



State of Connecticut
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RANKING MEMBER
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TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Testimony

S.B. 31 AA Requiring The Operation of Gateway Tolls
H.B. 5949 AA Instituting Toll Charges For Trucks Using Connecticut Interstate Highways
H.B. 6136 AA Establishing Tolls At Connecticut's Borders
H.B. 6200 AAC The Imposition Of Tolls On New Highways Or Highway Extensions

Transportation Committee

Friday, February 18, 2011

Dear Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, Senator Boucher, Representative Scribner and fellow members of the Transportation Committee:

I am writing to you today to address the overall subject matter of tolls.

There are four bills on today's agenda concerning the establishment of tolls on interstate highways in Connecticut. Again, I am not speaking on a specific bill but on tolls in general.

I believe tolls are inevitable—somewhat a necessary evil--so let's make tolls sensible, safe, and financially productive. We are the only state from Maine to Florida that has not installed an E-Z pass system to collect fees on its interstate highways and that time has come. Toll is user fees and should be assessed to the drivers of vehicles who use our highways—both inter and intra-state.

Tolls are commonly assessed by distance traveled. One price tolls are generally collected at bridges. The New Jersey Turnpike (I-95) is only slightly longer than Connecticut's I-95 (126 miles vs. some 110 miles). Yet there are only 18 exits on the NJ Turnpike while in Connecticut there are over 90. It would not be feasible to construct entrance and exit booths at every Connecticut exit so we will have to construct one-price tolls at designated places

The devil is always in the details: The details I propose are as follows—all of which I believe are critical to the safe, sensible and productive use of tolls in our state.

1). Tolls should be collected via the latest version of E-Z Pass. (See attached). Vehicles can then pass through the tolls at highway speed. Gone are the old "throw a quarter in the basket" of forty years ago. Cameras at toll booths photograph license plates of vehicles not equipped with E-Z pass in order to bill the registered owner of these vehicles. The NY Port Authority, which operates New York's E-Z Pass system, is about to end all coin collections at its Harlem River Bridge Toll. A vehicle will have to be equipped with E-Z Pass or receive a bill in the mail. E-Z pass is an efficient—both environmentally and cost-wise—means of collecting tolls.

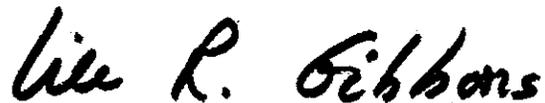
2). No border tolls. Tolls should be located throughout the state according to traffic numbers to capture both resident and interstate drivers. However, for those drivers who are going on short trips from home, technology is available that allows operators of vehicles to drive within a ten mile radius (or whatever distance is designated) of their residence without paying the toll.

3) All monies collected by the tolls must—by legislation—go into the State's Special Transportation Fund and cannot be swept into the General Fund.

4) Another purpose of electronic tolls is their use as a congestion mitigation measure. There should be language in the bill that establishes a pilot program to measure higher toll pricing at peak rush hours to determine if this evens out the daily flow of traffic.

Thank you for your time and attention to the issue of tolls on Connecticut's interstate highways.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lile R. Gibbons". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Lile R. Gibbons
State Representative
150th House District

Enclosure: 1 Photograph of the toll in New Hampshire at the southern end of I-95S going into Massachusetts.

