

# The Governor Harry W. Nice Bridge

## A Toll Facility Of The Maryland Transportation Authority

**T**he Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge carries US 301 over the Potomac River between Maryland and Virginia. It is the second oldest of the Maryland Transportation Authority's seven facilities. The opening of the bridge on Dec. 15, 1940, gave MdTA customers a new route to the South. Before the bridge was built, travelers heading from eastern and southern Maryland to Richmond and Norfolk, and points further south, crawled through Washington, D.C., along US 1.

Originally called the Potomac River Bridge, the structure was renamed in April 1968 to honor the governor of Maryland during whose administration the bridge was planned and built.

There were no bridges across the Potomac River south of the nation's capital prior to Dec. 1940. The Maryland Primary Bridge Program, developed in 1937, called for crossings of the Potomac,

Susquehanna, and Patapsco Rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Governor Nice approved the program on April 15, 1937, and a year later the United States Congress ratified the plan under its regulatory powers over navigable waterways.

The site chosen for the Potomac River Bridge was a ferry terminal. In earlier years, crowded vessels transported vacationers across the Potomac River on their way to the

popular resort town of Colonial Beach, Virginia.

In September 1938, President Franklin D.



Roosevelt journeyed to Charles County to lead the ground breaking ceremony for the new 11,446-foot span. To serve the bridge, Maryland Route 3 (Crain Highway) was extended to the Potomac River from Mattawoman in northern Charles County. The extension of Route 3 is now known as US 301.

The extension of Crain Highway and the opening of the bridge over the Potomac proved a more popular southern route than planners had anticipated. Traffic engineers predicted the bridge would carry an average of 136,000 vehicles-per-year during the first five years. During fiscal year 1942, the traffic volume surpassed 171,600 vehicles. Just four years later, the count climbed to 453,900 annually.



Maryland  
Transportation  
Authority

## Background (continued)



**More than 6.8 million vehicles traveled the bridge (both directions) in FY 2007.**

## About the Authority

**Fort McHenry Tunnel (I-95)**

**Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge (US 301)**

**Francis Scott Key Bridge (I-695)**

**Baltimore Harbor Tunnel (I-895)**

**Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge (US 40)**

**John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway (I-95)**

**William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial (Bay) Bridge (US 50/301)**

Traffic peaked at 3.2 million in 1964. The following year, it dropped by a third following the opening of the Capital Beltway, which made it possible for southbound motorists to quickly travel around Washington, venture across the Potomac River, and continue south into Virginia.

In recent years, traffic volumes have rebounded, with 6.8 million vehicles crossing the bridge during fiscal year 2007, proving that many motorists still prefer the comparative tranquility of travel through Charles County on US 301 as an alternative to the congested Capital Beltway and Interstate 95 south of Washington.

Maryland's toll facilities were financed and constructed through revenue bonds. The outstanding principal and interest due each year is paid from toll revenues. Toll revenues are the primary source of funds. The Authority's toll receipts are pooled, and revenues from all seven facilities are combined to pay for operating, maintaining and making capital improvements to these facilities.

**T**he Maryland Transportation Authority is an independent State agency that finances, owns and operates the State's seven toll facilities. The Authority's eight Members, appointed by the Governor with consent of the State Senate, serve as the agency's policy-setting and governing body. Maryland's Secretary of Transportation serves as Authority Chairman.

Daily operations of the seven facilities are carried out by the Authority's 1,700 employees. Overall management of Authority operations is handled by the agency's Executive Secretary.

The Transportation Authority oversees the State's seven toll facilities and the Maryland Transportation Authority Police. The agency has statutory authority to act on behalf of the Maryland Department of Transportation to supervise, finance, construct, operate and maintain transportation facilities.

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## A Commitment to Safety

The Maryland Transportation Authority Police is a nationally accredited force with more than 500 sworn and civilian employees. Specialized K-9, motorcycle, all-terrain-vehicle, marine and anti-aggressive-driving units help provide maximum safety and security at Authority facilities, the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport and the Port of Baltimore. To maintain the highest level of professionalism and ethics, Transportation Authority Police officers remain true to their mission of safeguarding life and property, preserving peace, preventing and detecting crime, enforcing the law and protecting the rights of citizens.

The force has received local and national recognition for its roadway-safety efforts, which include child-passenger-safety awareness programs, anti-aggressive-driving initiatives and sobriety checkpoints. These efforts have been successful due to the continued teamwork among Authority Police and Operations personnel.

This same teamwork drives the Authority's Traffic Safety Committee, headed by the Chief of Police, Chief Engineer and Director of Operations. The committee provides leadership of Authority efforts to help ensure safe roadways for Maryland's citizens and visitors.

## E-ZPass® Maryland

The Maryland Transportation Authority is a member of the *E-ZPass*® InterAgency Group (IAG), which continues to develop a seamless electronic-toll-collection system throughout the northeastern United States. *E-ZPass* Maryland has grown to include more than 650,000 active transponders and has reduced significantly typical, peak-hour congestion at Maryland toll plazas. More than 16-million *E-ZPass* customers from IAG agencies throughout the Northeast can pay tolls electronically in Maryland. As more motorists use *E-ZPass*, convenience will increase; traffic congestion in and around toll-plaza areas will decrease; and engine-idling time will be reduced, resulting in reduced vehicle emissions. For additional information about the *E-ZPass* Maryland program and its standard, commuter and business plans, visit [www.ezpassmd.com](http://www.ezpassmd.com).

## Nice Bridge Improvement Project

The purpose of the Nice Bridge Improvement Project is to study the different options for improving the crossing and the flow of traffic across the bridge and on the roadways leading to and from the bridge. The study process involves developing and evaluating alternates and researching the possible impacts to environmental resources. The purpose of studying alternates and conducting this analysis is to identify potential enhancements to capacity and safety at the existing bridge. The project study area extends along US 301 from Charles County, Md., to King George County, Va. The project team will work with environmental resource agencies, local and State governments and the public throughout the study in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The project planning phase of the study was initiated in summer 2006.

# Your Toll Dollars At Work

## Fast Facts

### Construction Dates

March 1939 - December 1940

### Cost

\$5 million

### Location

US 301 over the Potomac River; 1.7 miles of two-lane bridge; vertical clearance is 135 feet.

### Toll Rates

Toll collected in southbound direction only

Commuter discount with valid Maryland-issued *E-ZPass*: up to 60-percent savings per trip

2 axles: \$3

3 axles: \$6

4 axles: \$9

5 axles: \$12

6 axles: \$15

### Annual Traffic

6.8 million vehicles  
(both directions)

# Contact Us

For more information about the Maryland Transportation Authority, please call the Division of Communications at 410-537-1017, or, toll-free, at 1-866-713-1596.

E-mail: [mdta@mdtransportationauthority.com](mailto:mdta@mdtransportationauthority.com), or visit us at [www.mdtransportationauthority.com](http://www.mdtransportationauthority.com)



The Authority reminds its customers to stay alert and exercise caution when traveling through workzones, toll plazas and around police vehicles.



Maryland  
Transportation  
Authority

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