



Thank you for the opportunity to be here this evening. My name is Brian Parke and I am the President and CEO of the Maine Motor Transport Association and a resident of Brunswick. Our Association is comprised of more than 1,600 member companies, whose employees make up a large portion of the 32,000 people who make their living in the trucking industry in Maine. I am here to speak on behalf of our trucking membership regarding the upcoming toll increase announced by the Authority.

MMTA and the Turnpike Authority have had a longstanding and excellent relationship because we have the shared goals of safety, efficiency and value – and we certainly appreciate this relationship. We have had the opportunity to meet recently with Executive Director Mills and his staff, who did a very good job explaining the need for the increase and the rationale for arriving at the current proposal. While the trucking industry is generally not pleased to experience an unexpected increase to the tolls, we can appreciate the fact that the MTA's planning did not anticipate a pandemic or the implications of COVID on the operating budget of the Authority. We understand the need to collect an additional \$17.3 million in tolls to offset recent losses and to maintain bond ratings, as well as to continue to fund ongoing safety projects including the widening that is in progress.

The trucking industry is slated to pick up \$6 million of this proposed toll increase. We understand that this subset of the overall increase will be largely shouldered by non-resident commercial truck traffic. However, it will nonetheless impact Maine trucking companies and the businesses that rely on trucks to transport their essential freight shipments. In fact, 84% percent of Maine's communities rely exclusively on trucks to move their goods and much of the 52,650 tons that our members move daily, are transported on the Turnpike.

It goes without saying that COVID has, and is still impacting many Maine businesses, including our members. We know that in March and April of 2020 very few passenger vehicles were moving in Maine and the impact on the MTA budget reflects the downturn of traffic. It was during this time, however, that Maine trucking companies rose to the challenge to supply Maine residents, grocery stores, pharmacies, first responders and others with essential goods needed to stay safe, secure, and protected from COVID. If not for our industry's travel on the Turnpike, the impact on the MTA budget would have been much more severe than it actually was.

Our members worked every day despite the challenges that they faced such as a lack of PPE and a difficulty in finding rest stops, showers and food while on the road. In this regard, we want to thank the Turnpike's staff for recognizing our needs early on. We worked closely with your team to ensure the Turnpike facilities and rest areas would be open and available for our truckers to stop, eat and rest as they delivered relief to our fellow Americans. This was not so in every state and we want to say thank you on behalf of our industry.

In terms of the increase to tolls, we appreciate the consideration given to commercial trucks as you developed the proposal. It is never easy to raise tolls or other revenues and we know that the Authority takes their responsibilities to bond holders and the travelers on the turnpike seriously. Safety is a primary concern, and we appreciate your thoughtfulness as the safety of our members and their professional drivers is also a top priority to us. One of the main takeaways from our testimony is to continue to remind the Authority, and others listening, of the importance that commercial trucks play in Maine's overall economy.

The trucking industry in Maine pays approximately \$163 million in federal and state road taxes in Maine, over and above tolls. Our members rely on a safe and efficient road system in order to deliver their goods and keep our economy moving. And there is no question that the Turnpike is an integral road used to supply the entire state. We value the work done by the MTA to keep the road safe and open to travel in all weather conditions. We know and trust that you will continue to recognize the importance of trucking to Maine and its citizens and that you will continually weigh that importance with the decisions that you make now and in the future.

Please know that MMTA and our members are here to call upon for industry input when needed.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.