

Resolution
To Finalize and Submit the Southern Toll Plaza
Phase One Report to the United States Army Corps of Engineers
02/23/10

Whereas, the Maine Turnpike Authority's (MTA) enabling Legislation states that the economic and social well being of the citizens of the State requires that the transportation system be developed in a comprehensive manner that depends upon the safety, efficiency and modern functional state of the Turnpike;

Whereas, the MTA's Bond Resolution (contract with bondholders) requires that the MTA maintain or replace Turnpike infrastructure based on the inspection and recommendation of its General Engineering Consultant (GEC), and that compliance with the Bond Resolution is required in order for the MTA to issue bonds and access funds for essential capital improvements;

Whereas, the MTA's long history of Bond Resolution compliance has been rewarded by outstanding credit ratings from the nation's leading rating agencies, enabling the MTA to access capital funds at low rates of interest;

Whereas, the Maine Turnpike's York Toll Plaza was built in 1969 with an expected structural lifespan of 25 years, and is now approaching its 41st year of operation;

Whereas, the plaza's age and deteriorated condition has caused it to become increasingly unsafe for motorists and employees, inefficient to operate and in need of constant and costly repairs;

Whereas, in 1998, the MTA recognized the need to replace the York Toll Plaza and included the project in its twenty-year plan;

Whereas, in September of 2004, the MTA directed its GEC to conduct a comprehensive study of the York Toll Plaza for the purpose of evaluating the condition of the existing plaza and developing strategies to address its deficiencies;

Whereas, in April of 2007, the U.S Army Corps of Engineers determined that the basic project purpose of the Southern Toll Plaza replacement project "is to replace/rehabilitate the existing barrier toll plaza on the Maine Turnpike at York, Maine, incorporating Highway Speed Tolling (Open Road Tolling) and addressing settling/subsidence and facilities deficiencies, safety deficiencies, and existing and projected traffic volumes;"

Whereas, in July of 2007, the MTA determined that any mainline toll plaza replacement project should be designed to incorporate an Open Road Tolling system that would provide E-ZPass customers with the convenience of paying their tolls electronically at normal highway speeds and maintain cash toll collection for non-E-ZPass users, while ensuring the MTA's ability to effectively collect revenue and enforce payment;

Whereas, the MTA determined that an Open Road Tolling System that offers cash toll collection is more suitable and financially prudent for the Maine Turnpike's unique traffic mix, which includes a high percentage out-of-state and occasional users, than an All-Electronic (cashless) Tolling system that would be reliant on interstate and international billing and enforcement protocols that do not currently exist and are uncertain to exist in the future;

Whereas, in conducting the Southern Toll Plaza Study the GEC has utilized the design guidelines for toll plazas in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the USACE Highway Methodology to ensure that the future plaza is designed to operate safely, efficiently and cost-effectively and with minimal environmental and community impact;

Whereas, the Southern Toll Plaza Study has been accompanied by an extensive public participation process, which has included three general public meetings in the Town of York, one public meeting for potential abutters, also in the Town of York, a public meeting with the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Transportation in Augusta, three public meetings of the Maine Turnpike Authority Board and the York Board of Selectmen in Portland, a number of meetings and facility tours in the Town of York with legislators, local officials, interest groups and individuals, and considerable written correspondence in response to questions posed by local officials, interest groups and individuals;

Whereas, in accordance with FHWA design guidelines and USACE Highway Methodology criteria the GEC has recommended that four options be advanced for further consideration, including (1) a no build option, (2) an option at mile marker 7.3, (3) an option at mile marker 8.7 and, (4) an option at mile marker 9.1;

Whereas, the four options recommended for advancement by the GEC are in keeping with the MTA's insistence that no option require the displacement of homes and that all options seek to minimize environmental and property impacts to the extent possible;

Whereas, the MTA staff is satisfied that the requirements of the Phase 1 Report have been completed and recommends that the four options and all supporting data and information be finalized as the Southern Toll Plaza Phase 1 Report and sent to the USACE for their review;

Now, Therefore, Be it Resolved, that the Board of the Maine Turnpike Authority accepts the recommendations of the MTA staff and the GEC to finalize the Phase 1 Report and send it to the USACE for their review.