

EZPass contract awarded for Newport-Pell Bridge

By Sam Bari

The Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority announced that Caseta Technologies, Inc. was awarded the contract for installation of the EZPass toll collection system on the Newport-Pell Bridge. RITBA Chairman David Darlington made the announcement May 1 at the annual RITBA meeting.

"We are excited to be working with Caseta Technologies, a leader in the electronic toll collecting industry," Darlington said. "With their experience and expertise, we feel the Authority's move to 21st century technology is in very capable hands."

Caseta's \$1.8 million bid was the lowest of the four submitted bids to install an electronic toll collection (ETC) system on the bridge connecting Jamestown to Newport. The bid includes the design, development, installation and maintenance

of the EZPass toll collection system. The project is expected to be completed by early 2009.

Last November, Congressman Patrick Kennedy secured \$500,000 in federal funds to help offset the cost of the implementing the new ETC system for the span, which opened in 1969.

"In light of the difficult budget issues, both locally and nationally, we are very grateful that Congressman Kennedy was able to secure these funds," Earl "Buddy" Croft, executive director of RI Turnpike and Bridge Authority, said in a statement. "This funding will help us to defray the costs of EZPass implementation."

Caseta Technologies Inc. is a privately held company that has been delivering complete ETC systems and Radio Frequency Identification Device (RFID) technology solutions for over 10 years. Caseta has

designed, developed and delivered ETC systems for many toll authorities, including Metropolitan Transit Authority bridges and tunnels in New York, the largest toll authority in the world. Caseta's ETC software and integrated hardware currently manages over 700,000 transactions daily with an install base of over 200 lanes.

The EZPass electronic toll collection system is used on bridges and toll roads from Virginia to Maine. EZPass tags are battery powered RFID transponders that communicate with reader equipment built into toll collection lanes. ETC systems have several benefits, including an increase in patron convenience, improvement of traffic flow, and a reduction of traffic congestion and the resulting emissions that can cause pollution.

In other RITBA business, the firm of Pannone, Lopes and De-

vereaux was re-appointed as legal counsel after responding to an RFP for legal services. The firm was awarded the position of general counsel while others will be used for specialty situations, Darlington said.

The panel also approved a request from Executive Director Croft for \$25,000 to \$30,000 to purchase equipment required by state troopers for overweight truck enforcement.

"If we buy the equipment, we can get a commitment from the troopers to show up and use it," Croft said. "Otherwise we have to wait in line for a unit to be available and for someone to move it from another location." Croft added, with the equipment on hand, all the troopers would have to do is run the trucks through and check their weight.

Town looking to fill boards

Two vacancies exist on the Jamestown Affordable Housing Committee, which acts in an advisory capacity to the Town Council on issues relating to housing. Members sit as a review committee for proposed Housing Trust Fund Projects and conduct studies and analyses of the current housing conditions in Jamestown, to be used as part of the Comprehensive Plan. The term is three years.

Two vacancies exist on the Personnel Board. This board makes recommendations to the Town Council regarding policies and procedures governing municipal employees and may be assigned other related duties by the Town Council. Meetings are held as needed based upon requests of the Town Council. In accordance with the Home Rule Charter of the Town of Jamestown, no member shall hold or be a candidate for any public office or position, and cannot have been a public official for at least two years prior to their appointment, or be a member of any national, state or local committee or political party. The term is two years.

Two vacancies exist on the Town Buildings & Facilities Committee, which is charged with evaluating the condition and usefulness of existing municipal facilities and developing

a plan outlining the nature of renovations and changes determined as necessary. The term is three years.

Any resident who is a qualified voter in the Town of Jamestown and is interested in serving should contact the Town Clerk by submitting a letter of interest and background. Applications can be found on the Internet at www.jamestownri.net or at the Jamestown Library, 26 North Main Rd., and the Town Clerk's Office, located at 93 Narragansett Ave. Persons who have submitted letters in the past are encouraged to do so again. Please respond no later than May 28.

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When you drive west over the Jamestown Verrazano Bridge, look to your left toward the Plum Beach shoreline. You will see an unused and wasted capital asset of the State of Rhode Island. The trestle portion of the old bridge could be in use right now, and would be a most enjoyable recreation facility, with plenty of room for peaceful communing with nature and fishing.

You probably have visited other communities where such public piers exist, and are beloved places, visited often, and shared by young and old.

The concept that the trestle has to be demolished and replaced by a new pier appears to be part of a plan that ultimately will result in there being no pier at all. Cynical and Machiavellian? Absolutely.

With foot traffic only, the existing trestle could last for many, many years, with very little capital expense. Volunteer organizations could help with much of the supervision and tidying up. It works that way elsewhere. Why not here?

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