



The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce

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December 16, 2010

Chesapeake City Council
306 Cedar Road
Chesapeake, VA 23322

Dear Council Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce, a regional business organization with over 1000 business members in Dare, Currituck and Hyde Counties. We appreciate the opportunity to address the proposed rate toll rate increases on the Chesapeake Expressway.

Economic times have been tight over the past few years. Visitor bureaus, chambers of commerce, government agencies, and private businesses have worked extremely hard to encourage travel. Businesses have added bonus perks for vacation stays, reduced rates, and placed added emphasis on hospitality and the satisfaction of our guests. We have spent additional dollars on software and websites to enhance the vacation shopping experience and to make it easier for clients to book their vacations. We have added calendar of event items of interest to encourage travel to and between the state residents. Both sides of the border have benefitted from this as is shown by tourism numbers that have remained consistent despite a soft economy.

We recognize that those not wanting to pay the Chesapeake Expressway toll could take the two lane road around that area. It is easy to bypass the toll and in reality only costs the driver a few added minutes. However, we remember what it was like in the days before the expressway was built. Traffic would back up for miles in that area and that was a perception issue for us. The traffic jams were the first and last images that both NC and Virginia visitors had when passing through our states. We understand the importance of the tolls to pay for the expressway but would ask that you also consider the amount of the fees as this could also become a perception issue for us both.

The current rate of \$2 is affordable but \$3 or \$5 each way for less than 7 miles of toll road seems exorbitant. Consider how this would impact a family traveling from the Outer Banks to Virginia for a doctor's visit with a specialist or to do some shopping, a business owner traveling for training or to purchase office supplies, or a property owner traveling to your area for supplies out of stock in our small community,

Many of our member businesses are concerned about the increased tolls and the image problem this creates with our visitors.

The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of regional partnerships in marketing and economic development and asks you to only impose rate increases that are necessary at this time. What seems like a small amount will impact us all and could cost our states and regional tourism organizations more in marketing and image rebuilding later than will be saved by a quick adjustment to the toll rate.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this issue and voice our concerns. If I or the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce can assist you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin Mann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robin Mann, Chair
Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce
Board of Directors