

**THE ILLINOIS STATE TOLL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF THE
CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE MEETING
September 21, 2011**

The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority held a Customer Service Committee Meeting on Wednesday, September 21, 2011 at approximately 12:00 p.m. at the Central Administration Building in Downers Grove, Illinois.

Directors on the Committee in attendance were as follows:

Committee Chair Bill Morris

Director Carl Towns

Director George Pradel

Chair Wolff

Committee Chair Bill Morris called the meeting to order and requested a motion to approve the minutes of the Customer Service Committee meeting held on July 28, 2011. Director Towns made the motion to approve; seconded by Director Pradel. The motion was approved unanimously.

Committee Chair Bill Morris asked Shana Whitehead, Acting Chief of Business Systems to provide a re-cap of the work done by the Customer Service Working Group and review of potential areas of focus for the Customer Service Committee moving forward. Ms. Whitehead began by highlighting actions taken to date regarding electronic tolling technology, namely: established “back-office” system replacement timeline; developed Request for Information (RFI) which is expected to

be release on September 30th, 2011; commenced development of functional and technical requirements; made improvements to the existing system improvements such as the online violation images, implementing the 90 day rule and the automatic update of credit card information at expiration.

Regarding Customer Service Contracts, Ms. Whitehead highlighted the following accomplishments: image review contract was awarded to state use vendor finalized in December 2010 (Bridgeway Training Services); print and mail contract with state use vendor approved 8/25 (The Printers Mark, a subsidiary of Transitions Mental Health Services); transponder fulfillment contract with state use vendor approved 8/25 (Ada S. McKinley Community Services, Inc.); and call center contract in progress.

Regarding the Bridgeview Training Services contract, Director Towns indicated that he visited the facility. He noted that minority hiring had not been implemented yet but they now have sources for minority recruiting.

Ms. Whitehead highlighted four additional key initiatives discussed by the Customer Service Working Group previously: improved transponder replacement rates, increased address correction, provision of online violation images and implementation of the 90-Day Rule. Regarding transponder replacements, she indicated that approximately 300,000 transponders were replaced in 2011 which represents a 92 percent response rate – a significant increase from previous response rates averaging 80 percent. Additional outreach is needed to retrieve transponders from 700 unresponsive but active accounts. Based on

battery life estimates, she estimated that approximately 550,000 transponder replacements would be needed in 2012.

Chair Wolff suggested that Tollway should seek more publicity about the high response rate to the transponder replacement to spark interest/awareness among other users who will receive similar notices in the future. Ms. Lafleur indicated that additional attention will be brought with free advertising spots over the next year. Director Morris added that the change in the wording in the letter to the toll users indicating that the transponders would be turned off in 90 days also contributed to the increased response rate.

Regarding address corrections, Ms. Whitehead indicated that an average of 4,300 per month was processed during January 2011 through August 2011. As a result, the Tollway expects to save \$40K in costs related to processing and re-sending mail returned due to incorrect address information.

Regarding online images, Ms. Whitehead indicated that the online image review process has been very well received with 44,593 images (violations) reviewed by 11,006 unique parties Mar-Sept 2011. Approximately 4 percent or 1,782 images were disputed by toll users overall. Approximately 2 percent of the overall images, or 664 images, led to dismissed violation cases.

Regarding the 90 day rule, she indicated that the Board agreed at the June 30, 2011 Board meeting to adjust the 90 day rule to ensure toll users receive violation notices within 90 days of making their third toll violation.

In response to a concern raised by the Board about needing a credit card to obtain a transponder, Ms. Whitehead highlighted a page on the Tollway website that explains to toll users can open an I-PASS account with cash, check or credit card. It also highlights that I-PASS gift cards can be purchased at Jewel stores, the Tollway Customer Service at the O'Hare Oasis and other locations.

Chair Wolff suggested that the Tollway customer service telephone number be added to the website. Ms. Lafleur indicated that the Communications team will revise the website to include the customer service number in multiple locations on the website.

Ms. Whitehead introduced Wendy Abrams, Chief of Communications, to give an overview of the plan to exceed the legal requirements for informing the public of the toll increase on January 1, 2012 by using all Tollway communication tools to educate the public, including: leveraging working relationships with local governments and businesses along the Tollway to help deliver key messages; and educating all stakeholders about the benefits of the Move Illinois capital program and I-PASS.

Ms. Abrams indicated that the key messages communicated to the Tollway include:

- The Illinois Tollway's new capital program, Move Illinois: The Illinois Tollway Driving the Future, begins in 2012.
- New toll rates for passenger cars take effect on January 1.
- No increase is scheduled for trucks until 2015.
- Rates vary by road, plaza and ramp. For a complete list, visit www.illinoistollway.com.

Specific details about the customer education campaign are highlighted on slides 7-11 in the [attached presentation](#).

Ms. Whitehead then reviewed the proposed Customer Service Committee Workplan. She indicated that within the next 4-6 months the Committee will focus on American Express Usage and Feedback Transponder Purchase Plan.

Regarding American Express usage, Ms. Whitehead indicated that the Tollway could save up to \$1 million annually if they stopped accepting American Express payments. Staff is starting to assess current usage patterns, current expenditures for credit card fees and the impact on customers. Ultimately, this information will be used to determine whether the Tollway should continue to accept American Express from the 200,000 I-PASS customers who list American Express as their primary credit card.

Ms. Lafleur indicated that this is important because American Express charges higher processing fees. She added that initial research indicates that people use American Express typically have other credit cards also.

Regarding feedback transponders, Ms. Whitehead indicated that the committee and staff would review the pros and cons of providing this type of transponder to toll users again. She explained that many toll users preferred the feedback transponders because they provided visual notification when the account balance was low or completely depleted.

Directors expressed preference for the feedback transponders also.

Ms. Lafleur clarified that the feedback transponder under consideration does not have the visual display of previous models but beeps instead. She also noted that if the Tollway chooses to use these transponders again then the Tollway would incur implementation costs related to the adjusting the Tollway lane technology to read the new transponders. Ms. Whitehead added that the cost might be offset by behavioral changes related to real-time notification of account depletions i.e., toll

users might be more likely to pay tolls upfront if they are aware of their account status.

Chair Wolff asked what percentage of other toll systems are using feedback transponders. Ms. Whitehead responded that very few systems are currently using these transponders because they have not been available on the market for several years.

Ms. Whitehead then outlined the potential areas of focus for the Customer Service Committee beyond the initial 6 month timeframe, including: violations framework policies, violations look-back policies, collection litigation and possible toll discounts for financially-distressed toll users. Details regarding this work plan are highlighted on Slides 12-16 on the [attached presentation](#).

Director Morris asked the committee members whether they had additional questions about the proposed work plan. No questions were raised.

Director Morris opened the floor for public comment. No public comment was offered.

Ms. Lafleur reminded Directors that focus groups will be conducted in October around some of the concepts discussed today and invited them to attend as observers. The results of those focus groups will be presented at an upcoming Customer Service Committee meeting.

There being no further business Committee Chair Morris requested a motion to adjourn. Director Towns moved to adjourn; seconded by Director Pradel. The motion was approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Minutes taken by: _____

Tranece Artis
Board Secretary
Illinois State Toll Highway Authority