



New York State Bridge Authority Transparency Plan

October 20, 2021

Description of the Authority:

The New York State Bridge Authority (NYSBA), established in 1932, operates and maintains five crossings over the Hudson River: the Bear Mountain Bridge near West Point in Ft. Montgomery; the twin spans of the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge; the Mid-Hudson Bridge connecting Poughkeepsie and Highland; the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge; and the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, connecting Catskill and Hudson. The Authority also maintains the superstructure of Walkway Over the Hudson, while New York State Parks operates the park. The Bear Mountain Bridge carries the Appalachian Trail across the Hudson River. The Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge carries a portion of the Empire State Trail. The Rip Van Winkle Bridge carries the Hudson River Skywalk. Both the Mid-Hudson and Newburgh-Beacon bridges also have pedestrian paths.

As of October 2021, the Authority employs a total 99 FT and 57 PT staff across all its bridges and offices, including laborers and foremen, toll collectors, bridge managers, security technicians, Command Center Administrators, IT, as well as administrative management and support staff housed at the Highland Headquarters campus. During the summer months, the Authority employs roughly 20 summer maintenance employees.

The Authority receives no State or Federal funding and is funded almost exclusively by the tolls it collects, which remain some of the lowest in the nation when compared to similar sized facilities.

The Bridge Authority provides support to Historic Bridges of the Hudson Valley (HBHV), a 501(c)(3) organization focused on bridge-related education, community outreach, and special events.

Overview of Current Transparency:

The Authority's website was overhauled in 2021 in order to be more user-friendly, aesthetically pleasing, and provide useful information for the traveling public. A new feature on the website is a real-time alerts page, featuring traffic data from TRANSCOM so that the traveling public knows roughly how long it takes to cross one of the bridges. Another feature is live feeds of the Authority's social media pages, which contain traffic updates and general interest posts. Additionally, one of the pages features links to other transportation entities in New York State, in case a member of the public needs information about another road or toll crossing within the state.

The Authority has an active social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. One general interest post is made every workday, keeping the public informed about projects the Authority is undertaking, safe driving habits, and other topics that will be of interest to our constituents in the Hudson Valley. Requests and questions are answered in a timely manner. In addition to the daily posts, the Authority's Command Center

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posts messages that would affect the public (fog, roadwork on span, accidents, information for wide-loads, etc.) 24/7 on Facebook and Twitter. The Authority also has a YouTube account, which is primarily used to post webcasts of monthly board meetings.

As part of the Authority's switch to cashless tolling, the Authority has been conducting extensive marketing and outreach efforts to educate the public about the change coming to all five NYSBA spans. The Authority has been working closely with the OGS Media Services Center to develop marketing assets such as digital display ads, videos, and audio commercials. This includes audio and video assets that were recorded in Spanish. The cashless tolling conversion is regularly discussed on our Facebook and Twitter posts. The Authority is also utilizing its connections with local radio stations, Chambers of Commerce, higher education institutions, etc. to spread the word on cashless tolling. This has included participating in interviews on local radio morning shows and the "Hudson Valley Business Scene" show hosted by the Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce.

We post real-time advisories regarding travel conditions, roadwork, weather, incident status, etc. to social media and public information distribution platforms such as TRANSCOM, the STICC, and the HVTMC. The Authority will work to continue finding ways to notify the public of traffic conditions so that they are well-informed on their commute. In early October, the Authority started posting average travel times to cross the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge on VMS units before the approach to the bridge. Additionally, the Authority is exploring other options for notifying the public about traffic conditions, like additional VMS units, text message alerts, etc.

The Authority's Board of Commissioners, as well as its committees focused on finance, governance and audit, provides stewardship and oversight of the Authority. NYSBA consistently maintains the highest bond ratings among transportation agencies as well as the highest condition ratings for its bridges. The Board of Commissioners meets monthly, while committees meet several times a year. Public notices for meetings are sent to local press generally one week before an upcoming meeting, while meeting times are also announced on the Authority's website and social media pages. Meetings are open to public, live-streamed, and available for later viewing on the Authority's YouTube page. Videos and minutes of past meetings can be accessed through the NYSBA website. An area of improvement would be to post the board meeting agendas with greater lead time before a meeting.

The Authority has a stringent competitive procurement process and requires Board approval for all purchases of \$15,000 or greater.

The Authority has maintained its reputation as a transparent government entity to its bondholders, government officials and the traveling public through its operating policies, administrative procedures, and internal controls. Through both internal and external audit processes and its compliance reporting in connection with Public Authorities Law, Sunlight policies, State Finance Laws, Economic Development Laws, etc., the public has access to myriad data associated with the Authority's operations and staff performance. Much of the Authority's financial and operational data can be found on its website with additional information made accessible through the state's Public Authorities Reporting Information System (PARIS) reporting and the Project Sunlight database.

The Authority receives very few Freedom of Information Law requests in comparison to other state entities. It received six FOIL requests in 2018, nine in 2019, 24 in 2020, and eight YTD in 2021. As of October 19, 2021, the Authority does not have any open FOIL requests. Almost all FOIL requests are processed through e-mail and records are shared electronically. The Authority does not charge for providing data or records, unless providing physical copies of records presents an undue burden on the Authority.

The Authority utilizes the records retention and disposition schedule as outlined by the State Archives.

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The Authority, in collaboration with HBHV, has completed interpretive signage for all of our vehicular spans. The Authority commissioned New York State Parks to design the panels and for Fossil Industries to fabricate them. These signs, located at the bridge approaches and on the pedestrian paths, provide historical and engineering information about the bridges.

Another collaboration between the Authority and HBHV has involved outreach to area schools and educators. HBHV has organized classroom visits and New York State Master Teachers Program workshops at the Bear Mountain and Rip Van Winkle Bridges. This allows area teachers and students the opportunity to see these historic spans up close, utilize the local bridges in their STEM curriculum, and to take a tour and have direct access to NYSBA engineering staff.

The Authority maintains close ties with the Hudson Valley community that it serves. This includes participating and spreading the word about initiatives that impact the area bridges and the quality of life in the Hudson Valley as a whole. One such example is the Authority offering consultation to the Dutchess County Transportation Council's "Poughkeepsie 9/44/55" initiative, which is looking into alternative designs for the Route 9 interchange with the Mid-Hudson Bridge approach, as well as alternatives for the Poughkeepsie east/west arterials.

The Authority is also in close contact with the City of Newburgh's Transportation Advisory Committee and other constituents, who have been advocating for increased hours of operation on the pedestrian walkways on NYSBA spans. The NYSBA Board of Commissioners will be considering initiating a rule change process to address this issue.

Additional Measures that May Increase Transparency:

	Transparency Measure	Next Steps	Notes	Estimated Date for Implementation
1.	Increase VMS use to alert motorists of estimated time of bridge crossings due to traffic delays.	May need to procure additional VMS signs or coordinate with HVTMC to utilize their signs when available.		Implemented 10/1 at NBB, looking at using at other bridges.
2	Provide opt-in text service for drivers to get travel alerts in real time would be a good way to inform the public of traveling conditions while they are in route.	Need to further investigate how to implement and what it would cost.		2022
3.	Post Frequently Asked Questions on website.	Need to gather FAQs and develop answers.	There is already an FAQ page related to cashless tolling on the website.	Immediately
4.	Ensure the smooth processing of FOIL requests and the accessibility of information and documents.		The Authority receives few requests, but some past requests have taken longer than	Immediately

			others to process and review.	
5.	Streamline availability of documents and reports on the NYSBA website to ensure the public can easily access information.	Looking at the layout of the NYSBA website and seeing how best to present this information.		End of 2021
6.	Live stream chosen traffic camera views on our website to complement real time travel data stats we recently began posting on website.		The Authority needs to review security concerns of this and determine a procedure for if/when footage would need to be stopped due to a bad motor accident or other incidents.	2022
7.	Post Board Meeting Agenda and Materials one week before meeting.		Approval for board agenda items will be needed sooner.	Immediately
8.	Review and improve ADA compliance and accessibility.	Review the new website and look for ways to increase accessibility. Ensure that other forms of compliance with ADA are being met.		2022
9.	Look for ways to improve language access.			2022
10.	Highlight individual employees on the website and social media so the public can put faces to the Authority.			End of 2021
11.	Continue supporting community outreach efforts for various initiatives, such as the Poughkeepsie 9/44/55 initiative.			Immediately
12.	Continue improving notifications to the public of upcoming construction activities on our bridges.	Consider more press outreach and/or website messaging surrounding construction alerts.	The Authority presents most of this information on social media, where we can directly reach our constituents.	Immediately