</p> <p>MTC’s Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024: https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/MTC-FY2024_ACFR.pdf</p> <p>BATA’s Capital Improvement Plan & Toll Bridge Program Report: https://mtc.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6017410&GUID=87C708D1-603E-49C9-8E74-0D0F607ED9B4&Options=&Search=</p> <p>BATA Operating and Capital Budgets FY2024-2025: https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/meetings/attachments/6037/5a_BATA_Resolution_0177.pdf</p> <p>BATA Resolution 175 Asset Management Policy https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/meetings/attachments/5895/5a_24_0071_2_BATA_Resolution_No_175.pdf</p>

	Theme	Response
3	<p>Economic Impact on Lower-Income Communities (33): The toll increases disproportionately impact lower-income communities, particularly those who rely on bridges for daily commute.</p>	<p>While a toll increase has a greater burden on a low-income household than an affluent household, BATA is required to keep the bridges in a state of good repair, and tolls are the only reliable funding source available to BATA, which receives minimal federal and state funding.</p> <p>MTC – as the region’s transportation planning, coordinating, and financing agency which is governed by the same board as BATA – has a goal of lowering transportation costs in the Bay Area to make travel more affordable and open up greater access to opportunity. Based on the most recent Bay Area travel survey, low-income households who use the toll bridges are about twice as likely as other households to also take transit. While BATA is not authorized to offer discounted tolls based on income, MTC is working to lower the overall cost of transportation by making public transit more affordable. In 2020, MTC partnered with Bay Area transit agencies and launched Clipper START, which provides a 50% discount on transit fares for qualifying low-income residents. As an example, on Clipper START a roundtrip transbay BART fare is just \$5 instead of \$10. Clipper START is available on all major transit systems that accept Clipper.</p> <p>MTC is also working, in coordination with the Association of Bay Area Governments to increase the housing supply, particularly affordable housing, and create more housing close to jobs.</p>

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4	<p>Call for Alternative Solutions (29): BATA should explore alternative solutions to toll increases, such as identifying other revenue sources or better managing existing funds</p>	<p>State law requires that BATA fund toll bridges in a state of good repair. BATA has applied for federal grants from the recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to fund various work needed on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, but a one-time grant, while welcome, would not replace the need to raise bridge tolls due to the scale and ongoing nature of the need. BATA needs an ongoing, reliable revenue stream to pay for bridge preservation projects and cannot depend on one-time grants or other funding sources outside its control.</p> <p>Refer to Government Accountability theme above for detailed information on how existing toll revenue funds are used.</p>
5	<p>Geographic Disparity (14): The toll increase disproportionately impacts residents of the East Bay and Solano County who often choose to live there due to more affordable housing</p>	<p>As provided in state law, BATA provides a discount on the RM 3 portion of the bridge toll for drivers crossing multiple bridges during commute hours on the same day. This discount is intended to lessen the impact for heavy users that cross more than one bridge during commute times. Drivers receive a discount on the second bridge crossing. The current discount of \$1 will increase to \$1.50 on January 1, 2025 as part of the final RM 3 toll increase. A maximum of one morning discount and one afternoon discount can be applied to the same vehicle for the day. MTC is also working, in coordination with the Association of Bay Area Governments, to increase the housing supply, particularly affordable housing, and create more housing close to jobs, as called for in Plan Bay Area 2050.</p>

	Theme	Response
6	<p>Support for Toll Increase (12)</p> <p>General support for the toll increases to raise necessary revenue for infrastructure improvements and public transit. Belief that higher tolls will help reduce car usage and encourage more people to use public transportation like BART.</p>	<p>Revenue from the toll increase is intended to fund the operations, maintenance and rehabilitation of the seven state-owned bridges and keep them in a state of good repair.</p>
7	<p>Need for Enhanced Public Transportation Options (8):</p> <p>Comments hoped the increased tolls would encourage more transit use, and increased investment in public transportation options.</p>	<p>Revenue from the toll increase is intended to fund the operations, maintenance and rehabilitation of the seven state-owned bridges. BATA can raise bridge tolls for other purposes, such as for transit operations, only with legislative authorization as was the case with Regional Measure 2 and 3.</p> <p>Regional Measure 2 and 3 are helping to fund several public transit improvements that serve bridge corridor travelers. MTC’s Plan Bay Area 2050 recognizes that investments in public transit, funded with sources other than the proposed bridge toll increase, are critical to a healthy, vibrant, affordable and equitable Bay Area.</p>
8	<p>High-Occupancy Vehicle Policy (3): Two-person carpools should receive the toll discount.</p>	<p>This policy is designed to encourage maximum person throughput by rewarding two-occupant vehicles with the travel time savings available in the carpool lanes, and provide the highest reward via a discounted toll, to carpools with three or more occupants.</p>