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External Email

Greetings Martha, please forward this message to the Bay Area Toll Authority Oversight Committee for the Meeting of 13 May, 2020.

Good morning Committee Chair Amy Worth and members.

Aleta Dupree here for the record.

Today I speak to you on matters concerning BATA, some of which pertain to Item 3A.

This crisis which is COVID-19 has indeed brought about many challenges, and rethinking of the ways that business is conducted across the board. It is my hope that this crisis will pass sooner, rather than later, and we can return to a sense of normal.

It is with good reason that we stopped manual collection of cash toll monies on 21 March of this year, keeping the safety of employees and the Public in mind. And we are learning how to operate in this methodology much sooner than when the planned All Electronic Tolling System would be eventually be deployed.

I think this contract is indeed reasonable, and necessary, an investment in the future, something I believe we would eventually be doing anyway. It is important to look at how many of these payments are coming in by paper checks, as opposed to electronic means, and also compared to FasTrak.

Some will pay with checks, and I understand that, and there are many organizations that use lock boxes, and have done so for a long time. I occasionally receive paper checks, and I am able to deposit them, using my phone or tablet by taking pictures of both sides of them. It's not my preferred method of receiving funds, but it happens. So through this contract we can invest in greater capabilities to process both checks and electronic payments.

Invoicing is indeed challenging, but not new. And BATA is not alone in this, as a number of other toll highway agencies are doing this as well. Some, such as the Massachusetts Turnpike, and MTA Bridges and Tunnels in New York, have been doing this for several years now. Some others, such as the NJ Turnpike, and NYS Thruway, have started this new work just recently. We can learn from others, but I also believe that BATA is a leader, and others are looking to our example.

I do believe that FasTrak is the ideal, and it's important to encourage our repeat users to sign up for it. I think things can be done to encourage electronic delivery of toll invoices, and also the use of phone based toll payment applications.

I have not been on any of the bridges, as I have not traveled as of late, due to my staying at home. As I look toward hopefully this crisis passing soon, I believe that there will be new normals. And one of those I believe is the electronic payment of tolls across the board.

There are many benefits of not stopping to pay tolls, the greatest of which is safety. And so with no stopping necessary, I encourage this agency continuing to develop and be more practiced in this new method of conducting business.

Given this, I continue to advocate that we not return to the previous method of performing manual cash toll collections.

Thank you.

Sent from my iPad