

**Testimony
Rudy Marconi
First Selectman
Town of Ridgefield
Before the Transportation Committee
February 27, 2017**

- SB-560 AN ACT INSTITUTING ELECTRONIC TOLLS ON CONNECTICUT'S HIGHWAYS.
- SB-751 AN ACT ESTABLISHING ELECTRONIC TOLLS ON CONNECTICUT'S HIGHWAYS USING A CONGESTION PRICING SYSTEM.
- HB-5458 AN ACT ESTABLISHING ELECTRONIC TOLLS ON CONNECTICUT'S HIGHWAYS.
- HB-6058 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC TOLLS.

DON'T slow down, DON'T stop, DON'T drop a token. IT'S AUTOMATIC!!

When you think of tolls, you probably remember those awful booths that used to turn Connecticut highway travel into a stop-and-go nightmare.

Push those images out of your mind. Connecticut banished its last toll booth in 1989, and we will never see them here again.

But today's technology does allow us to create all-electronic tolling (AET). It's a system that doesn't even require you to slow down as you pass.

By installing booth-free, non-stop tolls, anywhere in Connecticut, we can net more than \$1 billion dollars a year for transportation and, just as important, begin to unclog our most crowded highways. And most importantly, let's begin to fix what is broken BEFORE we begin funding future projects!

This idea comes from the state's Transportation Strategy Board. A two-year, \$1 million study was conducted with the results presented in February 2010. The 500-page final report examined eight possible tolling scenarios, from tolling all limited-access roads to creating special toll lanes on otherwise toll free highways.

And what happened to the study? What always happens; NOTHING! We have spent the last decade talking about tolls. Debating and arguing while "the State economy grew by 17% between 2006 and 2015, yet State expenditures grew by 48.9% during the same period! And we wonder – where did the \$1.5 billion deficit come from??"

And now the Governor expects the Towns to begin paying for a third of the teachers' pension agreement – why? Because the State of Connecticut is financially broke!

What can we do??

ELECTRONIC TOLLS

I support tolling for two reasons, both of which will attract new businesses to Connecticut—and with them jobs, but most importantly create a revenue stream to help Connecticut get on the right track, toward economic prosperity!

1. Tolls will HELP relieve congestion

Traffic through the Stamford-Bridgeport corridor is projected to increase to the point that, by 2030, it will resemble the infinite-parking-lot highways of Los Angeles today. If you were a CEO, would you want to relocate your business to an area like that? As an employee would you want to have to make this daily commute? Having tolls during peak hours will aid in moving commuters to alternative schedules and public transportation, thus the imperative need to begin addressing commuter rail service today.

2. Tolls will fund transportation

Our current budgets for roads and rail transit are underfunded, and in this economy, it will only grow worse. Revenue from tolls will let us add the capacity we need—most importantly, Connecticut's rails. Improved commuter train service (including the proposed link between New Haven, Hartford and Springfield, Mass) will foster business growth along our transportation corridors and protect our rural areas from sprawl.

There is another reason I support tolls: fairness. When we drive the New York Thruway or Massachusetts Turnpike, we're tossing our money into the coffers of these border states. Yet when cars and trucks cross into Connecticut, it's a free ride!

Tolls will improve our quality of life and bring jobs to Connecticut. No one likes to pay tolls. But with unsustainable congestion looming, the ongoing need to attract jobs and business, and a failing transportation infrastructure, a smart approach is tolls - the answer Connecticut is looking for.

Please, the time is now.