

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 21, 2024.

The meeting was called to order at 8:36 A.M. by Chair, James K. Salome.

Members Present

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

Members Absent:

Peter Alviti, Jr., P.E., Ex Officio
Karen D. Pinch

Invited Guests:

Lori Caron Silveira, Executive Director
Eric Seabury, Director of Engineering
Kathryn Coleman, Director of Tolling Operations
Jeffrey Goulart, Chief Financial Officer
Stephen Cahill, Manager of Safety and Security
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
Jeffrey Wiggin, Assistant Project Manager
Jamie Swanberg, Manager of Tolling Operations
David Schultz, Legislative Fiscal Analyst

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 24, 2024 Board meeting. Director Janaros acknowledged and complimented the minute-taker, noting it was an involved meeting, with a lot of back-and-forth discussion. He felt the minutes were captured accurately. Chair Salome expressed gratitude to the minute-taker as well.

Item No. 4

Motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter M. Janaros, passed unanimously to approve entering into a dark fiber lease agreement with OSHEAN, Inc. Key elements of the agreement include: 1) OSHEAN will lease twelve (12) strands of fiber on the Newport Pell Bridge, 2) OSHEAN will be responsible for all costs associated with connecting the fiber to terminuses in Newport and Jamestown, 3) The agreement will be for 10 years with two (2) additional five (5) year options (mutual agreement), 4) OSHEAN will provide, free of charge, the services that Cox Communications currently charges RITBA. The annual fees are approximately \$70K per year. The connection speed from OSHEAN will be approximately double the current speed provided by Cox, and 5) The new services with OSHEAN will be available to RITBA by 6/30/24. Director Caron Silveira noted that while tolls and gas tax are the primary sources of revenue for the Authority, staff is always looking to monetize RITBA’s assets. The lease agreement with OSHEAN is a prime example and Director Caron Silveira noted Mr. Goulart continually looks for opportunities to monetize the Authority’s assets. Chair Salome commended Mr. Goulart for a job well done. Director Janaros noted how worthwhile this endeavor is, as the conduits have been there for a longtime and Mr.

Goulart has found a way to market them. Mr. Goulart noted he has had discussions with other interested entities as there are additional conduits that could be marketed. Mr. Goulart thanked Frank Flowers, Manager of Maintenance, for his assistance in providing detailed information about the conduits on the Bridge.

Item No. 5

Motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter Janaros, passed unanimously to approve the recommendation from RITBA staff to appoint the firm of Rodio & Ursillo, LTD to serve as board counsel at a rate of \$225 per hour. In July 2023, RITBA staff issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for legal services and received six (6) proposals related to nine (9) distinct areas of representation (litigation, appellate practice, commercial/taxation/public finance, environmental, labor and employment, tolling, internal and external investigations, general matters and corporate governance, and construction and design). There is no financial effect as the budget contains \$42K for legal fees inclusive of board counsel fees.

Item No. 6

Motion by Peter Janaros, seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to approve a task order for Commonwealth Engineers and Consultants (CE&C) to perform the routine inspection of the North Main Road Bridges & Wildlife Arches I, II, III, & IV at a cost not to exceed \$30,839.05. RITBA solicited Requests for Quotes from five prequalified, local On-Call Infrastructure Professional Services consultants for routine inspection of the bridges and arches. Five consultants responded, and RITBA staff determined CE&C to be the best candidate for the proposed work. Mr. Seabury noted RITBA typically offers the use of bridge inspection equipment and staff to operate the inspection equipment and manage traffic control. Due to current internal efforts to power wash bridges and perform other required maintenance, the consultants were required to include rental of bridge inspection equipment and traffic control in their proposals. \$37K was budgeted for these routine bridge inspections.

Item No. 7

Discussion – Concrete Deck Repairs vs. Rubberized Asphalt Chip Seal – Mount Hope Bridge: On October 23, 2023, RITBA received bids to perform 6,000 square feet of concrete deck wearing surface repairs, and the lowest bid was \$1,379,000. This would temporarily address many of the current pothole issues currently being taken care of by RITBA staff, but it would do little toward improving rideability, which has been a common complaint. The wearing surface of the entire bridge deck is scheduled for replacement beginning in FY26 under RITBA's Capital Improvement Plan. At that time, all temporary concrete deck wearing surface repairs would need to be removed along with the entire wearing surface on the bridge. In the interest of fiscal responsibility, another option to improve rideability has been explored. RITBA staff worked with WSP, one of its On-Call Infrastructure Professional Services consultants, to produce a rough order of magnitude cost estimate to perform a rubberized asphalt chip seal on the entire bridge. This has been performed on the bridge several times in the past ten to twelve years. WSP estimates it would cost between \$265,000 - \$350,000 based on data obtained from RIDOT and City of Newport contracts in recent years. It would improve rideability as there would be a new, refreshed riding surface but it would not address pothole repairs. They would continue to be performed by RITBA staff. A third option is to simply continue patching potholes utilizing RITBA staff. This would not address rideability and would require the current frequency of pothole repairs being taken care of in-house. Chair Salome asked why the Authority is waiting until 2026 to replace the full bridge deck surface. Mr. Seabury indicated it is based on the plan of finance built into the Capital Improvement Plan. Director Janaros stated he is in favor of the chip seal option. There are approximately 16,000 motorists crossing the bridge each day. Director Janaros stated spending 1.3M for the first option, only to have it torn up in a few years to perform the full deck replacement is less favored than the chip seal option, which is a much lower cost and can improve rideability. He believes this option is a modest investment for the benefit of the Authority's customers. Chair Salome agrees with Director Janaros' and Mr. Seabury's recommendations for the chip seal approach. Director Caron Silveira indicated the item can be put on the agenda for a vote at the next

scheduled Board meeting. Director Janaros also noted the project will only take about two days to complete. Director Caron Silveira indicated the full deck replacement project has been included in the recent grant proposals that have been submitted for federal funding. RITBA is hopeful it will have success in securing funding outside of its plan of finance for this project.

Director of Engineering Eric Seabury - Capital Projects Status Report:

- Phase II – AET Construction - Newport Pell Bridge: The bridge deck has been completed on the eastbound side for Structure E. It is cured and the next step is paving the top. Half of the concrete has been poured for a 400-foot section of the new roadway that will exist under the new gantry and the new gantry foundations have been poured. They have installed most of the fill for the new highway line. In the coming week, Lynch will pour the other half of the slab that will be under the gantry. The project has been moving along on schedule. The contractor has done a particularly good job, even working on days that it's been snowing.
- Mt. Hope Bridge Suspension Cables & Anchorages Investigation and Dehumidification: Messrs. Seabury, Wiggin, and Flowers made a visit to the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, located between Camden, NJ and Philadelphia, PA and took a tour of their dehumidification system. It was designed by an overseas consultant, and the Delaware River Port Authority has encountered issues. The RITBA team has learned what not to do regarding this project. AECOM, the design consultant for RITBA's dehumidification project, is making recommendations to the staff in charge of the Ben Franklin Bridge to rectify their issues. As AECOM's office is in Philadelphia, the RITBA team met with the consultant to receive an update on the project's 30% design completion and had a kickoff meeting with Kiewit for the upcoming cable airflow test due to begin March 11. This test will require fifty-five workdays or less.
- Compression Link Phase I Work – Newport Pell: RITBA staff continues to monitor the scaffolding that is installed under the Newport Pell Bridge at the compression link location. WSP is continuing with the design work for the final repairs.
- Safety Barrier Feasibility Study: Studies for all four bridges are on schedule.

CFO Jeff Goulart – Financial Summary Report: All numbers continue to look positive. January and the first half of February look good. YTD Financial Statement Notes – Actual vs. Budget material variance analysis: Total revenue exceeded budget by \$3.9M or 18%. This increase was 100% driven by higher toll revenue. Gas tax was on budget. Operating expenses were lower than budget by \$400K or 6%. Personnel expenses, utilities, contractual services, other supplies and expenses, bridge inspections, and insurance were all lower. Repairs and maintenance were higher by only \$1K, and transponder expenses were higher by \$3K. For a period of time in December and early January, RITBA charged no fees for transponders as a good will gesture to motorists rerouted to the Pell Bridge due to the Washington Bridge matter. Typically, the Authority sees \$25-35K monthly in transponder revenue. Director Janaros asked what the outlook is on the gas tax revenue. Mr. Goulart has a five-year projection with numbers tweaking down, but the anticipated reduction is built into the plan of finance.

Chair Salome asked Mr. Seabury if he feels the bridges will be capable of managing the additional weight of EVs. Mr. Seabury first noted that he feels the transition to all EVs on RI roadways will take longer than anticipated. He stated the current infrastructure does not exist throughout the country. One of the bigger concerns Mr. Seabury has been reading about is how parking garages will manage the added weight of EVs as they were not designed to handle it. On RITBA's bridges, vehicles are generally "live loads," which means they cross with space between them, which is quite different than a complete dead load, as would be the case in a parking garage. Mr. Seabury feels there will be ways to work with the additional weight given proper time to prepare for the added volume of EVs on the bridges.

Executive Director's Report:

- **Plaza Road Design Work** – Director Caron Silveira indicated the work to rebuild Structure E has been done well by Lynch’s subcontractor. She noted she has fielded a lot of questions from the public and the media about the status of the project. She indicated the Authority will be back to two lanes in each direction at the work zone by mid-May. The project will continue, but the single lanes will return to two in each direction, and the “pinch point” will be relieved. There will still be instances when RITBA will need to take a lane for various parts of the project, or for inspection work, or upcoming repair to the compression link. Director Caron Silveira stated the phone calls she answers from the public provide reassuring information to the callers. Once she shares the process of the work, how the Authority is working to keep disruptions to travel at a minimum, the callers appreciate being informed and better understand the process. The public appreciates open communication and the customer service provided by RITBA management in responding to inquiries from the public directly.
- **Mount Hope Bridge Dehumidification Project** – When speaking with elected officials, be it members of the Governor’s office, or the federal delegation, Director Caron Silveira said she stresses that any language which states “this project is set to begin,” is merely referring to the preliminary blow test of the cables. The project has not gone out to bid yet. The RITBA team is working hard to ensure this preliminary work, which will take place over approximately fifty-five business days, will inconvenience motorists as minimally as possible and it will be completed in advance of Roger Williams University’s graduation exercises. RITBA recognizes the motoring public is already having to contend with traffic resulting from the Washington Bridge, and with the road design project underway at RITBA’s toll plaza. Director Janaros shared traffic numbers which validate the Authority’s plan for performing the cable blow test during the hours chosen, which should minimize delays for commuters. The Director has been contacted by the business community in Bristol. Director Caron Silveira and Mr. Seabury will be meeting with a representative from the Bristol Merchants Association. The representative has already indicated once open lines of communication are established, then the business community can stand ready to support RITBA. Director Janaros asked if the Authority will be taking care of traffic control. Director Caron Silveira replied that it will be. Lastly, once the blow test is completed mid-May, all work will stop, as the busy summer season begins, and will not resume until the fall.
- **Washington Bridge – Impact on RITBA Operations** – The impact on traffic in January was approximately 25K or 830 additional vehicles per day. Director Caron Silveira believes the additional traffic is coming westbound; this is not from official data but from observing with the naked eye. The Director feels much of the traffic is coming from the East Bay commuters who are taking a “southern loop” to get to the airport or to Providence or other points north. Another impact which is requiring the attention of RITBA staff is the APRA requests inquiring about bridge inspections and the condition of the bridges. There are ten business days before a response is due. More time can be requested. The Authority has some considerations in terms of what it can disclose. There is a process; TSA must be contacted to ensure no sensitive security information related to the bridges is shared. Resources must be allocated to answer the requests, as the public has the right to request public information under the APRA statute. At the same time, staff are working hard to tend to the day-to-day operations of the Authority.
- **Next Board Meeting** – March 20, 2024.

A motion by Peter Janaros, seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to adjourn the public meeting at 9:08 a.m.

Lori Caron Silveira
Secretary