

**ITEM #7: REGIONAL PROCLAMATION – IMPACT OF TOLLS ON THE DOWNTOWN AND MIDTOWN TUNNELS [Action Requested]**

***John Rowe, ERC Task Force Chair***

***Robert A. Crum, Jr., HRTPO Executive Director***

Over the past several years, there has been significant discussion across the region about the impact that the tolls at the Downtown and Midtown Tunnels have on residents and businesses in the Hampton Roads region. Concerns about the current Elizabeth River Crossing (ERC) Toll Agreement, signed by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the current ERC concessionaire, led to the HRTPO Board forming an Elizabeth River Crossing Task Force.

Based on comments expressed at ERC Task Force meetings and throughout the region, the attached guiding principles have been prepared that express potential goals for the region to work towards to mitigate the impacts of these tolls on the Hampton Roads region. These guiding principles and goals are included in the attached Proclamation to be considered by the HRTPO, HRPDC, and HRTAC Boards in a unified regional statement regarding this issue.

ERC Task Force Chair John Rowe and HRTPO Executive Director Bob Crum will present this information for consideration by the HRTPO Board.

Attachment 7

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

The HRTPO Board should consider action to approve the attached Proclamation supporting efforts to mitigate the impact of the Downtown and Midtown Tunnel Tolls on Hampton Roads region residents and businesses.

**A Proclamation of the Hampton Roads Region  
Supporting Efforts to Mitigate the Impact of the  
Downtown and Midtown Tunnel Tolls  
on our Region’s Residents**

As regional organizations representing as many as 17 local governments and over 1.7 million people in the Hampton Roads Region, the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC), and Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) understand the significant impacts that the current Elizabeth River Crossing (ERC) toll agreement, signed by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the current ERC concessionaire, has on the residents and businesses of the Hampton Roads Region. Although the HRTPO, HRTAC and HRPDC are not signatories to this agreement, we are committed to continue working with the Commonwealth of Virginia and the next concessionaire to develop solutions that benefit our Region. Our guiding principles and goals for this effort are as follows:

**Toll Mitigation/Relief for our Residents:** The current tolls and the escalation of these toll rates per the current ERC Agreement have dramatically impacted residents and businesses in the Hampton Roads Region. We support steps to permanently reduce tolls and the escalation of toll rates for our residents and businesses, and to prevent burdensome administrative fees that adversely impact our community.

**Reduce Regional Impact of Compensation Events:** The current ERC Agreement defines many of our region’s priority transportation improvement projects such as the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel (HRBT) Expansion and I-64 Southside Widening/High Rise Bridge as competing facilities which may require the Commonwealth of Virginia to pay a compensation event if these projects are constructed and proven to impact ERC. All of these projects are critical to the Region’s efforts to reduce congestion, protect public health, safety and welfare and sustain our regional economy. Consistent with the HRTPO’s approved Long Range Transportation Plan, HRTAC is advancing these high priority regional projects with locally generated funding totaling over \$5 Billion which is largely provided by regional gas and sales and use taxes. The decisions leading to the current and future advancement of critical congestion relief projects in Hampton Roads Region cannot be compromised by the ERC Agreement.

**Regionally Integrated Network:** Through the work of the HRTAC and HRTPO, the Region’s officials have endorsed the Hampton Roads Express Lanes Network that will result in a consistent system of managed lanes around the Hampton Roads Beltway interconnecting several of the Region’s priority projects, including the I-64 Peninsula, HRBT, I-64/I-264 Interchange, I-64 Southside/High Rise Bridge and Bowers Hill Interchange projects. This network will allow the Region to employ smart transportation management strategies to facilitate mobility and congestion relief. The operation of a toll system at the Downtown and Midtown Tunnels independent of this regional network is not in the best interest of the Region. The HRTPO, HRTAC and HRPDC encourage the Administration to continue to work with the Region and the state legislature to explore all means and methods to bring the Downtown and Midtown Tunnels into a publicly owned and controlled regional network to ensure the most effective management of traffic movement and accountability to the Hampton Roads Region.

**State Commitment to Continue to Explore Options:** The Region is appreciative of the efforts of the current State Administration and state legislature to identify and explore options to address the negative impacts of the current ERC Agreement, and understands that the process to achieve the guiding principles noted above will likely require collaboration with a new concessionaire and future State Administrations. Remaining time of the current Administration is limited, and the Region encourages the Commonwealth to enter into an agreement with the Region that commits current and future administrations to working with the Region to achieve the guiding principles summarized in this Proclamation.

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Linda T. Johnson, Chair  
Hampton Roads Transportation  
Accountability Commission

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Donnie R. Tuck, Chair  
Hampton Roads Transportation  
Planning Organization

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Andria P. McClellan, Chair  
Hampton Roads Planning  
District Commission