I-895 AT FRANKFURST AVENUE INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT
Frequently Asked Questions

General

1. **Why is the project being constructed in phases?**
   Answer: This project was originally planned as a single contract. However, following the strike of the Francis Scott Key Bridge and the resulting traffic increase on I-895, the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) decided to construct the project in three phases to minimize impacts on I-895 traffic.

   Phase 1, completed in October 2025, included construction of new electronic tolling gantries and relocating toll collection from the former toll plaza to the new gantries.

   Phase 2 will include the reconstruction of Frankfurst Avenue, reconfiguration of the Frankfurst Avenue/ Shell Road intersection, and consolidation of the southbound I-895 off-ramps to Frankfurst Avenue. Phase 2 construction is anticipated to begin in 2028 and be completed in 2030.

   Phase 3 will include pavement rehabilitation on mainline I-895, replacement of the I-895 bridges over Frankfurst Avenue and Childs Street, and reconfiguration of the interchange. To replace the bridges and reconstruct the pavement, I-895 will be reduced to one travel lane in each direction within the construction zone for approximately 12 months.

   Phase 3 construction will begin after the new Francis Scott Key Bridge is open to traffic and traffic operations on I-895 have normalized. The reopened Key Bridge will provide an alternative route for travelers and help mitigate some of the congestion associated with the I-895 lane reductions.

2. **When will the existing toll booth structure be removed?**
   Answer: The former I-895 toll plaza structure will be removed during Phase 3, after the new Francis Scott Key Bridge is open to traffic.

   The structure must remain in place until the interchange can be reconfigured to accommodate highway-speed travel through the former toll plaza area. The interchange reconfiguration and toll plaza removal will require extended lane closures on I-895, which could increase congestion.

   The opening of the Francis Scott Key Bridge will provide an alternative route for travelers and help mitigate some of the congestion associated with the Phase 3 lane closures.

Although the toll plaza may appear to be the cause of the slowdown, the primary bottleneck is the capacity of the I-895 tunnel.

3. **Why can't the toll plaza be removed now if it is causing delays?**
   Answer: Although it may appear that the former toll plaza is the primary cause of northbound congestion, the primary bottleneck is the capacity of the I-895 tunnel. Removing the toll plaza would improve traffic flow in its immediate vicinity, but the tunnel will continue to constrain the overall capacity of the highway.

   This is demonstrated by southbound I-895 traffic, which can back up as far as Lombard Street during the morning rush hour. A similar traffic pattern occurs at the southbound toll plaza, even though there is no downstream bottleneck beyond the plaza.

4. **What measures has MDTA taken to mitigate congestion on I-895, particularly near the former toll plaza?**
   Answer: The strike of the Francis Scott Key Bridge reduced effective highway capacity and increased traffic congestion throughout the Baltimore region. Since the loss of the Key Bridge, traffic at the I-95 and I-895 tunnels has increased by an average of 3,250 vehicles per day, or roughly 4 percent, resulting in increased travel times, particularly during peak periods.

   MDTA continues to coordinate with agency partners, including the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and Baltimore City Department of Transportation, to identify and address congestion hotspots.

   MDTA has also taken several measures to improve traffic flow and safety near the former Toll Plaza, including:

   - Reducing the number of travel lanes at the former northbound toll plaza.
   - Implementing channelization along the toll plaza approach and departure areas to discourage aggressive driving and provide refuge for commercial vehicle inspection activities.
   - Limiting daytime construction activities.
   - Modifying the lane configuration at the junction of northbound I-895 and the northbound I-895B spur, which carries traffic from I-695 and MD 2 to northbound I-895. The configuration now provides a single lane on each approach, balancing traffic entering the merge from the I-895 mainline and the I-895B spur.

   To help motorists plan their trips, MDTA has also developed a dedicated Harbor Crossing web page www.mdta.maryland.gov/harborcrossings that brings together commuting resources and transportation options.

Project Funding

5. **What is the project cost, and how is it being funded?**
   Answer: Based on 2026 value, the total project cost is estimated to be approximately $160 million to $180 million. The project is being funded through a combination of federal grant funds and MDTA toll revenues.

Traffic

6. **How many vehicles use Baltimore Harbor Tunnel each day? Will this Project affect traffic volumes at the facility?**
   Answer: The Baltimore Harbor Tunnel currently carries an average of approximately 83,450 vehicles per day, which is roughly 4 percent higher than in 2023, largely due to traffic diverted from the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

   By 2045, average daily traffic is projected to be approximately 90,000 vehicles per day. The project's proposed improvements are not anticipated to affect long-term traffic volumes on the facility.

7. **What impact will the project have on traffic volumes and patterns on Frankfurst Avenue, Shell Road, and Childs Street?**
   Answer: The project will maintain the existing connections between I-895 and the local road network. Although temporary traffic changes will be needed during construction, access to Frankfurst Avenue, Shell Road and Childs Street will be maintained.

   During Phase 2, Frankfurst Avenue will be reduced to one lane in each direction for most of the construction period.

   During Phase 3, I-895 will be reduced to one lane in each direction within the construction area for up to 12 months while the bridge is replaced and the roadway is reconstructed.

   Drivers will receive advance notice of traffic changes, detours and other impacts as construction progresses.

Tolling

8. **Where are the I-895 Baltimore Harbor Tunnel electronic toll gantries located?**
   Answer: The new all-electronic tolling (AET) gantries are located on Childs Street on and off-ramps and on mainline I-895 north of the tunnel.

Project Impacts

9. **How will the project improve safety?**
   Answer: Removing the toll booths and redesigning the interchange will make travel on I-895 safer and more efficient. The new design will reduce the need for drivers to merge, change lanes, and adjust speeds, helping reduce the potential for crashes.

   Consolidating some of the ramps will also simplify traffic movements and create a safer, more predictable driving environment.

10. **Why are the interchange ramps being reconfigured?**
    Answer: The existing ramp configuration does not support highway-speed travel with electronic tolling. As part of the project, some ramps will be consolidated to simplify travel, reduce locations where vehicles paths cross, and make the interchange safer and easier to navigate.

11. **Why are the I-895 bridges over Frankfurst Avenue and Childs Street being replaced?**
    Answer: These are the original bridges and are approaching the end of their service lives. Replacing the bridges is more cost-effective than continuing ongoing repairs and maintenance.
    The replacement bridges will also be widened to accommodate the reconfigured ramp movements, allowing MDTA to address bridge improvement as part of the overall interchange reconstruction.

12. **How will the space in the existing toll plaza area be used after the toll booths are removed?**
    Answer: After the toll booths are removed, the project will maintain two lanes in each direction on I-895 through the former toll plaza area and provide two collector-distributor (C-D) lanes alongside mainline.

    The C-D lanes will help separate local traffic from through traffic, making it safer and easier for drivers to enter and exit I-895.

Schedule

13. **What is the construction schedule?**
    Answer: Phase 1 construction was completed in October 2025.

    Phase 2 construction is anticipated to begin in 2028 and be completed in 2030.

    Phase 3 construction is anticipated to begin after the new Francis Scott Key Bridge is open and traffic operations on I-895 have normalized.