



DATE: December 1, 2009  
TO: STA Board  
FROM: Elizabeth Richards, Director of Transit and Rideshare Services  
RE: Toll Increase Options for the State-owned Bay Area Bridges

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**Background:**

The Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA) is authorized to increase the toll on the seven state-owned toll bridges in the Bay Area to pay for the completion of the Toll Bridge Seismic Retrofit Program. Additionally, AB 1175 which was recently passed and becomes effective January 1, 2010 adds the seismic retrofits of the Antioch and Dumbarton Bridges to the Seismic Retrofit Program.

BATA is required to hold public hearings in regard to proposed toll increases for seismic improvements before taking any action. BATA has planned three public hearings, one each in Oakland, San Mateo, and Concord which conclude December 3rd. On December 9th, MTC staff will be presenting a recommendation on the toll option to the BATA Oversight Committee. Action on the toll increase is scheduled for January 2010. Three toll increase options have been proposed.

Tens of thousands of Solano residents commute out of county, primarily to destinations in the Bay Area which require daily bridge crossings: the Carquinez/Zampa Bridge or the Benicia-Martinez Bridge. Solano commuters who travel to San Francisco or other points along the Peninsula cross a second bridge – usually the Bay Bridge. These commuters who drive alone will be required to pay the increased bridge tolls.

A large percent of Solano residents commute by way of car/vanpooling (20%) or transit (5%). Carpools with 3 or more individuals cross bridges toll-free during peak hours so many of these High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) commuters would normally not be affected by a bridge toll increase. However, of the three toll increase options, two include tolls for car/vanpools for the first time.

**Discussion:**

The major reasons cited for the need for a toll increase are: 1) cost of Dumbarton and Antioch seismic retrofit; 2) traffic decreases and resulting loss of revenue; and 3) increased debt and operations cost. The funding strategy to address these increased costs and reduced revenues include pursuing cost savings, improving toll violation collections and seeking new fund sources including increased tolls.

Each of the proposed toll increase options aim to generate \$165 million annually (see Attachment A, Toll Revenue Options). A summary of the current tolls and proposed options are presented below:

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>	
	<b>All 7 bridges</b>	<b>All 7 bridges</b>	<b>All 7 bridges</b>	<b>6 bridges</b>	<b>Bay Bridge</b>
<b>Autos</b>	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	Peak \$6; Off-pk \$4; \$5 wkends
<b>Carpools (3+); Peak periods only</b>	\$0	\$3	\$0	\$3	\$3
<b>Trucks (5-axle truck)</b>	\$2.25	\$4.60	\$7.00	\$4.60	\$4.60

According to BATA, over 10 million eligible carpools cross the bridges each year. Two of the three proposals would charge 3+ carpools a toll for the first time - \$3.00. In addition, carpools would only receive the discounted toll if they use a FasTrak transponder in a carpool lane when crossing a bridge. If the new toll and the required use of a transponder does not decrease carpooling, \$30 million of bridge toll revenue is projected to be generated annually by carpools under Options 1 and 3.

STA staff surveyed several other bridge and toll road tolls in the country to compare to the bridge toll options proposed by BATA (Attachment B). In California, the Golden Gate Bridge toll is currently \$6 for autos and \$0 for carpools. In New York, the New York City bridge tolls ranged from \$8 - \$11 for autos and \$2-\$2.66 for carpools (25% of the auto cost). Several bridges in urban areas are toll free for all users: Seattle, Portland, and Washington D.C.

#### Carpool/Vanpool

By definition, carpools and vanpools do not receive public subsidy as they are private vehicles operated by private, volunteer drivers who operate and maintain these vehicles. They receive no capital or operating funds. Yet, car/vanpools carry large volumes of people across bridges. Over the Bay Bridge, Caltrans reports 21,717 people cross the bridge, during the peak period in 6,736 are car/vanpools vehicles as compared to 26,338 people who cross in 22,903 single vehicles. Thus, car/vanpools carry 44% of the people who cross the bridge in 23% of the vehicles.

Maintaining a high level of car/vanpooling is a publicly cost-effective method of relieving bridge congestion. Staff recognizes that the time may have come for congestion pricing and toll charging for carpools to some degree. None of the research identifies anywhere in the nation that car/vanpools are charged more than a third of the auto rate. At \$3.00, the Bay Area proposals would result in carpools paying 50-60% of the regular toll. Staff recommends a discount to car/vanpools where the car/vanpool toll is 50% or less of the single auto toll.

Under the current bridge toll policy, “commuter buses” do not pay a toll 24 hours a day. Large Commuter Vanpools (11-15 passengers) are considered “commuter buses” in the bridge toll policy definitions. Many Commuter Vanpools from Solano travel to San Francisco and San Mateo counties, thus crossing two bridges regularly. Many of these are destined to United Airlines Maintenance facility of which the work day consists of not only the traditional work hours, but also swing and night shifts resulting in the commute periods outside the peak. In recent years, Commuter Vanpools have been required to use a transponder that has been specifically programmed not to charge a toll when they travel during the off-peak. Under any new proposal, it would be important to ensure that this is maintained and differentiated from car/vanpools with 3-10 passengers who would qualify for reduced toll only during the peak periods.

#### Solano Priority for Net Revenues

MTC staff has not stated if there are projected to be net revenues that would be generated from this proposed toll increase, STA staff is recommending the Board consider identifying and submitting priority projects under public comment should revenues become available. STA staff recommends submitting the following priorities: Capitol Corridor Rail Line and Overcrossing and Rail Stations, I-80 Corridor Improvements, SolanoExpress and TDM Capital and Operating, and Vallejo Station and Ferry Capital and Operating.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

No impact on the STA budget.

#### **Recommendations:**

Approve the following:

1. Support a toll increase option that sets a carpool toll at 50% or less of the auto toll rate;
2. Support maintaining the current 24-hour toll-free status for large Commuter Vanpools;
3. Toll Bridge Revenue Priority Projects for Solano County as listed in Attachment C; and
4. Authorize the STA Chair to submit a comment letter to MTC on the proposed toll increase.

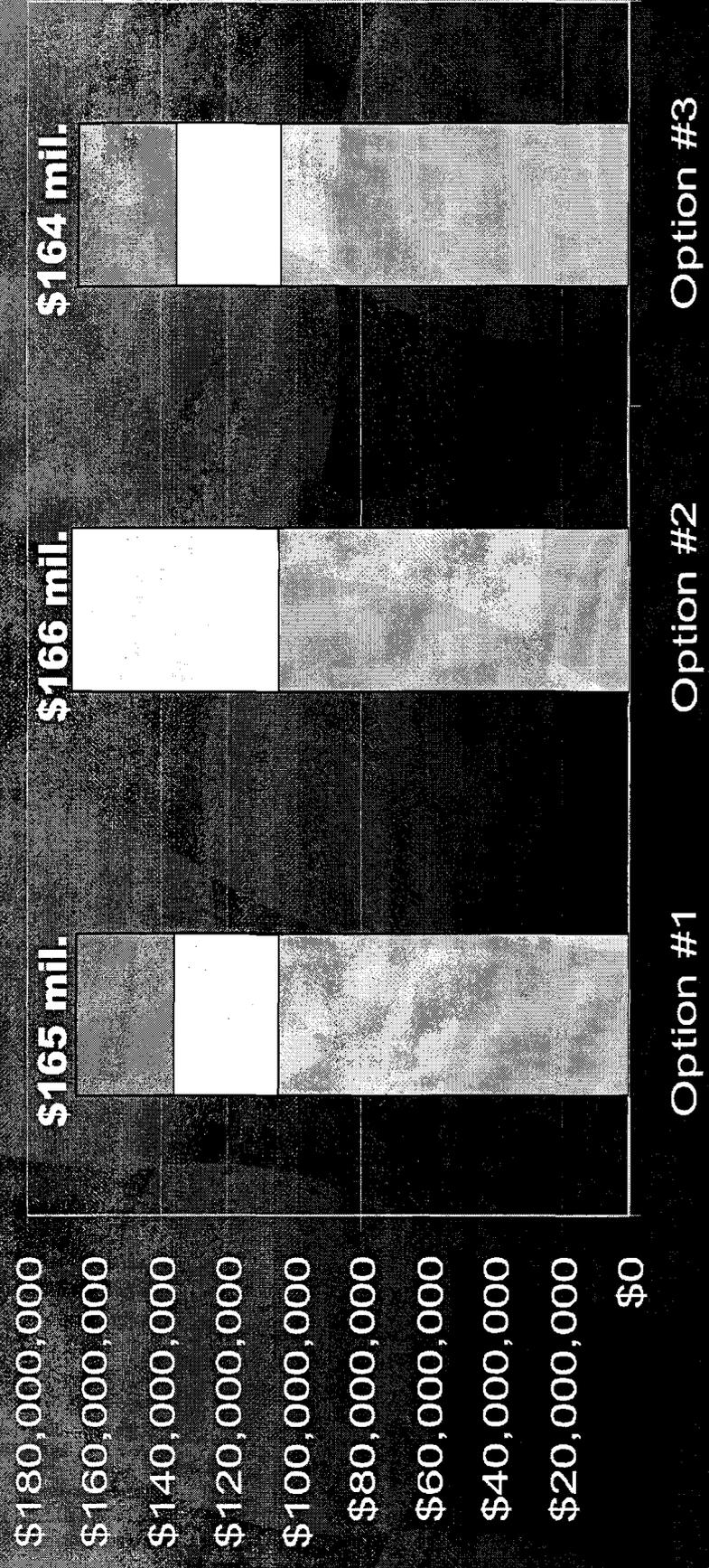
Attachments:

- A. Toll Revenue Options
- B. Nationwide bridge toll comparison
- C. Priority Projects for Excess Toll Revenue

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# Toll Revenue Options

## Toll Revenue Generation Estimates



**Option #1** — \$5 for autos, \$3 for carpools, & \$6 per axle for trucks.

**Option #2** — \$5 for autos; \$0 for carpools, & \$10 per axle for trucks.

**Option #3** — 6 Bridges: Same as Option #1; Bay Bridge \$6 for autos in peak and \$4 for autos in non-peak (M-F), \$5 for autos on weekends.

# Toll Revenue Options

## Comparison of Carpool Toll Rates

Agency/ Facility Type	Cash Toll	Charges for Carpools?	Carpool Toll	Occupancy
BATA (Bridges)	\$4.00	No	\$0	3+/2+
GGB (Bridge)	\$6.00	No	\$0	3+
MTA Verrazano Narrows (Bridge)	\$11.00	Yes	\$2.66*	3+
PANYNJ (Bridges/Tunnels)	\$8.00	Yes	\$2.00*	3+
TCA (Toll Road)	\$5.50	Yes	\$5.25	—

\* Must use staffed lanes and meet enrollment requirements.

- Most other toll roads surveyed do not have reduced rates for carpools.

B A Y A R E A T O L L A U T H O R I T Y

Priority Projects for Excess Toll Revenue

- Capitol Corridor Rail Line and Overcrossing Improvements and Dixon Rail Station Improvements
- I-80 Corridor Improvements
- SolanoExpress and TDM Program Capital and Operating
- Vallejo Baylink Ferry Station and Operating

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