

Bay Area Toll Authority

October 23, 2024

Agenda Item 4b - 24-1323

Information – High Occupancy Vehicle Policy Changes for BATA Bridges

Subject:

Staff will seek feedback on a proposal for BATA bridges to modify the high occupancy vehicle (HOV) policy to support deployment of open road tolling for Authority discussion.

Background:

Staff provided an overview of proposed HOV policy changes relating to the open road tolling program at the May 2023 and October 2024 BATA Oversight Committee meetings. All BATA bridges have designated HOV lanes to incentivize carpooling and transit use by providing priority and time savings benefits through the toll plazas. The open road tolling project and removal of the toll booths will increase vehicles' speeds through the toll plazas and require changes in HOV policy to maintain safety and person throughput within the existing plaza areas.

The existing toll schedule at the Bay Area state-owned bridges allows vehicles with three or more occupants (HOV 3+) a discounted toll, except for the Dumbarton and San-Mateo Hayward bridges, where a discounted toll is available to vehicles with two or more occupants (HOV 2+). The HOV 2+ discount for the Dumbarton and San-Mateo bridges originated from a statute specifying that vehicles containing two or more persons could have exclusive or preferential use of HOV lanes on those bridges. That statute has since been repealed. To provide regional consistency on the HOV toll bridge discount, staff proposes offering the HOV discount on all bridges only to HOV3+ vehicles.

However, to improve safety, increase person throughput and utilize the excess capacity in the HOV lanes, staff proposes allowing HOV2 vehicles to use the HOV lanes at the Antioch, Benicia-Martinez, Carquinez, Richmond-San Rafael, Dumbarton, and San Mateo-Hayward Bridges without a toll discount. Especially with the extension of the westbound HOV lane on I-580 from Regatta Boulevard to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge toll plaza as part of the Forward Project, allowing HOV2 into the extended lane is critical to avoid creating congestion due to lack of current HOV3+ volume. HOV 3+ drivers using the HOV lanes would need to declare their occupancy using the switchable FasTrak Flex toll tag to receive the discounted toll. These HOV policy changes are proposed to be effective January 1, 2026.

No change is proposed at the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, where HOV3+ volumes are high and there is no excess capacity. HOV lane access and the toll discount will continue to be limited to HOV3+ vehicles in the dedicated approach lanes with a FasTrak account.

Issues:

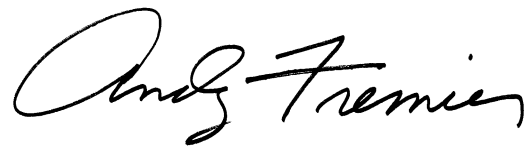
None identified.

Recommendations:

None. Information Only.

Attachments:

- Presentation



Andrew B. Fremier

High-Occupancy Vehicle Policy Changes for BATA Bridges

BATA

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Recap and today's goals

- **High Occupancy Vehicle Policy:**
In May 2023 and October 2024 BATA Oversight Committee, staff provided an overview of proposed HOV policy changes relating to the open road tolling program.
- **Today's goal is to discuss the proposed HOV policy changes and a proposed implementation date of January 1, 2026.**

Future Operational Changes For Open Road Tolling



Current condition



Future condition – Open Road Tolling with Booths Removed



Need for an updated HOV Policy

Dedicated HOV lanes approaching the toll bridges provide time savings and priority for buses and carpools and will be retained with Open Road Tolling, but some HOV lanes are underutilized. Current HOV policy needs to be updated to:

- 1. Improve Safety** by minimizing traffic weaving and optimizing the lane configuration for future Open Road Tolling.
- 2. Increase Person Throughput** by improving transit prioritization and maintaining or increasing HOV demand.
- 3. Enhance Regional Consistency** by offering a toll discount only to HOV3+ on all state-owned bridges.

Proposed BATA Toll Bridge HOV Policy

Current:

- Reduced toll for HOV3+ on all bridges
- Reduced toll for HOV2+ on Dumbarton and San Mateo-Hayward bridges

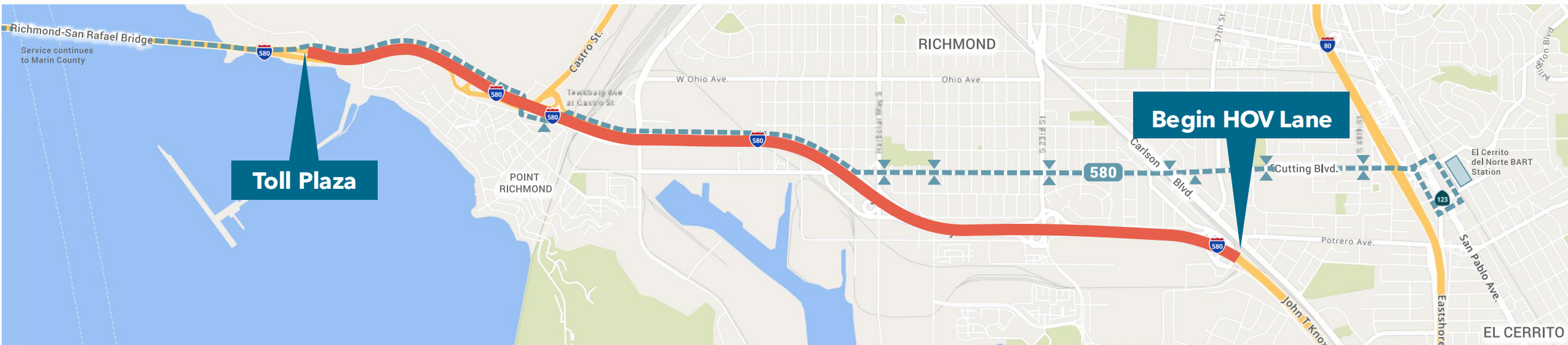
Proposed:

- Reduced toll for HOV3+ on all bridges
- HOV2 can use lane for time savings but pays full toll except at Bay Bridge

Bridge	In Designated HOV Lane HOV Discount	
	Current HOV Policy	Proposed HOV Policy
San Francisco-Oakland Bay		
Antioch		
Carquinez		
Benicia-Martinez		
Richmond-San Rafael		
Dumbarton		
San Mateo-Hayward		

Richmond-San Rafael Forward

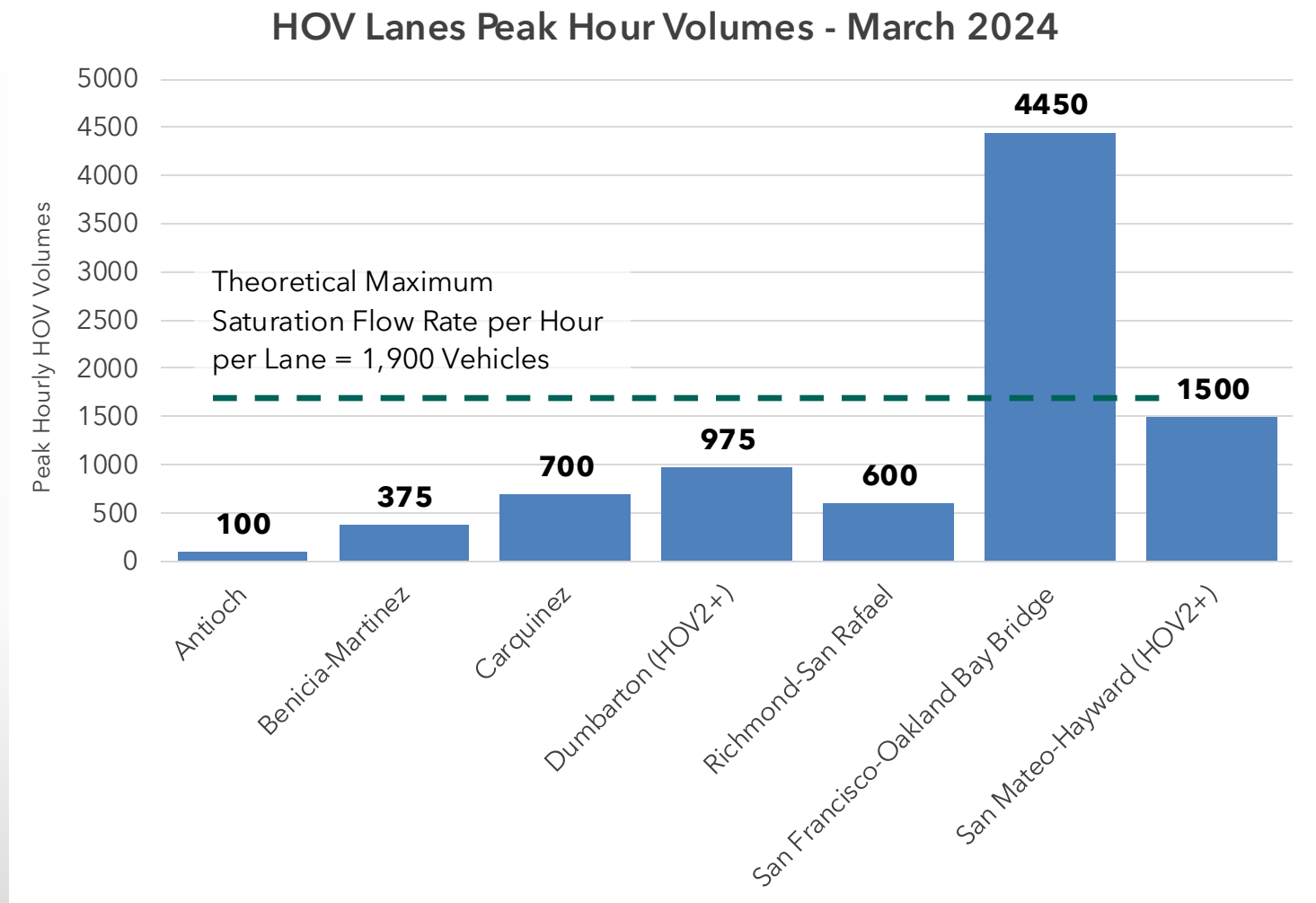
Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Approach and Interstate-580:
New Westbound HOV 2+ lane will begin between Regatta Blvd and Marina Bay Pkwy



- Richmond San-Rafael Forward Project proposes to convert a general-purpose lane to a HOV2+ lane from west of Regatta Blvd. to the Toll Plaza on I-580.
- Currently, there is insufficient existing HOV3+ demand in the I-580 HOV lane. Traffic analysis shows travel time improvements with the proposed HOV Policy.
- Proposed HOV policy allows HOV and transit to use the new HOV lane continuously through the toll plaza.

Increase Person Throughput

- Except at the Bay Bridge, the bridges have peak hour capacity in the HOV lanes.
- Allowing HOV2 into the HOV lane will provide them a time savings and increase overall person throughput.



Enhance Regional Consistency

- Proposed change is consistent with the Agency's policies on other managed lanes to encourage carpooling and transit by maximizing cost and time savings benefits for the highest occupancy vehicles.

Benefit	Vehicle Occupancy	BATA Toll Bridge HOV Lanes	Bay Area Express Lanes*
Maximum	HOV 3+	Time Savings at Half Price Toll	Time Savings at No Toll
Partial	HOV 2	Time Savings** at Full Toll	Time Savings at Half Price Toll

*I-880, SR-237 and US 101 Express Lanes.

**Except at Bay Bridge where HOV2 is not eligible to use the carpool lanes since the volume is too high.



Timing for HOV policy change

- HOV policy change is a key component of RSR Forward initiatives being delivered in early 2026
- Requires update to BATA toll schedule, including public hearing process
- Staff recommends HOV policy change implemented on **January 1, 2026** to:
 - Align with Richmond-San Rafael Forward delivery
 - Combine public hearing process for HOV policy and toll increase
 - Simplify delivery and public messaging of HOV policy and 2026 toll increase

Next steps for HOV policy

- Conduct public review process in November and December 2024, including a webinar with Q&A, formal comment period, and public hearing.
- Seek approval for HOV policy changes in December, in conjunction with update to tolls.

Proposed timeline for HOV policy changes (matches proposed toll increase timeline)

Tasks	2024				2025												'26	
	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	
BATA O and BATA review of proposed HOV policy change for public comment		●																
Public comment period & hearing			●●															
One virtual public meeting			●															
BATA approval HOV policy changes				●														
Implementation: RCSC, toll system, signage					■													
Customer education													■					
HOV policy effective Jan 1, 2026																		◆

