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New tolling system being developed for U.S.-Canada border bridges

Fast facts:

- Under a new contract, two international bridge crossings on the Ontario-Michigan border will get updated tolling systems.
- The \$9.3 million contract will cover modernization of the existing toll system at the International Bridge, connecting Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, with Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and the Blue Water Bridge connecting Port Huron, Michigan, to Sarnia, Ontario.
- Potential benefits of developing a new tolling system for both bridges include administrative cost savings, technological upgrades and improved customer service.

August 3, 2021 -- A bi-national partnership recently awarded a contract to update the tolling systems for three bridge operators at two international bridge crossings on the Ontario-Michigan border.

The \$9.3 million contract will cover modernization of the existing toll system at the Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge, connecting Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, with Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and the Blue Water Bridge connecting Port Huron, Michigan, to Sarnia, Ontario. The contract will be administered for the bi-national partnership by the International Bridge Administration (IBA) through an agreement between the IBA, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Federal Bridge Corporation Limited (FBCL).

Heading a bi-national team of vendors, prime contractor IBI Group will implement a toll system on both the U.S. and Canadian sides of the Blue Water Bridge and the Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge, while providing operations and maintenance support for up to 10 years for toll software services.

"This is a great opportunity to partner on a common software solution for our future tolling needs," said IBA Bridge Director Peter Petainen. "More than that, it is a privilege for the IBA, as part of our continuing bi-national partnerships, to work with the Blue Water Bridge and FBCL through this agreement and administer the contract on behalf of all three bridge operators."

The contract costs will be shared equally by the IBA, MDOT and FBCL, a Canadian Crown corporation wholly owned by the Government of Canada. Through its board, the International Bridge is managed as a joint venture of FBCL and MDOT. The U.S. portion of the Blue Water Bridge is a State of Michigan entity.

"From the new, technologically up-to-date platform, we expect to see greater flexibility in toll payment solutions, more timely management of devices in the system and increased accuracy and reliability," said Natalie Kinloch, chief executive officer of FBCL. "We should realize efficiencies by using a common platform with our partner bridges."

The cost per location for each bridge operator to design and deploy the system is estimated at about \$1.9 million.

Beyond cost savings, the bridge operators anticipate other benefits from the new toll system.

"We're excited by the possibilities offered by new toll technologies," said Amy Winn-VanHoeck, bridge director for MDOT at the Blue Water Bridge. "We may see the addition of transponder technology to toll lanes, improved customer online experience options, and new payment options for customers."

Officials at the International and Blue Water bridges anticipate a one-year timeframe for design, construction, and deployment of IBI's tolling solution. A current toll system contract covering the IBA and Blue Water Bridge (MDOT) expires in August 2022.

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**Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge:
Bridging Our Past, Connecting Our Future**