

# Bay Area Toll Authority

November 20, 2024

Agenda Item 6a - 24-1406

## **Public Hearing –Toll Increase and Changes to High Occupancy Vehicle Policies for BATA Bridges**

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### **Subject:**

The Authority will conduct a public hearing on the set of toll increases and changes to the high occupancy vehicle (HOV) policies proposed by the Authority in its public notice, as posted in newspapers starting on November 3, 2024. The Authority may consider providing initial direction to staff with respect to the set of potential toll increases and changes to HOV policies to be presented to the Authority at its December meeting. The Authority shall consider all public comment received through the end of the public comment period on December 18, 2024 before determining whether to proceed with the toll increase and HOV policy changes.

### **Background:**

The Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA) proposes to increase the tolls for all vehicles crossing any of the seven state-owned toll bridges in the Bay Area (Antioch, Benicia-Martinez, Carquinez, Dumbarton, Richmond-San Rafael, San Francisco-Oakland and the San Mateo-Hayward bridges) pursuant to California Streets and Highways Code Section 30918. Additionally, BATA proposes to establish a uniform three-person occupancy requirement for the discounted toll during weekday commute periods at the seven state-owned bridges and allow vehicles with two occupants to use the carpool lanes during weekday commute periods on the approaches to the Antioch, Benicia-Martinez, Carquinez, Dumbarton, Richmond-San Rafael and San Mateo-Hayward bridges. These two-occupant vehicles would not receive the discounted toll.

Staff is proposing that the Authority hold a public hearing on November 20, 2024 to receive public testimony on the proposed toll increase and HOV policy changes and act on the toll increase and HOV policy changes at the December BATA meeting by adopting a new Toll Schedule for the state-owned toll bridges (attached to this Memorandum in draft as Attachment 1). Notice of Public Hearing was published in San Francisco Bay Area newspapers and posted on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's website last month and a public webinar was conducted on November 13, 2024. Copies of the proposed toll increase and HOV policy changes are on file at MTC offices in San Francisco and posted on the MTC website.

The public comment period is extended through and until the end of public comment heard on BATA's toll increase and HOV policy changes agenda item at its December 18, 2024 meeting. All public written and oral comments provided through that time will be incorporated into the record. However, in order for comments to be summarized and published in the agenda packet and distributed in advance of consideration of this item at the December 11, 2024 BATA Oversight Committee meeting, they must be submitted by 5 p.m. December 3, 2024. Oral testimony for inclusion in that summary will be received at the public hearing on November 20, 2024.

### **Toll Increase Proposal**

The proposal includes increasing tolls on the seven state-owned bridges by 50 cents a year from 2026 through 2030. This is similar to the Golden Gate Bridge's approach to toll hikes and would spread the increase over five years rather than a large one-time jump. The increased revenue would be used only to pay for the maintenance, rehabilitation and operation of the bridges.

Tolls for large freight trucks and other vehicles with three or more axles would rise by 50 cents per axle each year from 2026 through 2030.

To help recoup the increased costs of collecting tolls via license plate accounts and invoices, compared with collecting tolls via FasTrak® tags, tolls on January 1, 2027 would rise by another 25 cents for customers who pay with a pre-registered license plate account and by \$1 for tolls paid by invoice.

The proposed toll increase is separate from the \$3 increase approved by Bay Area voters in 2018 through Regional Measure 3 (RM 3) to finance a comprehensive suite of highway and transit improvements around the region. The first of the three \$1 RM 3 increases went into effect in 2019, followed by another in 2022. The last of the RM 3 toll hikes will go into effect January 1, 2025, bringing the toll for regular two-axle cars and trucks to \$8.

The proposed plan would result in the following toll rates for two-axle vehicles through 2030 (See Attachment 2 for the full toll rate table):

**Proposal: Two-Axle Vehicle Toll**

<b>Payment Option</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2025 Last Voter-Approved RM3 Increase</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2026 With Toll Increase</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2027</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2028</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2029</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2030</b>
<b>HOVs*</b>	\$4.00	\$4.25	\$4.50	\$4.75	\$5.00	\$5.25
<b>FasTrak®</b>	\$8.00	\$8.50	\$9.00	\$9.50	\$10.00	\$10.50
<b>License Plate Account</b>	\$8.00	\$8.50	\$9.25	\$9.75	\$10.25	\$10.75
<b>Invoice</b>	\$8.00	\$8.50	\$10.00	\$10.50	\$11.00	\$11.50

\*HOV rate is 50% of two-axle FasTrak rate

Attachment 2 provides more details on the toll increase proposal, including financial context and toll bridge preservation needs, as presented at the October 23, 2024 BATA meeting.

**HOV Policy Changes Proposal**

BATA proposes updates to the policies for high-occupancy vehicles on approaches to the Bay Area’s state-owned toll bridges. BATA’s existing toll schedule allows vehicles with three or more occupants a discounted toll (half-price), with a two-person occupancy requirement for the discounted toll at the Dumbarton and San Mateo-Hayward bridges. To provide regional consistency and to support the future deployment of open-road tolling at the state-owned bridges, the proposal would establish a uniform three-person occupancy requirement for the discounted toll during weekday commute periods at all seven bridges. The discounted toll rate is available weekdays from 5 to 10 a.m. and from 3 to 7 p.m.

The proposed policy changes would also allow vehicles with two occupants to use the carpool lanes on the approaches to the Antioch, Benicia-Martinez, Carquinez, Dumbarton, Richmond-San Rafael and San Mateo-Hayward bridges. These two-occupant vehicles would not receive the discounted toll but would be able to use the carpool lanes to save time traveling through the toll plazas. At the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, where volumes of vehicles with three or more occupants are much higher than those at other bridges, no change is proposed. Use of the carpool lanes on approaches to the Bay Bridge still would require a minimum of three occupants.

The proposal changes are designed to improve safety on the toll bridge approaches by minimizing weaving between lanes and to increase person-throughput by prioritizing access for buses and carpools. The policy changes also would optimize lane configurations as now-obsolete toll booths are removed as part of the coming transition to open-road tolling.

Attachment 3 contains more details of the HOV policy change proposal as presented at the October 23, 2024 BATA meeting.

**Summary**

The schedule for adoption and implementation of the proposed toll increase and HOV policy changes is as follows:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Discussion/Action</b>
November 20, 2024 9:35am	Public Hearing BATA Meeting	Public comment on proposed toll schedule
December 11, 2024	BATA Oversight Committee Meeting	Staff presents a summary of public comments received by 5 p.m. on December 3, 2024; Public comment provided on the item by 5 p.m. on December 10 will also be shared with the Committee and in-person comments may be made at the Committee meeting. Committee will be asked to take action on toll increase and HOV policy changes.
December 18, 2024	BATA Meeting	Authority action on toll increase and HOV policy changes
January 1, 2026		Toll increase and HOV policy changes are effective

**Issues:**

None identified.

**Recommendations:**

**Authority Approval.** Authority to receive public testimony on the proposed toll increase and

HOV policy changes. The Authority may consider providing initial direction to staff with respect to the set of potential toll increases and changes to HOV policies to be presented to the Authority at its December meeting. The Authority shall consider all public comment received through the end of the comment period on December 18, 2024 before determining whether to proceed with toll increases and HOV policy changes.

**Attachments:**

- Attachment 1 – Draft Toll Schedule for the State-Owned Toll Bridges in the Bay Area, Effective January 1, 2026
- Attachment 2 –Toll Increase Proposal – October 23, 2024 BATA Meeting
- Attachment 3 –High Occupancy Vehicle Policy Changes– October 23, 2024 BATA Meeting
- Presentation



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