



HEARING DATE: February 13, 2025

BILL NO/TITLE: HB679: Maryland Transportation Authority - Patapsco River Toll Bridge – Design

COMMITTEE: House Environment & Transportation

POSITION: Support

Purpose: HB679 would require the Maryland Transportation Authority to design the entrances and exits to the new bridge over the Patapsco River so that vehicles do not pay a toll if they do not actually cross over the bridge.

Maryland Motor Truck Association understands that truck movements sometimes contribute to traffic conflicts and road maintenance concerns - particularly where residential and industrial properties are in close proximity. When possible we support buffer areas between industrial zones and residential communities. Many of the industries we serve operate 24 hours a day; yet, also fashion numerous local jobs and generate millions of dollars in economic activity.

One area where no such buffer exists is in Dundalk. For decades there have been residential concerns about truck traffic and discussions about how to divert traffic to alternate routes. Over the years, many of the routes that were previously used by trucks were sacrificed by the industry to maintain a positive relationship with the communities surrounding them. The trucking industry does not support any effort to further limit truck access in the region, or to force industry on to alternate routes because those routes often involve significant additional mileage or the paying of a toll. This legislation attempts to overcome one of those challenges by addressing a concern at the I-695 toll plaza whereby trucks exiting the Port of Baltimore onto Broening Highway that want to access the outer loop of I-695 were previously forced to pay the toll even when they did not ever cross the Key Bridge.

The Maryland Transportation Authority previously attempted to address this issue by decreasing the toll rate for vehicles with 3 or more axles that are completing this movement since they did not use the bridge. Since the Key Bridge collapse, the agency has also temporarily suspended the collection of tolls in these circumstances until a new bridge is built. With the rebuild of the bridge, coupled with the elimination of using traditional toll booths given the state's implementation of cashless tolling, there is a meaningful chance to address this ongoing concern by relocating the toll gantries and removing the toll for the Broening Highway access road.

The passage of this legislation would open up a safer, more efficient and more environmentally friendly route to the trucking industry, thereby providing drivers with a viable and practical alternative to the local routes in the area. MMTA asks for a favorable report.

About Maryland Motor Truck Association: Maryland Motor Truck Association is a non-profit trade association that has represented 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.

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