



*Commonwealth of Virginia*  
*Office of Governor Terry McAuliffe*

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# **Governor McAuliffe Announces Deal Ensuring No Tolls on the MLK Freeway Extension in Portsmouth**

*Plans under way to ease tolling impacts on the Midtown and Downtown tunnels*

**PORTSMOUTH** – Governor Terry McAuliffe today announced an agreement that ensures no tolls will be collected on the Martin Luther King (MLK) Freeway extension project, a key achievement in his work to reduce the financial impact of major construction improvements on motorists in Hampton Roads.

The agreement also includes provisions to ease the tolling burden related to projects on the Midtown and Downtown tunnels for residents who are most severely impacted due to financial, medical or other circumstances. The MLK extension, the new Midtown Tunnel under construction, and the rehabilitation of the Midtown and Downtown tunnels are collectively known as the Elizabeth River Tunnels project.

“After a great deal of work, we now have a plan in place to ease the financial pressure of tolling, particularly for Portsmouth residents,” **said Governor McAuliffe**. “The Elizabeth River Tunnels project must be built to reduce congestion, increase safety and improve the economy. This is the right project, but a bad deal reached under the prior administration. Since I took office, toll rates on the tunnels have been lowered during construction. We have worked with our private sector partner to ensure there will be no tolls on the MLK extension. Imposing a toll to finance the improvements would have placed an unfair burden on the citizens of Portsmouth. It is not good policy for Portsmouth to bear the cost of this project when it is also sharing the tolling burden with other motorists in the region who travel the Midtown and Downtown tunnels.”

The state will transfer \$78 million that was set aside for Route 460 improvements in southeast Virginia to buy out the tolls on the MLK extension project.

“Regarding the Midtown and Downtown tunnels, there will be some relief to ease the tolling burden on those residents who are the most financially impacted,” **added Transportation Secretary Aubrey Layne**. “Our contractor, Elizabeth River Crossings (ERC), has agreed to pay \$500,000 a year for 10 years to help offset the cost of tolls to those toll users who are the most financially stressed. I have directed Deputy Secretary of Transportation Grindly Johnson to lead this effort and work with the local community to ensure these monies are invested in the most beneficial way to ease the financial burden of tolls on those residents who need the help the most.”

The cost for toll violations will be capped. The highest amount that ERC can charge for violations regarding unpaid tolls, fees and court costs cannot exceed \$2,200. VDOT will be working in collaboration with ERC and the community to better inform and educate the region about the EZPass program, making tolling as easy and convenient as possible for motorists.

The Department of Rail and Public Transportation will work with Hampton Roads Transit to make certain the state's subsidy of \$2 million will be used specifically to move more people with fewer cars through the tunnels.

For more information on the project, go to [www.driveert.com](http://www.driveert.com).

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