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Kentucky, Indiana propose actions to mitigate effects of tolling on low-income and minority populations

Toll exemptions for TARC, free local transponders, low minimum account balances

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (May 7, 2015) – Kentucky and Indiana are proposing practical, concrete actions for lessening the effects of tolling on low-income and minority populations affected by the Louisville-Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridges Project.

The proposals include toll-free crossings for the mass transit buses of TARC (Transit Authority of River City). Local transponders will be widely available at no cost, allowing access to the lowest toll rates, and drivers will have maximum ease in managing and replenishing toll payment accounts.

The two states conducted a formal assessment that included surveys and extensive public outreach. A draft report was released in June 2013 for public examination and comment, followed by additional public outreach and an in-depth analysis of prospective toll mitigation measures. Transportation and finance officials from both states on the project's Tolling Body voted this morning to accept the assessment and implement the measures included in the Toll Mitigation Plan.

“In keeping with our commitment to conduct a robust assessment, the study submitted to and reviewed by FHWA represents much painstaking work, including much public input,” Kentucky Transportation Secretary Mike Hancock said.

Kentucky and Indiana jointly are building the project to dramatically improve cross-river mobility between Louisville and Southern Indiana. The project has two parts:

- **Downtown Crossing** – Includes construction of a new bridge for northbound Interstate 65, renovation and reconfiguration of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Bridge to carry southbound I-65 and rebuilding of downtown interchanges in Louisville and Jeffersonville, Indiana. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) is in charge. The new bridge is scheduled to open to traffic in January 2016. The reconstructed Kennedy Bridge – final piece of the overall project – is scheduled to open in December 2016.
- **East End Crossing** – Comprises a new bridge and approaches, eight miles upriver, to connect Indiana 265 in Southern Indiana with the Gene Snyder Freeway in Kentucky. Indiana is responsible for securing design, financing and construction. The new crossing is scheduled to open to traffic in October 2016.

Once the project is completed in 2016, tolls will be charged for use of the two new bridges and the renovated I-65 Kennedy Memorial Bridge. An all-electronic toll system will be used for greater efficiency and cost containment, enabling initial base toll rates as low as \$1 per crossing on each bridge.

“The project team put significant thought and effort into producing a quality document that demonstrates the states’ commitment to this issue,” said Indiana Department of Transportation Deputy Commissioner Jim Stark. “The result is a plan by which the effects of tolling can be mitigated in practical, meaningful ways to those who will be disproportionately affected.”

Measures recommended for implementation fall into three categories:

Transit – Provide toll-free crossings to TARC to provide barrier-free, low-cost access to Jeffersonville, Indiana, and Louisville Metro

Transponders – Provide free and accessible local transponders – sticker-like devices that attach to the inside of a windshield and bear a bar code that is read by an overhead scanner. The toll is automatically paid from the customer’s account. Transponders will be made readily available through local retailers, such as grocery stores and markets, and local governmental services offices.

Management of user accounts – Allow accounts to be established with as little as a \$20 balance to allow customer entry into the program. Establish a wide range of options for replenishment of funds in

a user's account, including cash, credit/debit cards, money orders, bank transfers or online payments. A website is planned to manage accounts online.

KYTC and INDOT already have undertaken or committed to other mitigation measures, including:

- \$20 million for TARC for additional buses and vans and associated facilities, such as bus stops and park-and-ride sites.
- Post-construction traffic monitoring to determine whether local communities are adversely affected by traffic bypassing the toll bridges.

The full report – “Assessment of Economic Effects of Tolling and Potential Strategies for Mitigating Effects of Tolling on Low-Income and Minority Populations” – can be accessed from the Bridges Project website, <http://kyinbridges.com>.

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