

Mainiero, Phil

From: matt.repicky@gmail.com on behalf of Matt Repicky <Matthew.Repicky@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2017 2:11 PM
To: tratestimony
Cc: zRepresentative Michael Ferguson
Subject: Testimony for the General Assembly's Transportation Committee

I am a Danbury, CT resident writing to provide testimony for the public hearing on the following bills to be considered by the committee:

- S.B. 560 AN ACT INSTITUTING ELECTRONIC TOLLS ON CONNECTICUT'S HIGHWAYS
- S.B. 751 AN ACT ESTABLISHING ELECTRONIC TOLLS ON CONNECTICUT'S HIGHWAYS USING A CONGESTION PRICING SYSTEM
- H.B. 6058 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC TOLLS
- H.B. 6045 AN ACT INSTITUTING CONGESTION VARIABLE PRICING LANES ON INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS
- H.B. 5458 AN ACT ESTABLISHING ELECTRONIC TOLLS ON CONNECTICUT'S HIGHWAYS

Please consider my testimony in regards to these matters to unequivocally state that I am against any border tolls on the main Interstate highways that are in our state. As a resident that travels across the state from Danbury to Greenwich to Windsor, Norwich and Groton, I can attest to the poor conditions of our roadways and the congestion problems that exist on them. I understand the challenges of needing to improve the conditions of our roadways and improve the design of our transportation system to improve the possibilities for travel through the state and make the state a better place for residents and businesses.

But the solution to these challenges is not to implement border tolls so that those in the interior of the state can feel happy knowing that "out-of-state" drivers are paying the way for in-state residents. That narrative is a falsehood on where the burden of the tolls would fall and where the money would come from and who would be affected the most by the tolls.

#1- Residents, like my wife, from all over Fairfield, Litchfield and New Haven Counties commute across the state border with New York every day using I-84 and I-95. Border tolls would hit these commuters the most. Commuters that have already been pushed to live further away from their jobs because of the high costs of property closer to their employer.

#2 - The vast majority of out-of-state drivers, especially truck drivers, that our state representatives would love to be used as a scapegoat of traffic and congestion on our roadways and that they would also love to paint as being the individuals paying the tolls by having them at the border, do not simply drive across the border and then stop and unload their goods. They are indeed driving deep into the state and even across the state to bring goods to points North and East of the state. So there is plenty of opportunity to add tolls throughout the state to capture the revenue associated with this traffic.

#3 - For those out-of-state drivers that are coming into the state to spend money and benefit CT businesses, these tolls will be a further detraction to them bringing their wallets to businesses in the state. Residents of West Chester County will more likely choose to travel to White Plains and points South for their shopping, while residents from neighboring Putnam and Dutchess Counties will likely head to Newburgh, Poughkeepsie and Cortlandt for their shopping.

#4 - Residents like myself who live and work closely to the border to NY will see increased congestion on local streets as knowledgeable drivers elect to take Route 1 to avoid tolls on I-95 or Route 6 to avoid tolls on I-84.

Already enough drivers take local roadways to avoid rush hour congestion between I-684 in New York and Exit 8 in Danbury. The tolls would only offer a further incentive for people to avoid the highway and take local roads when the highway is already considered a poor option due to traffic delays.

For all of these reasons and more, I again affirm that I am against any border tolls on our Interstates. As to other proposals to create congestion variable pricing systems and "express lanes" for paying travelers, these toll methods unfairly target the hard working residents within the state and any reservation of roadway for privileged drivers that pay additional fees further worsens the congestion and the toll taken by traffic on the remaining commuters. I strongly suggest that people drive a mile in the shoes of someone who might have to commute from Danbury to Groton or Norwich, or Danbury to Windsor or Springfield on a regular basis during high peak driving times to see just how poor our transportation system is working to allow residents to commute across our state.

If the state can enact a method of distributing tolls across the state, equally across travelers, in a manner that does not worsen the congestion of the Interstate highways or local roadways and the funds generated are indeed used to improve the conditions of our transportation system, not just maintain them, then I would openly consider the proposals and be in favor of improving our transportation system.

One final point of consideration for how to improve our transportation system is in the maintenance of a positive flow of traffic. On 12/14/2015 there was a high profile traffic accident involving tractor trailers on I-691 in the Westbound direction. While this accident occurred at approximately 12.30pm, the investigation and/or clean-up of the accident was so poorly handled that it took 2 hours, from ~4.30pm to ~6.30pm, to travel approximately 4 miles from the Route 15 on-ramp to I-691 to the accident site near Exit 4 in Southington. While the vehicles in the accident had caught fire, the cause of the traffic by 4.30pm was not controlling the fire, but planning the removal of the tractor trailers from the accident site, which since the vehicles had veered off the roadway, was not impacting the ability of traffic to flow on the roadway.

For an accident where no lanes were closed as a result of the accident itself only the clean-up and recovery efforts, which had no business being performed during the peak driving period, this was an entirely unnecessary disruption to thousands of commuters. There was no state police present before or at the site of the accident controlling and directing traffic. There was no closure of on-ramps from local streets to I-691 to warn drivers to detour around the accident site. There was no control of a situation where there was need for an abundance of control to prevent the massive traffic jam that occurred.

Procedures for the proper investigation and handling of accidents should be reviewed and improved to prioritize a primary directive of maintaining a positive flow of traffic through the system. Lane closures should be avoided or limited in duration wherever possible and clean-up actions resulting in worse traffic conditions should be reviewed and evaluated based upon the risk to the public, risk to destruction of evidence, and the potential for negative impact to traffic flow.

As the primary directive should be maintaining a positive traffic flow, if the risk to public or the potential for evidence to go uncollected in leaving an accident on the side of a roadway is less severe than the negative impact to traffic flow in investigating and removing the accident, then the accident should remain undisturbed until non-peak travel times when the impact to traffic will not be as severe.

Thank you,

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Matthew Repicky
Danbury, CT 138th District