

Bay Area Toll Authority Oversight Committee

May 12, 2021

Agenda Item 3a - 21-0583

FasTrak® Equity Action Plan

Subject: A report on the approach, status, and timeline of modernization of FasTrak® program policies.

Background: In response to the COVID shelter-in-place order in March 2020, Caltrans removed toll collectors from the booths to protect toll collectors and the travelling public. As a result, toll collection at State-owned bridges became all electronic. In January 2021, the FasTrak® Regional Customer Service Center (RCSC) Contractor deployed system changes for more robust all electronic tolling based on the existing invoicing model already used at the Golden Gate Bridge.

The emergence of COVID required Caltrans and BATA to implement all electronic tolling much earlier than the previously planned spring 2022 schedule. While FasTrak® account openings increased following the transition to all electronic tolling in March 2020 and again in early 2021, many former cash-paying customers receive invoices in the mail and must find new ways to pay tolls. In the first quarter of 2021 BATA executed a campaign titled “More Ways to Pay” to educate drivers about toll payment options. BATA is now working to update toll policies and programs so that the FasTrak® program provides customer-friendly toll payment options that serve all drivers equitably, regardless of factors such as household income, English proficiency, or access to online and banking services. The work will require a holistic approach that considers the many aspects of customers interacting with the program – from becoming a FasTrak® customer to keeping an account in good standing to enforcement and violations. Enforcement and violations have additional considerations as they may also generate additional burdens if unpaid violations result in high penalties or the inability to renew vehicle registration.

The project approach will follow the MTC Equity Platform pillars and include:

- **Define and Measure:** Analyze and baseline account data and trends; partner to research impacts to communities of concern; identify gaps in services, access, and multi-language educational materials.
- **Listen and Learn:** Engage customers on challenges and creation of solutions; involve stakeholders, community partners, and customers throughout the process.
- **Focus and Deliver:** Review CSC policies through an equity lens to identify actionable changes; identify partners to achieve equitable outcomes in customer service; collaborate with stakeholders to deliver on solutions.

- **Train and Grow:** Retrain RCSC representatives on revised procedures that better assist limited English proficiency customers; develop an evaluation approach for operational changes with a feedback mechanism for continuous growth.

Stakeholder engagement is essential to ensuring that proposed solutions are meaningful and impactful. Additionally, proposed solutions must be assessed for legal and regulatory compliance, financial implications, and operational feasibility. These steps will take time to complete and will be an iterative process. At the same time, staff has identified some initial actions that may be taken in the near term to provide greater access to FasTrak® and support other initiatives like the FasTrak® START means-based discount program:

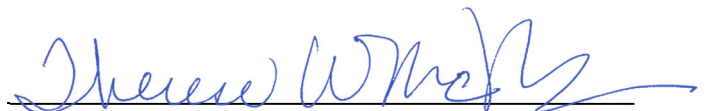
- Reduce the security deposit for toll tags;
- Reduce the initial pre-paid balance upon opening a FasTrak® account and funding with cash/check;
- Review account replenishment grace periods to increase ability to maintain accounts in good standing and provide notification of impending replenishment;
- Launch mobile app to provide additional account and replenishment information access; and
- Expand communications with customers related to account maintenance.

Initial actions above could be deployed by the end of 2021, with recommendations for other program areas implemented in late 2021 and 2022, depending on the scope of the recommendations. Staff will report progress to this Committee on a quarterly basis as work progresses. Staff will also return to this Committee for necessary approvals to implement the selected recommendations.

Issues: None

Recommendation: This item is presented for information only.

Attachments: Presentation Slides.


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