

**Bay Area Toll Authority  
Oversight Committee**

**April 13, 2022**

**Agenda Item 3b - 22-0387**

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**Equity Action Plan Update**

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**Subject:**

A presentation on best practices for payment plans plus update on other activities related to the Equity Action Plan.

**Background:**

At the May 2021 BATA Oversight meeting, staff unveiled an ambitious strategy to make the Bay Area tolling program more equitable through its Equity Action Plan. Staff provided updates at the October 2021, November 2021 and January 2022 BATA Oversight meetings. At those meetings, Commissioners addressed 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. BATA has already made several policy changes:

- Dramatically reducing BATA violation penalties, and
- Reducing tag deposits, reducing the pre-paid balance for cash-paying customers to open a FasTrak® account, and eliminating cash payment network fees to make it more accessible and affordable to become a FasTrak® customer and manage accounts.

At the January 2022 BATA Oversight Committee meeting, Commissioners made a specific request for staff to conduct research into the best practices of administering payment plans. After researching tolling agencies, parking programs and utilities, staff identified the following best practices:

- Make it as easy as possible for the customer to sign up and make payments
- Maintain frequent communication with customers
- Require an initial payment to enter the plan
- Direct customers to customer service representatives who specialize in administering payment plans
- Do not require income level to be a factor for eligibility

Based on the best practices research and the urgent need to develop a payment plan for BATA's toll program with the primary goal of assisting BATA customers with outstanding toll violation penalty debt, staff has prepared a concept for what a payment plan pilot program would look like. This concept incorporates guiding principles that require the plan to be fair and equitable, simple to understand and participate in, cost effective, able to deploy rapidly, and able to leverage existing assets. Key elements of the payment plan pilot concept are:

- Existing applicable waivers and settlements will be applied first
- Payment plan pilot is for BATA bridge transactions only
- Tolls must be paid in full as initial payment, and penalties can be paid in installments for a maximum duration of 12 months
- To enter a payment plan, accumulated penalties owed must be at least \$150
- Concurrent payment plans are not allowed
- Payment plan enters default status 30 days after a missed payment
- No new fees or interest charged to payment plan participants
- No income eligibility requirements – payment plans are open to all

Staff will continue to conduct financial and legal analyses about the feasibility of such a proposed pilot program, as well as determine the appropriate delivery model, delivery schedule and cost.

**Recommendations:**

Information only.

**Attachments:**

Attachment A: Presentation on Equity Action Plan



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