

4



**Thruway  
Authority**

**TESTIMONY OF MATTHEW J. DRISCOLL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY**

**JOINT HEARING OF THE LEGISLATIVE FISCAL COMMITTEES - TRANSPORTATION  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2020**

Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Kennedy and Magnarelli and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly Fiscal and Transportation Committees; thank you for having me here today. My name is Matthew Driscoll and I am the Executive Director for the New York State Thruway Authority.

The Governor Thomas E. Dewey Thruway is a 570-mile superhighway spanning New York State, and is one of the longest toll systems in the United States. Underscoring its importance to the state, region and nation, Thruway customers in 2019 traveled approximately 8.4 billion vehicle-miles on the highway, averaging more than 22.8 million vehicle-miles per day. The Thruway serves as a vital link to long distance interstate travel and provides the major route of access for visitors to our state's tourism anchors – it is

also a principal artery of commerce and serves as a primary catalyst of the state's economic activity.

The 2020 Thruway Authority budget represents a total financial commitment of \$1.3 billion. It is a budget that is balanced; provides the necessary resources to sustain the system; and maintains our facilities infrastructure by maximizing funding for critical projects in our multi-year Capital Plan.

The Thruway is undergoing several customer-centric improvement projects including the conversion of our entire facility to cashless tolling, and the redevelopment of all 27 service areas. These improvements will propel the Thruway into a new era providing our customers with modernized service amenities for generations to come.

By the end of 2020, the Thruway will implement system-wide cashless tolling. This conversion will reduce congestion and improve traffic flow. We currently operate cashless tolling facilities at all seven of our fixed-price toll barrier locations.

In support of system-wide cashless tolling, the Authority has continued an aggressive education and marketing campaign to raise awareness of and promote E-ZPass usage. This year we will expand that effort even further.

We have taken steps to enhance our customer support including the creation of an Office of the Toll Payer Advocate.

Maintaining and modernizing a superhighway requires continual reinvestment. The Thruway has not had a toll adjustment since 2010. Over the last several years, the Authority has reinvested approximately \$630 million into its infrastructure, including bridges and accelerated roadway rehabilitation and replacement projects across the state. As the Authority continues to undertake these capital improvements, we've introduced a modest proposal to adjust tolls. I'd like to make clear what these proposed changes mean for our customers.

Simply stated, other than the Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge, if you have a NY E-ZPass, your tolls will remain the same.

For example, Western New York customers with a NY E-ZPass and the Grand Island Commuter Plan or Resident Plan, will see no increase to their tolls. Neither would a daily commuter on I-90 or anywhere else on the Thruway system, except for the Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge.

On the bridge, NY E-ZPass customers will pay \$5.75 by 2022, representing an increase of 50 cents in 2021 and 2022. We heard loud and clear the community's concerns, and this proposal reflects what we heard. This means we will maintain a bridge commuter discount plan... and...create a discount plan that will be offered to Westchester and Rockland County residents.

This collective toll proposal will support the statewide conversion to cashless tolling. Again, aside from the bridge, NY E-ZPass customers will see no impact to their toll rates, while out-of-state E-ZPass holders and those choosing to pay with Tolls by Mail will see a difference. However, to be clear, motorists can avoid the differential by getting a NY E-ZPass. As a user-supported, non-tax revenue receiving highway, this toll adjustment proposal is a fair and equitable approach that recognizes the needs of motorists and residents alike.

As you're aware, both spans of the bridge are now open to traffic while work continues on the 3.6-mile bicycle and pedestrian path connecting Rockland and Westchester Counties. In its final configuration, motorists will benefit from the addition of breakdown lanes, advanced traffic monitoring systems, dedicated bus lanes in both directions, and four emergency turn arounds along the two spans. In addition, there will be six majestic overlooks as part of the shared use path. All these safety, educational and recreational features are happening in one of the busiest traffic corridors in the northeast. The project remains within its budget of \$3.98 billion.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the talented men and women of the Thruway Authority for their dedication and professionalism in bringing the highest standards of safety and reliability across our Thruway system. Those that work out on the roadway each day are key to our success, and they deserve to have a safe work environment as much as any other employee.

In closing, please know that I remain committed to keeping the Thruway the safest and most convenient means of travel. Whether one is commuting to work, visiting friends or family, enjoying the recreational opportunities around

our state, or supporting the freight economy, the Thruway will take you there.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.