

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 15, 2023.

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 A.M. by Chair, James K. Salome. Director Caron Silveira noted that Assistant Project Manager Jeffrey Wiggin would be presenting Director of Engineering Eric Seabury’s items in his absence.

Members Present

James K. Salome, Chair
Darrell Waldron, Vice Chair
Peter M. Janaros, P.E.
Karen D. Pinch

Members Absent:

Peter Alviti, Jr., P.E., Ex Officio

Invited Guests:

Lori Caron Silveira, Executive Director
Kathryn Coleman, Director of Tolling Operations
Jamie Swanberg, Manager of Tolling Operations
Jeffrey Goulart, Chief Financial Officer
Stephen Cahill, Manager of Safety and Security
Jeffrey Wiggin, Assistant Project Manager
Frank Flowers, Maintenance Manager
Remmy Villacis, Network Technician
William O’Gara, Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O’Gara, Legal Counsel
Marianne Durgin, Executive Assistant to the Director

Item No. 2

Public Comment – There were no public comments.

Item No. 3

A motion made by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2023 Board meeting.

Item No. 4

Discussion: Mount Hope Bridge Charging Station – Charging Fees – Mr. Goulart addressed the Board seeking approval to begin charging an hourly rate at RITBA’s charging station located at One Old Ferry Road in Bristol to cover the cost of the electricity that supplies the charger. The level 2 charger was installed in 2017. Late last year, the Authority upgraded the software which now allows RITBA to see who is using it and for how long. If approved, a fee of between \$2 - \$4 per hour would be charged. Use would be capped at four hours per user. Director Caron Silveira indicated RITBA staff conducted research to see which entities in the state are charging a fee. While most agencies are moving in that direction, only a few locations, primarily in the private sector, are charging fees. Also, the City of Newport is charging a fee at the Gateway Center in Newport of \$1.50 per hour. Director Caron Silveira recently spoke to Chris Kearns of the RI Public Utilities Commission, who indicated they are also moving in this direction and expect to put forth a legislative agenda addressing this and other aspects of EV usage next year. They have 50 charging stations, in park-n-ride lots, and in DOA and DEM locations. Director Caron Silveira noted that as RITBA is a quasi-public entity, issuing bonds, and paying for its electricity, there are several

considerations to be weighed in evaluating how to proceed. Director Janaros asked if the charging station is located on the property RITBA leases to Roger Williams University. Mr. Goulart confirmed that this is the location, and that the charging station is available to the public, not only the University community. Director Pinch indicated she feels charging a fee for the use of electricity is reasonable, as owners of gas-powered vehicles pay for gas. Chair Salome suggested that RITBA staff consult with bond counsel to obtain input as the Authority has obligations to its bond holders. Director Janaros inquired about the status of the charging station outside the E-ZPass walk-in center in Jamestown. Mr. Goulart indicated the charger in Jamestown is much older, and the manufacturer went out of business four years ago. It would require purchasing a new one and having it installed. Chair Salome suggested the Authority hold on pursuing anything with the Jamestown charger, and first proceed with consulting bond counsel on the proposal of charging a fee at the Bristol location. This item will be brought back to the Board at the March meeting.

Item No. 5

Motion by Karen D. Pinch, seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to approve a task order for Green International Affiliates, Inc. to perform the Routine Inspection of the Hummocks Avenue Bridge at a cost not to exceed \$6,412. Federal Highway Administration requires routine bridge inspections every two years, and the Hummocks Avenue Bridge is due in April 2023. The Authority issued a request for quotes from five of its prequalified On-Call Technical Services consultants. Four quotes were submitted, ranging from \$6,412 to \$13,038. Green International Affiliates, Inc. submitted the lowest cost proposal at \$6,412, which is below the budgeted estimate of \$9,000 for this inspection.

Item No. 6

Discussion: Replacement of Flat Roof at 33 Ferry Road, Bristol - RITBA Manager of Maintenance Frank Flowers was notified by Roger Williams University staff, who lease and occupy the building located at 33 Ferry Rd., Bristol, that water was leaking into a portion of the building. RITBA staff immediately responded by inspecting the facility. The initial inspection revealed that water penetration was from a flat roof surface. Subsequently, this was supported by a qualified roofing contractor RITBA brought in to inspect the building. The contractor also indicated there could be asbestos containing material in one of the roof layers of repairs. RITBA will procure an on-call consultant to take test samples. After the results are determined, staff will perform a scope of work and issue an invitation to bid to remove and replace the existing roof. The IFB will include a contingency for any additional repairs required when the original roof is removed. An update will be provided to the Board once the bid responses have been received. Director Janaros asked what the square footage is of the roof. Mr. Wiggin will report back to Director Janaros. The roof is located on the back side of the building and to the side.

Assistant Project Manager Jeffrey Wiggin - Capital Projects Status Report: This month Mr. Wiggin provided updates to the following capital projects in Mr. Seabury's absence:

- Newport Pell Bridge Pier 5W Girder Temporary Shoring and Bearing Removal and Replacement: All the shoring and stiffeners have been installed. Replacement of the bearings will take place in the spring when the weather is warmer and best suited for installing. The project will start up again on April 15th and should be completed by May 12th.
- Phase II – AET Final Design- Newport Pell Bridge: RITBA staff met with WSP and did a detailed review of the 75% design on February 10th. A final draft will be presented to RITBA from WSP with all comments and recommendations incorporated from both the tolling and engineering departments. This project is on time. Director Janaros asked about the status of the gantry. Director Caron Silveira stated the gantry is structurally designed; the aesthetic aspect of the

gantry is now being explored with two local architectural firms. One aspect being considered is whether to include lettering on the gantry. The final design will be brought before the Board.

CFO Jeff Goulart – Financial Summary Report: Mr. Goulart indicated year to date performance is solid. Total revenue is higher than budget by \$4.1M, while operating expenses are lower by \$600k. Operating profit is higher by \$7M, or 35%. Revenue is higher by \$5.5M or 30% as compared to the pre-Covid numbers of 2019. Operating expenses are higher by only \$833k. Operating profit is higher by \$4.7M. Compared to pre-Covid levels, performance is back, even though traffic is not back 100%. Personnel expenses, insurance, repairs and maintenance, bridge inspections, and transponders were all lower than budget. Action is being taken to reduce costs in the categories where costs are higher than budget. Plans are underway to renegotiate the contract with the telephone provider this spring when it is due to expire, and RITBA will be looking to reduce costs. Currently the Authority pays anywhere between \$8k to \$13k a month for telephone services. Last month Katie Coleman had an item approved by the Board which will reduce the other supplies and expenses category. Multiple toll transaction fees per license plate will be issued on one invoice, reducing paper costs and postage. Director Janaros inquired about the gas tax revenue. Mr. Goulart stated it is down \$.5M from budget. The last four months have not been as low as the months of July and August. Director Caron Silveira stated RITBA will hear next about gas tax at the state level in May, at the revenue estimating conference. Chair Salome noted the US Senior Open will be hosted in Newport this summer and should generate a lot of traffic during that time.

Executive Director's Report:

- **Tolling Operations**
 - **Hub** – Director Caron Silveira indicated it continues to be a very busy time for tolling operations. The centralized hub that is being developed by the E-ZPass Group will make significant improvements to the system by streamlining the way tolling agencies exchange files. The Hub is due to go live by Memorial Day. If it is not ready by that date, it will likely be held off until after summer, as all agencies agree it would not be wise to kick it off during the highest traffic months of summer, especially with many of the agencies being destination locations.
 - **Back Office and Lane Integrator** – The back-office contract is proceeding. There are many moving parts to it. Implementing a new back-office, along with a new lane integrator, and transitioning from Kapsch to Emovis for these services is nothing short of a herculean task. The work is proceeding smoothly.
 - **Customer Service** - The tolling department is making strides in doing better with phone service for customers. Staff are increasing E-ZPass accounts, which will reduce the bill-by-mail transactions. The E-ZPass department is caught up on the backlog of images to be read, and thereby getting invoices into the mail on a timely basis.
- **Federal Funding Requests – RAISE 2023 and Bridge Investment Program** - The deadline for the RAISE 2023 grant submission is approaching soon. The Authority is requesting letters of support from Board members, the Governor's office, the federal delegation, representatives and senators of RITBA host communities, and organized labor. The response is always overwhelmingly positive. RITBA is also awaiting word on the Bridge Investment Program and should hear by the end of February or early March. The Governor's office and the federal delegation have been in touch with USDOT and Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg to stress the importance of the need for rehabilitation of the Mt. Hope Bridge, both the dehumidification of the cables and anchorages and the re-decking of the bridge. Also noted by Director Caron Silveira was that the George Washington Bridge in New York has completed a rehabilitation in an amount of almost \$2 billion,

which includes some of the work the Authority plans to do at the Mt. Hope Bridge. RITBA staff will take a trip to see the work done at that bridge.

- **General Assembly – 2023 Session** – The only bill submitted to the General Assembly this session is one seeking to change legislation to allow motorists 30 days to pay a toll invoice instead of 14. Although this may sound counterintuitive because it delays receipt of revenue, it will reduce the time staff currently spends servicing customers on the phone for late fee issues, freeing up time for more productive use. The primary sponsor of the bill is Representative Finkelman of Jamestown, and co-sponsoring it are all members of the Aquidneck Island delegation. If passed, it will be good for customers and good for RITBA staff.

Executive Session: Pursuant to RI General Laws 42-46-5 (a) (1), Personnel Matter – Job Performance – Executive Director - Motion by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to move the Executive Session item to the March agenda.

A motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter M. Janaros, passed unanimously to adjourn the public meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Lori Caron Silveira
Secretary