

Date: October 28, 2020
Referred by: BATA

ABSTRACT

Resolution No. 140

Resolution of appreciation for Kenneth Brown on the occasion of his retirement from the California Department of Transportation.

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RE: Resolution of Appreciation Kenneth Brown

BAY AREA TOLL AUTHORITY
Resolution No. 140

WHEREAS, Kenneth Brown this month retired from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) after 29 years of public service, all on the Bay Area's toll bridges, working his way up the ranks from bridge engineer to senior bridge engineer to office chief in the Department's Structures, Maintenance and Investigation division; and

WHEREAS, Ken is a Bay Area native who grew up tinkering and thought he might become an architect, but his lifelong passion for bridges drew him to U.C. Davis to study engineering, and then to Caltrans to become caretaker of the region's bridges, keeping the spans in good shape and open to the public; and

WHEREAS, Ken in his early career worked under the "last of the guard" of the Division of Bay Toll Crossings, which preceded the establishment of Caltrans and which was staffed with famous old-school office chiefs like Bob Bridwell; and

WHEREAS, Ken helped to develop critical repair strategies during several local crises, including the MacArthur Maze tanker truck fire in April 2007, when the Interstate 580 connector overpass collapsed on to the deck of Interstate 880 below; the November 2007 collision of the oil tanker Cosco Busan with a tower of the Bay Bridge West Span; and the September 2009 discovery of a cracked eyebar on the original East Span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge; and

WHEREAS, Ken spent countless hours up close and personal with the region's bridges, because front-line inspecting can't be called in from a drone and requires an in-person presence two-foot visual analysis and hands-on contact with the bridge infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Ken appreciates the aesthetics not only of engineering but also of art, and together with his team was instrumental in the successful installation of The Bay Lights on the West Span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge; and

WHEREAS, Ken rescued from the condemned former toll administration building in Oakland a treasure trove of Bay Bridge historical plans and documents, including original plans hand-drawn on linen and images on glass slides, and preserved for posterity these irreplaceable relics; and

WHEREAS, Ken's colleagues describe him as a consummate professional, as a soft-spoken and humble guy you can always turn to, and as one who has knowledge and experience second to none; and

WHEREAS, like the bridges he loves, Ken rarely showed stress under pressure, even when the load was heavy and the tension extreme; and

WHEREAS, although Ken promised himself he would only retire when he no longer found the passion, enthusiasm and commitment to come to work, that day never came, yet what did come was an eventual acceptance that he might hand over the torch and move on to the next chapter; and

WHEREAS, there is a red 1968 Triumph convertible in Ken's garage that is only forty percent restored and needs a new paint job, much like certain of the region's toll bridges; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Bay Area Toll Authority thanks Ken for his steadfast commitment, unquestioned reliability and wise counsel in the care and upkeep of our bridges, and wishes him a retirement filled with family and friends, camping and mountain biking, and a good supply of peppery Zinfandels.

BAY AREA TOLL AUTHORITY

Scott Haggerty, Chair

The above resolution was entered into by the Bay Area Toll Authority at a duly called and noticed meeting held in San Francisco, California and at other remote locations, on October 28, 2020.