



Connecticut Fund
for the Environment

Save the Sound®

**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment
Before the Committee on**

In Support of H.B. No. 6045,
AN ACT INSTITUTING CONGESTION VARIABLE PRICING LANES
INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS.

In Support of H.B. No. 5458,
AN ACT ESTABLISHING ELECTRONIC TOLLS ON CONNECTICUT'S HIGHWAYS.

In Support of H.B. No. 6058,
AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC TOLLS.

Submitted by Claire Coleman
Climate & Energy Attorney
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Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE) is a non-profit environmental organization with over 4,700 members statewide. The mission of CFE, and its bi-state program Save the Sound, is to protect and improve the land, air, and water of Connecticut and Long Island Sound. We use legal and scientific expertise and bring people together to achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations.

Dear Senators Leone and Boucher, Representative Guerrero, and Members of the Transportation Committee:

Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE) submits this testimony in support of H.B. No. 6045, which proposes to institute congestion variable pricing lanes on Connecticut's interstate highways, as well as H.B. 5458 and 6058, both of which propose to institute electronic tolls on Connecticut's highways. CFE supports both tolling and congestion pricing as strategies to reduce traffic congestion and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions while generating critically needed income for the state.

Connecticut is required by the Global Warming Solutions Act to reduce GHG emissions in the state to 10% below 1990 levels by 2020, and 80% below 2001 levels by 2050. Yet, GHG emissions in the state have risen 7.5% from a low in 2012, largely due to increased vehicle use.¹

¹ See Acadia Center, *Updated GHG Emissions Inventory for Connecticut*, June 13, 2016, available at <http://acadiacenter.org/document/updated-greenhouse-gas-emissions-inventory-for-connecticut/>.

Traffic congestion is a persistent and growing problem in metropolitan regions across the United States, including in Connecticut, which imposes significant costs on residents and taxpayers. The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) estimated that in the United States, congestion costs were estimated at \$63.1 billion annually in 2000 and \$87.2 billion annually in 2007, with approximately 28 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emitted per year due to waste from inefficient vehicle operation due to congestion.²

Congestion pricing is a smart strategy for improving transportation system performance, including reductions in delays and idling, generating revenue for funding transportation, and reducing Connecticut's Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) emissions and pollution. Congestion pricing refers to variable road tolls—charging higher prices under congested conditions and lower prices at less congested times and locations—intended to reduce peak-period traffic volumes to more manageable levels. Tolls can vary based on a fixed schedule, or they can be dynamic, meaning that rates change depending on the level of congestion that exists at a particular time.³ As explained by the Federal Highway Administration, “[t]he concept of tolling and congestion pricing is based on charging for access and use of our roadway network. It places responsibility for travel choices squarely in the hands of the individual traveler, where it can best be decided and managed. The car is often the most convenient means of transportation; however, with a little encouragement, people may find it attractive to change their travel habits, whether through consolidation of trips, car-sharing, by using public transportation, or by simply traveling at less congested times.”⁴

The ICCT has also estimated congestion reductions of 13 to 30%, greenhouse gas reductions of 15 to 20% and significant reductions of ozone and fine particulate pollution have been achieved from implementing congestion charging systems in London, Singapore and Stockholm, and similar benefits would be expected in U.S. cities and counties.⁵ The U.S. Department of Transportation has noted the benefits obtained by U.S. Cities that have employed congestion pricing. For example, on the State Route 91 priced lanes in Orange County, California, traffic during rush hours moves at over 60 mph, while the traffic in adjacent lanes crawls at average speeds of 15 mph or less. Commuters on the priced express lanes thus save as much as half an hour each way on the 10-mile trip, or as much as an hour a day.⁶

Similarly, high-speed, electronic toll collection lanes would allow for convenient electronic payment of highway and bridge tolls as vehicles pass through a toll, which would help reduce overall fuel consumption and GHG emissions associated with idling in traffic congestion.

² The International Council on Clean Transportation, *Congestion Charging: Challenges and Opportunities* (Apr. 2010), available at http://www.theicct.org/sites/default/files/publications/congestion_apr10.pdf.

³ Victoria Transport Policy Institute (2011). *Road Pricing: Congestion Pricing, Value Pricing, Toll Roads and HOT Lanes*, available at <http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm35.htm>.

⁴ U.S. DOT, Federal highway Administration, *Congestion Pricing, A Primer* (Oct. 2008), available at <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop08039/fhwahop08039.pdf>.

⁵ The International Council on Clean Transportation, *Congestion Charging: Challenges and Opportunities* (Apr. 2010), available at http://www.theicct.org/sites/default/files/publications/congestion_apr10.pdf.

⁶ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *the Benefits of Congestion Pricing*, last modified Feb. 1, 2017, <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/congestionpricing/sec3.htm>.

A study by Smart Growth America and the Natural Resources Defense Council correctly concludes that “[t]olling is an effective way to manage demand on heavily used roadways, and it is even more powerful when the revenues are directed toward increasing other transportation options such as carpool programs, commuter buses and other forms of public transportation.”⁷ CFE supports setting aside the money generated from new electronic tolls in Connecticut for such efforts, including mass transit infrastructure that would further limit congestion and GHG emissions.

In sum, CFE supports H.B. No. 6045, H.B. 5458, and 6058, which will all improve Connecticut’s climate performance while meeting our state’s mobility needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Claire Coleman
Claire Coleman
Climate & Energy Attorney
Connecticut Fund for the Environment
ccoleman@ctenvironment.org
(203) 787-0646 ext. 122

⁷ Smart Growth America, Natural Resources Defense Council, *Getting Back on Track: Aligning State Transportation Policy with Climate Change Goals*, available at <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/getting-back-on-track.pdf>.