

Maryland Transportation Authority Access Live
November 13, 2018

Kevin Reigrut:

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for joining us for the Maryland Transportation Authority's first ever live telephone town hall outreach event. I'm Kevin Reigrut, executive director of the Maryland Transportation Authority, or MDTA. Hope you're having a great Tuesday evening. We called tonight to share the details and impacts of the upcoming I-895 bridge reconstruction project in Baltimore that you may have seen covered in the news over the last week.

Before we begin, I want to let you know how tonight's town hall meeting will work. For about the first 15 minutes or so, I'm going to share some important information with you, but then we want to hear from you about any questions, comments or concerns that you might have about the project. We should have about 45 minutes for that conversation. Just like a radio call-in show, to ask a question at any time or to share a comment, please press *3 on your telephone keypad at any time and you'll be transferred to an operator who will take some basic information. You'll be returned to the call and can listen in until we're ready to take your call. Easy, right? Again, press *3 on your phone keypad to ask a question at any time during the town hall. I'll let you know when it's time to ask your question live by calling your name and city, and I'll ask you to repeat your question so that everyone listening in can hear it too. In order to get to everyone's question in our timeframe, callers will be limited to one question each.

So, again, thanks for joining us. Before I delve into the project, I want to let you know that customer service is a priority here at the MDTA. Keeping that in mind, we'd like to hear from you regarding a subject that's important to the MDTA: all-electronic tolling. I'll ask the question now and a little later during our talk tonight because we'll have callers joining us throughout the town hall. At the Intercounty Connector, Maryland 200, and the I-95 express toll lanes, two of MDTA's facilities, tolls are paid either with E-ZPass or by video tolling. The new Nice/Middleton Bridge, when it's constructed, will also only accept E-ZPass or video tolling. All electronic or cashless toll facilities help to reduce emissions, improve safety and enhance customer convenience. What we'd like to hear from you is if you'd like to see all-electronic tolling expanded to MDTA's other facilities. If the answer to that question is yes, please press 1 on your keypad. If the answer's no, you can press 2. I'll share with you the results of that survey as we go along tonight. We appreciate your participation in this poll.

Our goal tonight is to provide you some information about the I-895 bridge project, including the project's need, anticipated major traffic impacts, the overall schedule, and how you can stay informed. I will also take questions live and do my very best to give you the answers you need. We recognize that you're busy and appreciate your sharing part of your evening with us. For any of you who can't listen for the entire hour tonight, want to listen later, or in case there's something you missed or want to share the information with others, this telephone town hall meeting will be available on the project website at 895bmore.com. That's 8-9-5-b-m-o-r-e.com. Or you can also sign up to receive project information and where we'll have continuously updated information

about the project. And while we're here tonight to talk about the I-895 bridge project, we'll also try to handle any other MDTA or E-ZPass-related questions or concerns, but you can always contact us at MDTA@MDTA.maryland.gov or by calling 410-537-5675.

Before I begin, I want to make our message clear. This is big-time roadwork. You should avoid I-895 during this project if at all possible, and we recommend using I-695 or I-95 as alternate routes. Be prepared for major delays if you choose to use 895.

Let's kick things off with a little background. The MDTA owns and operates Maryland's eight toll facilities, including I-895, the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel and its approaches where this project is located, its parallel route I-95 and the Fort McHenry Tunnel, and I-695 on the east side consisting of the Francis Scott Key Bridge and nearly 11 miles of highway approach. We're different from most state agencies because we're fully self-sufficient. No general fund or transportation trust fund, better known as gas tax dollars, are used to fund our program. We also manage and operate the Maryland E-ZPass program, so if there's anyone on the call that doesn't have your E-ZPass yet, with standard transponders now absolutely free of charge and no more monthly maintenance fee, there's simply never been a better time to join and take advantage of the savings and reliability of the program, especially because Maryland E-ZPass customers save 25% off the cash toll rate at nearly all of our facilities, and 37 and a half percent on the Bay Bridge.

We are committed to providing premium transportation facilities and exceptional customer service. As part of that commitment, this telephone town hall meeting is just the first of many initiatives in our public outreach campaign to keep you, our customers, informed about this significant and essential project. I mentioned the Fort McHenry Tunnel and the Key Bridge because they will play a major role in helping you get where you need to go during the course of this three-year project when you're avoiding I-895.

Before we go on, I see that a number of new people have joined us, so for anyone who just joined the call, if you have a question about the 895 bridge project, please press *3 now and an operator will take your question and place you in the call queue.

Now let's dive into what this project is all about and why we're doing it now. The project work area extends three miles from south of the Harbor Tunnel to just north of the Boston/O'Donnell Street exit ramp, Exit 11. The 3,300 foot long elevated section of I-95 north of the tunnel runs over 23 railroad tracks, the entrance to I-95, and exit ramps and Baltimore city streets. The bridge was built in the mid-1950s and the bridge deck has not been renovated since 1985. Let me put that into context. The last major rehabilitation project on this bridge occurred during the first year of President Reagan's second term. Back to the Future was the number one movie in the United States and the theme from

Miami Vice was the number one song. So, as you can imagine, it's been a little while since our last major project year, and it just can't wait any longer.

It's like a patchwork quilt in constant need of repair. The I-895 Bridge, also sometimes called the Canton Viaduct, is also the only structurally deficient bridge the MDTA owns and operates. Now, it's important that you know that structurally deficient doesn't mean the bridge is unsafe. The bridge is very safe; it's just a warning sign that we need to do this work before problems get worse. So, the bridge project itself includes completely replacing the 60 year old existing elevated bridge, major renovations to the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel, including tile replacement, repaving the tunnel road surface, and rehabilitating the fire standpipe system, replacing the Holabird Avenue ramp, repairing the tunnel roadway approaches and retaining walls, some drainage work, and work on a number of ramps and Baltimore city streets. We're widening the outside shoulders of the highway to accommodate maintenance and police activities, and relocating the inspection area prior to the southbound tunnel. After construction is complete in 2021, the bridge will have a 100 year service life, resulting in less frequent maintenance, the delays and congestion that causes, and a smoother, safer ride.

The project is being completed in four primary stages with several sub-stages. Major traffic impacts will occur during stages two and three from just after Thanksgiving, just a few short weeks from now, until the summer of 2021, which is why we're hosting this telephone town hall tonight; to let you know about the upcoming traffic impact ahead of time so that you have the information you need to decide your travel route. During that time, travel lanes will be reduced from two lanes to one lane in each direction, or two-way traffic operations, with major impacts to I-895. This construction staging plan will allow us to complete the projects for you that much faster. In just three years rather than five, and 40 million dollars cheaper than previously proposed options. We've also designed the contracts with incentives for getting finished early and significant penalties for delivering late to do everything we can to minimize the construction duration.

Also, the Holabird Avenue ramp, or Exit 10, will be closed for approximately one year during stage two. As I mentioned before, specific information on the schedule will be available on the project website at 895bmore.com. We will provide updates on the website and through other methods as the project progresses.

Okay, so just a reminder for those already on the call or anyone who may have just joined us that if you would like to ask a question during the telephone town hall, please press *3 to be put into the call queue.

We'll give you a quick update on the cashless tolling poll. As of right now, 75% of our respondents would like to see more all-electronic tolling at MDTA's facilities and 25% reporting that they do not want to see additional cashless tolling. If

you haven't participated in the poll yet and you'd like to, if you are interested in seeing cashless tolling expanded to MDTA's other facilities, press 1 on your keypad. If you would not like to see cashless tolling, press 2.

Back to the bridge project. What does this mean for those of us who use I-895 and 695 and 95? Like I said before, this is big-time roadwork. With only one travel lane in each direction 24/7 during stages two and three, there will be major traffic congestion. We want to urge motorists to avoid I-895 and use the Key Bridge or the Fort McHenry Tunnel as alternate routes. We anticipate heavier traffic on those routes as well due to traffic diversions. Additionally, we'll be closing both the northbound and southbound bores of the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel at separate times for 60-day periods. Two-way traffic will proceed in the opposite bore in order to rehabilitate the tunnel and approach roadway surface. More specifically, the northbound tube will close in the spring of 2019 with two-way traffic in the southbound tube, and then the southbound tube will close in the spring of 2020 with two-way traffic operating in the northbound tube. Tunnel work will also take place outside of these 60-day periods during overnights and weekends requiring two-way traffic operation. And complete weekend closures of I-895 and 895 on-ramps will take place periodically throughout the duration of construction.

Baltimore city streets and I-95 ramps also will be impacted, with off-peak lane and shoulder closures. As you can tell, there will be a lot of work going on. Although detours will be extensive, we are prepared. Two very important roadway improvement projects will be fully complete before the I-895 bridge project begins to impact traffic. You may be aware of the 49.4 million dollar I-95 improvement project that was completed last month. We added one travel lane to each direction of I-95 from the Fort McHenry Tunnel to [marabia] Road. This additional capacity will help with some of the traffic that's being diverted to I-95. Also, prior to Thanksgiving, the 20 million dollar I-695 Curtis Creek Drawbridge preservation project will also be finished. So, the two-way traffic pattern between Quarantine Road and Maryland 10 will be a thing of the past.

I'd like to take a quick opportunity to really thank you for your patience throughout all this construction work. These two projects were strategically planned to prepare us and our customers for the 895 bridge project with additional, more reliable alternate routes.

Another reminder for those who just joined the call, and for anyone who'd like to ask a question: If you'd like to ask a question or offer a comment, press *3 on your phone to be placed into our call queue, and we'll be getting to those calls in just a moment.

Also, for those who just joined, we'd love to get your feedback on all-electronic tolling. So, to repeat our poll question for tonight: At the Intercounty Connector, Maryland 200, and the I-95 Express toll lanes, two of MDTA's facilities, tolls are paid either with E-ZPass or by video tolling exclusively. The new Nice/Middleton

Bridge in southern Maryland, when it's constructed, will also only accept E-ZPass or video tolling. All-electronic or cashless toll facilities help to reduce emissions, improve safety and enhance customer convenience. Would you like to see all-electronic tolling be expanded to MDTA's other facilities? If your answer to that question is yes, please press 1 now. If the answer to that question is no, go ahead and press 2. We'll be tabulating the results during the balance of our call, and I'll be sure to let everybody know what those results look like. Again, thanks to everybody for participating.

Wanted to touch quickly on operations efforts during the project. The MDTA understands that the I-895 bridge project will impact you, our customers, and I assure you your safety is our number one priority. We've developed an extensive operations and emergency response plan to help lessen impacts and to get you where you need to go. We recognize that immediate action from our first responders is vital during emergency incidents, and we've included continuous coordination with our emergency response and transportation partners as part of this plan. We've developed a detour plan for major incidents and will alert motorists of real-time traffic conditions on our overhead and portable electronic messaging signs.

Now, in terms of our outreach efforts, just like to talk a little bit to you about the public outreach plan and how you can stay informed of what's happening throughout the course of this project. You can find out about current traffic patterns on the MDTA's website at MDTA.maryland.gov and on the project's website 895bmore.com. That's 8-9-5-b-m-o-r-e.com. There you can also find project videos, lane closure and staging information, printable flyers and frequently asked question sheets, as well as traffic advisories and traffic cameras. You can also email us at info@895bmore.com or call the project information line at 410-537-5675 with any comments or concerns. We will also be sharing information via social media. You can follow the Maryland Transportation Authority, or MDTA, on Facebook or on Twitter @theMDTA using hashtag #895bmore.

I give you my personal guarantee MDTA will work as hard as we can to deliver a great project on time and to keep you informed. We know that this project will have an impact on your lives, and we want to offer a few tips to help you avoid delays. Again, avoid I-895 whenever possible. Know before you go. Use one or all of the tools we offer to know what to expect before you hit the road. If you can, adjust your travel times. Leave earlier or stay later. We ask for your patience. There will be delays, so plan accordingly and, very importantly, be safe. Leave plenty of room between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. There will be no shoulders to use during this project to avoid a collision.

In closing, I know that I just gave you an awful lot of information, so if you need clarification please press *3 to be connected to an operator and be put in the call queue. Before I take questions, I want to go over the general schedule one more time for callers just joining us. Beginning after Thanksgiving and

continuing for about a year, the northbound I-895 roadway and the Holabird Avenue ramp will be closed. Two-way traffic will operate in the southbound lanes. In spring of 2019, the northbound bore of the Harbor Tunnel will be closed for approximately 60 days with two-way traffic running in the southbound bore. Beginning in winter 2019/2020 and continuing for about a year, the southbound I-895 roadway will be closed and two-way traffic will operate on the northbound lanes. In spring of 2020, the southbound bore will be closed for 60 days with two-way traffic running in the northbound bore. We expect to have all work completed on this project in winter 2021.

I know it's a lot to remember, so please visit 895bmore.com for more information and to sign up for alerts. MDTA thanks you in advance for your patience as we undertake this major project.

So, at this point we're just about ready to hear directly from you and open the lines up for questions. We have a number of callers with questions already, but remember that if you have a question or comment, please press *3 to be connected. I will announced your name when it's your turn to speak. And with that, let's get started.

I understand we have Richard in Roselle, Maryland. Richard, what's on your mind?

Richard: Hi, yes. Sorry. I was calling from Rosedale. But just wondering: There was an option to select a cheaper discounted rate for using the 895 Tunnel if I was using that more so, I guess, for my commute to work. Is that something that's going to be shifted and credit now since you're suggesting that we use the 95 ramp tunnel instead?

Kevin Reigrut: Richard, thank you for that question. So, the commuter plan for I-895 is valid for all three of our harbor crossings as it is today. We definitely recommend using I-695 or I-95 to continue receiving your commuter plan benefit, but that will work for you regardless of which of the three facilities you're using.

With that, we're going to go to Dave in Baltimore.

Dave: Yes, I wanted to ask if ... Hi, I wanted to ask if you are anticipating reduced staff at the tolls because of reduced traffic during these time periods.

Kevin Reigrut: In terms of the staffing plan, because of the nature of the project we don't at this time anticipate any structural changes to the staffing structure at 895. If anything, there's the possibility that we may need to add or modify our approach with operations employees to help to facilitate the construction schedule. So, at this point the answer is: No, we don't anticipate reduced staff at 895 because toll collection efforts won't be affected by the construction project. Thanks for the call, Dave. We appreciate it.

Joe in White Marsh. Joe, what's on your mind?

Joe: Quick question: You're encouraging motorists to avoid 895. So, I commute via 895 through the tunnel to Glen Burnie and then I come home on the Key Bridge. When will the 695 Curtis Creek construction be complete? Your website doesn't give an update, although when the construction began it was estimated November it would be complete. Is it going to be complete before the two weeks going into the 895 construction?

Kevin Reigrut: I'm very glad you asked that question because I have some good news to report. On the Curtis Creek Drawbridge project, MDTA anticipates opening all four lanes of traffic back to our customers no later than November 20th. So, in just about a week from today. The Curtis Creek Drawbridge project was always designed to be concluded and restored to full traffic patterns in advance of 895, and we're going to deliver against that promise.

With that, we're going to go to Danita in Baltimore. Danita, what's on your mind?

Danita: Hi, how are you?

Kevin Reigrut: I'm well, thanks. How are you doing tonight?

Danita: I'm confused, but it's okay. I was calling because I travel 895 going toward Pulaski.

Kevin Reigrut: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Danita: Is that the north or the south, because I never remember.

Kevin Reigrut: Okay, so tell me again: Which way are you traveling?

Danita: I go through 895 but I go, I get off at Pulaski.

Kevin Reigrut: Okay. So, the northbound bore of the tunnel will be closed for two months in spring of 2019. Now, it's important to note that at any time we're going to have one lane of traffic moving in each direction, so you'll be able to travel on I-895 to go north or south. It's just [crosstalk] reduction of one lane of traffic in each direction, we expect that there's going to be significant congestion related to folks that are trying to use 895 while that reconstruction work is underway. But at no point in time will there be full traffic closure. The tunnels and the bridge will be open, just one lane in each direction rather than the two that we currently have.

Danita [crosstalk] thanks so much for the call. We're going to go to Nancy in Dundalk. Nancy, what's on your mind?

Nancy: Hi. I was wondering where the money is coming from to get this project off the ground.

Kevin Reigrut: Sure. So, actually, I think that that's one of Maryland's true best kept secrets. The Maryland Transportation Authority is 100% self-sufficient. What that means: No tax dollars whatsoever are going into the 895 Bridge reconstruction project. It's estimated at 189 million dollars, and every penny of that 189 million dollars comes from tolls and related revenues that are paid for by customers using MDTA's facilities. To a very real extent, MDTA is kind of like a business that happens to be cloaked in government clothing. We provide a product, ask our customers to pay for that product, but any customer that chooses not to use an MDTA facility doesn't pay a penny for that service and support. That's important because in this day and age when there are tons of transportation priorities out there, the Maryland Transportation Authority and all of the work that we're doing to own, operate and maintain four major bridges, two tunnels and two turnpikes has no burden whatsoever on the Maryland Department of Transportation's ability to get those other key projects done.

Thanks for that call, Nancy. We appreciate it. I understand we have Charlene from Patterson Park. Charlene, what's on your mind?

Charlene: Hi, good night. I had a question regarding the tolls during this period of time. Is there any consideration for lowering or discounting the tolls while this inconvenience is going on? Thank you.

Kevin Reigrut: Thank you very much for the question. I appreciate it.

So, as I just mentioned in talking to Danita, since MDTA is self-sufficient, there's no mechanism for restoring resources to MDTA that aren't collected through the collection of tolls. And because that's the case and because we actually still need to generate revenues to be able to own, operate and maintain our facilities, and most importantly be able to deliver brand new bridges like this to our customer, at this point we're not anticipating reducing tolls. Another thing that I should mention is: Since all of MDTA's facilities are fully financed, operated, maintained and improved with tolls revenues, we actually have a trust agreement with lenders who loan MDTA money to be able to undertake these massive capital projects. The terms of that trust agreements are pretty straightforward. We don't have the ability to waive tolls on the facilities that are pledged to those bondholder interests.

So, I appreciate the call. I hope I answered that question for you. With that, we're going to move on to Melinda in Glen Burnie. Melinda, good evening.

Melinda: Hi. Good evening. Thank you so much for hosting the call.

I was just wondering if 95 and 695, are they going to be able to handle all of the influx of traffic since we won't be able to use 895 for quite a while.

Kevin Reigrut:

It's a great question and I appreciate you asking it.

Look, we are hoping to encourage 45% or more of people using I-895 to divert to I-95 and to 695. 695 will now be a much more reliable drive because, having completely replaced the Curtis Creek Drawbridge mechanics, we're not going to have issues with the bridge getting stuck in an open or closed position. On 95, what we've been able to do is to undertake a major project which actually adds an additional lane of traffic all the way up to the tunnel approach. Does it mean that there's not going to be more congestion on 95 and 695? Unfortunately, if people divert in the way that we hope, you will see additional traffic on 95 and 695. So, we'd encourage you, even if you choose to use 95 and 695, make use of the resources that I described before, 895bmore.com, monitoring us on Facebook and Twitter, so that we can provide you with information about travel times on each of our facilities.

On the 895 project, we're putting a very robust program together which will be able to give us constant data monitoring on how traffic is moving and to give instructions to motorists on I-895 well in advance to let them know what the delays are going to look like, to encourage them to use those alternate facilities when things get particularly challenging during the rush hours. So, we do anticipate some additional congestion on 95 and 695, mostly as people get used to the new traffic patterns. We're very hopeful, though, that the impact to the diversion traffic on I-95 and 695 will be minimal, especially compared to the work that we're doing on 895.

And we're going to go to Evelyn in White Marsh. Evelyn, good evening. Thanks for joining the town hall.

(silence)

Evelyn, are you still with us?

Evelyn:

Oh, yes. Hi. I have a very bad anxiety in the tunnel, and I've been working at my job. I get up, go through 895, but I get off at Shell Road, and it's been 20 years I've been using 895. I'm trying to figure out what is going to be the best route for me to get from White Marsh to Shell Road since it's going to be very congested and it sounds like it will be a chance that I'll get stuck in the tube.

Kevin Reigrut:

Gotcha. So, Evelyn, thanks for the question. What we'd recommend for anybody using that travel path: Take 695, the Key Bridge, to Quarantine Road. Then you'll get on Pennington Avenue which will take you back to Patapsco Avenue. That should be a very good alternate route for the travel pattern that you just asked about.

Thanks for the call, Evelyn. Going to go to Colleen in Middle River. Colleen, how are you?

Colleen: I'm fine, thank you.

Kevin Reigrut: What's on your mind?

Colleen: I'm curious to know, with all of this talk about traffic and traffic congestion and taking alternate routes, what is Maryland Transportation Administration doing now to increase other ways for us to commute to and from work, particularly in the north south Baltimore-Washington Corridor? For example, have there been any additional talk about increasing the regularity and the frequency of the MARC train schedule, which might encourage people who might normally drive to consider taking the train? Also, are there any thoughts of creating increased bus and light rail services so people can get around the city without the cars and prevent people from standing in long backups?

Kevin Reigrut: Sure. Colleen, thank you so much for the question.

So, I have to answer that in two ways. The first is to mention that the Maryland Transportation Authority is the agency that's responsible for Maryland's toll facilities. We are a transportation business unit of the Department of Transportation, but the transit services that you describe are actually under the Maryland Transit Administration or MTA. I know that in the grand scheme of things the acronyms sound a lot alike. The reason that I mention that is because the Maryland Transit Administration is very much responsible for providing those transit service in and around the Baltimore metropolitan region.

Now, I'm hesitant to speak for them, but what I can tell you just because I have a very strong working relationship with Kevin Quinn, the administrator of the Maryland Transit Administration ... A historic side note: The MARC trains that the Maryland Transit Administration runs are actually housed on rail lines that belong to different railroad companies; CSX and Amtrak. So, the reason that additional MARC train services aren't as easy to come by, it's because those major rail companies own the rail lines and they basically lease time to the State of Maryland to operate MARC. It's tough to get additional time on those tracks for new trains, so that's why there hasn't been the kind of expansion of MARC services that you just described.

I can tell you that the Maryland Transportation Administration and the Maryland Transit Administration, along with the State Highway Administration who manages and operates all of the non-toll road facilities that are owned and operated by the state, we are in constant coordination about this 895 project to ensure that what we can do is to minimize the impact as much as possible for all of the people that are traveling in the Baltimore area.

Thanks for the call. I see that we have Ryan in Abingdon. Ryan, what's on your mind?

Ryan: Hi, how are you tonight?

Kevin Reigrut: I'm very well, thanks. How are you doing? Thanks for being a part of our town hall.

Ryan: Thank you. This is a great idea.

I had a question on you had mentioned that there was incentives for the contractors to either finish early or penalties if they finish late. Are those going to be based upon the stages being completed or the project as in overall?

Kevin Reigrut: Great question, Ryan. Thank you very much for asking it.

You know, a lot of people when they hear about a major infrastructure project like this, the first thing they think about is: We say it's going to be this long before the project is completed, and then schedule delays happen and the project goes on way further than anyone anticipated. In this particular case, MDTA got out in front of that issue. We value your time and we care about our customers' experience, so we actually built an incentive into the contract for our vendor to complete the project early. That incentive is \$70,000 per day up to 60 days ahead of schedule, which means they could have a maximum incentive of 4.2 million dollars if they get it done early and bring our customers back to a normal traffic pattern.

But very importantly, there are also very strict, stringent liquidated damages if the contract vendor goes over the 800 day period of performance. Our experience has been, in an incentive-disincentive environment, we've gotten really terrific results because obviously the vendor is incentivized to get the work done earlier, so if they think that they're getting a little bit behind they can bring some additional resources in to help get them back on schedule. That's exactly what we expect to happen here on this project.

Thanks so much for the call. Going to go to Milt in Baltimore. Milt, thanks for joining the town hall. What's on your mind?

Milt: [inaudible]

Kevin Reigrut: Milt, are you still with us?

Milt: Yes, I am. Can you hear me?

Kevin Reigrut: Okay [crosstalk] go ahead. I sure can. Go ahead.

Milt: Sorry. I just wanted to thank you for doing this. You're doing a great job fielding all these questions.

My question is simply about the summer, spring, summer when there's more traffic headed [inaudible] or will there be any [inaudible] allow for that?

Kevin Reigrut: I'm sorry. I lost the last couple of words of your question.

Milt: All right. I'm sorry about that. When spring and summer comes and there is increased traffic toward the eastern shore, will there be any way to accommodate that sort of increased volume headed south and east?

Kevin Reigrut: Sure. We will be closing one direction on various weekends to facilitate various activities. You can get a detailed schedule about all of those closings and sign up for any of our alerts on 895bmore.com. What I can also tell you is that we have specifically not scheduled any work for the holiday periods because that's when we have heavy traffic on our facilities, but traffic will remain for the duration in that single lane capacity.

Thanks so much for the call. We're going to go to Jason in Glen Burnie. Jason, what's on your mind?

Jason: Hey, how are you? I'm noticing the work that they're doing now on 895. I go northbound and what I see is that usually they don't merge the traffic until about maybe a quarter of a mile or a half a mile past the tunnel. And what I see happening is I see the people in the right lane are speeding by all the people in the left lane and they're merging at the top of the merge area, and basically it just slows everybody down. So, my question is: Are you going to work to minimize the congestion? If you're going to do single lane traffic, I mean, that's fine, but you have to get all the drivers going on the same page.

Kevin Reigrut: Right. Thank you so much for that question. And actually, I should mention: This project actually started in April of 2018. Happily, there's been no traffic impact to date because the work that's being undertaken is underneath the bridge. In terms of how we manage the traffic that'll be merging into one lane, what I'd like to let everyone knows: Southbound 895 traffic will be open to two lanes well prior to entering into the tunnel, which should solve exactly the problem that you just raised.

Thanks so much for the question. We're going to go Estelle in Dundalk. Estelle, thanks for joining the town hall.

Estelle: Hi, yes. Hi, yes, thank you for taking my call. My question is: I was wondering if you guys or if your company is coordinating with Google Maps. I know sometimes when I use Google Maps to get to school or to work, it helps me with traffic, but I also realize when the drawbridge was getting construction work done, they don't seem to have any idea about that, and so there's like no information to either use the drawbridge or not at all. So, I think if the company's able to coordinate with Google Maps, I think it'll give people a lot more of a better feeling about the upcoming traffic and construction because the map will have more information. I hope that made sense. Sorry.

Kevin Reigrut: It sure did, and I appreciate the question.

So, I myself, I use Google Maps and Waze as traffic applications to get me where it is that I need to be going. Now, both of those applications fundamentally work based on what's happening with your phone. With Waze, you press a button. With Google Maps, it actually tracks your location and sends that information to google to input into their algorithm. So, they're great services, we don't want to discourage anybody from using them, but you'll never get real-time information that's going to be as accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive as you would get from using 895bmore.com. So, I would strongly encourage you and everybody on the call: Go check out that project website because that's the place that we're going to be able to share with you the best, most comprehensive information.

So, what I'd like to do at this point, because I know that we've got a bunch of folks who may have joined us after we asked the question, I wanted to go back to our poll question and get some additional feedback. Again, that poll question is: On the Intercounty Connector and our I-95 Express toll lanes, you pay tolls with E-ZPass or using video tolling; no cash. The new Nice/Middleton Bridge is also going to be constructed as an all-electronically tolled facility. Would you like to see all-electronic tolling to MDTA's other facilities? If your answer to that question is yes, just go ahead and press 1 on your telephone keypad. If your answer's no, press 2 on the keypad. We've actually gotten 687 responses to that poll question already. 78% of you have said that you would like to see cashless tolling expanded to other facilities, and 152, or 22%, say that you would not like to see all-electronic tolling expanded.

With that, we're going to go to Max in Baltimore. Max, thanks for joining us tonight.

Max:

Hi. Thank you again for hosting this town hall.

My question's regarding the impact during stage two to 95 traffic during rush hour. In short, I know you've mentioned that you've expanded the lanes so there are more there. Aside from the fact that's going to increase, you know, induce demand, I'm wondering: What are your projections? Do you have minutes added to commute, or what have you, for time during peak rush hour commutes in the morning and in the evening on 95?

Kevin Reigrut:

We do. We do, and thanks again for that question.

So, with the improvements that we've already put into place, the expanded lane capacity, there will be minimal increases in travel times. MDTA expects that during the morning rush hour there'll be an estimated additional six-minute delay on southbound I-95, and during the evening rush hour there'll be an additional four- to five-minute delay on northbound I-95. But, again, we strongly recommend that motorists, if they can, use 695, the Key Bridge, as an alternate route because there's actually sufficient capacity on the Key Bridge to handle a good bit of that diverted traffic. We expect that vehicles on 695, both in the

morning and evening rush hours, will be able to do so without experiencing any delays.

Anyone on the call that's either just joining us or you thought of a question that you'd like to ask, if you'd like to get into the call queue, please press *3 on your phone. We'll get you in touch with one of our operators and get you into the town hall. I see from the clock that we have another 15 minutes or so, and the good news is there are a whole bunch of people that still want to ask questions. So, let's go to Bernard in White Marsh. Bernard, what's on your mind?

(silence)

Bernard [crosstalk]

Bernard: [crosstalk]

Kevin Reigrut: Bernard, can you hear me?

Bernard, one last call.

Bernard: I'm concerned why you're not completing the work inside the tunnel before they start on the bridges on the outside. It just seems awfully confusing to me [inaudible] both at the same time.

Kevin Reigrut: Bernard, thank you for that question. It's a very good one.

What I can tell you is: The projects are specifically coordinated to allow us to get to the tunnels and do long overdue rehabilitation work while the 895 project is underway. We're already going to reduce capacity on the bridge, so having one lane of traffic in each direction going across the bridge and into the tunnel is a very effective way to manage that traffic so that what we can do is, rather than having periodic closures of one bore or another and just getting a little bit of work done, we're going to be able to close the bore for 60 days at a time, which means by the time we get those bores reopened to traffic you'll be looking at what should look like a brand new tunnel facility.

Stu from Abingdon, I see that you're on the line.

Stu: Yeah, I wanted to say two things. One thing is: With the recent construction south of the tunnel and that, on the bridge there, when is that going to be complete? Because I've seen an extra half an hour to my commute added. I commute to D.C. and back and it's added a half an hour. I don't know where you're getting that projection to two to three minutes. I mean, I've driven that for the last ... or that construction for the last year and a half and it's been an extra half an hour for my commute every day. So, that's one thing.

The other thing is: Why are you guys closing it right after Thanksgiving? It doesn't make sense. It should close it January the 3rd because we get an extra 10% in holiday traffic through there. It doesn't make sense to start that construction then because you'll probably have about 10 work days because you have a couple of rain days in there, and it doesn't make sense.

Kevin Reigrut: Stu, and I'm sorry. When you were referring to the congestion that you were experiencing, was that on 95 or 895?

Stu: [crosstalk] working on the bridge southbound of the tunnel right now.

Kevin Reigrut: Right, okay. That's [crosstalk]

Stu: And they've been doing that for the last year and a half or year.

Kevin Reigrut: That's the Patapsco Flats project which was another crucial reconstruction that was really overdue. That project was also coordinated with the 895 project. It's well underway. One of the two spans that needed to be replaced is fully complete. You saw a switch to traffic. They're working on constructing the other span of the bridge. That project is not designed to be complete while 895 is going on. Instead, it's designed to open earlier than the bridge reconstruction project, but to give you a full, safe, reliable commute all the way down 895 from north of the city through the tunnels, then down to the Patapsco Flats and into Anne Arundel County.

Looks like we're going to go to Nancy in Dundalk. Nancy, what's on your mind?

Nancy: [inaudible] Hello?

Kevin Reigrut: Hi, Nancy. How are you tonight?

Nancy: I'm fine, and thank you for the town hall and all the information I've gathered. My husband commutes every morning and goes through the 895 tunnel. But my question was: Once this project is completed in 2021, is there talk or is it already implemented that the tolls will go up? The price of the tolls?

Kevin Reigrut: Let me answer that definitively. The answer is: No, nothing about the project would result in toll increases at any of MDTA's facilities. We actually look out into the distant future to make sure that sufficient revenue exists to be able to maintain our existing facilities and to do these types of major projects that are necessary on some of our aging infrastructure. We have a six-year projection which includes full funding of the 895 project, and no toll increases are anticipated during that period of time and hopefully even further into the future.

Nancy, thanks so much for the call. We're going to go to Fran in Perry Hall. Fran, what's on your mind?

Fran: Hi there. This is a really good idea. Thanks for doing this.

I was very curious: Was any consideration given to just closing 895 completely for about a year or a year and a half instead of spending three years on this and just, like I said, closing everything down at once, just doing everything all at one time and then getting it back up a lot earlier?

Kevin Reigrut: Fran, a great question.

We actually evaluated a number of different options, one of which is the one that we chose to go with: one bridge at a time. The other was a full 100% closure of 895, and then a third option was to do periodic, off-peak night and weekend closures. The third one was rejected because we were talking about multiple, multiple, multiple years to be able to get the project completed. You know, tearing the bridge down all at once, we determined that the staging of providing one lane of traffic in each direction was the best overall balance between cost, schedule, traffic impact and constructability. Removing 895 entirely as a traffic corridor would obviously have had an even bigger impact on 95 and 695, both in the short- and the medium-term. I think that we struck the very best balance we can, recognizing that we're still talking about a really long time to get this project done.

Now, in construction terms, three years actually isn't that long a period of time, given the nature of the work that's going to be undertaken here. For those of you who know 895 well, you know that it goes underneath 95, you know that it traverses 23 different railroad tracks. It's a very complicated bridge reconstruction project. One that was long overdue. This way, we're able to do this very sophisticated project and really minimize the length of time that the project has an impact on our customers, at the same time making sure that we don't make traffic jams on 95 and 695 that are unbearable.

Burt: [crosstalk] it's weird.

Kevin Reigrut: Burt? I see that Burt from Middle River is on the call. Burt, what's on your mind tonight?

Burt: Good evening. I was just wondering if there was a way you could restrict tractor trailer travel when you have two-way traffic in a single bore.

Kevin Reigrut: Appreciate the question. Thank you for answering it.

Prohibiting truck traffic was definitely considered, but what we found is that the daily percentage of truck traffic on 895 is approximately 3% of the total number of vehicles that are on the facility, and it's mainly trucks that are servicing the local business community in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County. So, since the amount of truck traffic was relatively small, and the impact

to local businesses and economic development is much larger, we elected not to prohibit truck traffic on 895 during the project.

Thanks for the call, Burt, and thanks for being a part of the town hall.

So, I see we have Jenny from Crownsville on the line. Jenny, what's on your mind tonight?

Jenny: Thank you for taking my call.

Kevin Reigrut: You're very welcome.

Jenny: I'm curious if we could improve the technology at the E-ZPass stations so that we could whiz through them more quickly and not hold up the people behind us and not put out as much exhaust.

Kevin Reigrut: That's an excellent question, and Jenny, I'm very excited that you asked because it gives me a chance to let everybody on the call know some really terrific news. This spring, MDTA put out a new contract to replace the entirety of our tolling infrastructure. It's called the Third Generation Tolling Contract and by the early January/February of 2020, all of the existing infrastructure that MDTA utilizes is going to be upgraded to the latest, greatest, best technology that's out there. As we begin to deploy all of this new technology and capability to our infrastructure, it's 13 years old. That was when the original contract was put out there. Basically, we're going to take a leap year forward in technology and to be able to provide exactly that kind of service and reliability in those E-ZPass lanes that you're talking about.

So, we're going to go to David in Baltimore. David, what's on your mind tonight?

David: Yes. My question pertains to what you were just talking about, about the electronic tolling. You see like the interconnectors and like Route 200 where everything is automated, where you just drive through at full speed. I mean, how long is it going to take to get that on 95, 895 and 695? Because the holdups with all these different closures and all these projects, I mean, some of this stuff adds up to almost an hour out of my day when I go down 895 or 95. I use all of them around here daily. My thing is this: Why don't we just take the cash out altogether and use E-ZPass? Like you just said, it's the third generation. I mean, E-ZPass is ... You know, it's cheaper to use an E-ZPass than paying cash. So, my thing is this: How long is it going to take to get it to where it's just, it's all E-ZPass overhead, there's no toll lanes, you just drive? No backups, just drive.

Kevin Reigrut: David, thank you so much for your question, comments and observations. I think I need to put you on retainer to help to sell the benefits to all Maryland customers of Maryland E-ZPass because you're absolutely right. Using an E-ZPass will get you through our facilities faster, it'll get you through safer, it is a

huge benefit to the environment because cars that are not stopped at toll facilities aren't idling and emitting particulate matter.

I'm going to try and answer a very complicated question in as brief a fashion as I can. Historically, Maryland, like all other tolling agencies, collected tolls with cash, which means we built out our infrastructure precisely for that purpose. It's why at each and every one of our facilities you see two lanes of traffic, or one lane of traffic that suddenly bows out like a snake with a full meal in his belly, and then it comes back to two or four lanes of traffic on the other side. You see that on I-95 at the Tydings Bridge, you see that on 895, on 95 at the tunnels. So, converting to all-electronic tolling might seem very simple, but there's very complex engineering that needs to go into making sure that we can reconfigure those travel plazas so that everyone who's driving on them is safe.

Now, we're also very committed to the fact that we've got toll collection staff who have been the lifeblood of MDTA since we first started in business in the early '70s. What we're doing with those folks is we're working diligently with all of our toll collectors to move them into new positions at MDTA so that they can continue their careers with us or with some of our partner agencies.

Now, in terms of all-electronic tolling, I mentioned on the call the Nice Bridge in southern Maryland is being completely rebuilt as well. That bridge will be reconstructed using all-electronic tolling. There's no specific budget or timetable for some of our other facilities, but we anticipate looking at the Hatem Bridge in Harford and Cecil County as well as the Key Bridge as potential options for all-electronic tolling in the immediate future. It's one of the specific reasons that we wanted to make sure to ask that poll question; because we wanted to hear from you, our customers, on what you think. Looking at the poll, we're up to 739 respondents, and the numbers look about the same as they have for a while. 78% say move forward with all-electronic tolling. 22% of you say not yet time to go to all-electronic tolling.

I see that I'm running very short of time, and I want to thank each and every one of you for taking time out of your busy schedules to be a part of this tonight. I hope you found it as helpful and as fun as I did. I know that I gave you a lot of information, so if you need additional clarification and you press *3 now, once the call ends you'll have an opportunity to leave a message, ask that question, and we'll be able to provide you a response.

With that, ladies and gentlemen, we've taken up the better part of an hour of your Tuesday evening. I wanted to call and thank you very much for participating in our first ever telephone town hall meeting. We hope that you have a terrific, safe, healthy and happy Thanksgiving. And with that, we're going to leave you to the rest of your evening, and thank you once again for participating in our live tele-town hall meeting. Thanks so much. Have a great night.

