

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority (“Authority”) was held at the Authority’s offices in Jamestown on February 16, 2022.

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 A.M. by Chair, Judith M. Morse.

Members Present:

Judith M. Morse, Chair
Darrell Waldron, Vice Chair
Peter Alviti, Jr., P.E., Ex Officio
Peter M. Janaros, P.E.
James K. Salome

Invited Guests:

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

Item No. 2

Public Comment – Melissa Cotta, cofounder of “Bridging the Gap for Safety and Healing,” addressed the Board. Approximately six years ago she saw a man jump to his death from the Mount Hope Bridge. She stopped her vehicle near to where the man was situated and attempted to talk him down to safety but was unsuccessful. She and her group have advocated for permanent suicide prevention barriers on RI’s major bridges. Her group seeks the installation of temporary barriers on RITBA’s bridges now and will be sending their request to the RITBA Board of Directors and leaders in the state.

Item No. 3

A motion made by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2022, Board meeting.

Item No. 4

Motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter M. Janaros, passed unanimously to approve a task order under Contract 19-10 for Collins Engineers, Inc. (Collins) to perform the Newport Pell Bridge Routine Underwater Inspection due this year at a cost not to exceed \$105,850.00. Federal Highway Administration requires underwater bridge inspections every five years. Cost proposals were solicited from RITBA’s six prequalified On-Call Engineering Inspection consultants, which yielded three proposals ranging from \$105,850.00 - \$148,524.00. The competitive price proposal process brought in quotes far less than the last inspection, which cost approximately \$288,000.00 in 2017. Collins will prepare a detailed report, which will be used to plan required maintenance and capital projects. Director Janaros noted that he has had experience with Collins and has found them to be a reputable company.

Item No. 5

Motion by Peter Alviti, Jr., seconded by Peter M. Janaros, passed unanimously to approve a task order under Contract 19-10 for Modjeski and Masters to perform the Routine Inspections for seven of RITBA’s minor bridges: Fishing Pier Access Road, North Main Road (Eastbound), North Main Road (Westbound), Wildlife Passage I, Wildlife Passage II, Wildlife Passage III, and Wildlife Passage IV, which are due this year at a cost not to exceed \$38,630.00. Cost proposals were solicited from RITBA’s six prequalified On-Call Engineering Inspection consultants, which yielded six proposals ranging from \$38,630.00 to \$68,822.00. Once again, the competitive price proposal process brought in quotes far less than the last inspection,

which cost approximately \$54,000.00 in 2020. Modjeski and Masters will prepare a detailed report, which will be used to plan required maintenance and capital projects.

Item No. 6

Discussion of Newport Pell Bridge Pier 5W Rocker Bearings Support – WSP recently completed the routine inspection of the approach spans of the Newport Pell Bridge. At the debrief, they noted that at Pier 5W, the two rocker bearings supporting the expansion end of the adjacent plate girder span were measured and are exhibiting excessive tilt movement. Over time, pack rust has built up between the rocker surfaces and the bearing pads of two of the bearings. Although there are pins to keep the bearings from sliding, over time they can move out of proper alignment. WSP has a chart tracking this and in the last five to seven years there has been a slow progression in the movement of the rocker bearings. For the immediate term WSP recommends putting shoring in place. For the long term, they recommend either jacking the beams and resetting the bearings or replacing the bearings with a modern bearing. Mr. Seabury noted that the immediate project will go out to bid in a month's time. Director Alviti confirmed with Mr. Seabury that there is no clear or present danger. The rocker bearings need attention but the conditions on the bridge are safe. This project has been included in the 10-year plan. RITBA's consultants have provided a life cycle of the major components of the bridges so RITBA can anticipate and plan for replacement of bridge components within its capital improvement plan.

Director of Engineering Eric Seabury - Capital Projects Status Report: This month Mr. Seabury highlighted the following:

- Bridge Electrical & Communication Upgrades – (Pell & Mount Hope) and ATMS Bridge Safety and Video Analytics: Work is currently being done to complete the Mount Hope Bridge fiber terminations.
- Phase I - AET Conversion of Existing Toll Plaza: The only remaining item for the temporary AET conversion project is swapping out the galvanized barrier sections that swing open with new ones. The current barrier sections do not have the appropriate ends attached to them that allow proper pinning to the adjacent concrete barrier sections. Due to supply issues, the necessary ends are not available. The contractor has instead located barrier sections that already have the ends attached and is coordinating delivery and installation now. Work is continuing on the conceptual design plan for the new tolling gantry.
- Misc. Steel Repairs – Mt. Hope and Sakonnet: Piasecki Steel has completed the composite stairway and access to the north anchorage of the Mt. Hope Bridge. The Mt. Hope Interim Inspection has been completed and there are some items identified that need repair that Piasecki will complete with remaining funds in the project's budget.
- Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge Guardrail and Railing Painting Project: (In-House): The project is finished. The touchup painting and the sealing of the curbing has been completed.
- Bridge Inspections: The inspection of the Pell Bridge Approach Spans is complete and WSP has submitted the final report. The Interim Inspection of the Mt. Hope Bridge is also complete. The load rating on the Jamestown Bridge is nearing completion by Atane.
- Capital Improvement Plan: The plan is complete from a project and timing perspective, and it will go to Mr. Goulart next to outline a plan of finance.

Director Janaros requested that Board members receive a copy of the draft Capital Improvement Plan in advance of the Board meeting where the Directors would be asked to vote on it. This would provide an opportunity for Board members to offer input in advance of its adoption. Director Alviti concurred and asked that there be a presentation of the draft at a Board meeting prior to the one where the Board would vote on it.

Director Alviti inquired about signage regarding the load rating on the Mount Hope Bridge. DOT received feedback from the public that there was no sign on one end of the bridge. It was noted that there are signs on both ends but they are small. Mr. Seabury indicated he is working with DOT to arrange for larger signs to be made and installed on both ends.

CFO Jeff Goulart – Financial Summary Report

With respect to year-to-date financials, actual vs. budget, total operating revenue is up \$2.4 million dollars or 32%. Toll revenue is higher by \$1.8 million or 17% because of the conservative approach used when budgeting, as it was not certain what the impact of COVID would be. The budget was based on 90% of 2019's traffic numbers. RITBA achieved 95% of 2019's numbers for toll revenue through December 2021. Traffic for November and December was at 98% and 97% respectively of 2019 numbers. The gas tax revenue YTD was higher by \$453,000 or 6%, and the budget for the gas tax revenue was based on 97% of the estimate provided by the Department of Revenue. YTD operating expenses are lower than budget by \$1.1 million or 16%.

Mr. Goulart also provided an update on some of the variances in YTD operating expenses as compared to budget. Personnel expenses, which include wages, taxes and benefits were lower by \$684,000. Severance payments in the amount of \$200,000 resulting from the All-Electronic Tolling (AET) conversion, which were budgeted for this fiscal year, were able to be recorded in the previous fiscal year. In addition, personnel expenses were lower due to several open positions, lower health care costs, and lower 401k contribution costs due to the open positions. YTD contractual services were lower by \$72,000, primarily due to lower legal fees. Other supplies and expenses were higher YTD by \$215,000, primarily due to additional credit card transaction fees due to higher volume. Additionally, postage and supply fees increased due to eliminating cash payments and moving to bill-by-mail. The E-ZPass Inter-Agency Group (IAG) dues of \$25,000 budgeted for January 2022 were paid in December. Insurance is lower by \$126,000 due to negotiated premiums and a credit related to worker's compensation. Repairs and Maintenance is lower by \$165,000 due to lower maintenance and electrical contractor costs and a one-time insurance claim recovery. Bridge Inspections were lower by \$325,000 partly due to higher budgeted costs and Mr. Seabury's competitive pricing proposal process. Transponder expenses are higher by \$20,000 due to the increase in sales.

Director Alviti noted that it appears RITBA is headed for a surplus. He asked if a plan was being developed for a potential surplus. Mr. Goulart indicated a surplus would be carried forward as part of RITBA's net income.

Executive Director's Report:

- **Traffic and Revenue Data** – Traffic and toll revenue have returned as Mr. Goulart mentioned in his report. January 2022 traffic is up from 2021 but lower than 2019 and 2020. This is primarily due to the significant weather events of the month which necessitated restrictions on the Newport Pell Bridge, even closure of the bridge for a short time. It was noted that February is traditionally the slowest month for traffic. It is anticipated that traffic will be more in line with 2021 and 2019 levels in the coming months.
- **Federal Funding Requests** – RITBA is awaiting a date for a debriefing on the RAISE grant proposal submitted for the dehumidification of the Mt. Hope Bridge cables and anchorages. In the meantime, RITBA is preparing for a second submission of the RAISE grant proposal in April and will focus more on climate change and its effects in the next submission. The submission will also focus on jobs that will be created with the project. Chair Morse inquired if the Authority has a surplus this year, could the funds be directed towards the project? Mr. Goulart responded that they would by default. Any excess would help fund our capital projects. Director Alviti noted that a surplus would likely only cover a small percentage of the project. Mr. Seabury noted there will

be a provision in the capital improvement plan for the project to move forward with or without grant funding. Director Salome asked if the state has ever taken surplus funds from RITBA in the past as he experienced this when Chair of another RI Quasi-Agency Board. Mr. Goulart indicated that any funds we receive are pledged to pay down the debt and interest associated with the toll revenue bonds and the motor fuel tax bonds. These bonds help fund our capital program. Lastly, Director Caron Silveira spoke about another concept she is looking into for funding of targeted projects, the concept of toll credits. US Senators Shaheen and Booker introduced toll credit legislation that would allow state credits to be purchased and sold among states. Toll credits for work done at the Authority would benefit RIDOT and the state in general by helping with future projects that are accomplished with the use of federal funds. If work is done using toll credits, federal funding for future projects would not require a state match. Director Caron Silveira reiterated that she and the RITBA senior management team will continue to explore every avenue available to obtain funds for this project and other targeted projects.

- **Suicide Deterrent Concepts – Legislative Bills** – Director Caron Silveira thanked Melissa Cotta and another member of the public for attending the Board meeting today. She indicated she is in regular communication with the sponsors of the bills, both Senator DiPalma and Representative Solomon. RITBA has identified an engineering consultant, Atkins, to provide the conceptual study services for suicide deterrent measures and is awaiting funding to begin the study. Atkins was involved in developing concepts for suicide barriers on the Sunshine Skyway Bridge in Tampa, FL. The pending legislative bills do not include a funding source. Director Caron Silveira and Mr. Goulart have submitted a proposal for APRA funds. Director Alвити requested that Mr. Goulart check with the Office of Management and Budget to see if funding for the study has been included in the Governor’s proposed budget. Director Caron Silveira noted that she continues to have regular communication with Senator Seveney and Senator Felag, both members of the Senate Finance Committee, who have been actively monitoring the status of funding.
- **Forum with Elected Officials from Host Communities** – Director Caron Silveira and her senior management team hosted a forum in January for the Senators and Representatives of RITBA’s host communities and some of the state leadership. The attendees were briefed on everything from RITBA’s assets, current and future capital projects, and the Authority’s efforts to obtain federal funding for targeted projects.
- **A Look to the Future Workforce** – Director Caron Silveira indicated that in addition to planning for the present she is putting an eye on the future workforce. She is looking to partner with a non-profit corporation that helps introduce the youth of our state to jobs and careers related to infrastructure, in our case providing a look at the types of jobs needed to run the Authority: Finance, tolling, engineering, bridge management, etc.

Executive Session - At approximately 9:20 A.M. a motion to convene into executive session, pursuant to R.I. General Laws 42-46-5 (a) (1) to discuss: Personnel Matter, Job Performance was made by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter M. Janaros, and passed unanimously. Executive Director Caron Silveira was provided prior written notice that her job performance would be discussed and that she could require that discussion be held during the open session.

At 9:35 A.M. a motion to exit executive session and convene into open session was made by Peter M. Janaros and seconded by James K. Salome. The motion passed unanimously, and the Executive Committee exited executive session.

Votes of executive session: James K. Salome made a motion to extend the Executive Director’s contract on the same terms for one year. It was seconded by Peter M. Janaros and passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Darrell Waldron to seal the executive session minutes and leave Executive Session. It was seconded by Peter M. Janaros and passed unanimously.

A motion by Peter Alviti, Jr., seconded by Peter M. Janaros, passed unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at 9:36 A.M.

Lori Caron Silveira
Secretary