

Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund

P.O. Box 151439 San Rafael, CA 94915 415-331-1982

June 14, 2020
By E-Mail to:
info@bayarea
metro.gov

Hon. Alfredo Pedroza, Chair
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (sitting as BATA)
375 Beale St., San Francisco, CA, 94105

Re: Proposed Bridge Toll Hike

Dear Chair Pedroza and Commissioners:

TRANSDEF, the Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund, has been involved with MTC for 30 years now. We take a very dim view of the Proposed Bridge Toll Hike. Here's why:

1. The fact sheet informs the public about the useful lives of bridge components, and the projected costs to maintain them. While no supporting documentation is offered, it is seemingly reasonable that funds to cover those costs are needed.
2. However, because BATA has failed to document its current revenues, it, therefore, has failed to establish the need for a toll increase. The fact sheet is totally silent on the revenue from the \$3.00 of bridge tolls currently being collected to support seismic retrofit. Why aren't those funds adequate for the operations, maintenance and rehabilitation programs that the proposed toll increases are supposed to fund?
3. TRANSDEF has determined through discovery with BATA in its suit against the Valley Link project that the seismic retrofit program was completed in 2019, and because of that, MTC is able to allocate the excess funds received from the seismic retrofit tolls to its pet projects, including Valley Link.
4. It is our understanding, confirmed by the East Bay Times Editorial "\$73 million of Bay Area toll money for transit diverted to bridges," that BATA does not produce separate financials for just the bridge maintenance revenues and expenses, but instead merges all toll revenues into one pot.
5. BATA's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report contains a 2024 Schedule 11 that seems to indicate that the bridges earn healthy operating profits. Why is that documentation not dispositive of there being no lack of revenue for preservation of the bridges?

6. Without separate financials, BATA cannot convince the public that it actually needs additional revenue to maintain the bridges.

As a result of the above facts, TRANSDEF strongly objects to the approval of any increase in bridge tolls prior to the release of full documentation of the revenues, expenditures, fund balances and deferred maintenance lists of the bridges' operations, maintenance and rehabilitation programs.

Show us the numbers!

TRANSDEF believes that MTC would not be producing such non-transparent documents as BATA's current financials, had an Inspector General been providing oversight. The time has come for MTC to agree to have an independent office of audits and investigations, headed by an Inspector General, before seeking further funding from the public.

Should BATA insist on proceeding on its existing approval schedule, without producing the requested financial documentation, TRANSDEF predicts MTC's reputation will suffer greatly as the truth comes out.

Sincerely,

/s/ DAVID SCHONBRUNN

David Schonbrunn,
President