

# Bay Area Toll Authority

December 18, 2024

Agenda Item 4a-24-1575

## Toll Increase and Changes to High Occupancy Vehicle Policies for BATA Bridges

### **Subject:**

A request that the Authority adopt BATA Resolution No. 184, Toll Schedule for the State-Owned Toll Bridges in the Bay Area to the Authority for approval. This Resolution would increase toll rates over a five-year period starting January 1, 2026 to fund toll bridge operations, maintenance, and preservation and establish a uniform three-person carpool requirement for discounted tolls on all bridges. The Authority shall consider all public comments received through the end of the public comment period on December 18, 2024 before determining whether to proceed with the toll increase and high-occupancy vehicle (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 be eligible for the discounted toll.

### **Toll Increase:**

As discussed by the BATA Oversight Committee and Authority over the past six months, BATA is increasing tolls to meet its responsibility to fund bridge operations, maintenance and preservation. The increased toll revenue will be used to fund BATA's \$1.9 billion Capital Improvement Plan as well as needs identified through BATA and Caltrans' joint asset management plan to keep the bridges in a state of good repair. BATA's plan of finance has long assumed a need to increase revenue for rehabilitation and modeled a toll increase in 2027 for this

purpose. The pandemic negatively impacted revenues and operating costs, resulting in substantially lower-than-anticipated toll revenues. The proposed toll increase would largely make up the gap between current toll revenue and pre-pandemic projections.

Toll rates for the state-owned bridges are as follows:

<b>Vehicle Class</b>	<b>Current Toll through Dec. 31, 2024</b>	<b>Toll as of Jan. 1, 2025 (Last voter-approved RM 3 Increase)</b>
Carpools	\$3.50	\$4
2 axles	\$7	\$8
3 axles	\$17	\$18
4 axles	\$22	\$23
5 axles	\$27	\$28
6 axles	\$32	\$33
7 axles and more	\$37	\$38

The toll increase proposal includes increasing tolls on the seven state-owned bridges by 50 cents per year from 2026 through 2030. This proposal would spread the increase over five years rather than a large one-time increase. The increased revenue would be used 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 an

additional 25 cents for customers who pay with a pre-registered license plate account and by \$1 for tolls paid by invoice.

The proposed plan would result in the following toll rates through 2030:

**Proposed Toll Rates**

<b>Vehicle Class</b>	<b>Payment Method</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2026</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2027</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2028</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2029</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2030</b>
<b>Carpool</b> (50% of 2-axle FasTrak rate)	FasTrak	\$4.25	\$4.50	\$4.75	\$5.00	\$5.25
<b>2-Axle</b>	FasTrak	\$8.50	\$9.00	\$9.50	\$10.00	\$10.50
	License Plate	\$8.50	\$9.25	\$9.75	\$10.25	\$10.75
	Invoice	\$8.50	\$10.00	\$10.50	\$11.00	\$11.50
<b>3-Axle</b>	FasTrak	\$19.50	\$21.00	\$22.50	\$24.00	\$25.50
	License Plate	\$19.50	\$21.25	\$22.75	\$24.25	\$25.75
	Invoice	\$19.50	\$22.00	\$23.50	\$25.00	\$26.50
<b>4-Axle</b>	FasTrak	\$25.00	\$27.00	\$29.00	\$31.00	\$33.00
	License Plate	\$25.00	\$27.25	\$29.25	\$31.25	\$33.25
	Invoice	\$25.00	\$28.00	\$30.00	\$32.00	\$34.00
<b>5-Axle</b>	FasTrak	\$30.50	\$33.00	\$35.50	\$38.00	\$40.50
	License Plate	\$30.50	\$33.25	\$35.75	\$38.25	\$40.75
	Invoice	\$30.50	\$34.00	\$36.50	\$39.00	\$41.50
<b>6-Axle</b>	FasTrak	\$36.00	\$39.00	\$42.00	\$45.00	\$48.00
	License Plate	\$36.00	\$39.25	\$42.25	\$45.25	\$48.25
	Invoice	\$36.00	\$40.00	\$43.00	\$46.00	\$49.00
<b>7-Axle and more</b>	FasTrak	\$41.50	\$45.00	\$48.50	\$52.00	\$55.50
	License Plate	\$41.50	\$45.25	\$48.75	\$52.25	\$55.75
	Invoice	\$41.50	\$46.00	\$49.50	\$53.00	\$56.50

BATA Resolution No. 184, (Attachment A), establishes revisions to the Toll Schedule for the state-owned bridges. Attachment B shows the Toll Schedule with revisions tracked against the current Toll Schedule. Since the BATA Oversight Committee referred BATA Resolution No. 184 to the Authority on December 11, staff supplemented the resolution with a recital that documents the Authority’s intent to use revenues generated by the toll increases to support bridge operations, maintenance, and rehabilitation needs, and associated debt service.

## **HOV Policy Changes**

BATA proposes updates to the policies for HOVs 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 be eligible to 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 proposed 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.

BATA Resolution No. 184, (Attachment A), establishes revisions to the Toll Schedule for the state-owned bridges. Attachment B shows the Toll Schedule with revisions tracked against the current Toll Schedule.

## **Summary of Public Outreach**

Staff informed the public about the proposed toll increase and HOV policy changes in multiple ways, including: public legal notices posted in newspapers in multiple languages, a public webinar on November 13, 2024, public hearing news releases on MTC's website, email blasts,

through numerous Committee and Authority meetings, and a public hearing on November 20, 2024. Attachment C details the public outreach activities.

### **Summary of Public Comments**

A 45-day comment period, beginning November 4, 2024 was provided for the public to submit comments through any of the following ways:

1. Attendance at the public hearing on November 20, 2024
2. Attendance at the public meetings for the BATA Oversight Committee on December 11, 2024 and the BATA meeting on December 18, 2024
3. Emails sent to [info@bayareametro.gov](mailto:info@bayareametro.gov)
4. Written comments sent by mail

A total of 197 comments from the public were provided through noon on December 11, 2024. Of the 197 comments, 173 comments opposed a toll increase on the state-owned bridges, 11 supported a toll increase, and 13 were undecided about the toll increase. The major themes raised in the public comments are summarized below. Many comments contained multiple themes. The table below provides a summary of all comment themes received and staff's responses. Public comments are available on MTC's website at <https://mtc.ca.gov/digital-library/5037260-bata-public-comments>.

	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	<b>Economic Burden</b> (121): Opposition to the proposed toll increases, highlighting the financial strain on working-class families and questioning the necessity of such hikes.	While BATA is sensitive to financial strains and the rising cost of living, BATA is required to keep the bridges in a state of good repair, and tolls are the only reliable funding source available to BATA. BATA has designed the toll increase at \$0.50 increments each year to minimize the annual burden to toll payers.

	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
2	<p><b>Government Accountability</b>            (36): Many comments appreciate the importance of transparency and call for clear and detailed financial documentation to help justify any proposed toll increases.</p>	<p>Please refer to MTC’s Digital Library (<a href="https://mtc.ca.gov/digital-library">https://mtc.ca.gov/digital-library</a>) for the following:</p> <p>See this link on MTC’s website with an overview of how BATA bridge tolls are used:  <a href="https://mtc.ca.gov/funding/regional-funding">https://mtc.ca.gov/funding/regional-funding</a></p> <p>MTC’s Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024:  <a href="https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/MTC-FY2024_ACFR.pdf">https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/MTC-FY2024_ACFR.pdf</a></p> <p>BATA’s Capital Improvement Plan &amp; Toll Bridge Program Report:  <a href="https://mtc.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6017410&amp;GUID=87C708D1-603E-49C9-8E74-0D0F607ED9B4&amp;Options=&amp;Search=">https://mtc.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6017410&amp;GUID=87C708D1-603E-49C9-8E74-0D0F607ED9B4&amp;Options=&amp;Search=</a></p> <p>BATA Operating and Capital Budgets FY2024-2025:  <a href="https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/meetings/attachments/6037/5a_BATA_Resolution_0177.pdf">https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/meetings/attachments/6037/5a_BATA_Resolution_0177.pdf</a></p> <p>BATA Resolution 175 Asset Management Policy  <a href="https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/meetings/attachments/5895/5a_24_0071_2_BATA_Resolution_No_175.pdf">https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/meetings/attachments/5895/5a_24_0071_2_BATA_Resolution_No_175.pdf</a></p>

<p><b>3</b> <b>Economic Impact on Lower-Income Communities (33):</b> The toll increases disproportionately impact lower-income communities, particularly those who rely on bridges for daily commute.</p>	<p>While a toll increase has a greater burden on a low-income household than an affluent household, BATA is required to keep the bridges in a state of good repair, and tolls are the only reliable funding source available to BATA, which receives minimal federal and state funding.</p> <p>MTC – as the region’s transportation planning, coordinating, and financing agency which is governed by the same board as BATA – has a goal of lowering transportation costs in the Bay Area to make travel more affordable and open up greater access to opportunity. Based on the most recent Bay Area travel survey, low-income households who use the toll bridges are about twice as likely as other households to also take transit. While BATA is not authorized to offer discounted tolls based on income, MTC is working to lower the overall cost of transportation by making public transit more affordable. In 2020, MTC partnered with Bay Area transit agencies and launched Clipper START, which provides a 50% discount on transit fares for qualifying low-income residents. As an example, on Clipper START a roundtrip transbay BART fare is just \$5 instead of \$10. Clipper START is available on all major transit systems that accept Clipper.</p> <p>MTC is also working, in coordination with the Association of Bay Area Governments to increase the housing supply, particularly affordable housing, and create more housing close to jobs.</p>
---	---

	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Call for Alternative Solutions</b> (28): BATA should explore alternative solutions to toll increases, such as identifying other revenue sources or better managing existing funds	State law requires that BATA fund toll bridges in a state of good repair. BATA has applied for federal grants from the recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to fund various work needed on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, but a one-time grant, while welcome, would not replace the need to raise bridge tolls due to the scale and ongoing nature of the need. BATA needs an ongoing, reliable revenue stream to pay for bridge preservation projects and cannot depend on one-time grants or other funding sources outside its control.  Refer to Government Accountability theme above for detailed information on how existing toll revenue funds are used.



	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Geographic Disparity (14):</b> The toll increase disproportionately impacts residents of the East Bay and Solano County who often choose to live there due to more affordable housing</p>	<p>As provided in state law, BATA provides a discount on the RM 3 portion of the bridge toll for drivers crossing multiple bridges during commute hours on the same day. This discount is intended to lessen the impact for heavy users that cross more than one bridge during commute times. Drivers receive a discount on the second bridge crossing. The current discount of \$1 will increase to \$1.50 on January 1, 2025 as part of the final RM 3 toll increase. A maximum of one morning discount and one afternoon discount can be applied to the same vehicle for the day. MTC is also working, in coordination with the Association of Bay Area Governments, to increase the housing supply, particularly affordable housing, and create more housing close to jobs, as called for in Plan Bay Area 2050.</p>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Support for Toll Increase (11)</b></p> <p>General support for the toll increases to raise necessary revenue for infrastructure improvements and public transit. Belief that higher tolls will help reduce car usage and encourage more people to use public transportation like BART.</p>	<p>Revenue from the toll increase is intended to fund the operations, maintenance and rehabilitation of the seven state-owned bridges and keep them in a state of good repair.</p>

	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Need for Enhanced Public Transportation Options (8):</b> Comments hoped the increased tolls would encourage more transit use, and increased investment in public transportation options.	Revenue from the toll increase is intended to fund the operations, maintenance and rehabilitation of the seven state-owned bridges. BATA can raise bridge tolls for other purposes, such as for transit operations, only with legislative authorization as was the case with Regional Measure 2 and 3.  Regional Measure 2 and 3 are helping to fund several public transit improvements that serve bridge corridor travelers. MTC’s Plan Bay Area 2050 recognizes that investments in public transit, funded with sources other than the proposed bridge toll increase, are critical to a healthy, vibrant, affordable and equitable Bay Area.
<b>8</b>	<b>High-Occupancy Vehicle Policy (3):</b> Two-person carpools should receive the toll discount.	This policy is designed to encourage maximum person throughput by rewarding two-occupant vehicles with the travel time savings available in the carpool lanes, and provide the highest reward via a discounted toll, to carpools with three or more occupants.

Attachment D contains responses to feedback received from Commissioners at the November 20, 2024 Public Hearing. Attachment E contains responses to feedback from Commissioners at the December 11, 2024 Committee meeting.

The Authority shall consider all public comment received through the end of the comment period for the toll increase and HOV policy changes agenda item on the Authority’s December 18, 2024 meeting before taking action on the toll increases and HOV policy change.

**Recommendations:**

Staff recommends Authority adoption of BATA Resolution No. 184.

**Attachments:**

- Attachment A – Resolution No. 184, Toll Schedule for the State-Owned Toll Bridges in the Bay Area, Effective January 1, 2026
- Attachment B – Toll Schedule with Revisions Tracked
- Attachment C – Outreach Activities
- Attachment D – Responses to Commissioner Feedback from November 20 Public Hearing
- Attachment E – Responses to Commissioner Feedback from December 11, 2024 Committee Meeting
- Attachment F – Toll Increase Fact Sheet, October 22, 2024
- Presentation

---

Andrew B. Fremier