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MDX Tolls Frozen; No Increase 'til 2019

By Richard Yager

By a 12-1 vote, Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) has delayed future toll increases until mid-2019 on the five county expressways it governs.

The MDX vote (with several exceptions) was approved at the Mar. 24 MDX Board meeting after its submission by Chairperson Maritza Gutierrez. The only dissenting vote was cast by Jose Cancio, a trucking firm executive whose term began Mar. 16 after appointment by Gov. Rick Scott.

The current MDX action appears to commit completion of a current five-year works plan without any toll hikes other than those previously approved in 2013. Financing to complete projects would come from investment and toll revenues and proceeds from the 2014A Bond Series for construction.

MDX current inflation policy provides that toll hikes go into affect annually unless voted down by a two-thirds majority with adjustments mandatory every five years. The agency has never applied a

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would not apply if requirements under a Trust

Indenture or Debt Management Senior Coverage (1.50) are not met, or if system maintenance and safety projects remain “in a condition of repair.”

The resolution also directs that addition of center or other lane miles to the system, not currently funded for construction, must be funded by tolls collected on that segment or in combination with state, federal or local funds.

The sense of that exception would apply to current and planned expansions for new Express Lane additions in southwest Miami-Dade. Any new project would need to meet “strict financial tests” with written support from Miami-Dade County or the municipality where the project lies.

If such requirements are not met, no further efforts will be made to move any future project forward to construction, according to an MDX statement.

“These improvements are our promise to the community to provide much needed mobility and to contribute to the growth and economic well-being of Miami-Dade County,” commented Gutierrez.

“By taking off the table the possibility of future toll increases, the conversation is kept of what’s important — to do what MDX has always done, deliver what has been promised. The resolution “strengthens the goal of reducing and retirement of the Authority’s outstanding debt,” she stated.

Increased tolls have come under sharp criticisms by RollBackTolls, self-billed on its web site as “Watchdog” over MDX. Spokesperson Carlos Garcia, a Kendall advertising man who heads the organization, was unable to be reached for comment on the latest MDX action. Garcia has held two meetings with Mayor Carlos Gimenez in recent weeks to discuss a variety of issues with the CPI Inflation Policy being front and center of those concerns.

The makeup of the 13 members includes seven appointed by Miami-Dade Commissioners and five by Gov. Rick Scott. The 13th position is held by the state Department of Transportation Secretary.

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