Carsie Bonner

Subject: RE: BATA Oversight Committee 12 November, 2025

From: aleta dupree <tsjoan@icloud.com>
Sent: Monday, November 10, 2025 1:05:27 PM
To: MTC-ABAG Info <info@bayareametro.gov>
Subject: BATA Oversight Committee 12 November, 2025

External Email

Greetings Commission Secretary, please forward this message to the BATA Oversight Committee for the Regular Meeting of 12 November, 2025.

Good morning Committee Chair Margaret Abe-Koga and Members.

Aleta Dupree for the record, she, her, with Team Folds.

I bring you my comments concerning the work and mission of BATA, mostly pertaining to Agenda Item 6A, which is an update on matters related to the FasTrak program. I begin with emphasizing the importance of the FasTrak program, and collection of revenue on our toll bridge system in general. I consider my own experiences, in remembering when I paid to use various toll facilities with currency, mostly in coinage. It was in 1986, when I first obtained a personal automobile, that I gained experience in paying tolls myself. This first time happened in the spring of 1986, at the Exit 24 toll station of the New York State Thruway, in Albany, New York. I think I drove to the next exit, number 25, in the nearby town of Schenectady. To be honest I do not remember how much I paid, it was probably no more than twenty five cents. You see, at the time, many toll roads had distance based fares, and tickets were handed out upon entry, and collected at the point of exit, and the appropriate amounts paid in cash. At one time the tickets were handed out by people, though eventually machines were installed to dispense these tickets. To have a job as a toll collector was something people either loved or hated. I considered going to work for the Thruway in my younger years but I ended up going on to other things. There are many nice people that toll collectors encountered through their workdays, especially regulars. Then again, there were challenges, inclement weather, drivers who were not so nice, exhaust fumes, and various risks to property or persons. Yet I have many good memories of driving on various toll facilities in my younger years.

And we have come a long way forward. I have shared with you my experiences using the Pikepass transponder based toll system in Oklahoma in beginning in early 1991. Yet as electronic toll collection advanced in the 1990's I had already moved to places that did not have toll roads. And in 2009 I gave away my car, therefore I have not directly paid tolls since that time.

For me it was easy to start using Pikepass in 1991. And I do fully support the FasTrak program, as I have often said before. I do remember that the minimum balance for Pikepass in 1991 was $40, with automatic $40 reload when the balance dipped below $10. Things did change over time, yet for some the initial balance can be an issue. In April of 1991 there were no websites, and websites did not become commonplace until 1995. Yet I still do remember driving to Oklahoma City to pick up two transponders for the cars I had. And for me the rest is history, and I enjoyed Pikepass until I moved away from Oklahoma in 1995.

I do believe that outreach is essential in helping people to be involved in FasTrak. Today there are more ways to perform outreach. Yet even with these methods of improved outreach, how do we make the case for FasTrak? For me, in Oklahoma, with Pikepass, it was easy, even then. For some, it is easier said than done. It is person to person outreach that I think is most effective for making the case, yet that is only one item in our toolkit, given the large population of our community that is Bay Area Soil.

I am in support of a cash payment network, just as with Clipper. You see, a cash payment network is a way for people to spend down their cash balances as they discover the various methods to pay for and manage FasTrak. I consider that given the phaseout of penny production, that there are billions of pennies that are not in circulation. And so given the shortage of pennies, people can take their jars and jugs of pennies to be redeemed, and take those proceeds to a cash payment location to fund a FasTrak account.

I submit to you that I am not speaking academically here. A few years ago I was cleaning house, and I was working through some boxes with paper and books. And in the bottom one one of those boxes, was about $1.75 in small change. I do not have a FasTrak account, and at the time I did not have a trip planned to the Bay Area. Given that I was still at home, it would be quite a while before I would have access to a BART vending machine, where I would add funds to my Clipper balance. And so I went to my local credit union branch when I was in that neighborhood and I deposited the small change into my checking account. There are some financial institutions where people can put their change into machines, which then credit the funds to their account. And so a cash payment network can be a way to reach out to the many who would benefit from using FasTrak. And a cash payment network can enable people with cash in hand to convert those funds very easily to FasTrak.

I do believe FasTrak is easy to use, and the case for its use is definitely founded in real benefits to users concerned. And the payment of tolls with stored value isn't really any different from filling a gas tank or charging a battery. This is really just a matter of timing, in funding FasTrak balances in concert with deposits of income. You see, for me as a person on fixed income, I receive my income through what is called direct deposit, which I first experienced in 1989. FasTrak is a method of toll payment that can be used by people experiencing all different methods of income payment, for many it is direct deposit. And with me being in the equity priority community, I have access to many different financial services including payment cards and direct deposit, and without additional fees for normal and routine usage.

I do see FasTrak as a living document, and a work in progress. We can consider the Clipper Program, which is planned to go into customer transition on 10 December, 2025. This will include open payments for Public Transportation in our beloved Bay Area. And BART has being doing open payments since 20 August of this year. It is essential to remember that BART is not only a leader in regional Public Transportation but that BART also has the unique distinction of being The Peoples System. And we can learn much from other systems, such as MTA Bridges and Tunnels in New York City. Yet the MTA is most known for operating a famous Public Transportation System known as the New York City Subway, which has an open payment based fare system branded as OMNY. The MTA also owns and operates the famous railroad station in New York City that is Grand Central Terminal. And toll and transit payment has many common themes. The Subway has the distinction of being The System that is Legendary and Stately, and practices ideals that are steeped in tradition and mindful of history. And we have EZ Pass in the eastern half of the country. Yet we at BATA have always shown the world in our leadership how things are done, and done well. I look forward to your advancing the conversation on this matter in your Meeting.

Thank you.