

**Bay Area Toll Authority
Oversight Committee**

December 14, 2022

Agenda Item 5a

Payment Plan Communications Strategy

Subject:

Communications strategy planned to promote the payment plan going into effect July 1, 2023.

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, January 2022, April 2022, June 2022, and October 2022 BATA Oversight meetings. At those meetings, Commissioners addressed the need for customers to be able to manage debt, to urgently focus on those who need debt relief 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.

BATA has also begun developing a low-income payment plan to accompany its existing waivers. The payment plan will go into effect on July 1, 2023, which is also the deadline for such a plan required in Assembly Bill 2594 (Ting).

Toll Payment Information Campaign:

In earlier meetings of the BATA Oversight Committee, Commissioners expressed a desire to see how staff will promote the payment plan. What follows is a robust Toll Payment Information Campaign for letting drivers know that they need to pay their tolls and letting low-income drivers know about the rollout of the new payment plan. The following are the goals of the Toll Payment Information Campaign:

- Collect overdue tolls and penalties
- Generate awareness about the risk of vehicle registration hold
- Educate about financial assistance programs available for unpaid tolls and penalties

- Drive qualified applications to apply for the low-income payment plan

The highest toll violations by zip code incidence are in Solano County's Interstate 80 corridor, the Highway 4 corridor, and the Interstate 880 corridor. Many areas with high toll violation counts are congruent with Equity Priority Communities.

The campaign will have two types of messaging:

- The first type is to let drivers know they need to pay their tolls and penalties or risk the Department of Motor Vehicles requiring all tolls and penalties to be paid before they can register their vehicles. This is a precursor to BATA releasing its backlog of vehicles that are eligible to have a hold put on their registration.
- The second type of message is to specifically promote the payment plan for state-owned bridges, Golden Gate Bridge, and the region's express lanes.

Staff intends to communicate with the whole region in an effort to convey the need for drivers to pay their tolls in addition to placing a special emphasis on the Equity Priority Communities for promotion of the payment plan. The Toll Payment Information Campaign will target multiple languages and cultures.

Staff will target the region as a whole using the following methods:

- Billboards
- Broadcast TV and radio
- Web and mobile ads and online video
- Social and earned media – both paid ads and free posts
- Media relations

To reach the targeted Equity Priority Communities, staff will use the following tactics:

- Local and multilingual/multicultural print ads
- Bulk mailing
- Neighborhood outreach at places like libraries and flea markets
- Collaboration with other agencies such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Cal-Fresh program, and similar low-income programs

- Outreach to community-based organizations, specifically churches and community centers

Next Steps:

Staff is already working on developing the campaign immediately to be ready for launch in July 2023.

Issues:

None identified.

Recommendations:

None identified.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Toll Payment Information Campaign



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