
Matt Driscoll: ...specifically to this topic the panel will listen but we will not engage with speakers. The Thruway Authority has a proposal to adjust tolls on the Thruway again beginning on January 1st, 2021. That's the first adjustment since 2010. This adjustment will take affect after the system-wide conversion to cashless tolling which takes place next month, November of 2020. The Thruway is a user fee supported highway. It is not funded with any taxpayer support. The investments made to the Thruway each year are funded almost entirely by toll revenues. It is through the reinvestment of those toll dollars that the Thruway continues to be one of the nations safest, most reliable, and most affordable highways. To ensure that funds are properly reinvested, we have developed an innovative and a comprehensive assessment management program. This program enables us to use extensive data about pavement and bridge conditions, crash profiles and other important elements of the system to prioritize capital projects and determine the most cost effective and efficient manner to complete those projects. For more than 60 years the Thruway has been essential for commerce and travel in the northeast. Thruway customers in 2019 traveled approximately 8.4 billion vehicle miles on the highway averaging more than 22.8 million vehicle miles per day with about a third of all vehicles coming from out of state. The Thruway plays a pivotal role in our state's economy connecting cities, rural areas, and, of course, tourist destinations as well. The Authority and its dedicated staff have been working hard as part of our effort to modernize and enhance the amenities and benefits of the Thruway system.

In June of this year, we opened the 3.6 mile shared bicycle and pedestrian path on the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge. We're moving ahead to redevelop all 27-service areas along the Thruway. The service areas were originally built back in the 1950s with the last significant redevelopment taking place in the 1990s.

And finally, we're converting to a system-wide cashless tolling next month which will ease congestion for motorists, reduce idling time and its impact on the environment, and help with the reduction of roadway incidents. These critical upgrades are moving forward even while the Thruway Authority has not adjusted tolls in 10 years and with toll rates on the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge which are considerably lower than its counterparts across the northeast. Our proposal has been informed by listening sessions we held in July of 2019 in both Rockland and Westchester Counties. Feedback from the listening sessions as well as recommendations by StanTech, Incorporated, the Thruway Authority's independent traffic engineer were considered in this current toll adjustment proposal.

But before we hear your comments, I want to clarify what this proposed adjustment means to you, our customers. Simply stated, beginning January 1, 2021, New York E-Zpass customers outside of those who use the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge will not be impacted by the proposal. Toll rates for E-Zpass customers on the rest of the system will remain the same. If a customer does not have an E-Zpass, they will use tolls by mail. Equipment on toll gantries will take a picture of the vehicle's license plate and we will send the registered owner of the vehicle a bill in the mail. For those who are toll by mail customers, they will be charged 30% more than the E-Zpass toll rate in addition to a \$2.00 administrative surcharge per billing statement to cover administrative costs. For passenger vehicles, E-Zpass customer will pay \$.50 more in 2021 and an additional \$.50 more in 2022. As part of our proposal a new resident E-Zpass plan will be

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offered for the Westchester and Rockland County residents that will keep their rate flat through 2022. The 40% commuter discount plan for E-Zpass customers will continue to be offered.

And to reduce commercial congestion on the Governor Mario Cuomo Bridge when driver's bridge shop, which they do for the cheapest crossings, our E-Zpass rates for those commercial vehicles on the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge will increase by 31% in 2021 and 30% in 2022. If you do not currently have a New York E-Zpass, I strongly recommend you to consider getting one as soon as possible. With E-Zpass there are numerous discount plans to match your needs regardless of how often you may travel on the Thruway. With cashless tolling going into effect next month and with the proposed toll rate changes taking effect January 1st, of 2021, don't wait, now is the time to sign up and get an E-Zpass and start saving money. Also you do not need to be a New York resident to obtain a New York State E-Zpass account as well.

So Thank you everybody and I'll turn it back to Jennifer. I believe we're ready for our first speaker.

Jennifer Givner: Yes, thank you Director. Just some brief ground rules before we begin. When it's your time to offer your comments, we will enable your audio, video will not be enabled at this time. To allow everyone an opportunity to offer comments, everybody is going to have a maximum of 5 minutes. Please try to help keep us moving with that. And as a reminder, if you're watching you can also submit comments by e-mail to tollcomments@thruway.ny.gov. This is definitely an important part of our process. We appreciate everyone's participation. I'd like to introduce our first speaker it is Camilla Morris. She's with the Bus Association of New York State. As I look to see your line, see if we can unmute you. There you go the line is yours.

Camilla Morris: Okay thank you Jennifer can you hear me okay?

Jennifer Givner: Yes, we can hear you very well. Thank you.

Camilla Morris: You're welcome. Good evening everyone. On behalf of the Bus Association of New York State membership and our millions of passengers, we appreciate the opportunity to express our concern with the proposed toll increase on the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge and the disproportionately high rates that motor coaches pay on the Thruway's main line. COVID-19 has impacted us in unprecedented ways that we could never have imagined just 6 months ago. The bus industry has been particularly hard hit and this is simply not the time to be increasing toll rates when many of these New York State small businesses are truly struggling to survive. My name is Camilla Morris I manage the Oneonta Division of Hale Transportation and I'm the President of the Bus Association of New York State referred to as BANY. Founded in 1938, BANY represents the broader interests of private motor coach companies, their vendors as well as travel and tourism entities. A significant portion of our membership is made up of small and often family owned businesses. These businesses are the backbone of their local communities providing jobs as well as critical transportation to schools, universities, and commuting employees. Our combined membership is responsible for ensuring the safe transportation of millions of New Yorkers annually. COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on our member's ridership and for those businesses that survive, it could take years to get back to

pre-COVID-19 ridership levels. At the same time our industry is facing immense challenges. The Thruway's toll proposal would further increase bus tolls on the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge which already has the highest bus tolls in the region. It is the only bridge in the New York City region that charges 3 axle buses and trucks the same toll rates. The MTA and Port Authority of New York and New Jersey provides discounted fees for buses on their bridges and tunnels to encourage greater use of transit and we believe the Thruway should do the same. Under the Thruway's supposed toll increase for the Governor Mario Cuomo Bridge, three axle buses would increase from a current toll of \$20.75 to \$22.95 in 2021, and \$25.12 in 2022. In these very difficult economic times I implore the members of this panel to rescind the proposed toll increase for the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge and to create a discounted rate for traveling any portion of the Thruway system. Doing so would recognize the fact that transporting commuters and travelers by bus is one of the most fuel efficient and environmentally friendly way to travel. New York State took a global leadership role with its enactment of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. When signing the law, Governor Cuomo said the environment and climate change are the most critically important policy priorities we face. The Act set very ambitious goals driving an 85% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 with an interim mandate of 40% reduction in emissions by 2030, both relative to 1990 levels. The state's transportation sector remains the largest generator of greenhouse gas with automobiles being the largest contributor. The Thruway's toll structure can be utilized as an important tool to help the state achieve these goals. According to the New York State Energy Research Development Authority, gasoline consumption accounts for the largest share of transportation GHG emissions. In 2015, emissions from gasoline accounted for approximately 74% of total transportation emissions. New policies must be considered quickly by the Thruway to encourage increased bus passenger traffic if the CLCPA's interim goal of 40% gasoline GHG reductions by 2030 are to be met. The average full size bus at capacity has the potential to remove as many as 51 cars cutting emissions and reducing traffic congestion. If two passengers decide to take a car, even a hybrid instead of taking the bus, their emissions will then double. According to the American Bus Association, a motor coach carrying 36 passengers gets the equivalent of 205 passenger miles per gallon of fuel. According to the recent study by MJ Bradley and Associates, on average motor coaches use the least amount of energy and produce the lowest carbon dioxide emissions per passenger mile of any of the transportation modes at all. At the same time that New York is rightfully moving to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and studies recognize the critical role of bus transportation in achieving these goals, COVID-19 challenges the very survival of our industry. The membership of BANY are hopeful that the Thruway Board will reject this toll increase on buses and instead adopt a new reduced system-wide tolling structure for buses similar to what virtually every other regional tolling authority has already done. This reduced tolling level should be system-wide and recognized for the necessity of our industry and the substantial benefits we provide to consumers, the environment and the state economy. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this very important matter. Thank you.

Jennifer Givner: Thank you Camilla.

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Matt Driscoll: Thank you Camilla.

Jennifer Givner: Up next we have Anthony Talerico, I apology Anthony, we're going to unmute your line and your line is open and you're ready to go.

Anthony Talerico: Can you hear me okay.

Jennifer Givner: We can, you're a little muffled.

Anthony Talerico: How's that is that better?

Jennifer Givner: Okay go ahead.

Anthony Talerico: Good evening. The Thruway Authority is the new cashless system is price gouging the price discriminating between E-Zpass and _____. The Thruway was bought and paid for by taxpayer funds and should be free as promised a long time ago. Basically the Thruway is forcing travelers to move E-Zpass or recharge on an exorbitant amount of fees and taxes that E-Zpass users are not subject to. Maybe the Thruway should shed the analysis system which has always been a money losing system. If they did they would not have to lose toll travelers and upsetting so many people who also vote and pay to travel. I was against the state separating the Thruway and making it an Authority, as you know, Authority's members _____ and taxpayers have very little to say and this whole hearing was nothing because everything is all in place and millions of dollars spent to put the cashless system in place. I believe taxpayers should rally together against this unfair practice and system. Thank you very much.

Matt Driscoll: Thank you.

Jennifer Givner: Thank you Anthony. At this time we don't have any additional guests registered to speak. If you wish to comment during this virtual public hearing, we're here until 8:00 p.m. this evening. If you haven't already signed up you can give us a call at 518-471-5300 and we can get you signed into the WebEx. Comments must be limited to the toll adjustment proposal. But we're going to take a brief recess and we'll check back in a little bit. Thank you very much.

This concludes the third and final public hearing for the Thruway Authority's toll adjustment. Thank you to everyone who did participate in these meetings. Thank you to our panelists for their time here. I'd also like to thank everyone here at our headquarters in Albany, our IT team was fantastic and very helpful, the media relations team, also our team in Syracuse where the Director is seated. We're going to continue to receive public comments via e-mail and via mail until next Thursday, October 22nd ending at 5:00 p.m. If you go to our website tollcomments@thruway.ny.gov you can find more information about submitting comments. Thank you so much. Have a great evening.