

February 24, 2015

Transportation Committee

Please enter into your records my testimony on the act concerning Electronic Tolls.

My name is John Timm I live at 78 Orchard St. Cos Cob, CT 06807. Cos Cob is at exit 4 of I-95 in the town of Greenwich.

As you can guess because of where I live I am opposed to the creation of tolls on Connecticut highways as stated in HB 6818, an Act Concerning The Establishment of Electronic Tolls At The State's Borders.

I have lived in Greenwich since 1954 and can remember the building of I-95 and the history of the tolls that existed before that caused traffic congestion, pollution and accidents.

Even though the bill talks about creation of "Electronic tolls", cash toll booths will still be needed for cash collection of tolls from those who do not have equipment such as EZ-Pass as would be required for electronic tolls.

It cannot be mandated that individuals traveling through Connecticut be required to have an electronic means for paying for tolls. Toll booths will have to be provided for those who do not have an electronic device for paying for tolls. The creation of toll booths will have an impact on congestion, accidents and pollution. The need for toll booths will require the hiring of state employees to man the booths. This will create a financial requirements to pay for these state employees and all the cost that can be attributed to a state employee such as salaries, health care and retirement benefits.

There is also the matter of the cost of maintaining the "Electronic Toll" system and cash toll booths. Just imagine the requirements on DOT in keeping the toll booths open during the recent snow storms. Keeping the toll booths open will require more than just running a plow truck through the toll plazas. This will possibly require the addition of more DOT personnel to keep the toll booths free from accumulating snow. The snow has to be removed by hand around the toll booths and removed from the toll plazas not just plowed aside.

To add the cash toll booths will require the purchase of property to accommodate the need for multiple lanes needed to collect the tolls. Additional traffic lanes will be needed for vehicles paying tolls by cash to decelerate and accelerate to merge into the travel lanes. This is also a potential for accidents. If you look at the toll plaza for the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge on Google Earth both in aerial view and street view you will see that the E-Z pass lanes have very little traffic while the cash lanes are backed up. E-Z Pass has been used on the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge for many years and still there is a back up of traffic at the cash lanes. We would experience the same conditions even with "Electronic Tolls".

Some have said that having tolls is a way for those who travel through Connecticut to help pay for the highways they are using and that other states have toll roads. I can travel from my home in Cos Cob to relatives near Boston, MA without having to pay a toll when I travel through Rhode Island and Massachusetts. I have a family member who lives in upstate NY and goes to Tennessee to visit family and only pays a toll on the return trip when crossing on I-84 East bound at the Beacon -Newburgh Bridge.

Having tolls at the borders of our interstates is really a regional tax on those who use the interstates for commuting to work and other activities.

Installing tolls at the borders will cause motorists to use local roads to avoid paying the toll increasing the traffic jams that already occur and increased air pollution. The installation of tolls on I-95 in Greenwich will add congestion on the Merritt Parkway where I understand tolls are not planned.

Though the thought of "Electronic tolls" sound easy it is not, it is just a part of an overall system that will not work. Tolls can have a negative impact on the economic growth of Connecticut and the surrounding states. Once tolls are incorporated there is nothing that will prevent bordering states from also instituting tolls which will be a further detriment to our region.

Sincerely,

John Timm

78 Orchard St.

Cos Cob, CT 06807