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DELAWARE RIVER AND BAY AUTHORITY

DELAWARE MEMORIAL BRIDGE

PROPOSED TOLL INCREASE

PUBLIC HEARING RE:

TWO-PHASED PLAN FOR BRIDGE TOLL RATES

HELD ON

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2024

6:30 P.M.

SALEM COMMUNITY COLLEGE, DAVIDOW HALL

460 HOLLYWOOD AVENUE

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APPEARANCES

PARTICIPANTS:

James Salmon, DRBA Public Information Officer

Tom Cook, DRBA Executive Director

Vince Meconi, DRBA COO

Victor Ferzetti, DRBA CFO

Charlotte Crowell, DRBA Chief Human Resources  
Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Ceil Smith, DRBA Deputy Executive Director

Jennifer Oberle-Howard, DRBA Management Analyst

Dave Hoppenjan, DRBA Chief Engineer

Commissioner Debra S. Behnke

Earl Ransome

PUBLIC SPEAKERS:

Mark E. Johnson

1 PUBLIC HEARING RE:  
2 TWO-PHASED PLAN FOR BRIDGE TOLL RATES  
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6

7 TOM COOK: Well, it looks like it's 6:30,  
8 so I guess we'll get started. Good evening. My  
9 name is Tom Cook, and I'm the executive director of  
10 the Delaware River and Bay Authority. And please  
11 welcome you -- I'd like to welcome you to this  
12 townhall discussion regarding the proposed  
13 restructuring of -- of the toll structure at the  
14 Delaware Memorial Bridge.

15 So just a few housekeeping items first.  
16 One, when we get to the question and answer section  
17 at the end of the presentation, please come up to  
18 the microphone, state your name and please spell it  
19 for our -- our court reporter, Lindsay. And if you  
20 would like a copy of the transcript at the end,  
21 please provide information to her so that she can  
22 get that to you.

23 So really what tonight is about is to have  
24 a townhall meeting regarding -- really the purpose  
25 is to talk about the toll structure here at the

1 Delaware Memorial Bridge. And the purpose of this  
2 initiative is to accomplish two goals. The first  
3 one is a smooth transition to a cashless, electronic  
4 tolling environment at the Delaware Memorial Bridge.  
5 And the second one is to secure the resources to  
6 allow the DRBA to make the adequate infrastructure  
7 investments in our assets.

8           So at this time, I'd like to introduce the  
9 members that -- from my staff that will be  
10 presenting. To my left is Ceil Smith, the deputy  
11 executive director. To her left is Vince Meconi,  
12 the chief operating officer. And to his left is  
13 Vincent Ferzetti, who is the chief financial  
14 officer. Also here tonight is the chief human  
15 resources officer, Charlotte Crowell.

16           And in the audience, I'd like to also  
17 recognize our vice chairman, Earl Ransome from New  
18 Jersey, thank you, and Commissioner Debbie Behnke,  
19 and her famous husband, dancing partner, Charlie.

20           So after that, really, I'd like now -- I'd  
21 like to turn it over to Ceil to go over the agenda  
22 and give you a little bit of background about the  
23 DRBA.

24           CEIL SMITH: Thank you, Tom, and good  
25 evening. I'd like to take this opportunity to

1 review tonight's agenda. First, we'll provide an  
2 overview of the Authority's transportation network  
3 and responsibilities. Next, we'll explore the  
4 capital investments recently completed, or currently  
5 under the way, and what the future capital needs  
6 are. Then we'll divert into the bridge toll  
7 structure and the plan two-phase approach necessary  
8 to fund the Agency's capital requirements, including  
9 a timeline of what to expect.

10 Finally, we'll open the floor to  
11 questions. We ask that you wait until the end of  
12 the presentation. There's a lot of information in  
13 the presentation that might answer your questions  
14 and concerns.

15 Who are we and what do we do? The DRBA  
16 does not receive tax dollars from either Delaware  
17 and New Jersey or the federal government to fund its  
18 operations. We're a bi-state governmental agency  
19 created by a compact in 1962 between the states of  
20 Delaware and New Jersey. The Delaware River and Bay  
21 Authority, DRBA, owns and operates the Delaware  
22 Memorial Bridge twin spans, the Cape May-Lewes  
23 Ferry, and the Forts Ferry Crossing.

24 The Authority also operates and maintains  
25 five regional airports. In New Jersey, Millville

1 Airport and Cape May Airport. In Delaware, the  
2 Wilmington Airport, the Civil Air Terminal, and the  
3 Delaware Airpark.

4 Since its inception, the DRBA has  
5 successfully carried out its primary mission of  
6 providing vital transportation links between the  
7 states of New Jersey and Delaware.

8 And at this time, I'm going to turn over  
9 the next part of the presentation to Mr. Meconi, who  
10 has more than 30 years of public sector manageable  
11 experience, including Secretary of Department of  
12 Health and Social Services for the state of  
13 Delaware. He also served as deputy chief  
14 administrative officer for New Castle County, and  
15 Mr. Meconi is also an author. I present our chief  
16 operating officer, Vincent P. Meconi.

17 VINCENT MECONI: Thank you very much,  
18 Ceil. So what I want to talk about is basically a  
19 couple of things. Why do we need to spend so much  
20 money, and why does everything cost so much?

21 So the first reason is probably the most  
22 obvious. We have an aging infrastructure. And in  
23 that regard, we're like the rest of the country.  
24 Our two bridge spans were built, first in 1951, and  
25 then the second one was built in 1968. I-295, which

1 we have seven miles of, was constructed in the  
2 1950s.

3 Our ferry vessels were launched in 1974  
4 through 1981, and our airports, except for the  
5 Delaware Airpark in Cheswold, date from World War  
6 II. So when you think about it, it's pretty  
7 interesting to note that the most -- that the newest  
8 part of our infrastructure dates from 1981, that  
9 most recent ferry vessel.

10 We have a large transportation network to  
11 maintain. It has an \$800 million book value, and  
12 that's on a depreciated basis. And to replace, even  
13 the bridge would probably cost several billion  
14 dollars.

15 The other thing to -- to keep in mind is  
16 that construction inflation exceeds consumer price  
17 index inflation every year. By the end of this  
18 year, the projections are that the CPI will have  
19 gone up 22.5 percent in the last 5 years. And keep  
20 that number in mind. When Victor presents, he's  
21 going to come back to that number. In contrast,  
22 construction infrastructure inflation is 45 percent  
23 over those same 5 years. It's almost exactly  
24 double.

25 So if you think buying groceries is

1 expensive, try buying steel or concrete or heavy  
2 equipment. So it's partly materials, but it's also  
3 partly labor. There are now -- I recently read that  
4 there are 100,000 fewer skilled tradespersons in  
5 this country than there were before the Great  
6 Recession. So there's a labor shortage in the  
7 construction industry as well driving up costs.

8           So before we talk about what we're going  
9 to do, I thought it would be helpful to talk about  
10 what we have done. We went back to the presentation  
11 slides the last time a toll increase was required  
12 and -- and was presented in this very room. And,  
13 basically, we've done pretty much everything that we  
14 said we'd do. So here are some of the highlights.  
15 Not everything by any means, but some of the  
16 highlights.

17           So probably the most important thing we  
18 did was put an overlay on the deck, the roadway of  
19 the northbound span, which really needed it, with a  
20 state-of-the-art product called ultra-high  
21 performance concrete. Now, that cost 73 million,  
22 which is a lot of money, but that new technology  
23 meant that it probably saved \$100 million over  
24 traditional deck repair and moved -- shaved months,  
25 even years, off the -- off the construction



1 timetable.

2           Second thing we did was paint the bridge.  
3 We paint every year, and over the last 5 years,  
4 almost \$45 million. We replaced 346 of the 552  
5 suspender ropes on the bridge. Suspender ropes are  
6 the vertical cables on the bridge, and that cost us  
7 \$12 million.

8           We did other steelwork repair. Something,  
9 again, we have to do every year, given that we're  
10 operating in a wind and saltwater environment. Over  
11 the last 5 years, that added up to \$10 million. And  
12 we replaced the pin and link mechanisms at the  
13 towers on the bridge at over \$8 million. Pin -- pin  
14 and links are assemblies that connect the deck, the  
15 roadway with the towers. And we replaced obsolete  
16 metal-on-metal bearings with state-of-the-art slide  
17 bearings. Much, much improved.

18           Our ship collision protection system is  
19 going on right now. That's the largest and most  
20 expensive project we've ever done. It'll cost \$93  
21 million by the time it's done. It's under  
22 construction now, well underway. It'll be completed  
23 next year.

24           Now, when we proposed this project some  
25 years back, the question that everybody asked was,

1 well, really, how likely is it that a ship would  
2 collide with a bridge? And we said, well, it's 100  
3 percent likely because it already happened. The  
4 second span was opened in 1968 and within a year, a  
5 ship actually hit that span, causing about \$1  
6 million in damage, which would be \$7 million today.

7 And then, as you all know, seven months  
8 ago, the world saw exactly what can happen when  
9 today's megaships hit a bridge. In Baltimore, that  
10 giant ship hit the Key Bridge and collapsed it in 20  
11 seconds. Our giant steel, sand, and stone cylinders  
12 would stop that ship and even bigger ships. And as  
13 I said, well underway now with completion next  
14 summer.

15 So we're pretty proud of our completed  
16 projects, and we've done a lot. But the thing --  
17 the thing is to maintain our infrastructure, we need  
18 to make continual investments, year after year. So  
19 here's some of the highlights of our five-year  
20 capital improvement plan.

21 The first thing I'm going to talk about is  
22 four, what I would call special projects, and then  
23 some things that we have to do every year.

24 So our first special project, and -- and  
25 by special, I mean kind of a one-off in contrast to

1 a project that we have to do every year like  
2 painting. These are sort of one-offs. You build  
3 them and then -- and then they're -- they're pretty  
4 much done for a while.

5 So the first one that I want to talk about  
6 is what we're really all here about, the toll system  
7 replacement, moving to cashless tolling probably  
8 within the next five years. Current estimate, about  
9 \$21 million. So in order to do that, we need to --  
10 there's an electronic or information technology  
11 component and there's also a construction component.

12 So as you can see on this slide to the  
13 left, this -- these are overhead E-ZPass readers of  
14 the kind you would see, for example, on Route 1,  
15 going up and down the state of Delaware. So that's  
16 certainly a technology that -- that -- that we'll be  
17 using.

18 Another option is -- is sometimes known as  
19 pay-by-plate, sometimes tolls by mail. The point  
20 is, I mean, as you can see this on the right, as the  
21 car goes through, it reads the license plate and  
22 then you get a bill in the mail or -- you get a bill  
23 in the mail. So there's also -- that's -- that's  
24 sort of the electronic component.

25 But there's also a construction component.

1 Not just installing the new readers, but demolition  
2 -- but demolishing most or all of the toll booths  
3 and narrowing the toll plaza, which is now 13 or 14  
4 lanes wide to 4 lanes, so it's a consistent 4 lanes  
5 all the way through.

6 The second special project is what we call  
7 combined enhanced wind stabilization and fall  
8 prevention fencing, and that's about \$35 million.

9 Now, right now, our wind protection system  
10 is adequate for about a 70-year storm. In other  
11 words, a storm that would come along maybe once  
12 every 70 years. But recent testing suggests that we  
13 need enhanced protection, so we're installing a  
14 series of wind diffusers, and I hope I can show  
15 this. Oh, well -- oh, there we go. There we go.  
16 That -- that is a wind diffuser. It's basically  
17 simply a metal panel that is going to deflect or  
18 diffuse the wind and -- so that the stability of the  
19 bridge is not threatened.

20 What we're doing is upgrading to today's  
21 standards. If we were to build the bridge today, we  
22 would have to have something like this on the  
23 bridge. So we're really catching up with the state  
24 of the art today.

25 Now, on the right, like all toll bridges

1 around the world, we unfortunately attract  
2 individuals who want to take their own lives, and  
3 we've lost nearly 200 since construction of the  
4 northbound span in 1951. Now, our police department  
5 does a fantastic job of suicide prevention. If they  
6 can get there in time and talk to the individual,  
7 they have almost a perfect record of talking them  
8 down. But sometimes troubled individuals simply  
9 drive onto the bridge, stop the car, get out, and  
10 jump.

11 So what we want to do is construct what we  
12 call an anti-climb fence, as you can -- as you can  
13 see there to the left of the individual. It's about  
14 eight feet tall, and I have a sample here if anyone  
15 would take a look at it. It's -- it's a -- it's a  
16 steel mesh fence, and the idea is not climb -- it's  
17 not impossible to climb it, but it's very difficult,  
18 and the idea is that it would delay the troubled  
19 individual long enough that our police department  
20 could get there and either talk the person down, or  
21 sometimes they physically grab them down.

22 Now, the reason why these two projects are  
23 listed together is that since they are both  
24 additions to the sides of each span, we can save  
25 millions of dollars by bidding and constructing them

1 together.

2 Our third special project is the widening  
3 of I-295 northbound at what we -- what we call  
4 Bridge 1 in Delaware. That'll run about between \$11  
5 and \$12 million.

6 So on the left, this is an overhead view  
7 of the project area, and in the red is the -- is  
8 what we call Bridge 1. It is over North and South  
9 Route 13, Delaware Route 13, and it carries the  
10 traffic over on 295. This is, obviously, to the  
11 west, and then to the east towards New Jersey.

12 As I mentioned, Delaware, DelDOT, that's  
13 the Delaware Department of Transportation, is  
14 widening I-295 northbound up to our property line.  
15 So what we need to do is to prevent a bottleneck we  
16 need to widen our portion. And you can see in the  
17 photo on the right that what exacerbates the problem  
18 is there's basically no shoulder on the right-hand  
19 side and a very narrow one on the left side. So not  
20 only do we have excess traffic flowing into that  
21 area, but we have limited shoulder space. So we  
22 need to do this in order not to make the problem  
23 worse.

24 Our fourth and final special project is  
25 basically a series of five projects that are

1 designed to improve worker safety for our own  
2 employees and also workers of contractors who work  
3 on the bridge, and that's about \$11 million over the  
4 next five years. So what you can see as you do the  
5 arithmetic there, that's \$78.3 million just for  
6 these four -- four projects alone.

7           So here's a little detail on the worker  
8 safety fall protection. So on the left, that's  
9 phase I. We've already done this. So right here  
10 and right here in the dark blue, those are basically  
11 -- they almost look like unspooled yo-yos. They --  
12 they house cables that you attach to the worker's  
13 dress and prevents them from falling, should they  
14 lose their balance. That's phase I, and we've  
15 already done that. And the reason why there's two  
16 is obviously one is for the lower level and -- and  
17 -- and the top one is for the upper level.

18           Now, phase II, which we just awarded the  
19 contract for, and it's very difficult, I know, to  
20 see in this drawing, but here's the platform on  
21 which the worker stands. Here is the railing on the  
22 left side and here's the railing on the right side.

23           What you can't really tell from this is  
24 they're only three feet tall. So that's really not  
25 ideal from a safety standpoint, so we're going to

1 add tops on them to make them four and a half feet,  
2 which is -- which is much safer. And we're also  
3 adding a -- another side rail in the middle here and  
4 over there. And they don't have those middle rails  
5 now. So this will be much -- a much -- much safer  
6 for our -- for our workers. And that's phase II,  
7 and then we have three more phases and other parts  
8 of the bridge for the next five years.

9           So if you look at what we're doing  
10 overall, so those first four projects, as I  
11 mentioned, are 78.3 million, and then we have -- I  
12 -- those are sort of one-offs, and now we have come  
13 to the projects that we have to do every year.  
14 Bridge painting. We're on, basically, a 10-year  
15 cycle. We paint the bridge -- we paint part of the  
16 bridge every year for 10 years, and after 10 years,  
17 we're done, and we got to start all over.

18           I want to emphasize bridge painting is not  
19 aesthetic. It's not to make it look nicer. It is  
20 to prevent -- to prevent or retard corrosion, again,  
21 in our salt air, salt water, high wind environment.  
22 So over the next five years, that's probably going  
23 to cost \$37 million.

24           Second thing we have to do every year,  
25 again, is major steelwork repair, every year in



1 perpetuity at the age of our bridge. So we project  
2 over the next five years, that's \$31 million.

3 And then I mentioned before that we were  
4 in the midst of replacing all of our suspender  
5 ropes, which are original to both spans, even at 75  
6 years, almost 75 years later. So the quantity left  
7 is 206, and we're going to wrap them up over the  
8 next 3 years at a cost of like between \$11 and \$12  
9 million.

10 And then the last thing we've -- we  
11 basically just recently discovered we have to do is  
12 the protective sheathing on our power cables, not  
13 our support cables, are -- are wearing away because  
14 of the vibration on the bridge. If you've ever  
15 spent a minute on the bridge, you know how much it  
16 vibrates really to the point where a few years back,  
17 we had some grad students from the University of  
18 Delaware come in and measure the -- the -- the  
19 vibration, the kinetic energy that was generated.

20 There's so much energy generated by the  
21 vibration, we could actually light the -- light the  
22 bridge with that energy. Of course, there's not the  
23 technology now to make the two go together, but  
24 nevertheless, that's how much vibration there is.  
25 So this is really a 10-year project to replace the

1 -- the power cables, and the next 5 years is going  
2 to run about \$3 million.

3 I also want to mention two ferry projects.  
4 DRBA, as -- as mentioned previously, has  
5 responsibility for three ferry sites and five  
6 airports in addition to the bridge. So I just want  
7 to mention that -- that, even though -- well, let me  
8 talk about them first. So ferry vessel. As I  
9 mentioned, the newest one we have is 43 years old.  
10 The other two are hitting their 50th anniversary  
11 this year. And to replace that one that's reaching  
12 the end of its useful life, that's a little over \$51  
13 million of -- of -- of Authority funding.

14 Cape May Road -- Approach Road  
15 resurfacing. It's -- it's the poorest shape of any  
16 of the roads we maintain, and we really need to --  
17 to resurface that. That'll be about \$9 million over  
18 the next five years. I would note, by the way, that  
19 although we have to maintain nine different  
20 locations, the -- the significant majority of our  
21 spending is here at the bridge. This year in 2024,  
22 two-thirds of all of our capital spending is here at  
23 the bridge versus one-third at all the other sites  
24 combined.

25 So that's what we're going to spend our

1 money on and have spent our money on, and with that,  
2 it's my pleasure to turn it over to my good friend  
3 and colleague for the last nine years, our chief  
4 financial officer, Victor Ferzetti.

5 VICTOR FERZETTI: Thank you, Vince.  
6 Again, my name is Victor Ferzetti. I'm the CFO for  
7 the Del River and Bay Authority. It's a personal  
8 pleasure for me to be here with you. I am from  
9 Carney's Point. I have grown up in the Penns Grove  
10 area and a graduate of the Penns Grove High School.  
11 So anyway, it's a pleasure to be home with you today  
12 to share this information and thank you for being  
13 here.

14 What my goal of this evening is to take  
15 you through the timing and the structure of the  
16 proposal for this in the two phases that Tom  
17 outlined earlier. When you start to talk about  
18 tolls, and I'll be orienting you to the screen,  
19 really, you start with what is a -- what is the  
20 standard for establishing tolls? And there's a  
21 federal bridge rate called -- that requires a -- a  
22 just and reasonable toll rate and establishment of  
23 that.

24 And so when you go through and you begin  
25 to sort of establish what is just, what is

1 reasonable, certainly that applies to the type of  
2 things that -- that Vince outlined for you, where  
3 are you spending the money, how are you going to --  
4 what are you going to use it on, but also, how do  
5 you compare to other entities and other tolls in  
6 your area?

7           So you'll see to the left at the top line  
8 you have the Del River and Bay Authority on the top  
9 line, the DRPA, which is our sister agency with the  
10 four bridges to the north of us, the GW Bridge up  
11 the Turnpike a little bit further to the north, and  
12 then to the south, as a point of comparison, you  
13 have the Fort McHenry Tunnel run by the Maryland  
14 Transportation Authority.

15           The -- the chart goes on to outline the  
16 various classes that we -- that we have at the  
17 bridge. You can see on the left, if you're an E-  
18 ZPass customer and you come over with a car today,  
19 we charge 4.75 for a transaction. The DRPA recently  
20 made theirs \$6 at the GW Bridge. Really, they have  
21 two rates. They have 13.38, which is the off-peak  
22 rate, but their actual peak rate is actually \$2 more  
23 than that. It's \$15.38 for a car using their  
24 facilities.

25           And then the Fort McHenry to the south,

1 which is \$6 if you have their E-ZPass transponder.  
2 But if you're probably like you and me from here,  
3 from this region going there, the likelihood is  
4 you're actually paying \$8 to use their facility for  
5 a vehicle in comparison.

6 The second -- the second class that you  
7 see, passenger cars, cash, video tolling. Ours is  
8 currently \$5, the DRPA is the same at 5, and then at  
9 the GW, they use cashless tolling already at the GW,  
10 as well as the Fort McHenry. So if you go there and  
11 you don't have an E-ZPass, you're actually paying  
12 17.63 and \$12 for those transactions.

13 The commercial -- 5-axle commercial rate  
14 that you see, the 5-axle trucks that you see in the  
15 roads are the most common transaction you'll see at  
16 the bridge, as well as on the highways. We  
17 currently charge 35, the DRPA 45, and amazingly, at  
18 the GW, 99.25 is the off-peak rate. It's not even  
19 the peak rate. It's actually 104 for that. And the  
20 Fort McHenry at \$48.

21 And then the next thing is really for  
22 those local, and many here could be that. The  
23 commuter rate is a -- for those who cross frequently  
24 on the bridge, we charge \$1.25 compared to \$5 for  
25 the DRPA. GW does not have a commuter rate. They

1 -- everything is peak and off-peak with them. And  
2 then the Fort McHenry is a little bit more than  
3 twice our rate at 2.80.

4 And then a frequent travel rate is, for  
5 us, 20 trips in 90 days. You can see that we are  
6 the only entity that offers that type of discount,  
7 2.25 at this time.

8 Jim, if you could go to the next one?  
9 Thank you. So one of the things I wanted to share  
10 with you is what's going on in the industry of  
11 tolling. And you can see by the map here, you have  
12 New York, you have Pennsylvania to the north and  
13 sort of west of us, New Jersey to the east, Maryland  
14 to the south, and ourselves, Delaware, Southern New  
15 Jersey in -- in between there. And what's going on  
16 is, is a conversion to cashless that has either  
17 happened, is likely to happen in the near future, or  
18 just simply new roads that are built aren't being  
19 built with toll plazas in them.

20 So the top bullet you see the New York  
21 agencies, PA, as well as Maryland. They are already  
22 -- they were originally of the traditional style  
23 with toll plazas. Many of them have converted and  
24 either you're using the E-ZPass system or they're  
25 billing you and sending you an invoice at home for

1 that transaction, again, often at a higher rate.

2 And the most newest facility on here is  
3 the 301, which was just recently constructed. It  
4 opened in Southern Delaware, and that is already a  
5 cashless environment. And then probably most  
6 significant for us that drives this conversation is  
7 what's going to happen with the Turnpike.

8 As you know, the Turnpike operates the  
9 Atlantic City Expressway, the Garden State Parkway,  
10 and the Turnpike itself. And they have announced  
11 plans to take the Atlantic City Expressway into a  
12 cashless environment by around May of 2025. They've  
13 expressed intent to convert the Parkway after that,  
14 and after those conversions are complete, they'll  
15 actually move on to the Turnpike itself.

16 And the most significant of that is the  
17 Turnpike itself, Exit 1, which flows into our  
18 facility. And sort of that transition from an  
19 environment when most people traveling through the  
20 region expect to pay either with  
21 E-ZPass or to be billed, and all of a sudden, should  
22 they reach our facility, and those services aren't  
23 available or in the same way, and -- and sort of the  
24 complications that causes for a toll agency.

25 So, Jim, if you could switch over to the

1 next slide? So really, what we're here to discuss  
2 with you is a two-part phase approach to this, and,  
3 you know, first phase being transition to a cashless  
4 environment. The industry standard, as you can see  
5 up there, is 90 percent. For those legacy entities  
6 and tolling plazas, you really want to be at a 90  
7 percent penetration rate for that prior to  
8 transitioning just to make a smoother transition  
9 with a higher use -- user rate at your facility.

10 Currently, you can see we're at 79  
11 percent, and that's held relatively steady. It  
12 grows just a little bit each year, roughly about a  
13 half a percent. But as you can see, if you do the  
14 math, to get from roughly 80 percent at a half a  
15 percent per year would take 20 years to get there if  
16 done organically.

17 So phase I of the transition plan is to  
18 propose a cash increase to encourage individuals to  
19 consider transitioning to E-ZPass and to, you know,  
20 sort of help individuals to think about the benefit  
21 of using E-ZPass at the time.

22 Phase I is planned to implement, should  
23 the Board decide to go with this proposal, April 1st  
24 of 2025. I can't emphasize enough that this is only  
25 for cash transactions at our facility.



1           So to give you an idea of what does that  
2 mean, roughly 18 million transactions go -- happen  
3 in one direction each year at the Del Memorial  
4 Bridge. Already about 14.2, 14.3 a year are already  
5 E-ZPass. And, really, what we're here talking about  
6 in this is the other 3.8 million transactions that  
7 currently are paying cash and sort of outlining the  
8 benefit of transitioning early to the discounted  
9 rates and other alternatives available to them.

10           The E-ZPass, again, would apply to cash.  
11 All other transactions, whether they be the full --  
12 the other fares, commercial, non-commercial,  
13 discount plans, would be unchanged on the April 1,  
14 '25, date. So no change if you have an E-ZPass  
15 transponder at this time with any agency. Even if  
16 it's not with us through our consortium, E-ZPass  
17 would still keep you out of the cash rate.

18           What you have here is sort of a comparison  
19 of the current rates that will stay in place for  
20 those that have E-ZPass. And then to the right, you  
21 would see the rates that are established for cash.  
22 For a passenger car, your -- you would go to \$3 --  
23 I'm sorry, \$3 per axle, \$6 per transaction. That  
24 continues as a multiplier for the next three  
25 categories. Those top four are considered to be

1 non-commercial transactions for us.

2           And then after that, you have the -- the  
3 trucks, the Class 2, the Class 3, 4, and 5. Those  
4 just represent the number of axles in the truck and  
5 the multiplier that would go with those. So you can  
6 see, for example, a 2-axle truck would go from 12 to  
7 \$14, or a dollar increase for each of those  
8 transactions and so forth.

9           Phase II. Now this, the second phase of  
10 this I want to highlight is -- is described as 2027  
11 or later, meaning no earlier than 2027, but  
12 certainly could happen later, depending on Vince's  
13 projects. The goal of this is to be able to fund  
14 this project in the future so that the assets  
15 continue to be well-maintained in the future. So  
16 that's the first bullet.

17           This enables us to continue to promote the  
18 transition to all electronic tolling. And also, we  
19 will be evaluating, as Vince highlighted as the  
20 special projects, what are the methodologies. What  
21 are the structures that are being implemented? How  
22 do we bring those to the Del Memorial Bridge? What  
23 is the best and most efficient and effective way to  
24 do that into the future?

25           Phase II of the toll structure for -- for

1 -- at that time would change. Again, no earlier  
2 than January 1st of 2024. The 2-axles are, again,  
3 your car transactions. The 4.75 that was outlined  
4 today would go to as much as 5.75. You know, this  
5 maximum rate is defined to say if we don't need it,  
6 and that's really the structure of this proposal,  
7 which is a little different.

8 If January 1st, '27, is not required, the  
9 Board will consider alternatives and other dates  
10 later than that that it is appropriate to do it. If  
11 5.75 is appropriate, they would adopt that rate or a  
12 rate that would be less than that for those classes,  
13 but certainly not more than those.

14 E-ZPass would be, a Maryland transponder  
15 using our facility, that could be as much as \$6, and  
16 at the cash rate, if we're in still a cash  
17 environment, would be a maximum rate of \$7. Or,  
18 again, where it says cash into the future, that  
19 could be the video tolling rate as an alternative.  
20 So -- if -- if we're at video tolling at some point,  
21 it would be that that would serve as the video  
22 tolling rate.

23 And then for those commercial-type  
24 vehicles of 2-axles or greater, again, that would be  
25 a maximum rate of \$9 or a cash rate of 10. And,

1 again, with commercial, it is not unusual for \$9 to  
2 be the largest and the heaviest of trucks. So think  
3 of it as a small -- small 2-axle might be seven and  
4 so forth and build it way up to nine. So that's why  
5 it is described as a \$9 rate. So, again, I would  
6 certainly -- the goal is to encourage those -- those  
7 individuals to take advantage of the transition.

8 For the commuters, the good news for this  
9 is the current 22 trips in 30 days would stay 22  
10 trips. There's no proposed change for that. The  
11 price for that would go from the current \$1.25 to  
12 what Tom has -- Tom has described as the 1987 rate,  
13 I think it was, right, Tom --

14 MR. COOK: Yes.

15 MR. FERZETTI: -- of \$1.50. That's what  
16 the rate was when it was 75 cents back in 1987 when  
17 I was a much younger individual. But, also, the  
18 good news is we are maintaining -- the proposal  
19 maintains the 75 percent discount that exists today.

20 And then lastly, the frequent traveler,  
21 which is 20 trips in 90 days. For those who don't  
22 commute but certainly use the bridge rather  
23 frequently, would go from 2.25 to 2.75, basically  
24 maintaining the current 55 percent discount that  
25 exists there today and proportionally making those

1 adjustments.

2           Okay. All right. So with that, I'm going  
3 to turn it back to Tom to -- to bring this  
4 presentation home at this time. Tom?

5           TOM COOK: Thank you, Victor. So, you  
6 know, over the years, the Del River and Bay  
7 Authority has been very good financial stewards of  
8 the revenue that we've collected. Just to put it in  
9 perspective, since 2019, as Vince alluded to, the  
10 CPI growth has been about 22.5 percent, or an  
11 average of 4.5 percent per year. Our budget growth  
12 during that same time period was 8.3 percent, or an  
13 average of 1.66 percent. And that -- that activity  
14 has actually been recognized by Wall Street as our  
15 ratings with Moody, our credit rating, is an A1  
16 stable, and recently,  
17 S and P ratings just increased our rating to A+.

18           And finally, I'd just like to talk about  
19 the timing of this proposal is very consistent to  
20 what we've done in the past. We had a total  
21 increase in 2011, and there was an eight-year time  
22 period in which we, in turn, did the next total  
23 increase. Currently, we're proposing something to  
24 take place, and the next significant total increase  
25 in this proposal is not until 2027, if you have an

1 E-ZPass.

2           So just to recap what this -- this  
3 proposal accomplishes, it gives us a path forward  
4 for a smooth transition to a cashless or electronic  
5 tolling environment. At the same time, it provides  
6 adequate funding for us to meet those financial  
7 investments into our assets that are needed to make  
8 sure that our -- our bridge is safe for our  
9 travelers.

10           And finally, you know, just to emphasize  
11 one more time, you know, if you have E-ZPass right  
12 now, or you get it in the future, and part of the  
13 reason why we're not starting this until April 1st  
14 is so that there is a transition period and people  
15 could convert to E-ZPass, there will be no impact on  
16 you at all until at the earliest, 2027.

17           So just to kind of recap what the timeline  
18 is, we held a public hearing in Delaware on Tuesday  
19 night. Obviously, you're here tonight for our  
20 public hearing in -- in New Jersey. The Board of  
21 Commissioners will consider this proposal, take back  
22 the information from these hearings, and consider  
23 this proposal at their November 19th meeting. If  
24 that is approved at that time, we will then be  
25 looking at, as we stated earlier, an implementation

1 of phase I on April 1st of 2025.

2 Now, if you want to gather, get more  
3 information about this and be able to see this slide  
4 presentation, you can go to our website at  
5 [www.drba.net](http://www.drba.net). If you'd like to provide comments to  
6 us after this presentation, you can also do that at  
7 the email address of [contact\\_us@drba.net](mailto:contact_us@drba.net). And that  
8 time frame for comment will be open through November  
9 8th.

10 And I believe that that is pretty much the  
11 presentation at this point. I would certainly  
12 welcome and open up the floor to -- to questions.  
13 If you do have a question, once again, please step  
14 up to the microphone, state your name and spell it  
15 for the -- the court reporter, and then, you know,  
16 we'll -- we'll address your question. Yes, sir.  
17 Welcome.

18 MARK JOHNSON: Hello.

19 TOM COOK: Hi.

20 MARK JOHNSON: My name is Mark E. Johnson,  
21 M-a-r-k, initial E, J-o-h-n-s-o-n. I am a resident  
22 of Pennsville, New Jersey. I've been so for 55-plus  
23 years. I just have -- I have some comments, and I  
24 have some questions. I was just made aware of this  
25 meeting tonight and this proposal tonight.

1 First of all, I find it ironic that you  
2 call this a proposal being that it seems like the  
3 agenda is going through. But with that at hand,  
4 before, I guess, my first question, and I have more  
5 than one, let me start with the comments.

6 Part of the toll rate increase is going to  
7 a \$21 million cashless tolling system. There are  
8 already 2 cash tolling lanes available now, out of a  
9 dozen or so lanes you have, and approximately 20  
10 percent of people pay with cash. So my question is,  
11 why is it that this toll increase, which is only  
12 going up for non-E-ZPass travelers, why are we  
13 paying that bill? I would think if you want to  
14 embrace a cashless society, then let your E-ZPass  
15 customers pay for that cashless society.

16 There are many people in this country that  
17 we (inaudible) tangible books, tangible photos,  
18 tangible money. So that is my question.

19 TOM COOK: I'll -- I'll -- I'll address  
20 that. I'll address that first.

21 MARK JOHNSON: Sure.

22 TOM COOK: So -- and one thing maybe we  
23 just wanted to reiterate, the -- the DRBA does not  
24 receive any kind of state funding. So we do not  
25 receive any funding from the state of Delaware,



1 state of New Jersey. Everything -- the revenues are  
2 generated from the fees that we receive, whether  
3 it's at the -- the Delaware Memorial Bridge or the  
4 -- the ferry or at the airports. So that is what we  
5 use to fund our expenditures.

6 So when you -- just to make sure I  
7 understand your question, that -- it's only those  
8 revenues that we have affordable to us to make those  
9 investments. So that's how we pay for things. We  
10 do not receive any funding from outside entities,  
11 unless it's a grant funding.

12 MARK JOHNSON: I -- I understand that --

13 TOM COOK: Okay.

14 MARK JOHNSON: -- and you made that point  
15 earlier in the presentation, but what I'm saying is  
16 if only 20 percent, or thereabouts, are paying with  
17 cash, 80 percent are paying with E-ZPass, why are  
18 not the E-ZPass customers' rates going up effective  
19 April 1st, 2025?

20 But I mean, they're the ones -- I don't  
21 want a cashless society. I don't want to -- I don't  
22 see why, you know -- it -- it doesn't make sense to  
23 me how -- you know, I feel like I'm being coerced  
24 into like, well, you know, we'll tighten nuts on you  
25 just a little bit because now I'm trying to ease you

1 into an E-ZPass. I don't want an  
2 E-ZPass.

3 And, you know, if you have 12 or -- about  
4 a dozen lanes over there for toll takers, maybe 2  
5 are open at any given time for cash only. I'd  
6 rather sit in line for 10 minutes if I have to pay  
7 with cash. I like to pay with cash. To me,  
8 diversity, right? That's what society told you, be  
9 diverse. Why not have diversified with payments?  
10 Hey? You know? E-ZPass is fine, but, you know,  
11 they should -- they should (inaudible) first of all.

12 TOM COOK: So one thing that you may know,  
13 may -- may not know, we -- we are one entity that  
14 has a customer service office right at the bridge.

15 MARK JOHNSON: Right.

16 TOM COOK: And have you used it before?  
17 Yeah. And I can tell you right now, I mean, they're  
18 -- they're quality -- quality customer service. We  
19 have a number of people that actually come in and,  
20 you know, do not go online, do not pay their --  
21 their -- or replenish their account online. They  
22 actually come in and put cash down on -- on the  
23 transponder, and that's how they pay for it. So  
24 that is, obviously, still affordable to -- to the  
25 individuals to turn around and keep their account

1 up.

2 With regards to the toll collectors, we  
3 actually, and Victor could help, but -- but I know  
4 there were a number of -- we had a number of toll  
5 collectors, full-time positions, that since I've  
6 been there we've reduced by at least four. We have  
7 six full-time toll collectors at the whole thing.  
8 We have a number of part-time people that come in.

9 So -- and that's a way, quite honestly, as  
10 -- as a business, to reduce our expenses, because by  
11 not having as many people, we can, thus, keep the --  
12 the -- toll structure at a lower rate and offer such  
13 things as the -- the discount commuter and -- and  
14 frequent traveler plans.

15 MARK JOHNSON: I understand that, but I --  
16 I worked in Delaware for over two decades, and I did  
17 have E-ZPass at one point so I could take advantage  
18 because I was coerced into -- into the frequent  
19 flyer plan we get the price or whatever. But when I  
20 got off that, when I stopped working in Delaware in  
21 2017, I think the system is all digital, it was a  
22 nightmare to get off E-ZPass. I went to that  
23 customer service center that you talked about.  
24 Individuals were great. No problem there. Took  
25 care of it. Did you want -- do you still want your

1 E-ZPass? No, I don't want it at all, I'd rather pay  
2 cash.

3 About a month later, I got a bill in the  
4 mail. I didn't use any of my so-called trips. It  
5 was a nightmare. It took me about two or three  
6 months. I eventually had to contact the New Jersey  
7 place. It was out of Trenton or wherever it was,  
8 (inaudible). You would think that this digital  
9 system, that, like, with one click of a button, he's  
10 off the system. The digital (inaudible) and the  
11 E-ZPass network, this guy no longer participates.  
12 It took me a long time to get out. I still got all  
13 my paperwork from that. That ended back in 2017.

14 But be that as it may, and I have other  
15 questions so --

16 TOM COOK: Sure.

17 MARK JOHNSON: Question number 2. I'll  
18 start with another comment. The Delaware River Bay  
19 and Authority, they own and operate, as you  
20 mentioned in your presentation, many of the  
21 surrounding airports and ferry services. I  
22 understand it's \$60 million for their analysis on  
23 the Cape May-Lewes Ferry new vessel program.

24 My question: Due to mismanagement and  
25 incompetency, why are the -- the Delaware River Bay

1 Authority airports, ferries, and bridges all picking  
2 from the same pot of money or fund? You mentioned  
3 earlier in the presentation that about 75 percent or  
4 so of the majority of the funds do go to the bridge.  
5 It still seems that if an airport wants to operate  
6 as an airport, I don't care who owns it. I  
7 understand you guys do, five airports, but that's  
8 okay. You want to use a ferry? Ferry people should  
9 pay for ferry services. Air travel people should  
10 pay for air travel services. Bridge-only people  
11 should pay for -- you know.

12 If somebody's coming down from New York or  
13 Connecticut and they go over the Delaware Bridge,  
14 why should even a small percentage of their fund go  
15 to fund some ferry that they're not using or some  
16 airport that they're not using? So that's my  
17 question. Go on record for that.

18 TOM COOK: So on the model is -- our model  
19 is very similar to the DRPA, whereas, they also fund  
20 the -- the rail system in New Jersey. So this --  
21 this structure is very consistent with what takes  
22 place in other entities.

23 The DRBA was actually created by a compact  
24 between the states of New Jersey and Delaware, a  
25 federal compact. And just to give you even a little

1 more history of it, the very first span was built by  
2 the State of Delaware. And then due to the demand  
3 in traffic, there was a need for a second span to be  
4 built.

5 At that time, land had to be acquired in  
6 New Jersey to -- to accomplish this. And so we  
7 turned around and that's how, kind of, the compact  
8 came about. But part of that agreement was,  
9 ironically, from New Jersey, was to turn around and  
10 also have a ferry system in Southern New Jersey to  
11 go to -- to Delaware.

12 So that is our mission to connect people  
13 and places in the heart of the northeast corridor.  
14 And in order to do that, that's why we are the  
15 efficient operator of both of those entities.

16 MARK JOHNSON: I --

17 VICTOR FERZETTI: You know what? I -- I  
18 would sort of -- I -- I wouldn't mind the  
19 opportunity to talk about the management part of --  
20 of what Tom just -- Tom just described a network. A  
21 network of transportation is, is it's not uncommon  
22 to have some assets help support others, buses,  
23 trains, as you referred to.

24 But on the management, it doesn't mean  
25 that -- it doesn't mean that we can't try to do it,

1 and that we don't try to do it, as efficiently and  
2 effectively as possible. For example, visibly,  
3 there used to be a day where there were five ferry  
4 vessels, now there are three.

5 I, on this team, I've been the one here  
6 the longest. I remember in the late '90s, we  
7 actually had 550 employees at the DRBA providing  
8 services of those exact networks that were just  
9 described to you. Today, there are 408, okay, full-  
10 time employees and even less temps than there used  
11 to be.

12 And so the point is that, yes, we do have  
13 a charge, meaning the compact to do, but -- but we  
14 absolutely attempt to do it in the most efficient  
15 and effective way possible. We know that  
16 individuals are paying for those services. We know  
17 that these are dollars that -- that are entrusted to  
18 us to make sure that those improvements and assets  
19 are both well maintained and -- and operated in the  
20 most efficient, effective way possible.

21 So yes, we operate. Yes, we do include  
22 operate a ferry. Almost every ferry -- I'm not even  
23 aware of a ferry in the United States that makes  
24 money, but it is very important to us to do both the  
25 capital and the operating aspect of that as

1 effectively as possible, and so that's what we do  
2 endeavor to attempt to do.

3 MARK JOHNSON: Fair. I have one more  
4 question I would like to address and then I'll give  
5 the mic to somebody else if they would like. It's  
6 kind of pathetic how the turnout is so minimal.

7 Let's see. Comment first. If part of my  
8 existing bridge toll and future increases are not  
9 going to be going to the Delaware Memorial Bridge  
10 use, but the Delaware River Bay Authority controlled  
11 airports, ferries, and road construction in  
12 Delaware, widening the -- widening the lanes that  
13 you mentioned, then leads right to my question.

14 Why are not Delaware residents, those who  
15 use those roads too, and Delaware businesses, not  
16 paying a higher share of their property taxes and  
17 businesses not having a sales tax to fund the  
18 construction maintenance and use of these things? I  
19 know Delaware is a state free tax, but, you know, I  
20 don't see why -- everybody shops in Delaware, right?  
21 No sales tax. Well, hey, those roads are in  
22 Delaware. That -- part of that bridge is in  
23 Delaware. Delaware commuters use that bridge back  
24 and forth. Why do not put a (inaudible) property  
25 taxes, sales tax, implement a sales tax?



1 TOM COOK: So very good question and,  
2 actually, something that people don't realize, it is  
3 not just the bridge structure that the DRBA owns and  
4 operates. It's actually a seven-mile corridor that  
5 stretches from -- into New Jersey, over to Delaware,  
6 and the -- the area that Mr. Meconi described for  
7 the widening part of it, is the part that is owned  
8 by the DRBA. So that is our responsibility to do  
9 that.

10 It is DelDOT that is turning around and  
11 expanding their portion of it. If we did not do  
12 that, that would create a choke point that,  
13 obviously -- that, quite honestly, exists today.  
14 And so it is our responsibility to make sure that we  
15 can provide a safe passage for our travelers.

16 MARK JOHNSON: Okay. Well, I'll open it  
17 up to anybody else, but with my closing statement,  
18 I'll say it looks like your proposal is actually  
19 already done, but it's nice to voice my opinion  
20 anyway. As a Christian man, I feel this is like a  
21 Revelation 13 when I'm speaking to the mark of the  
22 beast and the cashless society, the 2030 agenda,  
23 therefore. But, you know, we're living in the last  
24 days, what do you expect? So let the record show.  
25 Thank you for your time. God bless. Praise Jesus

1 Christ.

2 TOM COOK: Thank you. Any other  
3 questions? I would like to, once again, recognize  
4 we have our member of our police force here. Also,  
5 I believe our maintenance people and, you know, our  
6 IT people here. Again, the employees at the  
7 Delaware River and Bay Authority are very special  
8 people and work very hard, and I would just like to  
9 thank you and recognize them for everything they do  
10 for -- for the DRBA.

11 If there are not any other questions, once  
12 again, I -- I remind you that there is an open  
13 period to make comments up until November 8th. You  
14 can go to our website, use the email address that I  
15 -- I described, and I, once again, thank you for  
16 coming out and attending tonight's hearing, and have  
17 a safe trip home.

18 (WHEREUPON, the public hearing was  
19 concluded at 7:23 p.m.)  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

CERTIFICATE

I, Lindsay Hoke, do hereby certify that I reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing matter and that the foregoing transcript pages constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said proceedings to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am neither related to counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any interest in the outcome of the proceedings.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 18th day of October, 2024.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lindsay Hoke". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lindsay Hoke

<b>\$</b>	<b>\$93 9:20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>30 6:10 28:9</b>
<b>\$1 10:5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2 26:3 32:8 34:4 36:17</b>	<b>301 23:3</b>
<b>\$1.25 21:24 28:11</b>	<b>1 11:14 14:4,8 23:17 25:13</b>	<b>2-axle 26:6 28:3</b>	<b>346 9:4</b>
<b>\$1.50 28:15</b>	<b>1.66 29:13</b>	<b>2-axles 27:2,24</b>	<b>35 21:17</b>
<b>\$10 9:11</b>	<b>10 3:4 16:16 27:25 34:6</b>	<b>2.25 22:7 28:23</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>\$100 8:23</b>	<b>10-year 16:14 17:25</b>	<b>2.75 28:23</b>	<b>4 12:4 26:3</b>
<b>\$11 14:4 15:3 17:8</b>	<b>100 10:2</b>	<b>2.80 22:3</b>	<b>4.5 29:11</b>
<b>\$12 9:7 14:5 17:8 21:12</b>	<b>100,000 8:4</b>	<b>20 10:10 22:5 24:15 28:21 32:9 33:16</b>	<b>4.75 20:19 27:3</b>
<b>\$14 26:7</b>	<b>104 21:19</b>	<b>200 13:3</b>	<b>408 39:9</b>
<b>\$15.38 20:23</b>	<b>12 26:6 34:3</b>	<b>2011 29:21</b>	<b>43 18:9</b>
<b>\$2 20:22</b>	<b>13 12:3 14:9 41:21</b>	<b>2017 35:21 36:13</b>	<b>45 7:22 21:17</b>
<b>\$21 11:9 32:7</b>	<b>13.38 20:21</b>	<b>2019 29:9</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>\$3 18:2 25:22,23</b>	<b>14 12:3</b>	<b>2024 3:4 18:21 27:2</b>	<b>5 7:19,23 9:3,11 18:1 21:8 26:3</b>
<b>\$31 17:2</b>	<b>14.2 25:4</b>	<b>2025 23:12 24:24 31:1 33:19</b>	<b>5-axle 21:13,14</b>
<b>\$35 12:8</b>	<b>14.3 25:4</b>	<b>2027 26:10,11 29:25 30:16</b>	<b>5.75 27:4,11</b>
<b>\$37 16:23</b>	<b>17.63 21:12</b>	<b>2030 41:22</b>	<b>50th 18:10</b>
<b>\$45 9:4</b>	<b>18 25:2</b>	<b>206 17:7</b>	<b>55 28:24</b>
<b>\$48 21:20</b>	<b>1950s 7:2</b>	<b>22 28:9</b>	<b>55-plus 31:22</b>
<b>\$5 21:8,24</b>	<b>1951 6:24 13:4</b>	<b>22.5 7:19 29:10</b>	<b>550 39:7</b>
<b>\$51 18:12</b>	<b>1962 5:19</b>	<b>25 25:14</b>	<b>552 9:4</b>
<b>\$6 20:20 21:1 25:23 27:15</b>	<b>1968 6:25 10:4</b>	<b>27 27:8</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>\$60 36:22</b>	<b>1974 7:3</b>	<b>295 14:10</b>	<b>6:30 3:5,7</b>
<b>\$7 10:6 27:17</b>	<b>1981 7:4,8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>\$78.3 15:5</b>	<b>1987 28:12,16</b>	<b>3 17:8 26:3</b>	<b>70 12:12</b>
<b>\$8 9:13 21:4</b>	<b>19th 30:23</b>	<b>3.8 25:6</b>	<b>70-year 12:10</b>
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