

The Baltimore Harbor Tunnel

A Toll Facility Of The Maryland Transportation Authority

When the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel (Interstate 895) opened to traffic on Nov. 29, 1957, it was an event of national importance. The new tunnel was heralded widely as breaking the “Baltimore Bottleneck” for the first time ever. For years, traffic had crawled through Baltimore’s narrow streets, then the only direct route between Philadelphia and the South.

The traffic situation peaked in the mid-1940s, when a federal official referred to Baltimore as “the worst city in the United States, as far as I know, on the matter of taking care of its through-traffic.”

The need to break this bottleneck was apparent, and Maryland’s State Roads Commission - predecessor of the Maryland Transportation Authority -- initiated plans under Maryland’s Primary Bridge Program.

The program, which was developed and approved in 1937, called for crossings of the Potomac, Susquehanna and Patapsco rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

After a debate about the planned crossing’s location, the State Roads Commission decided on a Canton-Fairfield crossing as the best solution to address the City and State’s local- and through-traffic needs. Officials selected a tunnel, rather than a bridge, to carry the traffic after experts were convinced that the costs of a twin-tube tunnel could be supported by the toll revenues it would generate. Construction began in January 1955.

At the time, the tunnel was considered an engineering marvel. Each of the tunnel’s 21 twin-tube sections is 300 feet long (the size of a football field)

and was built in ship-yards and launched like a ship. Tugs then towed the sections to the construction site. The tunnel was built using the open-trench method -- prefabricated sections were sunk in a trench dredged in the Baltimore Harbor’s bottom, and the sections were joined under water.

An integral part of

the tunnel is its ventilation system -- the means for removing the exhaust fumes of thousands of vehicles daily and constantly replenishing the tunnel with fresh air.

The system includes one ventilation shaft and building over each end of the tunnel. Fresh air is supplied through a duct under the tunnel roadway and distributed through air flues. These flues are located just above the roadway on each side of the tunnel.

Air in the tunnel tube is drawn off into a duct above the tunnel ceiling and then dispersed into the atmosphere. The two ventilation buildings house gigantic fans that supply fresh air and remove stale air. Carbon-



Background (continued)



Approximately 25.9-million vehicles traveled through the tunnel during Fiscal Year 2004.

About the Authority

Fort McHenry Tunnel (I-95)

Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge (US 301)

Francis Scott Key Bridge (I-695)

Baltimore Harbor Tunnel (I-895)

Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge (US 40)

John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway (I-95)

William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial (Bay) Bridge (US 50/301)

monoxide levels in each tube are monitored around the clock.

The tunnel was an instant success. It eliminated 51 traffic signals for through-traffic in downtown Baltimore, provided a cross-harbor route for local commuters and diverted up to 40 percent of commercial-vehicle traffic from local streets.

Today, the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel handles more than 25.9-million vehicles annually. Along with the Fort McHenry Tunnel (Interstate 95) and the Francis Scott Key Bridge (Interstate 695), the Harbor Tunnel is part of a network of Baltimore Harbor crossings that provides convenient and safe transportation for local and interstate traffic.

The Maryland Transportation Authority is a group of six citizens appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the State Senate. Representing Maryland's diverse population and geographic regions, this group serves as our policy-setting, decision-making and governing body. Maryland's Secretary of Transportation serves as the Authority's Chairman.

Each Member serves a three-year term, with two of the Members' terms expiring each year. Members are eligible for reappointment to the Authority.

Daily operations of the seven facilities are carried out by the Authority's 1,500 employees. Overall management of Authority operations is handled by the agency's Executive Secretary.

The Transportation Authority oversees the State's seven toll facilities and the Maryland Transportation Authority Police. The agency has statutory authority to act on behalf of the Maryland Department of Transportation to supervise, finance, construct, operate and maintain transportation facilities.

Maryland's toll facilities were financed and constructed through revenue bonds. The outstanding principal and interest due each year is paid from toll revenues. Toll revenues are the primary source of funds. The Authority's toll receipts are pooled, and revenues from all seven facilities are combined to pay for operating, maintaining and making capital improvements to these facilities.

A Commitment to Safety

The Maryland Transportation Authority Police is a nationally accredited force with more than 500 sworn and civilian employees. Specialized K-9, motorcycle, all-terrain-vehicle, marine and anti-aggressive-driving units help provide maximum safety and security at Authority facilities, the Baltimore/Washington International Airport and the Port of Baltimore. To maintain the highest level of professionalism and ethics, Transportation Authority Police officers remain true to their mission of safeguarding life and property, preserving peace, preventing and detecting crime, enforcing the law and protecting the rights of citizens.

The force has received local and national recognition for its roadway-safety efforts, which include child-passenger-safety awareness programs, anti-aggressive-driving initiatives and sobriety checkpoints. These efforts have been successful due to the continued teamwork among Authority Police and Operations personnel.

This same teamwork drives the Authority's Traffic Safety Committee, headed by the Chief of Police, Director of Engineering and Director of Operations. The committee provides leadership of Authority efforts to help ensure safe roadways for Maryland's citizens and visitors. One such effort is the courtesy-patrol and vehicle-recovery program, which enhances safety and service for motorists while reducing the effect of disabled-vehicle-related congestion on Authority facilities.

E-ZPassSM Maryland

The Maryland Transportation Authority is a member of the *E-ZPass* InterAgency Group (IAG), which continues to develop a seamless electronic-toll-collection system throughout the northeastern United States. *E-ZPass* Maryland has grown to include more than 250,000 active transponders and has reduced significantly typical, peak-hour congestion at Maryland toll plazas. More than 11-million *E-ZPass* customers from IAG agencies throughout the Northeast can pay tolls electronically in Maryland. As more motorists use *E-ZPass*, convenience will increase; traffic congestion in and around toll-plaza areas will decrease; and engine-idling time will be reduced, resulting in reduced vehicle emissions. For additional information about the *E-ZPass* Maryland program and its standard, commuter and business plans, visit www.ezpassmd.com.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

The Authority continues to use ITS technology to improve safety and reduce congestion through enhanced incident detection and response, while informing motorists of real-time roadway and travel conditions and alternative routes. The Authority is an active partner in the Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART). Through a series of variable-message signs and highway-advisory-radio messages, the CHART system advises motorists of traffic conditions along major routes and suggests alternatives to avoid delays and congestion. This information, as well as real-time traffic images are available on CHART's website at www.chart.state.md.us.

Your Toll Dollars At Work

Fast Facts

Construction Dates

January 1955 - November 1957

Cost

\$130 million

Location

Interstate 895: 17 miles of four-lane divided highway, including 64 bridge structures; dual two-lane tunnels 1.5-miles long and 101 feet below the water surface

Toll Rates

Commuter discount with valid Maryland-issued *E-ZPass*: up to 80-percent savings per trip

2 axles: \$2

3 axles: \$4

4 axles: \$6

5 axles: \$8

6 axles: \$10

Annual Traffic

25.9-million vehicles

Contact Us

The Authority reminds its customers to stay alert and exercise caution when traveling through workzones, toll plazas and around police vehicles.

For more information about the Maryland Transportation Authority, please call the Office of Media & Customer Relations at 410-537-1017, or, toll-free, at 1-866-713-1596.

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