



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

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Federal Highway Administrator Norbert T. Tiemann has ordered a partial rollback of tolls on the Walt Whitman and Benjamin Franklin Bridges linking Philadelphia and New Jersey.

Regular automobile and motorcycle tolls were ordered reduced from \$.60 to \$.50 per crossing, and bus tolls were ordered reduced from \$.75 to \$.50 per axle. The commuter toll of \$.35 was retained, because the commuter toll restrictions imposed by the Delaware River Port Authority permit only a single automobile to be used during a calendar month, thus discouraging the use of car pools. Truck tolls were retained at the increased level because of the failure of any party to demonstrate that these tolls are unjust or unreasonable.

The new toll schedule will become effective on January 1, 1974.

The Port Authority, which owns and operates the bridges, had raised all tolls on April 1, 1972. In response to numerous complaints, the Federal Highway Administration instituted a formal proceeding to determine whether the increased tolls were just and reasonable.

A hearing was held in Philadelphia during the Fall of 1972, following which the presiding Administrative Law Judge recommended that the tolls revert to the former level. This initial decision was appealed by the Port Authority, and, in June 1973, the FHWA Administrator tentatively concluded the increased toll levels were neither just nor reasonable. Oral argument on the tentative decision was held in late June, at which the tentative findings were challenged by the Port Authority.

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Administrator Tiemann's final opinion compares the financial estimates presented by the Port Authority as the basis for the increased tolls, with financial data submitted by the Port Authority to the Federal Highway Administration, showing the actual income and expenses experienced under the raised tolls. Based upon these comparisons, the Administrator concluded that the toll increase was in excess of that needed by the Port Authority to meet its legal obligations, and that the increase in excess of the needed amount was not just and reasonable.

A just and reasonable toll schedule was calculated, and the excess amount collected during 1972 and 1973 was ordered applied to the Port Authority's 1974-1975 revenue needs.

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