



STATEMENT REGARDING

Senate Bill 31: AA Requiring the Operation of Gateway Tolls

House Bill 6136: AA Establishing Tolls at Connecticut's Borders

House Bill 6200: AAC the Imposition of Tolls on New Highways or Highway Extensions

Senate Bill 696: AAC Transportation Funds and Gas Tax Revenues

Senate Bill 699: AAC the Use of Funds from the Special Transportation Fund

Senate Bill 773: AAC the Voting Requirement for Nontransportation Appropriations from the STF

Transportation Committee

February 18th, 2011

The MetroHartford Alliance is the Region's economic development leader and Hartford's Chamber of Commerce. Our investors include businesses of all sizes, health care providers, institutions of higher education, and municipalities.

Maintaining and expanding all four components of our transportation system (air, rail, road, and water) is fundamental to our ability to compete for jobs, capital investment, and the best and the brightest, and yet we must recognize our woeful lack of the financial capacity to deliver that critical economic building block. While we have over \$3 billion in infrastructure needs, the Office of Fiscal Analysis projects that our Special Transportation Fund ("STF"), our sole source of funding such maintenance and expansion, will plummet to a \$71.4 million operating deficit in FY 12.

As a result, we are here today to applaud the Governor's budget proposal to increase fuel taxes and, more specifically, to urge the augmentation of his proposals with the 2003 recommendations of the Transportation Strategy Board to restore 100% of the 1998 reduction of 15 cents in the gasoline tax, to legislate the establishment of an electronic toll system, and to take the steps necessary to segregate all STF funds and eliminate the temptation to transfer such monies to the General Fund. The latter step is imperative to provide the Connecticut taxpayers with the assurance and confidence that we will deliver on the maintenance and expansion obligations..

Our support of these proposals recognizes the reality that Federal funding will not be the primary source of our future and that we must take more control and assume responsibility for managing a key component of our future prosperity. Our specific support for a comprehensive electronic toll system (rather than one limited to our borders) recognizes that fuel taxes, even with the proposed increases, will continue to decline due to changes in commuting patterns that include greater telecommuting and increased vehicle fuel efficiency and the rapid emergence of hybrid alternatives. We also underscore that, in an era of “shared sacrifice,” the payment of tolls is borne by all users of our highway system and not just Connecticut residents.

We emphatically reiterate that our support for increased fuel taxes and the establishment of an electronic toll system (or for other sources that can generate comparable revenue) is contingent upon a clearly defined constitutional safeguard that ensures taxpayers that all such STF funds are used solely to maintain and enhance a transportation system that supports a robust economy manifested by steady job growth and ever increasing prosperity for all residents. The Alliance stands ready to work with the Malloy administration, this Committee, and the entire Legislature to secure the predictable and sufficient funding for such a system.