

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority (“Authority”) was held via Zoom on Wednesday, January 12, 2022.

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The meeting was called to order at 8:32 A.M. by Chair, Judith M. Morse.

**Members Present:**

Judith M. Morse, Chair  
Peter Alviti, Jr., P.E., Ex Officio  
Peter M. Janaros, P.E.

**Members Absent:**

Darrell Waldron, Vice Chair  
James K. Salome

**Invited Guests:**

Lori Caron Silveira, Executive Director  
Eric Seabury, P.E., Director of Engineering  
Kathryn Coleman, Acting Director of Tolling Operations  
Jeffrey Goulart, Chief Financial Officer  
Stephen Cahill, Manager of Safety and Security  
Frank Flowers, Manager of Maintenance  
Raphe Sciola, Senior Administrative Assistant  
Marianne Durgin, Executive Assistant to the Director  
Remmy Villacis, Network Technician  
William O’Gara, Legal Counsel

**Item No. 2**

**Public Comment** – There were no public comments.

**Item No. 3**

A motion made by Peter Alviti, Jr., seconded by Peter M. Janaros, passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the November 3, 2021, Board meeting.

**Item No. 4**

Motion by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Peter Alviti, Jr., passed unanimously to approve a purchase order for Saccoccio & Associates Architects to conduct a space needs assessment for the two buildings that comprise the administrative, finance, engineering, operations, safety and security, tolling, E-ZPass, and maintenance functions of the Authority at a cost not to exceed \$12,500. RITBA solicited a quote from Saccoccio & Associates Architects, an entity listed on the state’s Master Price Agreement. Procurement rules allow one quote from an MPA-listed vendor for amounts less than \$25,000. Since moving to all-electronic tolling, the office demographics have changed with a new operations center, the addition of image review positions, and changes in office space due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The assessment will help identify deficiencies and suggest improvement options in the workspace. Director Alviti suggested that staff request more than one quote in the future to promote competitive pricing in the selection process.

**Item No. 5**

Motion by Peter Alviti, Jr., seconded by Peter M. Janaros, passed unanimously to approve a recommendation to increase rates for overweight and/or overwide vehicles crossing the Mount Hope and Newport Pell Bridges to be consistent with RIDOT’s rates and to ensure costs incurred by RITBA are covered related to the processing of invoices. The financial effect is an additional \$1K - \$2K annually. The maximum gross weight for crossing the Mount Hope Bridge is 40 tons. Fees will increase from \$15 to \$40

per trip for overweight vehicles crossing Mount Hope. An annual blanket permit will cost \$400. The fees for overweight/overwide loads on the Newport Pell Bridge will increase to be in line with RIDOT's rates. An annual blanket permit for the Newport Pell Bridge will also cost \$400. Director Alвити requested that the RITBA team be in communication with the RIDOT operations team to share any changes, as RIDOT will be examining its fee structure. Director Janaros asked why there is no charge for overweight/overwide vehicles crossing the Sakonnet River Bridge and the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge. Mr. Seabury indicated that it could be a hold-over from when the care and custody of those bridges was transferred to RITBA from RIDOT. It was noted that due to wear and tear of overweight loads on the bridges, it may be entirely proper for there to be a uniform policy for all the bridges under RITBA's care. The fees charged for overweight loads do not come close to covering damage that an overweight vehicle could cause. Mr. Seabury indicated the Authority would be open to expanding the program. Director Janaros noted that when the Authority has plans for a limited work zone on any of its bridges, it would be prudent to know the routes of overwides in advance so that these loads could be redirected if needed.

#### **Item No. 6**

**Status Update on Dehumidification of the Mount Hope Bridge Cables and Anchorages** - Director Caron Silveira provided a status update on the Mount Hope Bridge dehumidification project and funding opportunities. A RAISE grant proposal was submitted for \$25 million, which RITBA would have matched with \$10 million. RITBA was not selected in the first round. The only project selected in RI was a planning project submitted by RIPTA. USDOT has indicated that there will be more funds to pursue. There will also be a debriefing offered. When the bridge was built 92 years ago, the design did not address the concept of dehumidification. Corrosion of the wires within the cables is a direct result of climate change, one factor being the increased levels of humidity. RITBA has issued a Request For Proposals for the Mount Hope dehumidification project and has held a pre-proposal conference with interested firms. Some have already submitted proposals. The Authority will continue to pursue funding. Director Caron Silveira and Jeffrey Goulart went before Senate Finance and have worked with Senator Seveney of Portsmouth to submit a request to receive some of the ARPA funds allocated to the state. RITBA is also waiting for the bridge investment program portion of the infrastructure bill to issue guidelines to be followed in seeking funds for the project. In the event that more funding is made available, the federal delegation has inquired about other projects that might be bundled with the Mount Hope dehumidification project. The Authority has indicated that inclusion of the dehumidification of the Newport Pell Bridge, completion of the deck rehabilitation on the Newport Pell, and re-decking of the Mount Hope Bridge would constitute a bundled project request of over \$100 million. As the dehumidification project at Mount Hope will need to take place whether funding is awarded or not, the Authority will be taking a hard look at the 10-year capital plan to see what projects might be rescheduled to a later date. Director Alвити concurred that this is a good plan and asked that the Board be briefed on the Authority's findings after looking at the projects in the plan.

#### **Item No. 7**

**Status Update on Contract to Conduct Feasibility Study – Suicide Deterrent Measures** – Director Caron Silveira indicated that RITBA submitted a proposal to the Office of Management and Budget in March 2021 for funding of a \$1.5 million dollar study of what suicide deterrent concepts might be feasible for RITBA's bridges. Mr. Goulart indicated that a Request for Proposals was issued in July of 2021. The selection was qualifications based. In September of 2021 four proposals were received. The firms that submitted were AECOM, Atkins, Parsons and WSP. The selection committee was comprised of Eric Seabury, Steve Cahill, Frank Flowers, and Jeff Goulart. The selection committee rated the firms and shortlisted two firms, AECOM and Atkins, and conducted interviews. At the conclusion of interviews the committee rescored the proposers, considering the original RFP submissions and additional information gained from the interviews. Atkins scored the highest with a score of 94 out of 100 possible points. An award letter was issued to Atkins in December noting that a Professional Services Agreement, task order, and fee proposal would be developed and negotiated once funding was obtained. Director Caron Silveira

indicated that when she and Jeff Goulart presented the proposal before the Senate Finance Committee, they received positive feedback about the Authority's prospects of receiving the funding through the ARPA program. The final cost proposal will be presented to the Board for approval.

**Item No. 8 –**

**Compensation Committee and Compensation Study** - Director Caron Silveira noted that this item was put on the agenda as a docketing mechanism to remind the Board that the Authority needs to be in compliance with the Quasi-Public Accountability and Transparency Act and is subject to audit. Under the Act, the Authority is required to have a Compensation Committee comprised of Board members to fulfill statutory duties that include a compensation study for the executive and senior management positions at RITBA. The previous RITBA Chair, Stephen Waluk, appointed Judith M. Morse and Peter Alviti, Jr. as the committee members. Chair Morse indicated she has asked Director Caron Silveira to submit to the committee compensation recommendations for all senior management that the committee can review and approve for recommendation to the full Board. The committee will submit its own recommendations to the Board for the Executive Director's position.

**Director of Engineering Eric Seabury - Capital Projects Status Report:** A summary of all current projects was included in the Board materials. Of the \$13 million planned in ongoing capital projects, Chair Morse asked how much has been spent to date. Mr. Seabury stated that the summary page does not list this information, but the committed-to-date amounts can be found on the summary page for each project. This month Mr. Seabury highlighted the following:

- Bridge Electrical & Communication Upgrades – (Pell & Mount Hope) and ATMS Bridge Safety and Video Analytics: The Artificial Intelligence (AI) system that detects stopped vehicles is operational on the Newport Pell Bridge. One of the remaining punch list items is the deployment of speakers. The Mount Hope Bridge system will be operational soon.
- Phase I - AET Conversion of Existing Toll Plaza: Now in conceptual design phase with WSP.
- Misc. Steel Repairs – Mt. Hope and Sakonnet: Piasecki Steel has begun to erect the composite stairway and access to the north anchorage of Mt. Hope Bridge.
- Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge Guardrail and Railing Painting Project: (In-House): The project is nearing completion and staff is finishing touchup painting and the sealing of the curbing.
- Bridge Inspections: The inspection of the Pell Bridge Approach Spans is complete. The consultant, WSP, is working on the final report. The interim inspection of Mt. Hope Bridge is also complete, and a meeting was held to discuss the findings of the report including needed repairs. The load rating on Jamestown Bridge is almost complete. The capital improvement plan is being finalized from a project and timing perspective and will then be reviewed by Mr. Goulart to outline funding options.

**CFO Jeff Goulart – Financial Summary Report**

Toll revenue is up approximately 15% year-to-date. The budget was based on 90% of 2019's traffic numbers. RITBA achieved 95% of 2019's numbers for toll revenue through November 2021. The gas tax revenue is up 5% over budget and the budget for the gas tax revenue was based on 97% of the estimate as provided by the Department of Revenue. YTD operating expenses are lower than budget by 25%. The budget assumed nearly \$200,000 in severance payouts; however, the severance payouts were booked in the prior fiscal year.

Mr. Goulart also noted that in the area of bridge inspections the Authority is under budget by approximately \$467,000. This is primarily due to the timing of task orders and this number will come closer to budget as the year progresses. We are likely to still have a positive variance of about \$200,000 for the year.

YTD revenue is higher by about 20% or \$3 million dollars primarily due to the partial recovery from COVID. November YTD traffic was higher than 2020 by 23%, and YTD operating expenses are higher by 11% or \$480,000. Revenue is up 1.7% or \$300,000 compared to 2019 and operating expenses are down 10.7% or approximately \$570,000. Director Alviti asked if the 10.7% reduction in operating expenses is likely to remain in effect as we ease out of COVID. Mr. Goulart responded that by his calculations he believes about 70% of the savings will remain, mostly in the area of personnel. There's also been a savings with the move to all-electronic tolling. Chair Morse asked if the toll revenue has been impacted by the recent surge in COVID cases. Mr. Goulart indicated that he tracks the data daily and believes it's been impacted by the most recent COVID surge. Recently the traffic went from 95% down to 85% of 2019's numbers for the month of January. In addition, traffic was also recently impacted by the snowstorm. Vehicle crossings were down by 19,000 on the day of the storm. Director Caron Silveira noted that we did not see an impact from COVID on traffic in November and December.

#### **Executive Director's Report:**

- **Traffic and Revenue Data** – Traffic and toll revenue have returned as Mr. Goulart mentioned in his report. We continue to share data with the hospitality and tourism groups.
- **AET Conversion** – Travel through the open road tolling lanes is running smoothly. Director Alviti asked if RITBA has plans for the existing plaza to be demolished. Director Caron Silveira responded that demolition of the plaza will take place in about 18 months. Design, siting, and construction of a new gantry will occur during this time and the location of the new gantry is likely to be sited closer to Structure E. The new gantry will be state of the art and aesthetically appropriate for the bridge. The old tolling gantry and plaza will then be removed. The gantry and software cannot be repurposed as technology has advanced and a different kind of software will be used which will be more sophisticated and accurate. Chair Morse commented that the transition to all-electronic tolling went very smoothly and congratulated the team for a job well done.
- **New Acting Director of Tolling Operations** – Kathryn O'Connor retired as Director of Tolling and Operations. Kathryn Coleman is now serving as Acting Director of Tolling Operations. Director Caron Silveira noted that Katie identified issues and solved problems all throughout the night before the early morning conversion to all-electronic tolling took place. She noted that Kathi O'Connor had done a good job in succession planning. The Board members congratulated Katie on her appointment.
- **Federal Funding Requests** – This was reviewed earlier in the meeting. Director Caron Silveira reiterated that she and the RITBA senior management team are continuing their active pursuit of funding for targeted projects and are optimistic that RITBA will be successful. The Authority has received great support from the federal delegation and the state.
- **Medical/Dental/Vision Renewal Update – January 1, 2022** - The renewal of the health plan resulted in a decrease of 3.2% and there were no changes in benefits for the coming calendar year. There are no increases in vision or dental costs.
- **2016 Motor Fuel Tax Bonds – Partial Refunding Opportunity** – Director Caron Silveira and Mr. Goulart have been consulting with bond advisors to investigate opportunities for refunding and savings. There may be an opportunity to save in the range of three to five million by undergoing a partial refunding of the 2016 motor fuel tax bonds.

It was noted that the next Board meeting is scheduled for February 16, 2022.

Motion by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Peter Alviti, Jr., passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 A.M.

**Lori Caron Silveira**  
**Secretary**