



---

# Year in Review

2021



The Toll Roads®

---

# Table of Contents

3	Chairs' Letter
4	Leadership
5	CEO Letter
6	COVID Relief Efforts
7	Oso Parkway Bridge Project
8	Environmental Commitment
9	Conservation Grazing at Live Oak Plaza
10	Customer Service
11	Strong Financial Position
12	Financial Milestones
13	Mobility Matters
14	A Path to Progress
15	Award-Winning Staff





# The Road We Traveled

The Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) play a critical role in Orange County's remarkable past and vibrant future. Enhancing mobility and improving quality of life in the region are pillars upon which the Agencies were built more than three decades ago.

Today, while we've faced one of the most challenging years our generation has ever experienced, TCA has held true to its mission.

We supported our community by reminding drivers that "We're here for you now, we'll be here for you when it's time to get back on the road."

We improved our already strong financial position through one of the most successful bond refundings in history, reducing debt payments by more than \$210 million without extending bond maturity dates.

We marked a major milestone with the opening of the Oso Parkway Bridge, a multiagency collaboration funded by TCA without the use of taxpayer dollars.

We grew our commitment to the environment with the introduction of an innovative Conservation Grazing pilot program at Live Oak Plaza.

We celebrated the successes of projects and staff that were recognized by local and national organizations, illustrating the Agencies' commitment to attracting and retaining top talent.

And, most importantly, we gave back to our community by working with food pantries, blood banks and local hospitals to help residents when they needed it most.

In the pages that follow, we'll look back at all that we've accomplished and look ahead to the exciting work to come. Thank you to our customers and our partners for joining us on this journey.

Sincerely,

**Peggy Huang, Chair**  
Foothill/Eastern  
Transportation Corridor Agency  
Mayor, Yorba Linda

**Trish Kelley, Chair**  
San Joaquin Hills  
Transportation Corridor Agency  
Mayor, Mission Viejo

# TCA Leadership

## Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency Board of Directors



Chair  
**Peggy Huang**  
Yorba Linda



Vice Chair  
**Joseph Muller**  
Dana Point



**Trevor O'Neil**  
Anaheim



**Farrah Khan**  
Irvine



**Scott Voigts**  
Lake Forest



**Patricia Kelley**  
Mission Viejo



**Mark Murphy**  
Orange



**Anthony Beall**  
Rancho Santa Margarita



**Kathy Ward**  
San Clemente



**John Taylor**  
San Juan Capistrano



**David Penaloza**  
Santa Ana



**Austin Lumbard**  
Tustin



**Donald P. Wagner**  
County of Orange  
3rd District



**Doug Chaffee**  
County of Orange  
4th District



**Lisa Bartlett**  
County of Orange  
5th District



**Ryan Chamberlain**  
Ex-Officio Member  
Caltrans District 12

## San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor Agency Board of Directors



Chair  
**Patricia Kelley**  
Mission Viejo



Vice Chair  
**Will O'Neill**  
Newport Beach



**Richard Hurt**  
Aliso Viejo



**Arlis Reynolds**  
Costa Mesa



**Richard Viczorek**  
Dana Point



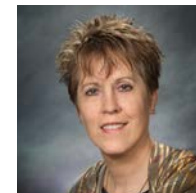
**Farrah Khan**  
Irvine



**Janine Heft**  
Laguna Hills



**Fred Minagar**  
Laguna Niguel



**Cynthia Conners**  
Laguna Woods



**Gene James**  
San Clemente



**John Taylor**  
San Juan Capistrano



**David Penaloza**  
Santa Ana



**Donald P. Wagner**  
County of Orange  
3rd District



**Lisa Bartlett**  
County of Orange  
5th District



**Ryan Chamberlain**  
Ex-Officio Member  
Caltrans District 12

# Full Speed Ahead

For generations to come, the past year will likely be considered one of the most unique in history. The challenges we overcame were varied and extensive, pushing us to re-envision how and where we work; shine a brighter light on every role within organizations and our lives; and re-emphasize the importance of people — their health, their contributions and their dignity. After a year that none of us could've anticipated, I'm excited to lead the Transportation Corridor Agencies as we look to the future.

In the transportation industry, we fill our days strategizing the best way to get people and goods from where they are to where they want or need to be.

So, where are we going? TCA's history of self-reliance based on the forethought of Orange County leaders laid out an innovative plan for achieving mobility that has provided an amazing place to live, work and play. As we see productivity increase as our country emerges from the pandemic and look toward the future, we need to build upon past successes and find the best ways to fuel our economic engine and bolster the quality of life we enjoy.

TCA is well positioned to support Orange County's continued bright future. Through focused, innovative and customer-centric operations, we've continued our growth, reaching 1.9 million FasTrak® accounts and achieving a customer satisfaction score of 4.5 out of 5. We've continued to contain costs by consistently looking at best practices, new concepts and focusing on seconds and cents.

Our approach to fiscal responsibility has served us well in achieving continued bond rating upgrades from Wall Street, reducing our debt and providing the liquidity needed to weather storms — like a global pandemic. This approach also allowed us to plan for necessary system widenings and interchange improvements without incurring additional debt or requesting support from local, state or federal tax-based sources.

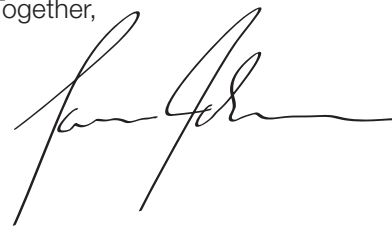
This is reflected in our Capital Improvement Plan (page 13), which highlights what we've already done and provides a roadmap for completing projects for residents

and commuters. This past year, the Oso Parkway Bridge and Signage Enhancements Projects reached substantial completion while we continued to advance the 241/91 Express Connector. In the future, with improvements at the State Route 73 Catalina View Mainline Toll Point and the State Route 241's Loma Ridge Segment, we will continue to provide exceptional value and convenience for drivers.

TCA's financial stability also supports our award-winning environmental programs. Since 1990, we've conserved and restored over 2,100 acres of coastal sage scrub, wetlands, riparian and saltwater marsh at 17 different Orange County locations, many of which are home to the federally protected songbird, the California gnatcatcher.

In the year ahead, I look forward to TCA's continued contribution to Orange County's success story. Our recognition of social responsibility and a culture of diversity and inclusion will permeate all that we do as we rely on a staff that demonstrates talent comes in all shapes, sizes, colors, ethnicities and identities. We'll continue to work with our member agencies and partner with organizations like Caltrans, the County of Orange and the Orange County Transportation Authority. And, we'll work with our member cities to ensure their residents have a powerful voice in shaping mobility and quality of life.

Together,



**Samuel Johnson**

Chief Executive Officer

# We're Here for You Now. We'll Be Here For You When It's Time to Get Back on the Road.

When the pandemic hit, TCA focused on the health, safety and well-being of staff and the community. Of course, The Toll Roads remained open and were a resource for essential and frontline workers to get to and from their jobs. But, we knew we had to do more. That's why we instituted business practices aimed at providing relief to drivers. From extending the time to pay a toll without an account to a moratorium on FasTrak® account suspension fees, we worked to take some of the stress off drivers. Additionally, TCA donated toll credits to the healthcare community and created educational resources to keep kids of all ages busy while safer at home.



## COVID Relief Efforts

- Temporary moratorium on violation escalations.
- Account suspension fee waived.
- Timeframe to pay a toll extended from five to 10 days.
- With customers taking fewer trips on our roads, we recalculated prepaid FasTrak payments to lower quarterly charges.
- Minimum monthly payment for violation payment plans lowered; penalties can be paid off over 12 months instead of six.
- **Educational Resources webpage** at TheTollRoads.com provides tools for educators and parents.
- Educational Resources activities include word searches, coloring pages and the popular interactive **Fossils in Your Backyard book**.
- Donated 300 \$20 toll credit gift certificates to healthcare workers at a local hospital.
- Board members and staff participated in community service: **TCA Gives Back video**.
- Expanded PayNearMe facilities at 7-Eleven and CVS locations. Customers can pay a toll, resolve a violation or replenish a FasTrak account with cash at participating locations.

*Pictured above: TCA Board Members giving back to the community during the pandemic.*

# Oso Parkway Bridge Opens

## Improving Safety and Connectivity

Two years of collaboration came to fruition with the January 2021 grand opening of the Oso Parkway Bridge. Partnership is a pillar of the Transportation Corridor Agencies' work, and this project brought together the Agencies, OC Public Works and Caltrans.

The Oso Parkway Bridge improves safety, mobility and connectivity in the region. It offers six lanes of travel (three in each direction) and provides a direct connection between the 241 Toll Road and Los Patrones Parkway. Previously, drivers were required to use an off-ramp, wait at a busy signalized intersection, then use an on-ramp to access the 241 Toll Road or Los Patrones Parkway.

The project also includes dedicated bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides, enhancing safety for students and families accessing Tesoro High School.

The new bridge diverts traffic from congested surface streets and provides improved access to businesses and restaurants in areas such as Ladera Ranch, Mission Viejo, Rancho Mission Viejo and Rancho Santa Margarita.

The \$40 million project was funded by TCA without the use of taxpayer funds and was recognized by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Orange County Branch as **Outstanding Bridge Project of the Year**.



The Oso Parkway Bridge is about **leveraging partnerships** to create a safer environment for children who walk to school from surrounding communities, saving drivers time by increasing mobility, and connecting our cities.



– Lisa Bartlett, TCA Director and Orange County's Fifth District Supervisor





---

# A World in Balance

The Transportation Corridor Agencies' commitment to the environment is woven into its fabric. For decades, the Agencies have worked to mitigate project impacts by preserving and maintaining vast areas of open space. TCA has preserved 17 different Orange County open spaces (more than 2,100 acres) in perpetuity — many of which are home to the federally protected songbird, the California gnatcatcher. Protecting these open space areas and the wildlife within is one of our highest priorities.

Below are few of our key projects. Learn more about our other environmental initiatives at [TheTollRoads.com/about/environment/initiatives](https://www.thetollroads.com/about/environment/initiatives).

## **Wildlife Protection Fence**

The Wildlife Protection Fence along State Route 241 was constructed to protect mountain lions, muledeer, coyotes and bobcats living in the Santa Ana Mountains from cars. In addition to shielding them from the road, the new fence, which spans both sides of a six-mile stretch of SR 241, also funnels them to existing wildlife bridges and culvert undercrossings constructed by TCA to allow them safe passage to open spaces on either side of the road. In 2021, the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife confirmed that the fence has greatly improved wildlife connectivity, with a success rate of nearly 100 percent in protecting the species named above.

## **Strawberry Farms Mitigation Site**

TCA has restored 15 acres of coastal sage and cactus scrub habitat and native perennial grassland at Strawberry Farms, located in Irvine and overlooking the Strawberry Farms Golf Course. Part of the larger Central/Coastal Natural Community Conservation Plan area, the open space is home to several species such as the California gnatcatcher and the coastal cactus wren.

## **Upper Chiquita Canyon Conservation Area**

TCA oversees the ongoing management of this 1,158 acres of open space. Among TCA's responsibilities are preserving and managing this preserved habitat. Now permanently protected as open space, the habitat supports important populations of the California gnatcatcher and coastal cactus wren.

## **Coyote Canyon Landfill**

This mid-century landfill closed in 1990, and just four years later, TCA began replanting the land with buckwheat, sage and other native plants. In the years since, nest monitoring and other studies documented the increase of the federally listed California gnatcatcher population in the area.



# Conservation Grazing at Live Oak Plaza

In 2020, TCA adopted conservation grazing as the preferred science-based approach to manage the 23.2-acre Live Oak Plaza Conservation Area. Conservation grazing, or targeted grazing, is the use of grazing livestock to improve and maintain the quality of biodiversity of natural areas that have been previously disturbed.

The cattle grazing program at Live Oak is the first of its kind in Orange County. At the site, nonnative mustard plants had overtaken the land, pushing out coastal sage scrub and other native vegetation. These nonnative species carry a heavy fuel load which, when combined with high wind conditions, creates a fire risk.

In addition to mitigating fire risk, grazing provides a natural alternative to the use of harsh chemicals and is also a more financially prudent approach.

In September, the TCA Board entered into an agreement for the three-year pilot program with a local rancher to perform the grazing three times per year: in late winter, spring and summer. The planning came to fruition when the first graze took place in early 2021.

Located in Trabuco Canyon, east of the 241 Toll Road, Live Oak Plaza contains valuable oak woodlands, riparian and coastal sage scrub habitat for the threatened coastal California gnatcatcher and the endangered Riverside fairy shrimp. Prior to being conserved as permanent open space by TCA in 2005, the site had been zoned for commercial, residential and gas station development. In addition to containing native habitat, the site also provides an important function as a wildlife movement corridor to and from the Cleveland National Forest.



“Ranching is part of Orange County’s heritage and this **common-sense approach to land management** allows us to use natural resources for the benefit of the community at large and preserve open space for future generations.”

– Janine Heft, TCA Director and Laguna Hills Councilmember



Watch our [Conservation Grazing video](#) and view more photos on [Flickr](#).



# The Toll Roads Put Customers First

The Toll Roads are committed to putting customers' needs first, now more than ever. Drivers have responded to this superior service by giving high marks to The Toll Roads in customer satisfaction surveys for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20).

Customer Service Representatives fielded more than 1 million calls during the year with a stellar average wait time of just one minute, eight seconds. This is an improvement over the previous year's strong performance.

Customers who spoke with a Toll Roads representative gave an overall satisfaction score of 4.5 out of 5, with even higher marks in key categories. Customers said that the Customer Service Representative they spoke with listened and demonstrated an understanding of their question/request (score of 4.73) and that they were very satisfied (4.71 out of 5) with the representative's ability to answer questions about products and services.

**In addition to these outstanding customer service results, The Toll Roads also welcomed 206,000 new accounts in FY20, bringing total accounts to nearly 2 million.**

The Toll Roads offer an array of options for customers. Drivers can find answers to frequently asked questions, pay tolls, resolve violations, open a new account and manage their account online at [TheTollRoads.com](https://www.thetollroads.com) or by downloading The Toll Roads App from the Apple Store or Google Play.

Read more about how we put customers first on [The Toll Roads blog](#).



**83,811,141**  
transactions

Customer Service  
Representatives  
fielded more than

**1 million  
calls**



Average wait time of  
**68 seconds**

Overall satisfaction  
score of

**4.5 out  
of 5**



# TCA's Strong Financial Position a Model for the Industry

Thirty years ago, through visionary leadership, Orange County made the decision to control its future through self-reliance. When TCA was formed in the 1980s, an exploding population in the region, worsening traffic congestion and shrinking transportation funds were the reality. With fewer tax dollars available to fund transportation projects, a new approach was taken enabling TCA to plan, finance, construct and operate the 73, 133, 241 and 261 Toll Roads. Instead of government dollars, the roads were financed through non-recourse toll revenue bonds backed only by tolls and Development Impact Fees (DIFs).

The innovative financial approach has delivered infrastructure that today would cost more than \$12 billion.

Throughout its history, TCA's strong fiscal management and long-range financial plan have been lauded by credit rating agencies including Standard & Poor's, Fitch and Moody's, which have rated all of TCA's bonds as investment grade. The Agencies' reputation for financial responsibility was upheld in 2020, despite challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like other toll agencies across the country, TCA experienced a decline in ridership prompted by the pandemic. However, unlike some others, TCA was well positioned to weather the challenges. Due to the solid financial practices during the years leading up to the pandemic, TCA's strong liquidity position was available to support core budget expenditures and retain all staff while also allowing continued focus on key Board priorities. TCA's conservative approach over three decades bolstered its reserves so it was prepared to weather the storm. Ridership on The Toll Roads has consistently grown and significantly outpaced revised projections. As of May 2, 2021, The Toll Roads are back to about 82 percent of pre-COVID ridership for the 133, 241 and 261 Toll Roads and 75 percent for the 73 Toll Road.



“ The Agencies' prudent fiscal approach has **set the standard for financial planning** in the tolling industry. Time and again, our financial strength has been affirmed by credit rating agencies and independent auditors. ”

– Tony Beall, TCA Director and  
Rancho Santa Margarita Mayor



# 2020 Financial Milestones

## Amended Debt Management Policies

In July, the F/ETCA and SJHTCA Boards approved Debt Management Policies in accordance with California Government Code Section 8855.

The Boards expressed the desire to provide additional detail in order to guide future Boards, offer enhanced transparency to the public and illustrate the Agencies' sound fiscal position. A debt management policy ensures that debt is issued and managed prudently, including consideration of accelerated repayment schedules.

TCA staff utilized best practice guidelines issued by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and checklists and guidelines issued by the California Debt and Investment Advisory Commission (CDIAC) to update the policies.

## Audited Financials

In November, an independent audit was conducted by Certified Public Accountants and in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States. The audit approval marked the 34th consecutive year that an independent auditor issued an unmodified opinion on the Agencies' financial statements, indicating that they fairly present in all material respects the financial position of TCA.

[View TCA's audited financial statements.](#)

## F/ETCA Bond Refunding

In late 2020, the F/ETCA Board approved a bond refunding offering on certain outstanding 2013A and all 2013C bonds in a move to further strengthen the Agency's cash position and create additional flexibility to pay down other bonds early or invest in key capital projects.

The refunding decreased annual debt payments every year without extending any bond maturity dates, resulting in a reduction in debt service payments in excess of \$210 million net of all transaction costs. The transaction was innovative and contained several components including an exchange of bonds with existing investors, the largest component of the transaction, and publicly sold tax-exempt and taxable bonds. Demand for the bonds well exceeded the size of the offerings. The refunding was finalized in January 2021.

F/ETCA has previously seized upon favorable market conditions to improve upon the financial position of the Agency. Combined with similar actions in 2017 and 2019, the Agency has saved over \$610 million in debt payments without extending any bond maturity dates in the last three years.



# Mobility Matters

## Capital Improvement Plan

TCA is committed to implementing improvements to our roads that enhance mobility and improve traffic conditions. Our priorities are reflected in our Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which is updated annually. The Fiscal Year 2022 CIP represents an approximately \$297.6 million investment for F/ETCA and \$42.2 million investment for SJHTCA in current and substantially completed capital projects through 2025. Projects include signage enhancement on our roadways and channelizers at Windy Ridge. Proposed future projects such as Loma Segment improvements are also detailed in the full [Capital Improvement Plan](#).

## 241/91 Express Connector

The 241/91 Express Connector will be a direct flyover ramp from the northbound 241 Toll Road to the eastbound 91 Express Lanes and from the westbound 91 Express Lanes to the southbound 241 Toll Road. The connector will provide improved connectivity between the 91 Express Lanes and the 241 Toll Road and will enhance traffic operations for the State Route 91 general purpose lanes and the northbound 241 Toll Road.

The Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency (F/ETCA) Board of Directors has advanced the contracted engineering work to complete the 241/91 Express Connector Project's final design phase. The phase is anticipated to last through 2022, with construction expected to commence in 2023 and completion estimated for 2025.

## Catalina View Traffic Improvements

The Catalina View Traffic Improvement Project consists of adding one additional lane through the Catalina View Mainline Toll Point (resulting in four mainline lanes and one truck climbing lane) and making operational improvements on the 73 Toll Road leading up to the mainline toll point in each direction to relieve traffic congestion experienced during the morning and afternoon peak periods. The project is set to begin this year.

## Better Together

At the Transportation Corridor Agencies, we believe that the path to progress is paved with partnerships. That's why we've spent decades cultivating and nurturing partnerships that forward the shared goals of our community. These alliances have led to marked mobility enhancements over the years and have helped to solidify the quality of life Orange County residents enjoy.





# A Path to Progress

In a year of challenges, TCA was able to implement changes that had a positive impact on our customers and our communities.

## PayNearMe

In July, The Toll Roads again enhanced customer service offerings, partnering with PayNearMe to add locations where drivers can pay tolls, replenish FasTrak accounts and resolve violations at 7-Eleven and CVS Pharmacy locations nationwide. The Toll Roads and PayNearMe first partnered in November 2017, allowing drivers to resolve violations at participating 7-Eleven locations. Over approximately one year, drivers quickly and easily paid tolls at 7-Eleven locations across the country. Success and demand led to the expansion of offerings and locations, allowing approximately 40,000 tolls to be paid at these locations.

## New Leadership

This year, Peggy Huang, Yorba Linda Mayor, was selected Chair of the F/ETCA, while Mission Viejo Mayor Trish Kelley was re-elected to her role as SJHTCA Chair. This is only the second time in TCA's 35-year history that both Boards are helmed simultaneously by women, making Huang and Kelley the highest-ranking female elected officials in Orange County transportation.

In April, Samuel Johnson was appointed TCA's CEO. He is the first person of color to hold the top position at the Agencies and is the highest-ranking Black leader in Orange County transportation. Johnson joined the agencies in 2015 as Chief Toll Operations Officer. As one of Johnson's first actions, he selected Valarie McFall to serve as the Agencies' first Deputy CEO, elevating her expertise and over 20 years of service to the new role.

## Racial and Social Justice

TCA recognizes its social responsibility, the importance and benefits of supporting diversity in the workplace, in contracting and in our community. TCA takes a thoughtful approach to hiring and contracting and is an active supporter of both the Black and Hispanic Chambers of Commerce and WTS International for their work in advancing women in transportation.

Through partnerships with industry organizations, TCA has supported the racial justice movement and acted to perpetuate real change in our country. TCA CEO Samuel Johnson, as president of the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association, instituted the Task Force on Diversity, Social and Racial Inclusion. He established a formal partnership with the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials to further the efforts of the task force, which works to implement practices and programs that contribute to social justice and expand recognition for the BIPOC community. Johnson also championed the expansion of the association's scholarship program to specifically assist students in pursuing studies at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Further, Johnson supported the development of the national Women In Tolling Council, which was formed to connect women in the tolling industry. The organization is focused on supporting diversity in leadership and promoting professional development.

Johnson notes, "I want TCA to be its best and for our people to be at their best. Diversity of thought and making all employees know their perspectives add value are key to these outcomes." TCA takes an engaged approach to achieving the Agency's culture, providing training and including discussion in monthly all-staff meetings in which staff are educated on diversity topics and invited to share their experiences.

# Award-Winning Staff

Resilience and innovation were benchmarks of 2020. Every TCA staff member worked tirelessly to continue to provide high levels of service and ensure TCA delivered on its commitments to enhance mobility and meet bond obligations. While this was a group effort, we are proud that a few individuals were recognized by the community and the industry.

## Samuel Johnson, CEO

Samuel received the **Contagious Leadership Award** from the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association's (IBTTA) Leadership Academy Alumni Association. IBTTA is the worldwide association for the owners and operators of toll facilities and the businesses that serve them. IBTTA's Leadership Academy is an executive development program tailored specifically for leaders in public and private sector tolling organizations and assists in executive development. Founded in 1932, IBTTA has members in 23 countries on six continents. In 2020, Johnson served as president of the organization.



The accolades for Johnson's work in 2020 were recognized in 2021. He was also recognized by the Women in Tolling Council with the presentation of its **Humanitarian Ambassador Award** for his efforts to "build awareness that is tangible, actionable and meaningful," according to the council.

Additionally, the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials Southern California chapter recognized Johnson as a **Transportation Trailblazer**. The local arm of the national advocacy organization noted that Johnson's accomplishments have "shaped accessibility and mobility in Southern California" and that he is "a leader that we all aspire to be."

## Valarie McFall, Deputy CEO

Valarie was named **Woman of the Year** by the Orange County Chapter of Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS). The annual award honors a woman who is a leader in transportation and has made an outstanding contribution to the transportation industry. McFall joined TCA in 2000 and has spent 20 years spearheading management and restoration efforts of over 2,100 acres of land for mitigation of transportation projects. She has held several key positions within the Agencies that allowed her to perform this important work, progressing over the years from Senior Environmental Planner to Principal Planner to Chief of Environmental Planning. This year, she became TCA's first-ever Deputy CEO.



## Jason Ferrer, Controller

Jason was among the esteemed **"40 Under 40"** class presented by the Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce. The award recognizes the next generation of business leaders and advocates who are making strides in their industries and the business community in Orange County. Ferrer instituted a teleworking process for accounting staff so that TCA could continue to operate and meet its financial obligations amid the pandemic and, under the leadership of Ferrer and TCA Chief Financial Officer Amy Potter, independent auditors returned an unmodified opinion of the Agencies' financial statements for the 34th consecutive year, indicating that they fairly present in all material respects the financial position of TCA.





**The Toll Roads®**

Follow us @TheTollRoads



[TheTollRoads.com](http://TheTollRoads.com)