



# Maryland Motor Truck Association

9256 Bendix Road, Suite 203, Columbia, MD 21045

Phone: 410-644-4600 Fax: 410-644-2537



**HEARING DATE:** February 29, 2024

**BILL NO/TITLE:** Senate Bill 1093: Maryland Transportation Authority - Tolls - Collection and Use (Maryland Toll Rate Reform Act of 2024)

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

**POSITION:** Oppose

Maryland Motor Truck Association (MMTA) appreciates efforts to raise additional revenue for transportation purposes; however, MMTA opposes Senate Bill 1093 as we believe it will result in substantial increases in toll rates, the potential loss of discounts for high-volume toll spenders, redistribution of funds currently used for operations and maintenance of heavily utilized trucking corridors, and possible elimination of meaningful future congestion mitigation projects on Transportation Authority roadways.

For many trucking companies, tolling is one of our largest expenses. It should be noted that, when tolls were reduced in 2015, the trucking industry did not experience a toll reduction, except at the Bay Bridge. The toll rates for trucks remained the same at all other facilities across the state. We have also had five toll increases since 2001, coupled with a substantial loss of discounts for our E-ZPass users as discounts were eliminated for trucks with three and four axles, and lowered for five + axle trucks.

While MMTA opposes the use of tolls to pay for maintenance on our existing highway system, the Association recognizes that major projects that add capacity to our transportation network are often not able to be funded by traditional means. We understand that for critical capacity enhancements, tolling is typically the only way to fund new highway construction or offset the cost of adding lanes on the existing system. However, we are concerned that the passage of this legislation will likely force MDTA to greatly increase toll rates to pay for projects that have historically not been tolled and are not part of the Transportation Authority's roadways. This may jeopardize future improvements to the agency's existing structures and prevent future congestion mitigation projects, such as a potential 3<sup>rd</sup> span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

It is also unclear what would be considered an optimum toll rate. Is the goal to maximize profits or minimize diversion to local roadways, which are often less safe than the major tolled thoroughfares?

Maryland's transportation system is the backbone of its commercial activity, with trucks providing the integral link for the state's rail system, the Thurgood Marshall Baltimore-Washington International Airport, and the Port of Baltimore Seagirt Marine Terminal, which serves as a distribution center of national importance. The Port relies on the motor carrier industry and the independent owner-operator to move the containers, automobiles, and breakbulk products that traverse the Port. If the costs of distribution to or from the Port rise, its attractiveness to shippers will unquestionably fall.

For the reasons noted above, MMTA respectfully opposes this legislation.

**About Maryland Motor Truck Association:** Maryland Motor Truck Association is a non-profit trade association representing the trucking industry since 1935. In service to its 1,000 members, MMTA is committed to support, advocate and educate for a safe, efficient and profitable trucking industry in Maryland.

**For further information, contact:** Louis Campion, (c) 443-623-4223