



# **MDTA Proposed Toll Increase on the Susquehanna River Bridges**

**A FREE RIDE...  
...I HARDLY THINK SO**

**Delegate David Rudolph**

*"The impact of raising tolls to cross the  
Susquehanna River will be immeasurable in  
separating Cecil County from the rest of Maryland."*

*-David Rudolph*

## **MdTA Public Hearing**

June 16, 2011

### **I. I-95: The Real Story**

- The \$5.00 toll on I-95 is for the entire 50-mile length of I-95 from the Baltimore City line to the Delaware State line.
- The \$5.00 toll on I-95 is not for the Tydings Bridge. It is only collected there because that is where the toll plaza was located 50 years ago...
- The only Marylanders who pay to use I-95 from Washington DC to the Delaware line are the citizens of Cecil County.
- The citizens of  
Montgomery County,  
Prince Georges County,  
Howard County,  
Anne Arundel County,  
Baltimore County,  
Baltimore City and,  
Harford County,  
all use I-95 for free (unless they use a Harbor crossing to commute)
- You want to talk about a "Free Ride". 3+ million Marylanders have been given the right to use I-95 on a daily basis free of charge.
- Commuters who get on I-95 from exit 89 (MD 155) and all those south, heading every morning use over 30 miles of I-95 for free - every single day round trip, 60 miles of I-95 for free.
- Again, the only people who pay are the 102,000 Cecil County citizens.

A citizen from Montgomery County can drive to Baltimore City everyday to work for absolutely \$0.00 .

- Our economy has been directly negatively impacted by the toll plaza being located at Perryville. Historically businesses, and especially now with BRAC, have made location decisions based on the cost of doing business in Cecil County – those costs include the tolls.
- **60+ companies** that have relocated to this region for BRAC, only **ONE** has chosen Cecil County. I repeat ONE.

Several years ago I requested that the Authority complete a study to move the toll plaza to the Delaware State line. I applaud the Authority for agreeing to do the study. I do not applaud how the study was conducted or its findings.

I had even requested the assistance of former US Senator Paul Sarbanes to pursue an initiative with Delaware to combine the tolls at the state line. Delaware has moved forward to construct a new toll plaza and the Authority at that time decided not to move the I-95 toll. If that decision had been made, we wouldn't be here tonight because Cecil Countians would have been treated as other Marylanders – equally.

Besides destroying Cecil County's economic development, the tolls impact our -

- Tourism
- Restaurants
- Fishing
- Agriculture
- State Parks
- Higher Educational opportunities, and the
- Casino

to name a few.

## I-95 Toll Proposal

In the short term, I propose the Authority establish a MARYLAND RESIDENT TOLL PLAN on I-95. If necessary such a plan could be limited, but an alternative must be provided so that all Marylanders are treated equally.

I propose that in the long term, the Authority revisit moving the toll plaza to Elkton. I continue to strongly disagree with the findings of the Authority study that 100% - yes 100%, of those using I-95 would divert around the toll if it was moved. But I do agree that because the toll plaza is at Perryville, the intersection at MD 155 and US 40 and the intersection at MD 222 and US 40 are both **failing** intersections – with “**F**” ratings.

## II. The Hatem Bridge

The Hatem Bridge is a bridge that has historically united two communities. Two communities in two different counties but with a common bond – only divided by water.

In 1940, then Governor O’Conor stated, “I think there is a distinction between the general traveling public... and that portion of the neighboring counties which is required constantly to use the bridge...connection with the earning of a livelihood”. In addition, Governor O’Conor stated that he hope in the future it would be toll-**free**.

In regards to the citizens of Cecil and Harford County, O’Conor further stated, “the existing toll rates can be reduced in favor of frequent users of the bridge, and particularly in favor of the residents of Harford and Cecil Counties.

While Governor O’Conor wanted to remove the tolls, today we have a I-95 toll that is 10¢ a mile (50 miles divided by \$5.00) and the toll on the Hatem is \$3.33 per mile (1.5 miles divided by \$5.00) .

In regards to the Hatem Bridge I offer the following proposal.

### Hatem Bridge Proposal

In my conversations with the Secretary and staff, it was stated that the AVI should be replaced for two reasons: safety and to raise revenues. I will address both issues.

#### A. SAFETY

As stated by Transportation Secretary Swaim-Staley during my meeting with her on May 16<sup>th</sup>, safety of Authority employees and those using the Hatem Bridge was an issue in the proposal to discontinue the AVI program.

With that understand, I visited the toll plaza on June 1<sup>st</sup> from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm and yes, to my surprise, there is a safety issue. Employees were going from lane to lane to resolve issues with expired AVI decals – an issue that, according to the Secretary, occurs at the beginning of every month. This is an issue that must be resolved.

**Safety Solution** – Activate the cameras and install a gate release button so that commuters can proceed and a photo of the vehicle tag would be taken. A bill for the full bill and costs would be mailed. Any issue with the decal reading incorrectly could be resolved at the Hatem Bridge Service Center.

B. REVENUE

According to data provided when I met with Transportation Authority staff last Friday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, eliminating the AVI decal system and raising the rate to \$36.00 would raise \$2.4 to 3.2 million. The average projection of additional revenue therefore is \$ 2.8 million.

**Revenue Solution** – Maintain a modified AVI Program

The new program would be broken down into two components

- AVI – Maryland residents
- AVI – Non-Maryland

Using \$2.8 million as the potential revenue increase, I propose the following –

1. Establish the following rate schedule (raises \$1.8 million)
  - a. AVI – Maryland Resident \$10.00
  - b. AVI – Non-Resident \$40.00

While, to paraphrase the staff, it has not been the practice to provide such discounts in the past to Maryland citizens, the Rhode Island federal court case (Cohen v Rhode Island Turnpike Bridge Authority), clears the way for the Authority to change their decision in favor of Maryland citizens. Judge William Smith clearly ruled in favor of Rhode Island’s in-state toll schedule.

2. Reduce Hatem Bridge operation expenses by 10%. (Savings of \$523,000).
3. Eliminate the non-revenue transponder program (as proposed by DLS).
4. Develop a public partnership with the Town of Perryville and Havre de Grace to provide off-hour police security (in conjunction with the Authority police assuming the responsibility of I-95).
5. Decrease the E-Z Pass truck discount program (As proposed by the Authority).

(Numbers 3, 4, and 5 will easily raise the remaining \$475,000 needed for my proposal to be revenue neutral)

My final recommendation would be for the Transportation Authority to **implement a senior citizen discount plan** for E-ZPass and AVI decal users.

As I complete my remarks, please note that my proposal is based on information provided by Transportation Authority staff and the Department of Legislative Services.

I understand the significant fiscal situation the Transportation Authority is facing due to the cost of the ICC and the Express Toll Lanes projects. I have not just come here tonight requesting that the proposed toll increases be shifted onto other Marylanders and facilities. I have offered recommendations with viable suggestions to offset any revenue impacts.

On behalf of the citizens of Cecil County, I request your consideration of the unique challenges we face here in Cecil County each and every day by having the two major arteries joining our county with the rest of the state constricted by tolls and that you consider my recommendations in order to achieve Governor O'Connor's goal of recognizing the unique bond between our two counties.

# Elimination of AVI Decal for Hatem Bridge – A Two Phase Increase

## Current AVI Decal Program **ELIMINATED!!!!**

### Proposed Bridge Discount Plan Effective 10/01/2011

\$36 for unlimited trips annually  
**PLUS** \$1.50 monthly fee = **\$54** per year  
**PLUS** \$21 transponder = **\$75**  
 in October 2011

### Proposed Bridge Discount Plan Effective 10/01/2013

\$72 for unlimited trips annually  
**PLUS** \$1.50 monthly fee = **\$90** per year  
**PLUS** \$21 transponder = **\$111.00 !!**  
 in October 2011

	% Increase to \$54 (minus transponder cost)	% Increase to \$75
<b>\$10.00 AVI Program</b>	<b>440%</b>	<b>650%</b>

	% Increase to \$72 (minus transponder cost)	% Increase to \$111
<b>\$10.00 AVI Program</b>	<b>620%</b>	<b>1010%</b>

# Hatem Bridge Commuter Plan Recommendations

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- Maintain the AVI decal System
- Establish a Maryland resident and a non-resident toll plan
- To ensure employee safety repair cameras and install electronic gate release mechanisms

# I-95 Commuter Plan Recommendations

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- Develop a Maryland resident toll plan
- Continue to consider relocating the toll plaza to MD/DE state line – west of the I-95/MD 279 interchange