

South Hampton Roads Midtown and Downtown Tunnels Tolls Survey

Part I: Pre-Tolling Report and Findings



Project Goals

to assess the public's views and anticipated behavior in light of the implementation of tolling on the Midtown and Downtown tunnels.

The data and analysis focus on commuting experiences, knowledge and views of tolls on the Midtown and Downtown tunnels, anticipated changes to commuting patterns, and knowledge and use of the EZ Pass system.

Study dates: January 26-31

Survey Administration

Data are from a random sample telephone survey of 601 residents of the cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach, including landline and cell phones.

The maximum Margin of Error (MoE) for the overall survey (n=601) is +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

The data are weighted using the HRTPO Travel Demand Model trip ends to reflect as closely as possible the locality of residence of drivers using the Midtown and Downtown tunnels.

Q1. Could you tell me which locality you are a resident of? (weighted)	Norfolk	21
	Portsmouth	32
	Chesapeake	20
	Suffolk	6
	Virginia Beach	21

Summary of key findings

1. Commuting Experiences

- Vast majority of residents drive; a third commute through one or both tunnels, and nearly two-thirds of them do so during Peak hours.

2. Views on Tolls

- Residents are slightly more supportive of tolls than opposed; tolling most popular option for paying for transportation improvements in Hampton Roads.

3. Knowledge of Tolls

- Residents think a reasonable toll for cars and light trucks is \$.77, and for commercial heavy trucks is \$1.75; split on whether current toll for cars and lights trucks is too high.

4. Anticipated Changes to Driving Habits

- Few say they will change where they live to avoid tolls, but majority say they will change their commute or where they travel to avoid them.

5. Issues Related to EZ Pass

- Most residents have heard about EZ Pass; majority have opened an account or say they don't need one. Most employers not helping with toll costs.

Commuting Experience

KEY FINDINGS

- **Most South Hampton Roads commuters experience traffic related delays on a regular basis.**
- **A third of South Hampton Roads commuters use the Midtown or Downtown tunnels at least once a week.**
- **Nearly 60% of commuters who use the Midtown or Downtown tunnels at all do so during Peak driving times.**

Q2. Thinking about your typical 7-day week, about how many days are you late getting somewhere because of traffic problems?

Average = 5 days

Q3. Thinking about your typical 7-day week again, how do you normally get around, do you normally...

Drive your own vehicle	87
Drive someone else's vehicle	5
Take the bus, ferry, or light rail	3
Take a taxi	1
Take turns sharing rides with other people, such as "carpooling"	1
Walk or ride a bike	1
Some other way	2

Q5. How many drivers in your home ever commute through either the Midtown or Downtown tunnels to get to work, school, or fulfill some other obligation?	Average = 1
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Q6. And how about you personally, how often do you use the Midtown or Downtown tunnels between Norfolk and Portsmouth?	
Daily	16
Once a week	13
Few times a month	22
Very seldom	19
Almost never	18
Never	10
Dk/refused	2

Q7. And when do you typically make that drive...	
In the morning before 5:30	3
In the morning between 5:30-9:00	16
In the afternoon between 2:30-7:00	19
Both in the morning between 5:30-9:00 AND in the afternoon between 2:30-7:00	22
During the day between 9:00 AM and 2:30 PM	15
In the evening after 7:00	10
Dk/refused	15

Views on Tolls

KEY FINDINGS

- **Knowledge of the tolls prior to their implementation was widespread.**
- **Residents of South Hampton Roads are more supportive of the tolls for their stated purpose than opposed to them.**
- **When given a series of options, tolls are the most popular way to pay for future transportation improvements among residents of South Hampton Roads.**

Q4. How much have you heard about the tolls that are coming to the Midtown and Downtown tunnels between Norfolk and Portsmouth on February 1, have you heard...	A lot	76
	Some	11
	A little	9
	None	4

Q8. The tolls on the Midtown and Downtown tunnels are being collected to finance transportation improvements, including expanding the Midtown Tunnel from one tube to two tubes, resulting in a total of four lanes. Would you say that you generally support or generally oppose the toll for this purpose, or don't you have an opinion either way?	Support	44
	No view	18
	Oppose	36
	Dk/ refused	2

Q9. There are various ways that have been discussed over the years for paying for transportation improvements in Hampton Roads. I'm going to read a list of several that have been discussed. Please tell me which one, if any, you most support for future transportation improvements

Tolls on specific projects	24
A regional sales tax	9
A regional gas tax	9
A statewide sales tax	20
A statewide gas tax	20
None (vol)	11
Other (vol)	3
Dk/refused	4

Knowledge of Tolls

KEY FINDINGS

- **Residents think toll rates for both cars and light trucks, and heavy commercials trucks are higher than they actually are.**
- **Residents are not sure if the toll rate for cars and light trucks is too high or generally reasonable, but think the toll rate for commercial vehicles is too high.**

Q20. There are different toll rates depending upon whether you travel through one of the tunnels during times of heavy traffic volume – called Peak times, or during times of light traffic volume – called Off-Peak times. Can you tell me how much the toll rate will be for cars and light vehicles during Off-Peak times?	Average = \$1.12
Q21. And how about the amount during Peak times, can you tell me how much the toll rate will be for cars and light vehicles during Off-Peak times?	Average = \$1.61

Q22. Just to let you know, the toll rate is scheduled to be as high as \$1.00 for cars and light trucks during Peak travel times. Regardless of whether you support or oppose the toll, do you think this amount is generally reasonable, too high, or too low?	Too high	48
	Generally reasonable	48
	Too low	2
	Dk/ refused	2

Q23. And what amount would you consider to be a reasonable toll for cars and light trucks during Peak travel times, when traffic volume is high?	Average = \$.77
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Q24. And the rate is scheduled to be as high as \$4.00 for commercial heavy trucks during Peak travel times. Again, regardless of whether you support or oppose the toll, do you think this amount is generally reasonable, too high, or too low?	Too high	69
	Generally reasonable	26
	Too low	1
	Dk/ refused	4

Q25 And what amount would you consider to be a reasonable toll for commercial heavy trucks during Peak travel times, when traffic volume is high?	Average = \$1.75
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Anticipated Changes to Driving Habits

KEY FINDINGS

- Residents are more likely to change commuting patterns than where they work or live to avoid paying tolls.
- The High Rise Bridge is a more likely alternative route than the Gilmerton Bridge.
- Residents more likely to carpool than take the bus or ferry to avoid paying tolls.

Q10. I'm going to read several changes people have said they might make to their commutes once tolls are put in place on the Midtown and Downtown tunnels. For each one, please tell me "yes" or "no" if it is a change you think you might consider.

	Yes	No	Dk/refused
Change where you live or work to avoid the tolls	19	77	4
Change your commute to avoid the tolls	57	38	5
Avoid traveling to destinations that require paying the tolls	58	38	4
Telecommuting or working from home	33	60	7

Q14. Several alternative driving routes are available to avoid driving through the Midtown and Downtown tunnels. As I read each one, please tell me if it is a route you would consider taking to avoid paying the tolls.

	Yes	No	Dk/refused
The Gilmerton Bridge	48	46	7
The High Rise Bridge	60	35	5

Q17. There are also several alternative modes of transportation available. As I read each one, please tell me if it is a mode of transportation you would consider taking to avoid paying the tolls.

	Yes	No	Dk/refused
The bus	20	77	3
The ferry between Portsmouth & Norfolk	40	57	3
Carpooling or Vanpooling	53	4	3

Issues related to EZ Pass

KEY FINDINGS

- **Knowledge of EZ Pass was widespread.**
- **Most residents have not opened an EZ Pass account because they do not think they will need one.**
- **A small but significant percentage of residents have not opened an EZ Pass account due to financial limitations or a lack of understanding about how to open one.**

Q26. In order to pay for the tolls at the Midtown and Downtown tunnels, drivers are being encouraged to open EZ Pass accounts, which will collect the toll electronically. How much have you heard about the EZ Pass accounts, would you say...	A lot	66
	Some	19
	A little	11
	None	3
	Dk/ refused	1

Q27. And have you opened an EZ Pass account?	Yes, already had one	26
	Yes, opened a new one	12
	No	61
	Dk/refused	1

Q28. (If No to Q27) Which statement best describes why you have not opened an EZ Pass Account.

I have not had time to open one	18
I do not know how to open one	4
I cannot afford to open one	8
I do not have a checking or saving account to open one	1
I do not need one / will not use it enough	69

Q29. Do you know if your employer is offering any help to their employees to offset the cost of the tolls, such as helping pay part of the cost?

Yes, employer is helping	6
No, employer is not helping	73
No, not employed	15
Dk/refused	7

Questions?

Thank You!