

PUBLIC HEARINGS

MDOT will hold four public hearings regarding the proposed toll rates at the following locations, dates and times:

LANSING, Michigan

Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009

1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

MDOT Transportation Service Center 3101
Technology Blvd., Suite H

POINT EDWARD, Ontario

Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009

10:00 a.m. to noon

Travel Information Centre
1455 Venetian Blvd.

PORT HURON, Michigan

Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009

3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Port Huron Municipal Building
100 McMorran Blvd.

PORT HURON, Michigan

Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009

6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Port Huron Municipal Building
100 McMorran Blvd.

The same information will be presented at each hearing. Written statements, faxes, and e-mails in place of, or in addition to, oral statements made at the public hearings may be submitted to: Robert H. Parsons, Public Involvement and Hearings Officer, Bureau of Transportation Planning, Michigan Department of Transportation, P. O. Box 30050, Lansing, MI 48909; or e-mail at parsonsb@michigan.gov; fax 517-373-9255. All written comments should be postmarked on or before Dec. 16, 2009. Additional information on the proposal is available on the BWB Web site at www.michigan.gov/bluewaterbridge.

HISTORY OF BRIDGE TOLLS

Completed in 1938, the initial span of the BWB was constructed by the Michigan Bridge Commission, a Michigan agency created in 1935. The commission issued bonds to pay for the main arched portion, while Michigan and Ontario paid for approaches on their respective sides. Michigan used federal aid dollars for its approach, of which a portion was repaid with tolls. In 1962, following repayment of the debt, Michigan discontinued collecting tolls on the U.S. side.

In 1970, the U.S. Congress passed a law permitting Michigan to again collect tolls on the BWB for maintenance and operational costs. To comply with the law and begin collecting tolls, MDOT repaid the federal government \$348,000 in 1971 for the grant it received in 1938 to fund the approach road.

In 1997, the second span and plaza improvements were funded with a combination of state, federal and bond dollars. MDOT is currently using toll revenue to pay off the bonds. The department anticipates full repayment by 2028.

The BWB has been able to keep its toll structure relatively low over the past decade, mainly because of the steady increase in traffic between 1995 and 2005. Further, MDOT chose not to raise tolls until the conclusion of the BWB Plaza Expansion Study, to provide a clear plan for capital improvements and the associated costs. With decreasing traffic trends, upcoming maintenance projects, and the U.S. plaza expansion, the current toll structure will not support the needs of the facility.

PROPOSED NEW TOLL RATES AT THE BLUE WATER BRIDGE



Information and Public Hearings Announcement



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This brochure provides important information concerning the purpose and need for a proposed toll increase on the U.S. side of the Blue Water Bridge (BWB). The proposed toll rates are required to meet the long-term financial needs of the bridge based on forecasted traffic and anticipated future expenditures. Tolls and lease revenue are used for operations, maintenance and capital costs of the BWB. The revenue generated by the proposed new toll rates will be used to maintain the structural integrity of the bridge and enhance operations through various projects, including concrete deck replacement, deck resurfacing, painting projects and the planned U.S. plaza expansion. The proposed U.S. tolls will align with the BWB Canada's rates, yet remain consistent with the regional average.

PROPOSED TOLL RATES

The Blue Water Bridge proposes the following U.S. toll rates to be implemented on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2010.

TOLL RATES		
CLASS	CURRENT	PROPOSED
Passenger Car	\$1.50	\$3.00
Commercial (Per Axle)	\$1.75	\$3.25
*Commuter Tokens	20 Tokens for \$40.00	20 Tokens for \$40.00

*Commuters may receive discounted rate of \$2.00 (Canadian) with tokens purchased on the Canadian side of bridge - a 33 percent savings, depending on the exchange rate at the time of purchase.

Commercial rates will be for vehicles with a capacity over 11 passengers and/or with a 1-ton vehicle rating.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. When was the last toll increase?

In 1997, tolls were raised from \$1.25 (passenger), \$1.50 (commercial) to the current \$1.50 (passenger), \$1.75 per axle (commercial).

2. How much money will this toll increase raise per year?

Annual toll revenue fluctuates depending on annual traffic volumes. However, based on the traffic patterns over the last three years, MDOT estimates increasing the tolls to \$3.00 (passenger), \$3.25 (commercial) will raise an additional \$8-\$10 million annually. These funds will be used to preserve the existing bridge assets and improve traffic operations on the BWB, the plaza, and the approaching roadways.

3. What factors went into increasing the toll?

Three primary factors necessitate the need for raising the U.S. BWB toll: 1.) The BWB tolls and lease revenue are used for operations, maintenance and capital costs of the bridge. MDOT is required by the enabling legislation to maintain a positive fund balance in its BWB fund. 2.) The BWB has many upcoming preservation and long-term maintenance needs, including bridge painting (\$10 million), redecking the second span (\$40 million), and redecking the original span (\$50 million), and 3.) Expanding the plaza will cost \$583 million.

4. What have you done to minimize the impact on local commuters who use the bridge on a daily basis?

MDOT will continue to honor the BWB Canada commuter token program. The price of tokens purchased in Canada will not change. Commuters who participate in the program experience a 33 percent savings over the proposed passenger toll rates, depending on the exchange rate at the time of purchase.

5. How does the proposed Blue Water Bridge toll compare to other northern border crossings?

Currently the U.S. BWB toll is the lowest passenger bridge crossing fare, and the second lowest commercial fare on the U.S./Canada border (see chart below). MDOT intentionally held the tolls at the same rate until the BWB Plaza Study was completed and a recommended alternative was identified. As shown in the chart, with the proposed toll increase, MDOT is still within the regional average for both passenger and commercial bridge/tunnels.

U.S./Canada (Bridge/Tunnel) Border Toll Comparisons (Passenger)	
	Toll
Blue Water Bridge (US) - MI	\$1.50
International Bridge - MI	\$2.50
Thousand Islands - NY	\$2.50
Ogdensburg-Prescott Bridge - NY	\$2.75
Blue Water Bridge (Canada)	\$3.00
Blue Water Bridge US (Proposed)	\$3.00
Peace Bridge - NY	\$3.00
Seaway International Bridge - NY	\$3.00
Queenston-Lewiston Bridge - NY	\$3.25
Rainbow Bridge - NY	\$3.25
Ambassador Bridge - MI	\$4.00
Detroit-Windsor Tunnel - MI	\$4.00

U.S./Canada (Bridge/Tunnel) Border Toll Comparisons (Commercial)	
(5-axle equivalent)	Toll
Ogdensburg-Prescott Bridge - NY	\$8.50
Blue Water Bridge (US) - MI	\$8.75
Thousand Islands - NY	\$9.75
Seaway International Bridge - NY	\$13.50
Blue Water Bridge US (Proposed)	\$16.25
Blue Water Bridge (Canada)	\$16.25
International Bridge - MI	\$17.50
Queenston-Lewiston Bridge - NY	\$18.50
Rainbow Bridge - NY	\$18.50
Ambassador Bridge - MI (calculates tolls using weight-based formula)	\$16.25 - \$22.50
Peace Bridge - NY	\$28.00

More questions?

Call MDOT's
Blue Water Bridge Office

810-984-3131