



Agenda Item No. 3

To: Finance-Auditing Committee/Committee of the Whole
Meeting of July 10, 2008

From: Joseph M. Wire, Auditor-Controller
Celia G. Kupersmith, General Manager

Subject: **APPROVE A BASE TOLL INCREASE ON THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE**

Recommendation

The Finance-Auditing Committee recommends that the Board of Directors approve implementation of Golden Gate Bridge Base Toll, \$6 Cash/\$5 FasTrak[®], as summarized below and detailed in the attached ordinance, effective September 1, 2008.

Basic Auto Rate (2-axle)	<i>Cash</i>	\$6.00
	<i>FasTrak</i>	\$5.00
Axle Rate (per axle if more than 2)	<i>Cash</i>	\$3.00
	<i>FasTrak</i>	\$2.50
Rate for Persons with Disabilities with valid District identification card		50% of applicable cash rate

The Finance-Auditing Committee further recommends that the Board of Directors find that the increase in the base toll is necessary for the purpose of: (a) meeting operating expenses, (b) purchasing or leasing supplies, equipment or materials, (c) meeting financial reserve needs and requirements, and (d) obtaining funds for capital projects necessary to maintain service within existing services areas, and therefore is exempt under Section 21080(b)(8) of the Public Resources Code.

The Finance-Auditing Committee recommends that the Board not take any action regarding the variable toll options until sometime in the future when more definitive feedback from U.S. Department of Transportation officials have been received regarding the proposed options.

Summary

Today's staff recommendation comes as the culmination of a process that began in November 2007, when the Board of Directors met in a workshop to discuss the financial condition of the District. On January 25th, the Board approved a formal process to analyze a base toll increase with an extensive public outreach component included. In addition, on May 8th the Board

approved two variable toll options to be considered and commented on by the public at the Public Hearing which was held on June 11th.

This report summarizes the staff's recommendations, the base and variable toll proposals, the public outreach process and public comments received on the toll proposals.

Golden Gate Bridge BASE Toll Increase Proposal

Staff recommends that the Board approve the base toll increase to be implemented on September 1, 2008. The proposal to increase the toll on the Golden Gate Bridge will close a projected \$91 million budget shortfall over the next five years. It will allow continued funding of Bridge, Bus and Ferry systems at current levels. The September 1, 2008, implementation date is strongly recommended because the District has experienced significantly increased fuel costs since the last deficit projection was produced in August 2007. The District foregoes approximately \$1.5 million in potential revenue for each month the proposed toll increase is delayed. All indications are that the recent increases in fuel costs will continue.

The proposed implementation of an increase in the base toll for the Golden Gate Bridge, which the District finds is necessary for the purpose of: (a) meeting operating expenses, (b) purchasing or leasing supplies, equipment or materials, (c) meeting financial reserve needs and requirements, and (d) obtaining funds for capital projects necessary to maintain service within existing services areas, and therefore is exempt under Section 21080(b)(8) of the Public Resources Code.

Base Toll Proposal:

As stated in the recommendation, the base toll proposal is a \$1 increase to the existing Golden Gate Bridge toll, which would result in a \$5 FasTrak toll and a \$6 cash toll for a two-axle vehicle and \$2.50 FasTrak/\$3.00 cash toll for each additional axle. This proposed toll increase is estimated to raise approximately \$18 million annually.

The recommended toll proposal changes the policy for the toll program for qualified persons with disabilities to a 50% discount off the cash toll per axle, which is consistent with the amount of discount provided for persons with disabilities using Golden Gate Transit or Golden Gate Ferry services. That amount would be 50% of \$6, or \$3 per two-axle vehicle. The current toll rate of \$1.50 per vehicle for persons with disabilities has not changed since 1991. No other toll bridge in the Bay Area has any form of discounted toll rate for persons with disabilities (Attachment A shows toll increase details).

Attached is a staff report from the January 25, 2008, Finance-Auditing Committee Meeting that provides the analysis supporting the base toll proposal (see Attachment B).

Variable Toll Proposals

Staff recommends that the Board take no action on the variable toll option at this time. As described in detail below, the variable toll proposals were to meet the requirement of a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) grant award to the Bay Area. As part of the grant, the U.S.

DOT must approve the variable toll proposal and they have not yet completed that task. Staff will bring the variable toll proposals back to the Board at some future date when the DOT review has been completed.

The remainder of this report will focus on the base toll increase proposal and recommendation.

Summary of Public Involvement

At the start of the toll study process, staff was directed to undertake comprehensive public involvement intended to inform the public about the District's financial needs in the future, to discuss the toll options under consideration and to seek public input on these options. Public outreach included:

- Three Open Houses were held: The first in the City and County of San Francisco on February 28th; the second in the County of Sonoma on March 13th; and, the final and third, in the County of Marin on March 19th;
- Press releases have been issued several times over the last six months, resulting in extensive media coverage throughout the Bay Area;
- A public hearing was held on June 11, 2008, at the Marin County Civic Center. The public hearing was noticed in the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, the *Marin Independent Journal* and the *San Francisco Examiner*, during the period of May 16, 2008, to May 23, 2008. Display ads were placed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Marin Independent Journal*, *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, *Commuter Times*, *Bay Crossings*, *Novato Advance* and *La Voz* (Spanish-language newspaper) during the period of May 21, 2008, to June 9, 2008, and on www.511.org and the District's web site; email updates were sent to subscribers on May 19, 2008, and May 29, 2008; and, posters in English and Spanish were placed on Golden Gate Transit buses and ferries, and at bus stops and ferry terminals.

Summary of Public Comments

At the close of the public hearing period on June 12, 2008, 574 comments were received by the District. Of these, 47 comments (8.2%) expressed support for a base toll increase. 380 comments (66.2%) expressed opposition to a base toll increase, including 7 comments specifically opposing changes to the Toll Rate for Disabled Persons (TRDP). 92 comments (16%) made no statement of opposition to or support for a toll increase.

In addition, of the 574 comments received, 14 comments (2.4%) expressed support specifically for the variable tolling options. Of these, only 1 expressed support specifically for Option B, while no comments specifically supported Option A. 30 comments (5.2%) expressed opposition to a variable toll. 11 comments (1.9%) expressed opposition to both the base and variable toll increases.

Attachment D provides a summary of these comments, aggregated by main topic, with a staff response below each comment.

Fiscal Impact

Implementation of the \$1 increase in the base toll effective September 1, 2008, will generate net revenues of approximately \$18 million in FY 08/09. It is forecasted to generate net revenues of \$93 million over the next five years.

Attachments:

Attachment A: *Proposals to Increase Tolls on the Golden Gate Bridge*

Attachment B: Finance-Auditing Committee/Committee of the Whole, January 25, 2008,
Approve Actions Relative to a Proposed Toll Increase

Attachment C: Finance-Auditing Committee/Committee of the Whole, May 8, 2008,
Approve Proposed Variable Toll Rates for Inclusion in Public Hearing

Attachment D: *Staff Responses to General Categories of Public Comment*

Attachment A

PROPOSALS TO INCREASE TOLLS ON THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE

	CURRENT TOLL & PROPOSED INCREASE		
	Current Toll	Proposed Incremental Increase	Proposed Toll Effective 24 hrs/day
Cash Toll (2-axle)	\$5	\$1	\$6
FasTrak Toll	\$4	\$1	\$5
Per Additional Axle Toll (Cash)	\$2.50 per additional axle	\$0.50	\$3 per additional axle
Per Additional Axle Toll (FasTrak)	\$2 per additional axle	\$0.50	\$2.50 per additional axle
Disabled Toll Rate	\$1.50	50% of Cash Toll	\$3
PROPOSED EFFECTIVE DATE:	September 2008		



GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE
HIGHWAY & TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT

REVISED JANUARY 24, 2008

Agenda Item No. 4

To: Finance-Auditing Committee/Committee of the Whole
Meeting of January 25, 2008

From: Joseph M. Wire, Auditor-Controller
Celia G. Kupersmith, General Manager

Subject: **APPROVE ACTIONS RELATIVE TO A PROPOSED TOLL INCREASE**

Recommendation

The Finance-Auditing Committee recommends that the Board of Directors approve the following actions:

1. Authorize undertaking the public input process associated with a potential toll increase by conducting three informational Open Houses as listed below, for the purpose of providing information, answering questions and receiving input from the public about the proposed toll increases under consideration, with the understanding that the date of the formal Public Hearing will be set by the Board at later date:

City and County of San Francisco

Thursday, February 28, 2008

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Fort Mason Conference Center, Landmark Building A, Golden Gate Room
San Francisco, CA

Sonoma County

Thursday, March 13, 2008

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Petaluma Community Center, Assembly and Activity Rooms
320 North McDowell Boulevard
Petaluma, CA

Marin County

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Pickleweed Park Community Center, Multi-Purpose Room
50 Canal Street
San Rafael, CA

2. Authorize staff to present for public review the following proposed toll increase (as discussed by the Board at the November 9, 2007, Strategic Planning Workshop) at the Open Houses that result in a \$5 FasTrak toll and a \$6 cash toll along with the related per axle toll rates implemented no earlier than July 1, 2008, and authorize staff to present a proposed change in policy for the toll program for qualified persons with disabilities to a 50% discount to the cash toll per axle.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek authorization for staff to set a public hearing regarding a proposed toll increase. The report provides an overview of the public involvement process to be undertaken and the toll options to be discussed at the public workshops.

The report is divided into the following sections:

- I. Problem Statement and Summary of Strategic Planning Efforts to Date
- II. Proposed Toll Rates to be Discussed in the Public Involvement Process
- III. Public Involvement Process for the Proposed Toll Increase

Additionally, there are four attachments to this report:

- Attachment A: Actions Taken to Reduce the Financial Shortfall Since 2002
- Attachment B: August 23, 2007 Staff Report: *Discussion Regarding Updates for the Five and Ten-Year Financial Projection*
- Attachment C: November 9, 2007 Staff Report and Associated Materials: *Development of Updated Strategic Plan for Achieving Long-Term Financial Stability*
- Attachment D: Draft Open House Materials

I. Problem Statement and Summary of Strategic Planning Efforts to Date

Activities from 2002 - 2006

In 2002, the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway, and Transportation District (District) was facing a serious financial crisis. The five year deficit (for Fiscal Years 2002/2003-2006/2007) was estimated in 2002 to be \$454 million. Over the next few years, the District undertook numerous specific actions to address this deficit. Internal to the District, with the cooperation of employee labor organizations, the District implemented a 22 percent staff reduction, a two year wage freeze for remaining employees and, in one case, a negotiated wage roll-back. Employee health benefits were also reduced.

Externally, significant Bus and Ferry service reductions took place over the years of 2003 through 2005. Fare increases ranged from as little as 5 percent per year for several of our services to as high as 40 percent in our cash ferry fares. After eleven years of unchanged toll rates, the Bridge tolls were raised in September 2002. Several incremental revenue enhancement programs were also implemented such as changes to parking fees at the Bridge, changes in our property management strategies and implementation of special sales programs at the Gift Shop.

Please see Attachment A for a detailed list of activities undertaken to reduce the deficit since 2002. Due to these initiatives and actions, the District's financial health improved substantially. The deficit has been reduced to \$91 million for the Fiscal Years 2008/2009-2012/2013 (Please see Attachment B for more details on the current fiscal health of the District.)

Infrastructure Improvement Projects

During this same period, in recognition of its paramount responsibility to safeguard and maintain the Golden Gate Bridge and its transit system infrastructure, the District has undertaken several vital capital projects. These have included completion of Phase II of the seismic retrofit of the Bridge, significant under-deck repainting and repair, expansion of the physical security systems at both the Bridge and ferry terminals, and other large, complex and expensive capital projects. In addition, during the last five years the District has been able to implement a program of annually contributing to its reserves for future capital projects and is set to begin a program of funding retiree medical benefit liabilities under the new accounting guidelines. Those actions will help ensure the District's long-term financial stability.

Advisory Committee History

When the District raised tolls in September 2002, the Board committed to undertake an annual review of tolls and the financial needs of the organization as part of the annual budget development process. Following adoption of the Fiscal Year 2005/2006 budget, an Advisory Committee consisting of a small group of board members was established to help staff develop a draft *Strategic Plan for Achieving Long-Term Financial Stability* and examine multiple ideas to address the continuing shortfall in funds. Their recommendations provided the basis of the guiding principles for the Board workshop discussions on the subject and the proposed toll increase.

Current Activities

The District is focused on addressing the remaining shortfall. The District continues to face a challenging financial situation as traffic levels on the Bridge remain steady yet costs continue to rise due to inflation and the growing need for capital investment in the aging Bridge, Bus and Ferry systems. On November 9, 2007, the Board met to review the *Strategic Plan for Achieving Long-Term Financial Stability* (see Attachment C for the meeting's staff report) and authorized staff to develop a public outreach plan for a proposed toll increase of \$1 in both the Fastrak and cash toll rates, to be effective no earlier than July 2008 and possibly as late as January 2009. Alternative toll options may result from the public involvement process.

II. Proposed Toll Rates to be Discussed in the Public Involvement Process

Criteria or Guidelines

One specific toll increase proposal with varying effective dates is recommended for presentation to the public at the Open Houses scheduled for late February and early March. This toll proposal was selected at the Board Workshop on November 9, 2007, based on the following key guiding principles developed by the Advisory Committee and approved by the full Board:

- Any toll increase proposal should strive to fully address the existing remaining shortfall with the understanding that the District will always seek out innovative funding opportunities and ways to reduce expenses to address future needs of the organization.
- Any increase in the cash toll rate should be in round dollars and not in cents. Toll increases that result in the need for coins will increase toll collection time which increases congestion at the Toll Plaza.
- FasTrak tolls can be increased in increments of less than one dollar without increasing congestion at the toll booth.
- A discount should remain available to FasTrak customers.
- The District will consider a toll increase when there is no other viable alternative that will enable the District to meet its needs. The impact of the toll increase should be sufficient to continue operation of current Bridge, Bus, and Ferry services with the understanding that staff will continue to focus on finding internal cost savings and seeking out service efficiency and productivity improvements. While cost savings will continue to be a strong focus for the District in all its programs and services, the general level of transit service and Bridge services will remain in operation and necessary capital projects will be undertaken consistent with the adopted multi-year Capital Plan included in the Fiscal Year 2007/2008 budget.

Toll Proposal

The toll increase proposal outlined below was discussed with the Finance-Auditing Committee and the Board of Directors agreed to move forward into the public process. The Board agreed upon two toll options, which are the same in content, but implemented six-months apart with the first option implemented in July 2008. With a July 2008 implementation, the proposed toll option is estimated to generate \$92 million in additional toll revenues over five years. Each six-month delay in the toll increase reduces revenue earned by approximately \$9 million. The toll proposal is as follows:

- \$6.00 per vehicle for cash customers. Additional axles beyond the normal two on passenger cars is \$3.00.
- \$5.00 per vehicle for FasTrak discount for customers. Additional axles beyond the normal two on passenger cars is \$2.50.
- \$3.00 per vehicle for the Qualified Persons With Disabilities Toll Program. It is proposed to set a policy of a 50% discount to the cash toll per axle for the Qualified Persons With Disabilities Toll Program. The current toll discount was implemented when the District did not have accessible buses and ferries throughout their fleet. Since that time, the District has invested in an accessible transit fleet. Today's rate of \$1.50 per vehicle has not changed since 1991.

- No changes to carpool guidelines. These customers would remain free during the District's carpool hours.

Environmental Review Impact

Please note that when considering a toll increase, it is necessary to look at federal and state regulations that govern the conduct of the District. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) applies to projects that require federal agency approval. Toll rates on existing toll facilities are generally left to State and local discretion. The options under consideration by the District to change existing toll rates for the Golden Gate Bridge do not require federal approval and are therefore exempt from the NEPA process.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) applies to discretionary projects proposed by state and local agencies that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Certain projects are statutorily exempt from CEQA. Under Section 15273, CEQA does not apply to the District's proposal to modify existing toll rates on the Golden Gate Bridge for the purpose of meeting operating expenses, funding capital projects to maintain service and meeting financial reserve needs. The District will prepare a Notice of Exemption for the proposed toll rates modification and file it with the appropriate State and Counties upon approval by the District's Board of Directors as provided for in Section 15062.

III. Public Involvement Process for the Proposed Toll Increase

In order to ensure full public review of the proposed toll increase option, staff recommends undertaking a series of three public Open Houses to discuss the need for the toll increase and the proposed toll increase option. Three Open House meetings would be held – one each in Marin, Sonoma and San Francisco County. Several staff members will be at each Open House to assist in answering questions in an open and informative atmosphere. Meetings will be publicized in the local newspapers, on the District's website, and by means of various media stories. These Open Houses will be conducted in late February and throughout March. (Please see Attachment D for a draft of the Open House materials.) Comments, ideas, and feedback will be collected at the meetings and through general correspondence by means of letters, phone calls, and email. Staff will then bring an analysis of comments from the public Open Houses to the Finance-Auditing Committee Meeting in April for review and discussion. At that time, a final toll increase option will be developed to serve as the basis of a formal public hearing proposed for late April.

Staff further recommends that a Public Hearing be held on Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. in central Marin at the San Rafael City Council Chambers. At this hearing, a full staff report will be presented and formal testimony taken. Following the hearing, staff will compile all of the testimony received and prepare a final recommendation for consideration at the May 8, 2008, Finance-Auditing Committee meeting followed by action by the full Board of Directors on May 9, 2008. The date for implementation of any toll increase will be established by the Board's action in May.

Fiscal Impact

These meetings are expected to cost approximately \$45,000 for material production, public notification and other associated costs. Budgeted for this year, staff believes that adequate funding for these meetings are included in the FY 07/08 Operating Budget.

Attachment A: Actions Taken to Reduce the Financial Shortfall Since 2002

Attachment B: August 23, 2007 Staff Report: *Discussion Regarding Updates for the Five and Ten-Year Financial Projection*

Attachment C: November 9, 2007 Staff Report and Associated Materials: *Development of Updated Strategic Plan for Achieving Long-Term Financial Stability*

Attachment D: Draft Open House Materials



Agenda Item No. 3

To: Finance-Auditing Committee/Committee of the Whole
Meeting of May 8, 2008

From: Joseph M. Wire, Auditor-Controller
Celia G. Kupersmith, General Manager

Subject: **APPROVE PROPOSED VARIABLE TOLL RATES FOR INCLUSION IN
THE TOLL-RELATED PUBLIC HEARING**

Recommendation

There is no recommendation associated with this report.

Summary

A PowerPoint presentation is attached and will be presented by staff at the May 8, 2008, Finance-Auditing Committee meeting.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated this report.

Attachment

Variable Toll Proposal for Golden Gate Bridge

Purpose of Variable Toll

- On March 14, 2008, GGBHTD Board adopted Resolution 2008-020:
 - Directs staff to develop a variable pricing component in connection with the GGB toll increase proposals under consideration, for purpose of further relieving regional congestion in the GG Corridor consisting of GGB and its Highway 101 approaches, including Doyle Drive.

Plan for Variable Toll

- Resolution 2008-020 specifies certain elements of the variable toll plan:
 - Aspire to achieve weekday peak vehicle average speeds of not less than 10 mph below the posted speed limit in the Corridor,
 - Exempt privately operated over-the-road buses from the variable toll component to the same extent as public transit vehicles,
 - Base the plan on both technical analysis and public input, including a June 2008 public hearing, with implementation included with a general toll increase as early as September 2008 but no later than September 2009,
 - Use net proceeds from the variable toll to fund District transit services.

Base Toll Increase

- Prior to adopting Resolution 2008-020, District had initiated public participation on a proposal to increase the GGB toll by \$1 to:
 - \$6 cash toll
 - \$5 FasTrak toll
- The timeline for this toll increase calls for a June 11 public hearing and Board action in July, with possible implementation as early as September 1, 2008.

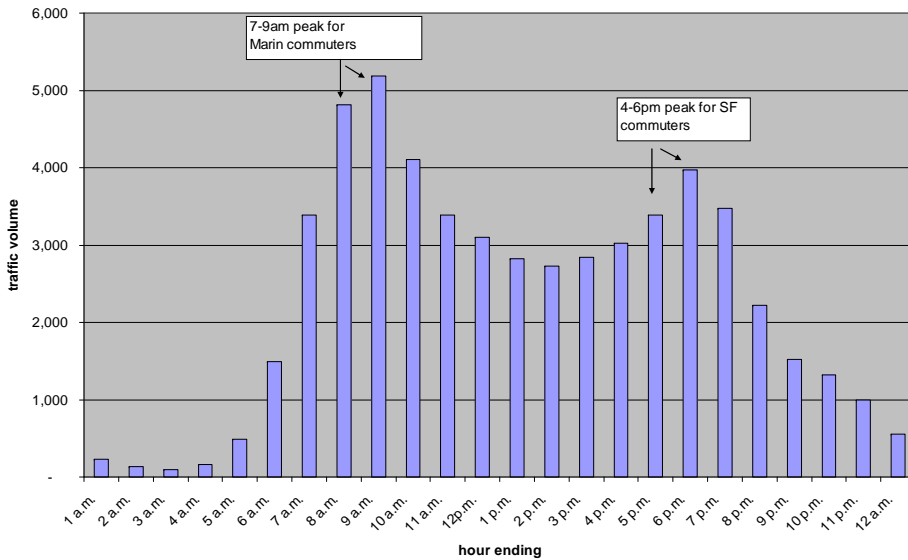
Variable Toll Component

- Elements of the Variable Toll Plan
 - Amount of variable toll (increment above the base toll increase)
 - Must do \$1 cash increment to avoid backups; FasTrak can be in smaller increments
 - Days and Hours of toll
 - Focus on Weekdays 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.; Weekends and Holidays 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.
 - Conforms to “peak” traffic hours (see graphic on next slide)
 - Vehicles subject to toll
 - All vehicles except “carpools”
 - Carpool hours currently 5 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays
 - Method of measuring toll effects
 - Most cost-effective method is to use Regional 511 traffic travel time monitoring data to determine average vehicle speeds within the defined GGB corridor before and after implementation of toll.

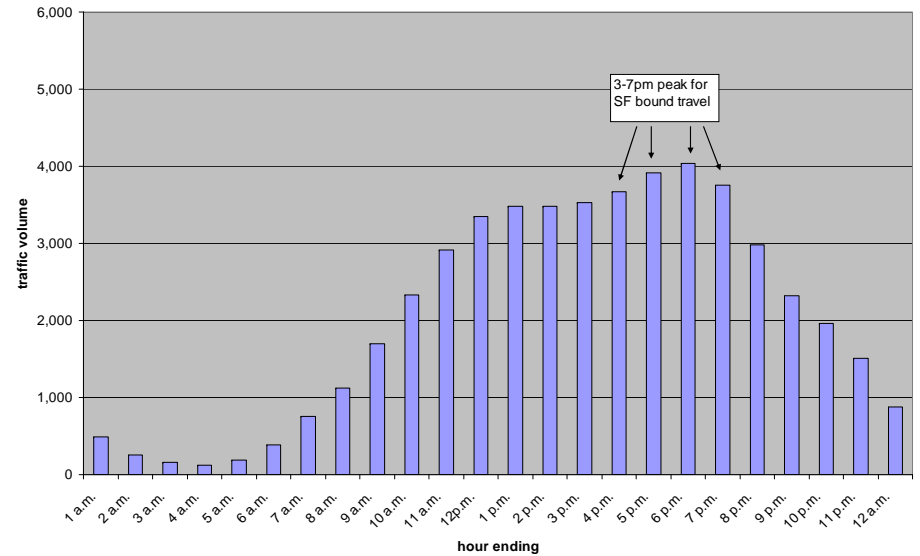
Hourly Traffic on GG Bridge

Peak Hours are Indicated

GG Bridge SB Hourly Traffic
WD Average



GG Bridge SB Hourly Traffic
WE Average



Variable Toll Options

Additional Amount Above \$1.00 Base Toll Increase
to \$6.00 Cash/\$5.00 FasTrak

Option	Cash/FasTrak Variable Toll Increment	Cash/FasTrak Total peak toll 7-9 a.m./4-6 p.m. weekdays and 3-7 p.m. weekends and holidays
A	\$1.00 / \$0.50	\$7.00 / \$5.50
B	\$1.00 / \$1.00	\$7.00 / \$6.00

Analysis of Options

- Experience drawn from past GGB toll increases shows that traffic decreases as much as 1 to 2% for each 10% increase in toll. Same factors may not apply to variable hour tolls.
- Staff researched reports of variable tolls on other facilities and found general consistency with GGB experience but a lack of definitive results for travel changes associated with time shifts and mode shifts caused by peak hour tolls.

Estimated Annual Revenue Generation (\$mil)

* amounts could change if more switch to FasTrak

Option	Base Toll Increase: additional \$1 on both Cash and FasTrak tolls	Variable Toll Increase – 7 a.m. – 9 a.m. Weekdays	Variable Toll Increase – 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. weekdays	Variable Toll Increase – 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. weekends & holidays	Net Total Variable Toll
A: \$1/\$0.50	\$18.1	\$1.5	\$1.1	\$1.2	\$3.8
B: \$1/\$1	\$18.1	\$2.2	\$1.5	\$1.5	\$5.2

Estimated Peak Hour Traffic Reduction at GGB Toll Plaza

Option	% SB AM Peak Hour Traffic Decrease	% SB PM Peak Hour Traffic Decrease	% SB SSH Peak Hour Traffic Decrease
A	7.6	3.8	3.9
B	9.5	4.6	4.5

Shows % southbound traffic reduction from existing 5,500 AM, 4,000 PM and 4,100 Saturday/Sunday/Holiday peak hour levels.

Estimated GGB/Doyle Drive Traffic Speed Improvement From Variable Toll

Peak Time and Congested Segment	AM Peak SB Doyle Drive	PM Peak SB Doyle Drive	SSH Peak SB Doyle Drive
Current Congested Speed	23 mph with 39* mph limit	31 mph with 39* mph limit	25 mph with 39* mph limit
Option A	29 mph	34 mph	28 mph
Option B	31 mph	35 mph	29 mph

*Note: weighted speed limit over 45mph, 35mph and 30mph segments.

Tracking Variable Toll Traffic Impacts

- Plan to use 511 travel data to track effectiveness of variable toll in reducing peak period traffic congestion.
- Will also track bus and ferry ridership changes to monitor ridership increases.
- Note that transit ridership increases may also be influenced by higher gas prices.

Attachment D

Staff Responses to General Categories of Public Comment

Summary

At the close of the public hearing period on June 12, 2008, 574 comments were received by the District.

Of these, 47 comments (8.2%) expressed support for a base toll increase. 380 comments (66.2%) expressed opposition to a base toll increase, including 7 comments specifically in opposition to changes to the Toll Rate for Disabled Persons (TRDP). 92 comments (16%) made no statement of opposition to or support for a toll increase.

In addition, of the 574 comments received, 14 comments (2.4%) expressed support specifically for the variable tolling options. Of these, only 1 expressed support specifically for Option B, while no comments specifically supported Option A. 30 comments (5.2%) expressed opposition to a variable toll. 11 comments (1.9%) expressed opposition to both the base and variable toll increases.

The following provides a summary of these comments, aggregated by main topic, with a staff response below each comment.

Comments on the Base Toll Proposal

Comments Made in Support of Raising the Base Bridge Tolls

The District received 47 comments in support of the base toll increase, including a letter of support from the District's Bus Passengers Advisory Committee. Several of these comments included specific conditions for support, as addressed below.

Comment: Increase Base Bridge Tolls to \$6.00 or More (11)

Early in the process, various toll increase options were considered by staff and the Board of Directors. Consideration of higher toll rates was discussed by the Board, but the final decision was to limit the base toll increase to \$1.00, resulting in a toll of \$6.00 cash or \$5.00 for FasTrak users. This \$1.00 base toll increase is estimated to generate sufficient revenue to address the \$91 million shortfall projected for the next 5 years. The variable pricing toll options under consideration would raise the effective toll above \$6.00 during certain periods.

Comment: Improve Public Transit Services (5)

The Golden Gate Bridge's bus and ferry services are funded primarily through tolls (46%) and a variety of other sources. The proposed \$1.00 base toll increase would provide revenue to continue existing transit services and implement some facilities improvements but would not fund transit service expansion. The District continues to seek new funding from sources other than tolls to improve its transit services. The variable toll proposal would generate new toll revenues specifically to improve transit services as an alternative to driving during peak hours.

Comment: Consider Scheduled Toll Increases Based on the Rate of Inflation or Other Means (3)

The District prefers that cash tolls be in whole dollar increments to minimize traffic delays at the Toll Plaza. The District has determined that the base toll increase under consideration will address its revenue shortfall, so no additional increases in the base toll are being considered at this time.

Comment: Raise Bridge Tolls Only Under Certain Conditions (7)

Several comments received from the public indicate support for the base toll increase with conditions other than those listed above. These qualifications include concurrently revising carpool policies (e.g., reduced occupancy and longer hours), charging bicycles and pedestrians, funding or not funding improvements to Doyle Drive, considering sponsorship programs, and improving or restructuring the District's public transit services.

Comments Made in Opposition to Raising the Base Bridge Tolls

The District received 380 comments in opposition to the base toll increase and 11 comments in opposition to both the base toll increase and the variable tolling proposals. Several of these comments included specific reasons for opposition, as addressed below.

Comment: Better Manage Existing Revenues and/or Reduce Expenses (103)

District management developed a strategic plan to address projected financial shortfalls, including prioritizing needs and identifying opportunities to increase revenues and reduce expenses. The District raised the toll in 2002, raises transit fares annually, generated revenues from new sources, and has implemented numerous cost-saving initiatives, some of which achieved one-time savings while others achieve ongoing annual cost savings. This has reduced the operating shortfall from \$454 million in 2002 to \$91 million in 2008.

Comment: Raising Tolls Would Result in Financial Hardship (92)

Currently, carpools with three or more people can cross the Bridge free of charge weekdays 5 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. This policy would be maintained under the proposed base toll increase. In addition, the District provides bus and ferry service between San Francisco and the North Bay. Frequent Golden Gate Transit bus and ferry users receive 20 to 46% off regular fares with the use of ticket books or TransLink cards. Some employers also provide subsidies for transit users. However, staff acknowledges that some of the comments (16) stated that public transit is not a viable option for their travel due to destinations outside the District transit service area, travel outside of transit service hours, excessive travel time on transit, and other reasons related to perceived undesirable levels of transit service. While the base toll increase would provide revenues to maintain existing service levels, revenues from variable tolls are proposed for transit service expansion. Also, District has implemented the TransLink fare card to improve coordination between transit operators. TransLink can be used on AC Transit and will be available later this year for use on Muni, CalTrain, and BART, helping to make transit more convenient for travel outside the District's transit service area.

Comment: Reduce, Eliminate or Restructure Public Transit Services and Increase Transit Fares (53)

Golden Gate Transit bus and ferry services were instituted in the 1970s to reduce traffic congestion on the Golden Gate Bridge and provide a public service between San Francisco and North Bay communities. Public transit service averts about 32% of Bridge traffic during the morning peak hours, and transit elimination could add 13,000 daily vehicle trips to San Francisco streets and the Golden Gate corridor.

Beginning in 1998, the District implemented annual bus and ferry fare increases. The program was renewed in 2006, establishing annual increases of 5% for a period of 5 years to cover rising operating costs. Since 2002, bus and ferry fares have increased by as much as 118%. In addition, the District continually reassesses its transit services and makes adjustments quarterly to maintain efficiency. Significant service cuts were made in 2003, and the District has determined that it cannot significantly reduce additional transit services without burdening users with insufficient frequencies, overcrowded vehicles or limited service areas.

Comment: Charge Bicycles and Pedestrians (37)

Additional toll collection resources are required to implement any bicycle and pedestrian tolling. The District Board has previously determined such a toll is not under consideration.

Comment: Improve Public Transit Services (24)

This comment asks for better transit options as a prerequisite to a toll increase. The District uses toll revenues to fund transit services and continues to utilize transit passenger fares and external funding to the maximum extent available. If the Bridge toll is not raised, transit service may be reduced.

Comment: Find Alternative Funding Sources (22)

The District is prohibited from seeking a sales tax and does not have authority to issue bonds, so it actively pursues grant funding and has successfully obtained funding for transit services. Since 2002, the District has successfully obtained \$225 million in Bridge and ferry capital grant commitments from Federal and State agencies. It has also received \$3 million from additional miscellaneous revenue programs, as well as increased revenue from property leases. A corporate sponsorship program that may have generated as much as \$5 million annually was considered by the District but ultimately rejected.

Comment: Charge Tourists More (16)

With a base toll increase, all motorists using the Bridge will pay a higher toll. Surveys of Bridge traffic show that motorists from outside the Bay Area use the Bridge primarily during off-peak weekday hours and on weekends, paying their tolls with cash instead of FasTrak. Variable tolling options include lower tolls during off-peak hours and higher tolls during peak traffic hours, including weekend peak traffic hours. A toll plan specifically aimed at charging motorists from outside the immediate area is not under consideration at this time.

Comment: Transfer the Bridge to Caltrans' Control (16)

The District was established by the State of California to design, build, and operate the Golden Gate Bridge. In the late 1960s, in response to severe and growing congestion on the Bridge, the State added responsibility for provision of public transit services in the Golden Gate corridor. Today, the District operates a successful transit operation that provides enhanced mobility to

residents in San Francisco, Marin and Sonoma Counties. Toll revenues currently provide a 46% subsidy for these services. Removal of this funding source would severely impact traffic on the Bridge.

Comment: Do Not Raise Tolls to Improve Doyle Drive (15)

None of the District's toll proposals would fund Doyle Drive reconstruction. Revenue generated from the base toll increase would go solely to fund the District's bridge, bus and ferry operations. Additional revenue generated by the variable tolling proposals would go toward improving bus and ferry services. The District does not own or operate Doyle Drive; it falls under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

Comment: Keep the FasTrak Discount, or Provide Additional Discounts to Regular Commuters and Low-Income Drivers (12)

A FasTrak discount of at least \$1.00 is maintained under the base toll increase and both variable tolling proposals being considered by the District. The District also provides a discounted Toll Rate for Persons with Disabilities (TRPD) to qualifying individuals who cannot use the District's fixed-route bus and ferry services. The TRPD would be set at 50% of the cash toll at all times, similar to transit fare discounts for persons with disabilities. Free passage for carpools and motorcycles will continue to be offered weekdays 5 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. Greater FasTrak discounts would reduce revenues and require offsetting higher cash tolls.

Comment: Revise the Existing Carpool Policy (hours, number of vehicle occupants, etc.) (5)

The base toll increase and both variable tolling proposals under consideration do not change the carpool and motorcycle tolling policy. The current policy allows free southbound passage for vehicles with three or more occupants, motorcycles, and buses during weekday commute periods (5 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m.) to help manage traffic congestion. This policy provides longer carpool hours than the High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane located on the southbound U.S. Highway 101 approach to the Bridge. The HOV lane hours are 6:30 to 8:30 a.m. only.

Comment: Consider Sponsorship Programs to Raise Revenue (10)

The District currently has advertising programs in place on its bus and ferry fleets. The District pursued a corporate sponsorship at the Bridge in 2007, but the Board decided to discontinue the effort, based on negative public feedback. The District continues to pursue new advertising, public/private partnership and grant opportunities.

Comment: Keep the Disabled Toll Discount at \$1.50 (7, including the District's Advisory Committee on Accessibility)

The base toll increase and both variable tolling proposals under consideration maintain discounts for persons who are eligible for the TRPD. The TRPD is offered only by the District and is not available on State-owned bridges in the Bay Area. The TRPD would be set at 50% of the cash toll at all times to provide parity with the transit fare discount for persons with disabilities.

Comment: Address Toll and Traffic Violations to Raise Revenue (4)

The District continues to vigorously address toll and traffic violations at the Bridge. The District is in the process of installing a new detection system that will help catch FasTrak violators, and

the District's Bridge Patrol, in conjunction with the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and others, monitors Bridge traffic in an effort to reduce speeding and other unsafe driving practices.

Comment: Eliminate the FasTrak Discount (2)

The base toll increase and both variable tolling proposals under consideration maintain discounts for FasTrak users. The FasTrak discount provides regular commuters an incentive not to pay their toll with cash, which saves time and helps reduce congestion at the Toll Plaza.

Comments on the Variable Toll Proposal Options

Comments Made in Support of the Variable Tolling Options

The District received 14 comments in support of the variable tolling proposals. Several of these comments included specific conditions for support, as addressed below.

Comment: Provide Funding to Help Improve Doyle Drive (5, including the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association, San Francisco Green Party, and San Francisco Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier)

None of the District's variable toll proposals would fund Doyle Drive reconstruction. Revenue generated by the variable tolling proposals would go toward improving bus and ferry services. The District does not own or operate Doyle Drive; it falls under the jurisdiction of Caltrans.

Comment: Improve Public Transit Services (3, including the Environmental Defense Fund)

The variable toll proposal would generate new toll revenues specifically to improve transit services as an alternative to driving during peak hours. The District also continues to seek new funding from sources other than tolls to improve its transit services.

Comments Made in Opposition to the Variable Tolling Options

The District received 30 comments opposing the variable tolling proposals and 11 comments opposing both the base toll increase and the variable tolling proposals. Several of these comments included specific reasons for opposition, as addressed below.

Comment: Raising Tolls Would Result in Financial Hardship (5)

Variable toll options would increase the toll only during peak traffic hours of 7 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. on weekdays, and 3 to 7 p.m. on weekends and holidays. Motorists can try to adjust their travel to avoid these periods of higher tolls. Currently, carpools with three or more people can cross the Bridge free of charge weekdays 5 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. This policy would be maintained under both variable tolling proposals. In addition, the District provides bus and ferry service between San Francisco and the North Bay. Frequent Golden Gate Transit bus and ferry users receive 20 to 46% off regular fares with the use of ticket books or TransLink cards. Some employers also provide subsidies for transit users. Staff acknowledges, however, that one comment stated that public transit was not a viable option for their travel because of destinations outside the District transit service area, travel outside of transit service hours, excessive travel time on transit, or for other reasons related to perceived undesirable levels of transit service. Revenues from variable tolls are proposed for transit service expansion. Also, District has implemented the TransLink fare card to improve coordination between transit operators.

TransLink can be used on AC Transit and will be available later this year for use on Muni, CalTrain and BART, helping to make transit more convenient for travel outside the District's transit service area.

Comment: There Is No Congestion on the Golden Gate Bridge (5)

While congestion on the Bridge may not be evident at all times, the District has defined the variable tolling project to address congestion on the Bridge and its approaches. Vehicle speed data provided to District staff by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's "511" regional travel information program indicates that there is recurring congestion on Doyle Drive in the southbound direction during weekday and weekend peak hours, and there is congestion on the north approach to the Bridge (southbound 101 at Alexander Avenue) on weekends at peak times.

Comment: Charge Tourists More (3)

Surveys of Bridge traffic show that motorists from outside the Bay Area use the Bridge primarily during off-peak weekday hours and on weekends, paying tolls generally with cash. Both variable tolling options include an additional toll during weekend peak hours; Option A includes a lower peak toll increase for FasTrak users than Option B.

Comment: Transfer the Bridge to Caltrans' Control (2)

The District was established by the State of California to design, build, and operate the Golden Gate Bridge. In the late 1960s, in response to severe and growing congestion on the Bridge, the State added responsibility for provision of public transit services in the Golden Gate corridor. Today, the District operates a successful transit operation that provides enhanced mobility to residents in San Francisco, Marin and Sonoma Counties. Toll revenues currently provide a 46% subsidy for these services. Removal of this funding source would severely impact traffic on the Bridge.

Comment: Reduce, Eliminate or Restructure Public Transit Services, and Increase Transit Fares (1)

Golden Gate Transit bus and ferry services were instituted in the 1970s to reduce traffic congestion on the Bridge and provide a public service between San Francisco and North Bay communities. Public transit service averts about 32% of Bridge traffic during the morning peak hours, and transit elimination could add 13,000 daily vehicle trips to San Francisco streets and the Golden Gate corridor.

Beginning in 1998, the District implemented annual fare increases. The program was renewed in 2006, establishing annual increases of 5% for a period of 5 years to cover rising operating costs. Since 2002, bus and ferry fares have increased by as much as 118%. In addition, the District continually reassesses its transit services and makes adjustments quarterly to maintain efficiency. Significant service cuts were made in 2003, and the District has determined that it cannot significantly reduce additional transit services without burdening users with insufficient frequencies, overcrowded vehicles or limited service areas. Raising fares higher than already planned and reducing or eliminating transit would contradict the intent of congestion reduction with a variable toll.

Comments Providing Various Ideas

The District received 57 comments that do not explicitly support or oppose the toll increase proposals under consideration but do offer ideas related to District services.

Comment: Charge Bicycles and Pedestrians (20)

These comments suggest implementing tolls for all users of the Bridge. Additional toll collection resources are required to implement any bicycle and pedestrian tolling. The District Board has previously determined such a toll is not under consideration.

Comment: Change the Toll Structure and/or Collection Method (18)

These comments suggest changing the toll structure and/or methods of toll collection, including: eliminating all cash tolling, eliminating all FasTrak discounts, providing additional discounts to FasTrak users, charging carpool users at all times, offering passes for unlimited travel during a set period of time, and implementing toll collection in the northbound direction. These comments have been noted and, while not related specifically to the toll increase proposal under consideration, will be further reviewed by staff.

Comment: Change Public Transit Services (6)

These comments suggest changing the public transit service provided by the District or at the Bridge, including: improving the District's bus and ferry services, raising fares, constructing rail transit, and reducing, eliminating or restructuring operations. These comments have been noted and, while not related specifically to the toll increase proposal under consideration, will be further reviewed by staff.

Comment: Better Manage Existing Revenues and/or Reduce Expenses (5)

These comments suggest better managing existing revenues and/or reducing expenses. One comment specifically recommends contracting Bridge operations. These comments have been noted and, while not related specifically to the toll increase proposal under consideration, will be further reviewed by staff.

Comment: Find Alternative Funding Sources (4)

These comments suggest finding alternative sources of funding for the District, including charging tourists more and increasing enforcement of FasTrak and traffic violations. These comments have been noted and, while not related specifically to the toll increase proposal under consideration, will be further reviewed by staff.

Comment: Use Toll Revenues to Help Improve Doyle Drive (1)

This comment requests that funding be made available to help improve Doyle Drive. The District does not own or operate Doyle Drive; it falls under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The District's Board of Directors has asked that all sources of

funding for Doyle Drive reconstruction be sought before the District would consider using tolls to fund Doyle Drive improvements.

Comment: Do Not Use Toll Revenues to Help Improve Doyle Drive (1)

This comment requests that no funding be made available to help improve Doyle Drive. None of the District's toll proposals would fund Doyle Drive reconstruction.

Comment: Use Toll Revenues for a New Purpose (Marin County Bicycle Coalition)

The Marin County Bicycle Coalitions suggests using Bridge revenue to fund a "safe routes to transit" program that improves the conditions pedestrians and bicyclists face when accessing the District's transit services in an effort to reduce parking demand at transit stops. This comment has been noted and, while not related specifically to the toll increase proposal under consideration, will be further reviewed by staff.

Comment: Implement an Alternative to the Proposed Base and Variable Tolls (TRANSDEF)

TRANSDEF suggests an alternative base toll and variable tolling program under which base tolls would be set at \$5.00 for cash and FasTrak users and variable tolls would be set at \$7.00 for cash and \$5.13 for FasTrak users. The District analyzed this proposal and determined that it does not generate sufficient revenue to address the \$91 million shortfall, nor does the variable tolling option generate any net revenues to support the expansion of the District's public transit services.

Comments Expressing Concern

The District received 8 comments that do not explicitly support or oppose the toll increase proposals under consideration but do express concern for undesirable indirect impacts of the tolling proposals. These concerns include the potential effects on employment opportunities and the local economy, the desire to charge pedestrians and bicyclists to use the Bridge, and the ability for the District's transit services to accommodate new demand. These comments are noted.

Comments Requesting More Information

The District received 14 comments requesting more information on the District, its revenues, its expenditures, its management, and bridge traffic patterns.

Comments Not Related to the Toll Proposals

The District received 13 comments that did not relate to either the base toll increase or the variable tolling proposals.