SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, good morning everyone, it’s still morning, but today’s meeting has a potential to go a little late because we definitely want to hear from everyone and their public input.

So, as we get ready to get started, I want to thank everyone for taking the time to come from all four corners of the state to be here today and get through the traffic and be here on time.

I want to thank the administration for being here as well and their presentation that will be starting shortly. A couple of quick housecleaning notifications, if there is any kind of an emergency,
please listen to the overhead speakers from Capitol Police and they will escort you to the nearest exit. We have the two doors here to exit this room, if something does occur. We also have an overflow room for people that are unable to find a seat here.

I believe this may be getting televised, if not, it is being recorded for the public to weigh in at a later date. Given that we have a very controversial here in front of us today for transportation, our job is to hear everyone’s input and as a result of that, we want to be cognizant of everyone’s time.

So, we have the administration here, is gonna give us a brief overview on, on their vision and then they will, we will open it up to take questions.

In the interest of time and expediency, we will be instituting a five-minute rule for legislators and the administration to have questions asked and answered. We don’t want to have so much time go by that we don’t then have time for the public, especially if you came from far away or you are losing a day of work because you feel passionately about this issue.

So, we will be loose with that rule, but if it gets out of control, we would then hold it firm. So, I just want to be cognizant of the fact that make your points, ask your questions, they will get answered, but it’s not gonna be an indefinite Q&A because we have other members here. It’s a large committee. They are all entitled to their questions to be answered as well. And then once the administration officials are completed, we will then go into the public hearing with other elected officials and other public. We usually reserve about an hour’s
timeframe for that and then we go back and forth. But given we have a few hours here, we will have to do the best we can.

So, please, make your points but keep it brief because we want to be respectful of everyone who took the time to come up here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, and again, just some more housekeeping. The overflow rooms are in 1B and 1C. If anyone leaves, goes out for lunch or dinner and can’t find a seat back in here, you can definitely sit in rooms B and C. They’re equipped with the audio, so you’ll be able to hear the testimony that is presented.

Similarly for a lot of folks who may have submitted testimony to the committee, folks who are unable to make it today or people who are here in attendance, who submitted written testimony via email to the committee, it will be uploaded if you send it in before the end of the hearing today. It may take a few weeks before you see it on the website, but it will be uploaded, it will be publicly available to you.

And for the public’s benefit, there are numerous members on this committee who will be in and out over the course of the afternoon. There are six committees with public hearings happening today. And transportation committee members sit on education, planning and development and other committees in this building, so they’ll be in and out meeting their obligations for each of those committees. So, it’s not that folks aren’t paying attention or not taking it seriously, it’s that
there are many committee meetings with many important agenda items on each.

With that being said, let’s get started.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, with that, first up we have our, the administration, our commissioners from DOT, OPM is here and DECD as well. Please, if you could begin, state your names for the record, as you have other members that may answer any questions for information you don’t have readily available. Please make sure they’re addressed as well for the record. And with that, Commissioner, the court is yours, so to speak.

JOE GIULIETTI: Thank you, Chairman Leone, Chairman Lemar, Ranking Member Martin, Ranking Member Devlin and members of the Transportation Committee.

I am Transportation Commissioner Joe Giulietti. I am joined by Commissioner Designate, David Lehman, from the Department of Economic and Community Development and Secretary, Melissa McCaw from the Office of Policy and Management. We are here to talk about the Governor’s Bill, H.B. 7202, which would enable Connecticut to constructs tolls along several highways. But we believe the dialogue should be much broader. We believe tolling is how we should move forward, but we need to spend a few minutes on why and why we are having this conversation in the first place.

Simply put, Connecticut’s aging transportation infrastructure and lack of sustainable recurring revenue in the Special Transportation Fund, has hampered our ability to just maintain a state of good repair. Let alone making the investments necessary to move our state’s residents and economy,
this lack of funding to maintain our infrastructure leads to major capital costs and the need to entirely revamp systems, which is not strategically smart or a financial best practice.

On paper, Connecticut has it all, access to world-class talent, equal distance between Boston and New York without exceptionally high cost of living, vibrant culture and educational institutions, but our reputation in one area in particular proceeds us. Congestion is getting worse and it costs us. It negatively impacts the quality of life for residents and it’s a financial drain and reputational impediment for businesses that want to grow here. The mirror, I95 and I84 are too slow. I84 was designed for 50,000 vehicles and we are instead carrying 180,000.

Passing this financial drain on our system and the investment required to the next generation. The commute on Metro North from New Haven to New York City is 10 to 15 minutes longer than it was a century ago. Many of our bridges are over 100 years old. Due to the lack of investment in infrastructure, our rail system has had to slow down. We have better railcars, but they’re forced to go slower.

DAVID LEHMAN: Thanks, Joe. Good morning. My name is David Lehman, I’m the Commissioner Designee from the Department of Economic and Community Development. The state’s economy and enhanced transportation infrastructure go hand in hand, simply put. They are the obvious jobs created by construction projects of this magnitude. But what would Connecticut lose by failing to invest in it’s transportation system.
Over the next 20 years, if we don’t go forward and make this investment, we would lose over $65-billion dollars in benefits, wages and output for drivers and businesses. Nearly $21.4 billion in state GDP and $3.2 billion in economic activity each year, including over 10,000 jobs.

So, what do our state’s business leaders, what are they saying about the State of Connecticut’s transportation infrastructure, some of whom will speak directly to this issue later today. In a recent poll, two thirds of business leaders in the I91 corridor say traffic congestion and poor infrastructure are the most pressing transportation issues they’ve seen.

In addition, 21 percent of those same leaders cited a lack of mass transit options as impacting their business. Connecticut driver’s experience 81 million hours of delay per year while stuck in traffic, costing residents and businesses a staggering $1.9-billion dollars per year currently.

Investing in our aging infrastructure is not an option, it’s a necessity, if we are going to truly impact economic growth and development across our state.

The Connecticut of tomorrow in just 10 years, in 2030, has more jobs and higher home values because of the vision Governor Lamont has laid out. 30-30-30 rail service into New York City with more frequent service to Danbury, Waterbury and New London. Easier access to Bradley Airport and upgraded airports. All while moving some drivers from roads to rail and incentivizing trucks to drive at off-peak hours. Utilizing intelligent
transportation systems and empowering Connecticut’s commuters with smart traveler technology, with that congestion on our major highways will be significantly mitigated, allowing commuters to predictably and efficiently travel to their destinations.

All of that and more can be a reality, but we can’t do it if we don’t have reliable, sustainable Transportation Funding that will allow us to maintain and more importantly enhance our infrastructure.

JOE GIULIETTI: We spend about $1.2-billion dollars per year in upkeep alone, never truly reaching state of good repair with our system and never fully realizing our aspirations of a 21st Century transportation system.

And quite frankly on the upkeep side, we are sorely lacking. 1,465 miles of state roadway are rated poor. 248 bridges are rated poor. The average age of our state bridges is 53 years, 11 years older than the national average. And several of our railroad bridges are over 100 years old.

The problem is clear, as my colleagues have stated earlier, we are here to talk about potential solutions. The Governor’s budget has outlined two options; trucks only and cars and trucks.

In the trucks only scenario, we believe that the federal government will only permit this option on bridges that are being reconstructed. Due to the location of bridges, that means that gantries would be concentrated in some areas while others would have none. We expect this option to bring in about $200 million in 20 years, with 50 to 100 gantries.
This plan would produce an over concentration of gantries in certain areas and doesn’t address the congestion or economic development issues we discussed earlier.

In the cars and trucks option, we expect about $800 million in revenue annually, after implementation in 2024. The Governor stated publicly that he will consider this option only if discounts for Connecticut drivers were maximized, including a 30 percent Connecticut E-ZPass discount, in addition to a 20 percent frequent commuter discount.

Out of that $800 million in annual revenue, we expect that 40 percent of it will be paid for by out-of-state drivers.

So, let me drill down on that last point for a moment. I understand the tolls are a hot issue and I get it. But there is no other plan that I’ve discussed where 40 percent of the revenue is paid for by people who don’t even live in this state, but who use our roads. We subsidized other states for use of their roads. There’s no reason why people from Rhode Island, New York and Massachusetts should use our roads for free, while Connecticut residents pick up 100 percent of the tab to repair and upgrade them.

We have also studied how other states reduce this burden, by loading of credit on the E-ZPasses or accounts for low income individuals or families and/or providing E-ZPass cash loading services at locations where utility bills and check cashing services are offered. We stand ready to offer these solutions for minimizing the burden.
From a preliminary review, the DOT is recommending rates per mile that are among the lowest in the region, 4.4 cents per mile. This aligns with the rates charged on the Mass Pike and is significantly less than the rates on the New Jersey Turnpike and the New England Thruway.

The Governor’s proposal is the beginning of a conversation about tolls, not the end. Leveraging the guidance and expertise of credible national experts as well as a baseline study to assess the best practice tolling in Connecticut. Governor Lamont’s proposal also benchmarks Connecticut’s tolling proposal against that of other states as we just discussed.

In addition, Governor Lamont has directed the Department of Transportation and me specifically to streamline the cost per mile. I look forward to working with Noel Petra of, at DAS Construction Services on this issue.

As he indicated in his budget address, Governor Lamont remains committed to a continuing dialogue with the legislature on this proposal but feels strongly that tolls is the only way to move forward with the kind of sustainable revenue source needed to maintain and enhance Connecticut’s transportation system.

MELISSA MCCAW: Thank you to my colleagues for laying out the why and the how. So, I’ll just touch base briefly on the current state of Transportation Funding in the State of Connecticut.

First, I greatly respect the bipartisan spirit in which this compromise was originally constructed and the legislature’s goal of linking the car sales tax
related purpose to the Special Transportation Fund. However, the Special Transportation Fund with the current diversion of the car tax receipts, sales tax receipts from the general fund will begin running a deficit in fiscal 2023 and 2024, the very next biennium.

This is the current schedule that is enacted in law. And as you can see here on the slide, if we do nothing, we acknowledge that the fund will become insolvent in the years to come. This is primarily because of debt service associated with issuing $800 million in bonds annually, a level that my colleague has indicated is far below the investment required for state of good repair, never mind, does not allow new projects that will support a more viable transportation system, as conveyed by Commissioner Giulietti.

Again, while I respect the thought process behind the current solution, it is not adequate to prevent us from running operating deficits.

In addition, we need to acknowledge that the current diversion actually leaves a hole of $368-million dollars in the general fund, for which no replacement revenue sources have been identified.

So, not only are we expecting the Transportation Fund to become insolvent, but at the same time, in simple words, we are robbing Peter to pay Paul and leaving a hole in the general funds to do so. Hence, the Governor’s budget provides two options and is transparent about the financial viability of both of these options.

I also want to address a specific point head on, as there has been a lot of questions about if and how
transportation infrastructure projects will continue between now and the time at which we expect tolls to come online in fiscal year 2024.

The Special Transportation Fund will continue under the Governor’s proposal to have sufficient funding for all existing projects that have been allocated through the Bond Commission and that are allotted and actively underway.

The administration will, however, have to evaluate funding adequacy for new projects between now and 2024. This is absolutely why one of the critical reasons that a comprehensive plan is needed for the Special Transportation Fund; to ensure, number one, that we can actually pay the bill for the $800-million dollars of that service we issue on an annual basis, but so that we can increase investment to improve the state of good repair, to fund new transportation system projects and bring our transportation system to a level that best supports economic development.

A revenue solution is needed to fund the debt service associated with the increased annual debt issuance. These options will take years to operationalize. Time is of the essence and we need to act decisively now to ensure that we have a financial plan that can support existing capital investment, increase capital investment, a plan that can actually fund that that service associated with these projects and an increased level of debt service well north of $1-billion dollars annually.

I want to thank the Transportation Committee today for hearing this bill. We firmly believe that our state’s infrastructure is an asset, which should be
treated as such with a sustainable recurring revenue source, identified to ensure that we can make the upkeep and enhancements that are necessary to get Connecticut moving again. Our economy and Connecticut’s future quite simply depends on it.

Thank you very much and at this time we will take any questions you may have.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. And thank you for all three, your presentation, mostly thank you for keeping it brief but on point in the interest of time.

You know, we’re dealing with a situation now where our infrastructure needs are becoming critical. Everybody wants them repaired and repaired properly and we have to figure out how to make sure that we get that done, not just when there’s an emergency, but on an ongoing basis. And this is a difficult conversation for us to have as a state, rightly so, because it would be a way of doing things differently than what we have done in the past 30 years from when we first had tolls. And I think that’s an important point as well. This state had tolls previously. It was able to work, people may not have liked it, but it was able to work. But since then, we’ve gotten away from that and we have not kept up with our infrastructure needs in terms of repair. And it brings us now to this crisis point where we have to figure a way to move forward for the benefit of our state.

So, as we get ready to open up to a few questions, I just wanted to maybe ask one or two of my own to Commissioner Giulietti, do we have enough revenue in all our tools in the toolbox and maybe, Ms. McCaw
from OPM can chime in as well; do we have other tools available that can handle all the infrastructure needs that we require at present day, not just what we need in the future?

JOE GIULIETTI: Let me answer first. I’m sitting down and going over all the needs that were there. I’m gonna say to you that we do not have available to us the funding that is necessary to go and do all the jobs that are in front of us right now.

I’ve spent the last few weeks going out with the Governor to a number of different areas and highways that are in tremendous need of change and investment, and we don’t have that type of revenue source available to us at this point.

And at this point, I will ask --

MELISSA MCCAW: Sure. I, I echo the sentiments of Commissioner Giulietti. While over the past, you know, eight years or thereabouts, we have significantly increased our annual debt issuance and we’re currently at the level of around $800-million dollars per year. The experts from DOT would indicate just to maintain state of good repair, that they would need that issuance to be well north of a billion dollars on an annual basis.

And so, the plan that we currently have in front of us, at least for the next biennium or two, does not allow the State of Connecticut to begin to make that investment to increase the level of debt issuance to improve state of good repair. So, the answer is, no. We are not able to meet the critical objectives that the experts in DOT feel are necessary from that perspective.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. And as we deal with the revenue side of the equation with infrastructure that from what you’re telling us we don’t have enough revenue, what we don’t want to do is also crowd out all the other important parts of government that also need to be funded from the revenue side. So, if we try to take revenue from elsewhere, then that becomes another critical point in those other areas, whether it’s education, municipal aid and so forth.

Let me ask you one other question. So, we just asked questions on the revenue side. What about on the borrowing side on our debt capacity? Recently, excuse me, recently we are, we instituted a cap on our bonding in terms of how much will we bond per year, that is on top of our self-imposed cap to 90 percent. So, we have a cap on a cap for bonding. And we want to make sure that we don’t borrow aggressively so that it hurts our ratings in the open market.

But is there enough borrowing capacity, without crowding out all the other issues that we have to borrow for, is there enough borrowing capacity to bond our way out of the infrastructure needs in transportation?

MELISSA MCCAW: We do believe that the plan, the broader plan complies with all of our bond cap requirements. As you might have heard in prior, in prior presentations through Appropriations or Finance, one of the benefits of the proposal that is before you is that it actually expands our options.

So, the only tool in our box doesn’t necessarily have to be borrowing, if the tolling plan as
proposed were to go forward, but the state would also be in the position to make some cash investments in critical projects as well.

So, we are basically broadening the tools that would be available. Certainly, yes, we’d be in compliance with any bond cap requirements. And again, this is a proposal where these investments that are absolutely critical and necessary could be subsidized by 40 percent. And so I just want to remain mindful of that.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you and you mentioned that with this, if this were to go forward, it would alleviate some of the bonding. But if we don’t institute this language and don’t find an alternative revenue source, then our borrowing capacity in my mind is not available for all the needs that we have; would that be true, or would that be false?

MELISSA MCCAW: That is correct. And even if we hold ourselves to an $800-million dollars of debt issuance on an annual basis, which means we’re not meeting state of good repair or making progress in that regard, that, that we’re issuing on an annual basis will begin to create the operating deficits that are projected without a comprehensive solution.

So, no, we would not have the capacity to continue to fund the existing $800-million dollars of annual debt issuance.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. And then from a business perspective, I hear many times, but maybe you can tell me if I’m wrong or I’m hearing the wrong message, the business community that I’ve had the pleasure to speak with over time, transportation
has been one of the main reasons why they then consider to either remain here, to leave here, or to even decide to come here if they’re coming from elsewhere. It has been an ongoing issue where companies may not choose to come here because if they feel they can’t get -- first of all, they have to hire the folks, but if then if they can’t get to the job or can’t get to the job when the business dictates it, then that is a, that is a calculation, business leaders and CEOs for whatever company they’re managing. That’s a deciding factor sometimes. So, we’ve heard that many times, but it’s been anecdotal. Has that message, has that exacerbated, is that still relatively true or untrue; where do we stand on it from a business perspective?

DAVID LEHMAN: Sure, it’s David Lehman, and I think you’ll hear from business leaders later than can address the issue as well directly. I don’t have an opinion now if it’s been exacerbated recently or if it’s changed. But, you know, at a simplest level, poor infrastructure in particular roads that has a direct cost on cars and maintenance of cars that impacts all Connecticut residents. But as it relates to business, the congestion that we have on our highways means longer trips and sometimes folks won’t take a trip. And ultimately, longer trips and more time in a car means less productivity. And less productivity that ultimately equals less sales and less robust economic actually.

So, I think it does have an impact in the decision making because businesses are gonna have less productive workers and potentially less happy
workers as well, if they’re in congestion and that is impacting our economy.

JOE GIULIETTI: And I’ll go a little further on that because both in my role as President of Metro North, I was approached by the business councils from the State of Connecticut, particularly in light of the fact that the trains are running slower, that the investment in the infrastructure, which had caused those trains to run slower, had caused a number of our communities to be experiencing longer travel times into New York, which had a direct net effect on the values of their housing and whether or not they could bring people in.

I also was approached as well from the universities that were talking about the need to have better connections between New York and Boston in order to be able to attract and keep that medical community open. So, I will tell you that, yes, I’ve heard it from both being the President of Metro North, and no sooner did I come on to this job, I had a Governor calling me up saying, we need to be looking at ways that we can get our highways moving better. We need to be looking at ways to getting that rail system moving better because we’re losing economic opportunity because of it.

So, I’ve heard it from both the political side and from the business side as I’ve been in this role.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, and I appreciate your answers and I’m sure we’ll, there will be other questions to dive on some of those talking points.

So, without further ado, let me open it to some of our members so we can do just that. First up is Senator Martin, followed by Representative Devlin.
SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome and thank you for coming here today. I just want some clarity on, before I go on to some of my other questions. But Melissa, you mentioned the $800-million dollars that we spend on our infrastructure. But then you concluded that we needed a billion dollars a year for the infrastructure. Is the $800 included in that billion or is the billion in addition to the $800?

MELISSA MCCAW: The $800 million is included in the billion. If I were to turn this over to my colleague to my right, he would tell you that numbers in the very, closer to $2-billion dollars is what the level of investment that’s required. But, yes, it is inclusive of the $800 million. Again, the point is that it is not at the necessary level for the Department of Transportation to properly make progress on state of good repair.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): So, it’s the $800 million, you’d really need $2-billion dollars?

MELISSA MCCAW: At minimum you would need to increase the annual that’s issued from $800 million to north of a billion dollars, greater than a billion dollars, yes.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): And, Commissioner, the $2-billion dollars out of that, how much do we receive from the federal government?

JOE GIULIETTI: $750 million.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): So, $750, plus the billion, so we’re betting close to the $2 billion that you may need? Okay. So, I guess over a 30-year period we’re looking at roughly $60-billion dollars is what
we would need. $2 billion times 30, back of the envelope here. So, roughly about $60-billion dollars we would need over a 30-year period?

MARK ROLFE: If your question is for state of good repair, yes. Sure, Mark Rolfe, Chief Engineer, Connecticut DOT. If we’re talking exclusively about state of good repair, roughly $60-billion dollars over a 30-year period is what we would estimate is needed for that. Of course, there’s lots of variables that could play into that, what the federal program is, the deterioration rate on our infrastructure, what the economic climate is like and how our contracts are bid. But as a general number, that’s probably as good as we can give at this point.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Okay. Thank you. So, I’ll just go into the bill a little bit now. So, the bill mentions entering into an agreement with the federal highway administration. And how long will it take to work out the agreement, should this tolling proposal move forward?

JOE GIULIETTI: While we were, the, the, we would begin that as soon as this legislature and this Governor came to terms that this is the way that we’re gonna go. We already have, I will tell you, the Federal Highway Administration is in this meeting today. We’ve already had meetings with them. We’ve been talking with them. So, it would turn around and I would say to you that as soon as it is decided that this is a way that we are going to go, we’ll be sitting down with them and coming up and we already do have a knowledge base on what is acceptable and what is acceptable by them for congestion mitigation, which is part of the reason
why when we looked at the various options, what we present back is what we feel is in compliance with the Federal Highway Administration

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): So, the timeline?

JOE GIULIETTI: Next year to two years.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): One to two years to get that approval?

JOE GIULIETTI: Yeah, we have it prescribed in the package, there is a prescribed timeline that has been developed. And as I’ve said, we’ve already begun those meetings. To go and talk about what is, I want to be clear, we’ve had those meetings to talk about what could be potentially available and what we could go that would meet those guidelines.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you. So, If an agreement by chance cannot be worked out, so what happens then?

JOE GIULIETTI: I would say that being very candid about it, an agreement can be worked out and will be worked out as it has been done in other states. We are not, we are not treading new ground here in terms of what we are looking at. Though you have seen articles that talk about this is a new concept going forward, it is not a new concept with the federal government. Some of what they were responding to is looking at it in a much broader framework. But to turn around and say that, you know, what would happen if we did not reach that agreement, I would say, if we did not reach that agreement, I would be coming right back to this legislature and this Governor to go and say that,
but that is not anticipated at this time. And nor has it been indicated from the FHWA either.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Have the, have they raised an eyebrow regarding the amount of tolling and gantries that are being proposed? From what I’m reading, is that this magnitude of tolling has never been done in the United States?

JOE GIULIETTI: It would be wrong for me to go ahead and comment on their raising an eyebrow, but they are fully aware of what we are looking at. They understand and have challenged states to come back with solutions on their own as well because one of the things we have to be looking at is how are we gonna leverage and match what becomes available for federal funding as well.

So, I’m not gonna turn around and tell you whether or not they’ve raised an eyebrow -- all right, go ahead. Go ahead.

TOM MAZIARZ: I’m Tom Maziarz, I’m Chief of Planning at Connecticut DOT, and I’ve been working on the tolling project now for about five years or so. And we’ve worked very closely with the Federal Highway Administrations, both here in Connecticut and in Washington. We are pretty close to understanding one another as to what we need to go forward. And that we believe we can all achieve that goal.

But basically in terms of what we need, we need a couple of things. All right. We need, first of all, to provide the detailed plan that the federal, the federal agency is going to be looking for. That will include the location of gantries and stuff like that. We also need at, at before we go and ask for that approval, we need enabling legislation out of
the State of Connecticut. They will not consider an application unless they’ve got the enabling legislation in place.

And I would also point out that what everyone has been referring to so far is the 2018 report we put out that had a statewide system of tolls. What Governor Lamont is proposing are two options; truck only tolling as well as a scale back, a greatly scaled back version of what we put out in 2018.

For example, the 2018 report had 530 miles of roadway that would be tolled and 82 gantries. The new scaled back version, proposed by the Governor, has about 330 miles. So, it was cut almost in half and then the gantries are cut from 82 down to about 52 gantries. And that is still adjustable. We were simply using an average spacing of six miles between gantries. That can be adjusted, depending on what kind of comments we see that we get from the legislature.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): So, we cut back the plan and the original plan was a, was a revenue stream of $1.1-billion dollars in gross revenue. And then in the Finance Committee meeting, this second proposal and the numbers came out for the 53 gantries. And the question was asked regarding the gross revenue because the number that was shown on the slide was $800-million dollars for revenue and that was a net number. So, the actual number was $920-million dollars, so we’re cutting all the gantries, but yet the $1.1 billion to $920 or $980 million doesn’t seem to, we’re not too far apart. So, are we --

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): It doesn’t --

TOM MAZIARZ: -- raising the rates?
SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): It doesn’t add up when you look at it at the face of it. But what was done by the Governor was to look at it strategically. Look at the roads that carry the greatest amount of traffic and try to restrict the tolling to just those roads. The advantage of doing that is when you restrict the tolling to just I-95 and I-84, which are our highest volume roadways in the state, you’re also selecting those roadways that have the highest level of through traffic. All right. So, net impact of this is that we lose only about 30 percent of the revenue that we would generate from a statewide system, and yet we’ve cut the system almost in half.

MELISSA MCCAW: If I may add, if I may add to that, sir. When DOT revised the congestion pricing scenario, it is based on the same report that you saw in 2018. And so, at any time after this hearing, if you would like to see that reconciliation of how we go from the $1.1 billion to the $929, all DOT did was subtract the revenues that were assumed in that report for the toll highways that would now be excluded and that’s how they got to the $929. So, the assumption did not change in terms of the revenue that would have been collected on the highways were now excluded.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): I can understand that. And the report of 2018, part of their charge was to make this a system that was equitable throughout the whole state. And by doing what you just did, now you’re putting the burden on, on certain geographic areas of the state and those that live in those areas.
So, with that said, just a few more questions. So, if the bill passes, is there any legislative approval required? Let me ask it another way. Can DOT set toll rates without approval from both chambers, should the bill be passed?

MELISSA MCCAW: The bill is a starting point for a discussion. And so, as has previously been indicated by the Governor, if there are certain milestones that would be palatable to this legislature, that provide greater comfort that there will be an ongoing dialogue about this process, we can shape that bill collaboratively. And the way it’s currently drafted, it’s very broad, but certainly willing to have further conversation on that.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): And that would also include the number of gantries?

JOE GIULIETTI: I will turn around and say to you on the, in terms of the number of gantries, we are actually looking forward because one of the things that we would be able to do, when given the green light to go forward, is look at what the latest technology is that’s out there. We based it on that 2018 report or the 2015 report. Gantries are changing on a day-to-day basis. We would be coming back in with looking at what is the best way to go and do that.

And you are right, we also, you heard Tom talk about the fact that we’re looking at doing it every six miles. Maybe we can look at it doing every seven miles, but you have to balance off against that is what would be the amount of risk and the amount of bypass that would go on and revenue drain, if we
were to go and do each one of those; and that’s what we have to take into consideration when we go and do it.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): So, I would hope that part of the discussion is also no tolling. So, in --

JOE GIULIETTI: Saying that, I would say to you that what the Governor has said, the Governor’s made it very clear, he’s asked us to look into this. We have given back the facts. We will continue to give the facts. What we’re looking for is revenue stream. The Governor has said that he’s open to hearing the legislature on these issues and looking for what are alternatives. So, yeah, I’m gonna say to you that obviously from the standpoint that it is not predetermined, we wouldn’t be here suggesting it’s predetermined. We’re here to go and give you the facts on it and from those facts we’ll go forward with this, hopefully legislative and Governor approval on going forward.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Just one more question. One more question. Regarding the Federal Highway Administration agreement, does that need our approval from this committee or the legislative body?

JOE GIULIETTI: No, it won’t, it won’t require approval from this legislative body. Someone will have to sign for the state. Quite frankly, I don’t know if it’s the Governor or whether it’s the Commissioner of Transportation.

But again, we can’t get that federal approval unless we have the legislative approval ahead of time.
SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Understood. Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Representative Devlin, followed by Representative Simms.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for being here to testify today on this bill, which is of great interest to people across our state.

I don’t think anybody in the room would at all disagree and probably violently agree that the need to invest in our infrastructure is essential, particularly for economic development, for just the daily lives of our, the people working here, living here and for businesses to want to come and grow.

But I don’t think infrastructure is the only thing related to businesses. USA Today just reported we’re the second highest state taxed in the entire nation, which was kind of good, I thought it was number one.

But we’re on the cusp of the third largest tax increase in our state’s history. So, there’s a lot of factors that make businesses look or not look at the State of Connecticut. And I’m hopeful that we can get on a path for growth.

Madam Secretary, you mentioned about the Special Transportation Fund robbing Peter to pay Paul, and I think that probably sums up the history of the Special Transportation Fund, which was established originally after the Mianus River Bridge collapse to support bonding. But slowly, but surely, because of deficits in the general fund, all of the expenses for the Department of Transportation, the Department
of Motor Vehicles, all of the pension costs, all of the fringe benefit costs for those employees have been moved to the Special Transportation Fund, crowding out its ability to be able to back transportation bonding.

So, one of the things I wanted to ask because there seems to be some confusion. I hear a lot, in fact, from the Governor and the President of the Senate that, oh, you know, the republicans just want to put this on our credit card. Meaning that with putting in tolls to generate gross revenues of $917-million dollars, not including the maintenance costs, not including the ongoing costs, any of that, that, in fact, toll money would be used sort of as a checkbook. We’ll just be paying cash for all of these projects and we’re not gonna bond any more for transportation. Could you shed some light on exactly what you’re thinking of in terms of bonding in the future for Special Transportation Fund type projects, transportation projects?

MELISSA MCCAW: Sure. There has never been an expressed intent that the solution of tolls would eliminate the need for bonding, so I just want to make that, that very clearly.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Implementing tolls will not eliminate bonding for transportation projects?

MELISSA MCCAW: Look, I think what implementing tolls provides is greater --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I just want to be clear.

MELISSA MCCAW: -- options, right? And so, if you were to hear the experts in DOT, they would tell you that, you know, some of the annual maintenance type
work that doesn’t necessarily have a 20, 30-plus year useful life, and if you were to talk to, you know, industry experts in terms of best financial practices, they say those types of investments really should be done on a cash basis. We haven’t had the financial flexibility to do so. I do think that the tolling option provides us with that, you know, that option.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay.

MELISSA MCCAW: And certainly the longer term projects might continue to be appropriate for bonding. I expect that there’d be a mix, but right now we lack that option. And quite frankly, you know, a lot of the conversation is about economic development infrastructure improvement, but it, it’s also about survival --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I appreciate you --

MELISSA MCCAW: -- if this budget can survive.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- explaining all of that.

MELISSA MCCAW: Sure.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I just also want to, if you can elaborate a little bit more about comparison of Connecticut to other states. And I appreciate the clarification that now, by, while we’re still working off of the same CDM Smith study that was published on November 14th, but moving from 83 gantries to 53 or 82 to 52, in fact, we’re only looking at 330 miles of tolled road. But I believe in Massachusetts, a state twice the size of ours with twice the number of registered vehicles, with 13 toll gantries that generate about, between $400 and $500-million dollars a year, has 138 miles that
are tolled. New Hampshire has 97 miles tolled. Maine has 106 miles tolled. New Jersey has 356. New York does have 574 miles, but it is a quite bigger state than the State of Connecticut.

So, can you speak to this density of tolling that you’re talking about in the state? And does any other state have that kind of density of tolls?

JOE GIULIETTI: That’s fine. I’ll start with this, you know, first off, you know, coming from both the States of Florida and New York, where I have seen the density of tolling that has been put in, one of the things we’re looking at and I also heard the same thing about Massachusetts, but you have to understand, yes, they only have 13 tolls because in some cases it’s 30 miles between entrance and exit ramps. When you’re looking at a highway like 95 or the Merritt Parkway with a number of entrances and exits, what we’re trying to do is balance out the number of gantries that will both protect the loss of revenue from people that know where the gantries are and how to avoid the gantries and putting in what we consider to be a manageable number with a manageable amount of risk that would go and capture that.

So, the answer is to the number of gantries is based on, you know, what we feel we can do that will still be very fair and then also allocate a low-cost formula to the amount of miles that people are driving. We’ve also got the estimates on what an average driver drives, and not what that impact is going to be.

So, coming back to it from the standpoint of what the revenue stream is, yes, in a lot of cases, if
you compare it to some of the smaller states that are not using that as a driver for their revenue, our problem here is that I don’t, walking into this, I don’t have the revenue stream to be able to take the projects that we’re looking. This presented itself and even when we lowered the number down, it still was giving us a number that allowed us to make the investments going forward. And that’s what we’ve been looking at is the investments going forward.

And I’m gonna say, it’s the same issue I got to in Florida and it’s the same issue we got to in New York in terms of looking at because the other thing that we haven’t said here is that there’s also been a reduction in what the federal government has been able to go and give and what we’ve been able to go for that we’re also balancing out, as every other state is, in trying to come up with revenues.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Or we’re hoping that’s gonna ramp up with the President’s commitment to infrastructure.

JOE GIULIETTI: I heard the Governor say that.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): But you raised something really important. You talked about the gantries being about six miles apart. And in Fairfield County, the exits are one mile apart. So, there’s a great concern about diversion to local roads from trucks, where our roads are not at all prepared to handle that, the back roads. So, is there a plan to close exits or how are you going to manage people trying to escape the tolls on the Merritt and I95, when they’re six miles apart, but the exits are far more frequent?
JOE GIULIETTI: The answer to that is actually that is what we’re into coming up with the six mile apart because one of the things you had to look at, for example, if Merritt Parkway was all by itself, we wouldn’t be looking at the Merritt Parkway. But the Merritt Parkway will become the overflow once the tolls go on to 95. That’s one of the reasons you have to do 95 and the Merritt Parkway at the same time. Putting them six miles apart is going to take it from the standpoint that people will not go and pull off for one mile to go and go back on. When you’re talking about being, the average tolling being about four cents a mile, it does not make it that they will go and do that.

And I just spoke to the people from Rhode Island yesterday. They found the same thing. They found that when they’re being fair with their assessment, they did not see the loss in revenue that people would pull off the highway to go on to local roads to come back in. It’s what every state has to look at. And, indeed, we would be looking at it if we saw, for example, in one particular area that we have that kind of revenue drain, we would be making adjustments for it. But that was taken into consideration when coming up with a six-mile model.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Sure. Thank you. I just have one final question for now. And that is, Senator Fasano yesterday, I think stated it pretty clearly, we’re looking at this as tolls or no tolls, right? I mean, we all agree, investing in our infrastructure it will create jobs, it will create jobs for our union folks and our nonunion folks. It will support our economy, it will revitalize our cities like the great cities of Stamford and New
Haven. So, with that, have any other options been considered?

JOE GIULIETTI: Do you want to take that?

MELISSA MCCAW: Excellent question. Obviously, the trucks only model, which we touch upon very lightly, but you’re probably aware that the maximum revenue potential has been up to $200-million dollars. The range that the DOT at first would say is $40 to $200-million dollars over 10 to 20 years. So, we know that that tool alone is not a viable option. We will have insolvency well before that. And it would need another significant revenue source. The car sale’s tax, current law would require the replenishment of taxes in the general fund. We haven’t had the conversation about what was really envisioned on the replenishment, is that income tax or is that sales tax? But certainly, you know, we are willing to continue to have the dialogue, but it does need to be a fully comprehensive model and trucks only doesn’t get you there.

So, the question is, what would palatable to the legislature? It still requires a significant investment. Just to be very clear, that by the end of the second biennium, with the car sales tax proposal or current law, we would start to have an operating deficit, you know, the level at which you’d have --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): It would, if there wasn’t a plan to address that.

MELISSA MCCAW: That’s right. That’s right. And so the question is, well what does that? Because the, the magnitude of the growth in the deficit is that once you start to see that deficit, in four years
you’re looking at $260-million dollars. So, I recommend with 20 years of financial background that we think about the magnitude of what that deficit is really going to become, and we solve for that. Those would be significant tax increases. And I don’t know if that’s something that the Governor nor the legislature would entertain, but we stand ready, willing to partner with you on looking at what those, those options could potentially be. And again, that’s a starting point for conversation.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I look forward to those conversations. Thank you very much to both of you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. We’re gonna continue on. We’re almost at the hour mark. We were gonna try and keep this within the two-hour timeframe, maybe we’ll go over a few minutes. But that again, we’re trying to make sure that everyone has a chance for their question. So, we have a long list here. If you’re not called up right away, be assured you’re on.

Next up is Representative Simms, followed by Representative Steinberg.

REP. SIMMS (140TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you Commissioner and fellow guests. I have a quick question. I would like to know what is the federal law restrictions that we have on the type of discounts and exemptions that we can offer Connecticut residents and small businesses or businesses in general?

TOM MAZARZ: The federal government really doesn’t put any restrictions on the discounts. What was proposed in the total scenario that we put forward
and that’s both for the statewide as well as for the scaled back system, would be that for a Connecticut resident who purchases an E-ZPass from the State of Connecticut, that they would be given a 30 percent discount anytime that they use that E-ZPass, as compared to someone from out-of-state with an E-ZPass.

On top of that, we’ve done something that a lot of states don’t do. We’re proposing a frequent user or what I like to call a commuter discount on top of the 30 percent. If you go to Connecticut E-ZPass and you are commuting on a regular basis, making 20 round-trips a month, say, that’s 40 one-way trips, you would qualify for an extra 20 percent discount. So, you’re getting close to a 50 percent discount just by the discounts that we offer through the E-ZPass, the Connecticut E-ZPass.

REP. SIMMS (140TH): Okay. Thank you. And currently I understand we’re kind of at the beginning stages of trying to put this all together. Is there a cost analysis on what is actually charged Connecticut residents currently, if, if it was implemented, you know, within the next year or two?

TOM MAZIARZ: We can probably prepare that. You’re talking about statewide, what would be the average cost per household?

REP. SIMMS (140TH): Correct.

TOM MAZIARZ: We can do that.

REP. SIMMS (140TH): I appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Next up Representative Steinberg, followed by Representative Lavielle.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you for your testimony today. You know, there’s been a lot of information, I guess you could call it, exchanged across the state, which I’d like to get clarified if I could. I’ve heard, for example, that the Special Transportation Fund has plenty of money and will forever and there’s really no need, all we got to do is tighten our belts, spend money more wisely, be more efficient on what we spend per mile on transportation investment, everything is hunky dory and there’s really no urgency here. What would be your response?

MELISSA MCCAW: That is not true. That is absolutely not true and, you know, I love the numbers. So, anytime you want to sit down and roll up the sleeves, I will gladly welcome that. Look, the Special Transportation Fund covers all of the salaries, fringe class for employees of DMV and DOT. It covers the operating expenses for our bus and our rail. It covers the capital infrastructure, state of good repair. We have been doing our best to limit the amount of debt issuance. We have been, you know, trying to restrict cost increases for operating costs for bus and for rail. But the reality of that, salaries do increase. We’re trying to achieve savings on healthcare and pension costs, things of that nature. But to maintain bus and rail, you know, you’re going to see costs go up by 2 to 3 percent on average per year.

And every year that we issue debts, the debt service will continue to grow. So, I don’t, I absolutely
disagree 100 percent that we can manage this structural deficit by driving down costs, that is not achievable.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): I’ve also heard that, you know, prosperity is just around the corner, that the Trump Administration is going to be lavishing money on us very shortly. They’ve been in office for over two years. Have you received anything specific with regard to transportation infrastructure investments from the federal government?

JOE GIULIETTI: Not only have we not received anything specific, we, I was with the Governor when he was talking to our state Senator, talking about the fact that what we want to do is be in position when that comes forward. But everything going forward that I’ve been involved in has, in fact, shown just the opposite. Okay. What has happened is where we used to be able to rely on an 80 percent match, you cannot rely on an 80 percent match, depending on the projects you’re going for, you’re lucky if you get a 50/50 match. And even in my latest conversations with the FRA, some of the matches they’re talking about are 75 percent from agency and 25 percent from the federal government.

So, we’re not seeing anything that has, has turned that around. I’m not, I have not personally in the positions that I’ve been involved with, seen any change in that, although we are very optimistic. And as you heard our Governor say, he has had conversations about the fact that they want to invest in infrastructure. What we want to do is be positioned that we are in the best possible place to have the local match to be go after every federal dollar that becomes available.
REP. STEINBERG (136TH): A quick question of clarification. We’ve heard a lot about the number of gantries, that if, basically because of just the gross number of them, that, therefore, directly correlates to how much a driver would, would be tolled. I believe I heard your explanation is, it’s related to where the exits are and how many roadways we’re tolling.

I just want to be sure, there’s no direct correlation between number of gantries and what people are gonna spend?

JOE GIULIETTI: I would say, you know, one of the things I was just reminded of because one of the questions we had before was about evasion and somebody pulling off the highway to avoid a gantry. The gantries are basically going to end up, being if they’re every six miles, that would cost the driver about 30 cents. Are they going to pull off an exit and pull on to an entrance ramp to avoid a 30 cent cost, okay, and the additional time to go and do that? So, to turn around and say to you what the gantries are basically doing is, it’s gonna be set up so that if the system will allow that it will capture and be fair to people on the total number of miles that they’re going and what the charge is going to be for those miles that they’re going through.

I don’t know if that answers the question, but.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you, I think that clarifies what, there may be a misconception out there. One last quick question, if I may. You’ve given us a lot of information about the issues related to the state of good repair, which has been
an ongoing problem in the State of Connecticut going on decades, just another example of our steady habits that are not necessarily good habits. We’ve avoided state of good repair. We’ve heard data that we have over 300 deficient bridges. And I know deficient is a term that you take very seriously. We all have the memory of the Mianus River Bridge collapse. I’m sure you’re doing the best you can, but if we continue down this path of failing to put enough money on the table for state of good repair, are you concerned about the potential ramifications?

JOE GIULIETTI: First off, let me be clear and not only from the standpoint of the concern going forward. We’ve already talked about, and I’ll use the one that I’m most comfortable with, I’m trying to avoid being classified as just the rail guy. But as the President of Metro North, who is out there and have to deal with a state that did not have the funding in place to even do the constant tension catenary system, which the State of New York completed in ‘95 and the State of Connecticut is still working on today and is supposed to be completed by the end of this summer. When you go and extend projects like that, the cost of extension, the cost of prolonging those projects is a cost that gets passed on and it’s future debt that gets passed on.

So, right now the problem is that not only am I looking at all the projects that I have in front of me that are looking for funding going forward, the fact that we go out and we look at highway bridges that were designed for 50,000 cars that are carrying 175,000 cars and what we’re putting on are bandaids. So, bandaids, I want to assure you that we have a
department that’s dedicated to keeping it safe, but eventually what ends up happening is exactly what you see on the rail system, it will get slower and it will get slower and it will get slower. And the economic impact of what that is, is also as critical as the safety impact of what happens when you don’t make those investments.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): And I’ve seen your spreadsheet of all the state of good repair projects, it’s a book long enough to be compared to War and Peace at this point. And I’m very concerned personally that if we do not immediately start making the appropriate investment that we’ll all be sitting here regretting a bad outcome and then where will we all be? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Next is Representative Lavielle, then followed by Senator Slap.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning or afternoon to all of you. Thank you for being here. I think all of you being here, recognizes there are ramifications in all of the areas you covered of the transportation issue.

I have two questions. And the first one has to do with the actual need for ongoing revenue stream. We’ve seen a number of plans that suggest that they will deliver X or Y or Z, and we’ve seen it for one year as an example. There’s, there’s a question I’ve had for quite a long time and before all of you got here, which is, I could, I could use the business analogy or the nonprofit analogy, whatever, I’ll just use the bake sale analogy, it’s easier.
When a bunch of kids show up for a bake sale, they sit down and they say, okay, we need for our project to raise $100. Now, we need the $100, but we’ll raise a little more, $110 or $120, but so we brought as many muffins as we needed, or we baked as many muffins as we needed to sell to get that. We didn’t bake as many muffins as we needed for $200 or for $300, whatever. With all the discussion of funding needs, revenue stream needs for one year, I do not feel that we have an accurate assessment of once you would get started. How much and what are the needs? Forget totals for a minute. What does the revenue stream need going forward from the DOT to do what you consider a reasonable amount work, and will that grow over time? What are we looking at, because if you put too much in the tolling system to account for that then we’re, you know what I mean, you got the picture. That’s my question.

MELISSA MCCAW: So, we’re gonna do a two part on that. Before we even begin to increase our level of involvement for state of good repair or an enhanced transportation system, our need and what we need to be solving for, between now and 2026, is a $400-million dollar deficit in the Special Transportation Fund, that’s number one. We need to break even, based on what we’re currently doing. Current bus, current rail, current $800-million dollars of debt issuance. And then I’ll ask Commissioner Giuletti to talk about the additional investments that you believe are warranted.

JOE GIULETTI: And again, I’m gonna turn around from the standpoint. I want to make it clear that even in doing the study, the study wasn’t to go and get to a dollar figure. The study was based on what
are the volumes that are out there? What is the tolling compared to other places that have done it? And what are the revenue streams that come in? And that’s why, you know, even, you know, when I’ve gone through the reports, I was not here to initiate those reports, but I’ve gone through all those reports. That’s why I have a good idea what it’s gonna take in terms of the truck tolling, that’s why I made some of the recommendations that I made when I was on the transition committee.

But we are looking at right now, you know, I’ll give you a quick list of what is right now in, in, we’ll call it a list of the state-funded projects included in an attachment state-funded program. And the major projects and programs to be canceled or indefinitely delayed. The I84 viaduct project, $4.4 billion, Heroes’ Tunnels, New Haven, $200 million. Goldstar Bridge in New London, $290.5 billion, million, I’m sorry, 184, I84 Danbury exits, $3 to $8, 1.5 billion, Mixmaster $7 billion, I95 congestion mitigation, $1.2 billion, Interchanges 15 and 7, in Norwalk, $160 million, I91, I691 Interchange in Meriden, $180 million. And replacing the Stevenson Dam Bridge, $141 million. Removing traffic signals in Route 9, in Middletown, $75 million, Hartford Line Stations, $340 million, Hartford Line Rail Improvements, $164 million, Rail Fleet Purchases, canceling 61 cars out of the 111 cars, $305 million. The New Haven Parking Garage, $80 million. The Metro North Moveable Bridges, Devon, Companies Cob and Saga, $4 billion dollars.

This is what’s at risk if we don’t come up with a way of going forward and coming up with a stream to go into it. That’s why, since I’ve been here I’ve
become very, very involved with OPM in terms of going in and saying, what can I do? Where can we go? What do we do if, you know, depending on the different scenarios that come out? We’ve gotten to know each other on almost a daily or bi-daily basis because of the fact that I have to keep going in there and saying, what do we do if this doesn’t happen?

So, I want to be clear, it’s a very real need that I’m dealing with as I’m looking at this.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Commissioner, thank you. I wouldn’t question that at all. I’m only trying to get a handle on the year-by-year, you know, when we do budgets. And if I put my Appropriations hat on, you know, it’s, it’s simply a question of how much do we need to put out there and burden drivers, the public, taxpayers, whatever in order to get exactly or approximately what we need every year. I know your list and the, and I trust you to prioritize that list as well; I know you know how to do that.

So, that was, that was what I was after was really the actual numbers of how we can lay this out because I still don’t feel that I fully grasp what is, what is the X that we’re solving for on a yearly basis through a constant revenue stream such as tolls?

TOM MAZIARZ: Representative, if I may, again, Tom Maziarz, Chief of Planning at DOT. And I’m looking over to our Chief Engineer and our Chief Finance Officer, if they want to add to this. What we have in terms of our fairly detailed capital needs plan over the next five years and beyond, would put us about a total need, federal plus state, of about
$2.2 or $2.3 million dollars. At any rate, so that is, I think, close to $7 or $800 short of, of, we’re about $7 to $800 million short of that now.

MARK ROLFE: Mark Rolfe, Chief Engineer at DOT. The number that’s on the citing is what we put forward in our five-year capital program. It was roughly $2.1 to $2.2-billion dollars per year. It does, will require some escalation over time. But I think our feeling was that maintain the state of good repair. Didn’t allow us to improve it dramatically, although there was some improvement projects in there. The base of the program was, at least 75 percent of it was focused on state of good repair. There was some enhancement projects that we’d hope to be able to do with some of that money. But that was the number that we were shooting for was the $2.1-billion dollar figure per year with combination of state and federal dollars, so you’d have to net out what we thought we’d receive from federal and then the balance would be state funds.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you.

MARK ROLFE: Does that answer your question.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Sort of, yeah. I would love to see that over a period of several years. But I don’t want to keep the committee too long either. And I, I, anything you could send would be helpful. I, sorry.

MELISSA MCCAW: Representative Lavielle, I’d be happy to send you what a 10-year projection looks like with a tolling action embedded. I think the answer you’re looking for, in addition to everything we just said, as, you know, currently we have a $1.7-billion dollar proposed Special Transportation
Fund budget, after implementation of a more comprehensive solution, whatever that looks like, we’d probably be in the range of growing this to around $2.4 to $2.5 billion.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): And everything that you’re saying would be with the freeze of the sales tax on new cars?

MELISSA MCCAW: That is correct.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Which is meant to be $360 million or so per year. Okay. Thank you. And my second question, I want to go fast in deference to overtime the committee. My other question is, I do understand that with time the gas tax, which for the next three, four years is supposed to be flat in the projections I’ve seen that they will be able to create eventually because the fuel efficiencies of electric cars or whatever. I would like to know if you have any projections over time of when you really expect that decline to start and how fast it will accelerate and how fast the gas tax revenues might disappear or at least significantly diminish? Thank you.

MELISSA MCCAW: Okay. I’d be happy to send you some specifics from our out-year projection report. We are essentially expecting to see relatively flat revenues, minus half a percent, starting in ‘20 to ‘23, 2023, but I will have a staff follow up with something specific for you to answer that question.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you. I think that would be really helpful.

TOM MAZIARZ: May I also add that at the national level, the federal government, yes. The federal
government is looking at that issue. They’re very concerned about the highway trust fund. Most research agencies that have been thinking about this issue feel that with conversions to electric cars, et cetera, that we are probably gonna be down 20 to 30 percent, somewhere around 2030. So, it’s, you know, it’s a little bit longer term, but it’s a significant drop by then.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Okay. Thank you. That’s very helpful. It’s still a ways off. Thanks very much all of you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Next we’ll move on to our newest member of the Transportation Committee and Newest Senator, so congratulations, Senator, Senator Slap, you have the floor.

SENATOR SLAP (19TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have one question, three parts, I’ll be real brief and then I’ll sit back and listen. So, from folks in my district, too, who have concerns about tolls. I want to recite kind of three, three arguments that I hear the most and maybe you can help, help educate me about, you know, what our accurate response is; one, loss of federal funds, all right, will we lose them? As soon as we put in the first gantry, we’ll lose all $700 and whatever million dollars of federal funds; so, if you could address that, that would be great.

Two, bloated administrative costs to DOT. We have some of the highest per-mile administrative costs to DOT of any state in the country. Why are they so high and can we get savings there and can’t that alleviate the need for tolls?
And then the last one, and my colleague, Representative Lavielle just touched on this, was the gas tax. And you hear from residents we already have and have had for a long time one of the highest gas taxes in the country; why hasn’t this been adequate? Granted, we don’t have tolls, most if not all of our neighboring states do, but we have this high gas tax. And we haven’t really seen a precipitous drop yet, we anticipate over the years. But and I think we’ve raided, so to speak, right, funds from the Special Transportation Fund, but haven’t done that and maybe you can educate me on that, I think in a little while now, close to a decade. So, those are in summary three, three kind of themes, three arguments that I hear from folks in my district and I’d be grateful if you could respond. Thank you.

TOM MAZIARZ: And I’m gonna respond for the Commissioner on this one, since I’ve been the one dealing directly with the federal agencies on that. We have in writing from the federal agencies that we’ll suffer absolutely no loss of federal funds, if we start collecting tolls. It is clear, it’s been clear for at least a couple of years now and we have it in writing.

JOE GIULIETTI: And I’ll take your second part in terms of the administrative costs. I saw that same report. It’s a report that I’ve been dealing with from, from this organization for a long time, even before I came here.

The problem with a report like that is it’s very general, very vague and they started off by saying, this should never be used for cost comparisons because what they do, for example, is they’ll
compare a dirt road in a rural country and the miles of that dirt road and not how many lanes are on it, but just the fact of that road, and then they compare it against, you know, I95 or I84, where there’s 12 lanes of traffic going on continuously and what the cost of each of those are and that’s how they come up with their formula.

I will send you, and I’ll be happy to send you from even the past administration how it was responded to and the fact that they now realize they, they’ve actually said that they did not have the data from all of the states to do a fair comparison. The last commissioner turned around and when they redid the numbers, came up with it that we would be more in line with 10 to the number 20 as opposed to number 50, okay, because of our, because of our density and the volume of traffic that we’re having.

So, let me send you what we’ve already provided in terms of answers so that where you can see it. I will always tell you, we’ll look at administrative costs, that’s part of what I’ve done in every position I’ve been in. But I will also tell you that, you know, we, we look to be lean, we look to be efficient and I’d like to at least give you back the material that has already been developed that goes and takes on that argument. We are not the 50th, we are more like the 20th in terms of it all. And based on the volume and the amount of density that we have, that’s probably about where we should be, but let me respond to you on that. And I think you take the last --

MELISSA MCCAW: Great. And with respect to number 3, we’re currently seventh highest in the nation with respect to gasoline, motor fuel taxes as of
July 1, 2018. I’m happy to share that information with you. I think the challenge is that, as you previously heard, that overall the gas tax has not been growing, it’s been relatively slatted at around $500-million dollars. And in general, expenses are continuing to grow and the Transportation Fund wages, healthcare, pension, and so the rate at which our revenues are growing is not in alignment with expenses.

The last piece that’s particularly important to note is that over the past five to eight years, and I’ll send you a chart, we begin to significantly increase how much debt we are issuing, those decisions were made, those projects were funded and now we’re feeling the impact of having to pay for it. So, those are the contributing factors.

SENATOR SLAP (19TH): Just one follow up, if I may, Mr. Chair. I don’t mean to put you on the spot, so if you don’t know this, feel free, you can get back to me later. But do you know when the last time we took money out of the Special Transportation Fund and diverted it to the General Fund; do you know when that was?

MELISSA MCCAW: I’ll follow up and send that to you, directly to your office.

SENATOR SLAP (19TH): Thank you.

JOE GIULIETTI: I’m gonna go with all of that in a moment.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, for your edification and for according to the reports that we have, the last time the Special Transportation Fund was in the red was in 2003. Since then, Special
Transportation Fund has had revenues either self-sufficient or General, General Fund dollars were moved into Special Transportation Fund. So, the last time that occurred was 2003, according to our charts here. And then, if I May, as we move on to Representative Zawistowski, who is next. A lot of the requests are being asked of the three of you to provide information to individuals. We want to make sure that all committee members get all the information that’s being requested so that everyone could be on the same page as we move this conversation along.

So, with that, Representative Zawistowski, followed by Senator Haskell.

REP. ZAWISTOWSKI (61ST): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. I have a couple, some comments followed by a couple of questions. I have multiple concerns about some of the bills that we have before us today. But I’d like to focus on transparency and accountability. I do have some fear that there would be some loss of that if we establish a transportation or tolling authority.

And I just want to give you an example of why I’m really concerned about this. This is my third term on the Transportation Committee and my third term on the Transportation Subcommittee of Appropriations. So, I’ve been involved in a lot of the budgeting process. Last budget cycle, we offered the opportunity to UConn students to get rides to Hartford on, on the bus for $20, I think, per semester per year, whichever works.

And, you know, it passed the budget. It was legislatively approved. I was at a breakfast at
Naugatuck last week and all of a sudden I heard about something called U-Pass, which is for $20 a semester, allows college students to have unlimited access to bus and rail anywhere in the State of Connecticut and Springfield. And I brought this up in the Transportation Subcommittee meeting and it was a surprise to all of us and it was a surprise to OFA as well.

The U-Pass includes 17 colleges and universities, including all our state-owned colleges and the University of Saint Joseph, and this must be a huge subsidy. I mean, I could understand some benefits in getting students back and forth to UConn, but throughout the state; I mean, and we’re talking about a tough time, a huge subsidy at a time where we’re talking about your lack of funding to repair our roads and bridges, not enough railcars on a couple of the lines and, of course, tolls.

And OFA did confirm that this is not legislatively approved. That that is something that just kind of came out of nowhere. We don’t know who actually approved it.

So, my follow up question is, are you aware of this U-Pass program and do you have any idea who approved it and how much it costs and also can tolls from highways be used to subsidize buses and rail? Thank you.

JOE GIULIETTI: I am aware of the U-Pass program. I’m aware that it’s for, the way that it is done is every student is assessed a student activity, all right, that would allow them to go and utilize this system. I do, I can’t tell you when it was approved and who approved it. I wasn’t here for that. We
will research that and get back to you. I do know that it works out that it has been a good program and a good partnership in terms of the money that’s generated from it and though it provides access, and again, I’m gonna be cautious in saying this. So, if I get this wrong and somebody jump in, but even on the rail side, it was supposed to be during the off-peak hours when it would not impact our regular commuters. All right. I’m getting a nod, so I got that right because I remember when they approached me when I was the President of Metro North on it.

So, it’s an idea to take those timeframes when we have capacity and allow it to be utilized by the students going forward. So, I will get back to you with additional information on that. I am not aware how the approval process went on that. What was the second part of it, I’m sorry?

REP. ZAWISTOWSKI (61ST): Commissioner, the website that does mention U-Pass doesn’t actually show any restrictions on times.

JOE GIULIETTI: Tom, do you know?

TOM MAZIARZ: Like the Commissioner said, I believe the original intent was to, to keep it on off-beat times. I’m not aware if that is true that it is available during peak times or not.

JOE GIULIETTI: I’ll take that again as something that I have to get additional information to you on and I will get that information for you.

REP. ZAWISTOWSKI (61ST): Thank you. And my other question is also, can tolls from highways be used to subsidize businesses and rail?
JOE GIULIETTI: I would say to you that, that we will be in active discussions on it to what the, depending on the tolling method that we go for. If It’s for congestion mitigation and we can prove that, that, that is part of the congestion mitigation, then I would say we have room to go and do that. But for me to go and give you answer on it right now, when we haven’t decided whether or not we’re going with truck tolling only or we’re going with all vehicle tolling, I will tell you there’s a lot of latitude on the congestion mitigation. And if we can come up with things that show that this can reduce the congestion on the highways, then there’s some latitude there.

But again, I have to caution that all of this, I would not jeopardize the funds that will come, you know, be available to us from the federal government and our ability to go and do it until we actually decide which way we’re gonna go and then I’ll come back and tell you where that’s gonna be.

REP. ZAWISTOWSKI (61ST): Yeah, I do appreciate hearing that as well. But thank you very much. This is just one reason why I am concerned about accountability and transparency going forward, if you’re getting a tolling authority. So, again, thank you very much. And the Transportation Subcommittee of Appropriations is meeting on Friday, so I’m sure we’ll have an opportunity to follow up. Thank you very much.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Next up is Senator Haskell, followed by Representative O’Dea and in the dugout is Senator Hwang.
SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And thank you all for being here and testifying today. Your expertise in this area is greatly appreciated. I’m laser-focused on the communities, as I understand many of you are too. I represent a community in which many people travel to and from New York every single day for work or simply within Fairfield County. And I thank, I thank Commissioner Designee Lehman for laying out some of the costs that they bear right now, whether it’s $6.1-billion dollars annually in the form of additional vehicle costs or the loss or productivity, 49 hours a year between Bridgeport and Stamford.

I want to narrow in on one portion of your testimony that concerns the commuter discount. How exactly would that be? How would you define a commuter?

JOE GIULIETTI: Actually, it’s the same way that the, the rail system would look at it as well. You know, and this will change over time. But right now, commuter is looked at as five days a week, four weeks out of the month, so that’s where your 20 days would be, so a back and forth. So, if you were on the system 40 times in a month, you would be a commuter.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): So, it’s crossing a gantry 40 times --

JOE GIULIETTI: In a month.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): -- per month? Okay. Great. And in your testimony, you used the word, maximized, and specifically in reference to a 30 percent discount for Connecticut E-ZPass drivers and a 20 percent commuter discount. What’s the limiting
factor there? Why is that the maximum available discount?

JOE GIULIETTI: No, I don’t think we used that it was the maximum available discount. It was what we used to come up with the funds and as we looked at what was being done in other areas. Again, that’s gonna be a discussion with the legislature and the Governor in terms of it. There have been questions already as to whether or not could it be more, all right? And the answer is for every bit of the discount that you want to go and raise it, it’s going to change that net --

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Revenue, sure.

JOE GIULIETTI: -- the revenue structure on it. I would just add that every single rate, every single discount and every other assumption we sort of made when we put together that 2010 plan, that was really intended overtime be a representative scenario for discussion purposes. That was not saying, we’re receiving a 20 percent commuter discount. So, that’s open for discussion as to how that could get adjusted. But it would have to be done in the context of it as we adjust somethings up, other things down, what’s the overall impact on the final net revenue that we get.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Sure. I appreciate that. Thank you. So, many of my colleagues have brought up the notion of a fear that this is going to increase congestion on our local roads. And I’m wondering if, you’re far more familiar with the technology than I am, but if it would be possible to exempt individuals who cross a gantry within a 10
mile radius of where their E-ZPass is registered from paying the toll at that gantry?

In other words, if I live off of Exit 42 on the Merritt, and I hop on for one exit to get to Stop & Shop in Norwalk, perhaps I would be exempt from paying the gantry in that neighborhood and, therefore, would opt out of using the local roads and would continue to use the Merritt? Would that be technologically possible from a 21st Century tolling perspective?

JOE GIULIETTI: You know, I’m gonna say that I can’t tell you that it is not technologically possible, but the same way that I would turn around and say, would a single gantry at a cost per Connecticut residents of three-and-a-half cents per mile, and averaging it out to about six miles or 18 cents, okay. I’m gonna turn around and say, I don’t know if opening that up because you do realize if we open up that way, we’d be opening it up across the entire state. And that’s gonna be the difficulty because then you’ve got to tie in every one of those E-ZPasses to where that individual’s living to go and make that factor. But for me to go and say it is not possible, I can’t say that to you. I will say to you, I, I do have an issue with the practical application of that and the potential impact, as we’re also trying to make sure that we’ve done it in a way that mitigates the losses that could occur from abuse of the system.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): And I certainly appreciate it. I think it’s a valuable point that if the cost is low enough, it may not be a mitigating factor for those who would be passing through only one gantry.
JOE GIULIETTI: Yeah, I would agree with it. The cost is probably gonna be lower for a single gantry than most people anticipate. The other thing I think it’s necessary to look at that question from a policy perspective, is it gonna help you achieve your goal of congestion mitigation. And I think I would argue that it wouldn’t because the problem we have on I95 today are the number of short trips and some of it people don’t have a choice, but they’re jumping on and they’re jumping off. That creates a lot of weaving as they come on to the highway and a lot of weaving as they get off of the highway. That’s a good piece of the problem with congestion on I95 and several other highways. We have an entrance every mile on I95 between New Haven and New York.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): That’s really interesting. I’m glad you brought up congestion pricing because I want to home in on that for a moment. Has the experience when this has been used in other states been that it has positively impacted the daily lives of commuters? Does congestion pricing work in getting folks and especially trucks off the road during those peak hours?

JOE GIULIETTI: The answer is, yes. Okay. The answer is that it definitely does because if you think about it even from the casual driver that has an option that whether or not I head over and go to the stores at 8 o’clock in the morning or I go to the store at 10 o’clock in the morning, and it’s much cheaper if I go at 10 o’clock in the morning, that has that affect. And the other end of it is, it definitely has an effect on the truck as well as they look at what the off-peak pricing is to what
the peak-hour pricing is and how that, that can have the effect. And I will tell you, if it wasn’t having the effect, we would not be getting the support from the federal government because that’s why they support a process like this is for congestion mitigation.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): That’s wonderful. I think that the commuters in my district will be tremendously thrilled to know that there’s something that can be done to reduce traffic and it’s not --

JOE GIULIETTI: It’s also the fact that we would then look at not only what that money is bringing in, but we can then look at to each area, those that we’re putting that system in, where it is that we can add lanes, okay, based on the fact that we’ll have this funding coming in and a funding mechanism to be able to go and add lanes that can reduce that congestion and again get people moving. I think where’s Tom is gonna jump in on me, so.

TOM MAZIARZ: Yeah, exactly, you stole my funder. But when we did the value pricing study originally about five, six years ago, we looked at I95 and what we found is that if you put the toll revenue back into specific targeted improvements like, for example, we’re looking right now, our engineering department and improving on I95, I’m calling this targeted, because they were looking at a six-mile widening of 95 northbound, just south of Bridgeport, just south of Route 8. That’s where there is a major bottleneck today. And if we can fix that bottleneck, we’re gonna reduce the amount of congestion behind it by about 60 percent. So, there are targeted improvements we can use that toll
revenue for to really help reduce congestion on top of the pricing.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): That’s fantastic and I certainly look forward to working with you on that. If I may just ask one final question, Mr. Chairman, and this is directed at Commissioner Giulietti. You know, if you take the train from Westport to Grand Central every day, you pay a user fee, you don’t have to buy that Metro North ticket. And we hear so often from those who are opposed to raising the necessary revenue to improve our infrastructure that tolls are a tax, tolls are a tax. But tolls really only do apply to those who are on our roads; therefore, I view them as a user fee.

I’m wondering if in your experience, in your many years working at Metro North, did anybody complain that the ticket they bought to buy, to go into Manhattan, the ticket that they bought to travel on a rail line was a tax as opposed to a user fee?

JOE GIULIETTI: To be quite candid about it, you will always get the complaint as soon as it goes up, okay. But, no, they’ve never called it a tax, they called it a fee or a fair for riding the system. And I, I like your characterization, it’s been used when I was in other states. It’s a user fee for utilization of that asset or that highway.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. We have probably about eight or nine members on the list. There might be a few more as they come in. We want to be cognizant of every one’s time. So, I just make mental note of that, so that we can try and keep our
time efficient with the administration so we can then move into the public hearing.

So, please ask any questions that is important, but we just want to be cognizant of that. Next up is Representative O’Dea, followed by Senator Hwang and in the dugout is Representative Morin.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Commissioner, Madam Secretary and all your friends. Real quick, on the congestion pricing, I will say, I’ve done a lot of research over the years and in speaking with the Assistant Vice President Controller who was responsible for the operation of E-ZPass and tolls by mail, accounting revenue and development and implementation policies for the NTA, he told me that it actually did not impact, there was a 4 percent impact on trucks with pricing.

In other words, they offered a 40 percent reduction and it didn’t alter hardly at all the truck traffic. It does, it may alter the passenger traffic slightly, but I was wondering if you were aware of that study in New York?

JOE GIULIETTI: First I’ll say to you, I was not aware of that study in New York, but I will say to you, the problem with New York is that there is never a time that the highways are not at capacity, all right. So, you’re dealing with a different situation there, you know. And the other end of it is, you know, it’s like, you know, I, I, I did work with the bridge and tunnel authority as well when we were putting it in and it goes back to, I think it was Representative Devlin, who turned around and talked about whether or not they would go to try and avoid the tolls. It did not in any way go to move
it on that end, but there was a period of time where there was a way to avoid one of the bridges and the tolls on that bridge, and it impacted that community with the number of trucks that would look to go and avoid.

So, the same way you’ve gotten that answer, I will turn around and tell you, I’d like to sit down with you and then go over what we were looking at when there was a community that there was a way of bypassing that, what they did to go and bypass that toll and what the effect was on that community.

So, I’m not, I’ll, I’ll go back to you and say, you’ve got me at a disadvantage, and I’ve sat there through all of these. So, I’ll, I’ll look forward to having the discussion with you.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): He’s in my district. We’ll set up a coffee, in your second-favorite town, New Caanone.

So, and Madam Secretary, just going through, let me ask on the congestion pricing again. My understanding, just as a follow up, in order for us to put in tolls, we either have to put in congestion pricing, we have to show that it impacts congestion, correct? Is that, is that fair to say?

JOE GIULIETTI: I’ll answer that. It’s fair to say, yeah, congestion pricing or --

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Or fix a bridge, a specific toll on a bridge; is there a way to combine those two? In other words, could you have, if we had just gantries on bridge alone and that would prevent, over water, so it would prevent diversion, and could
you argue it’s for the bridge and it’s for congestion so you can use it everywhere?

JOE GIULIETTI: I, I, I think what you’re trying to get at is whether or not when we were looking at the bridges, we were looking at other than gantry and the answer is, no, they would be gantry, whether or not it would be just bridges or it would be for bridge and toll. If you’re turning around and saying, is there a way of looking at can we just do it at the bridges and not just make it trucks; is that what you were asking?

REP. O’DEA (125TH): No, just at the bridges, but, but have it so that it’s both congestion and with related to the bridge. So, in other words, in order for the feds to approve this, as I understand Tom’s testimony, is that basically you either have congestion or you have it for that one bridge or so my question is, can you, can you kind of hybrid?

JOE GIULIETTI: Yeah, the answer to it is, you’re getting back to the same issue of how many are you gonna put out there and what is the revenue stream gonna be, because if you’re just doing it at the bridges, even if you were going to do a mitigation at the bridges, the fact of the matter is, what they allow at the bridges is once you begin the, letting the contracts and doing it, it’s a way of recovering your cost on those bridges and that’s why they allow you to do it. The other one, which is much more, I’ll call it flexible and variable, is the congestion mitigation that allows you to do it through a greater area and then be able to make investments into the infrastructure. Doing it just to bridges is not gonna develop the revenue stream
that we would be looking for when we dealt with the problems that started this conversation.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Is there a certain threshold for congestion that we need to show to the feds in order to get approval for it?

JOE GIULIETTI: Yeah, they’re gonna be very interested. We’re gonna have to demonstrate with not so much the report we just did for 2018, but our next report, which would be the final toll plan that we submit that we’re able to achieve a significant reduction in congestion, probably beyond the, you know, say 20 percent or so.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Okay. And shifting over now, to kind of conclude with a question about the, the funding as we all, where we all started, Madam Commissioner. Just my understanding in looking at the sweeping out, we swept between 2011 to 2017 at roughly $600-million dollars from the STF, whether it’s before going into the STF or after it went in. And we obviously passed the constitutional lockbox that some of us call the leaky box. But in any event, what happened was in the bipartisan budget that I appreciate the other side of the aisle doing with us last year or two years ago, we had the $300-million dollars that was going from the sales tax into the STF and that’s being swept out because of the general fund problem. What are we doing to fund that $300 million hole in the STF that was created by that sweep?

MELISSA MCCAW: So, thank you for an excellent question. So, first of all, with respect to the lockbox, the Governor’s proposal honors the lockbox through 2019, right, so we haven’t reversed any of
the existing lockbox. And so, therefore, the transfer level of 8 percent, the $29-million dollars is, would be maintained in the STF. The proposal as the Governor has put forward, we’re able to achieve balance for the next few years, again through maintaining that issue instead of $800-million dollars instead of a, you know, a higher level that DOT would argue is necessary, but the STF is also benefiting from some of the revenue and expenditure policy options that the Governor’s proposed. So, for example, the broadening of a sales tax states, you know, 8 percent of the sales tax revenues benefit the Transportation Fund. So, there, we’re actually picking up on revenues from that perspective as well as some of the savings on healthcare and pension that are proposed, benefit the STF because of the employees that are funded from that fund. So, for the next two-year timeframe, the fund is sustainable and hence the reason for the Governor putting forward the tolling options because a decision would have to be made in the short term to actually achieve long-term savings and bring the structural balance that would be required beyond the biennium.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Couldn’t those new funding sources that were being utilized with the sale tax and whatnot then put into the general fund and just leave the sales tax that we fixed on a by-person basis being left in the STF?

MELISSA MCCAW: It would not have, it would not have, it would be nowhere to nearly adequate.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): What I’m saying is, the $300 million was moved into the general fund because there was a hole, correct?
MELISSA MCCAW: Uh-huh.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Why couldn’t we have just left that in the STF and used the other funding sources that were plugged into the STF to fix that problem and use that to fill the hole in the general fund?

MELISSA MCCAW: So, for example, just to be very clear, in fiscal year 2020, the additional amount of car sales tax diversion would have been $91-million dollars. The STF benefited by about $27-million dollars from the sales tax broadening as well as from savings with respect to pension and healthcare. What I think I just didn’t very intelligently explain, but I’ll try again, is that the savings from those items, the pension, healthcare as well as the sale tax broadening, is not adequate to meet the $360-million dollars, there’s still a significant deficit.

So, if what you’re saying is, could we have taken, you know, the $27-million dollars of sales tax attribution and, you know, let’s say it’s another $20-million dollars of the pension, healthcare, and instead divert it a little bit more, another portion of it, yes, that could be achieved. But we could not, obviously, transfer the full $360 as planned without having a deficit in the general fund because we haven’t closed that deficit. That deficit continues into the second biennium.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you. And I was just trying to point out, it looks like we’re kind of shifting money around to fix a problem that --

MELISSA MCCAW: Not exactly.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): -- we fixed, we fixed, well, we’re sweeping the car tax, the car tax from the STF fund before it gets in there, correct?

MELISSA MCCAW: Uh-huh.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So --

MELISSA MCCAW: We were --

REP. O’DEA (125TH): -- my point is --

MELISSA MCCAW: Go ahead.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): -- we’re shifting that away from the Transportation Fund, correct?

MELISSA MCCAW: I would answer that respectfully that had we proposed and enacted in law the shift of the car sales tax and coupled that with a, not saying that the Governor have -- the income increase, or sales tax increase, then we’d say that was a viable shift.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): I got you.

MELISSA MCCAW: But to take money that really doesn’t have a source for backfilling it, we don’t see that as a viable plan.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Okay. And then finally, just with the widening of 95, we’ve got a number of studies between New York and New Haven corridor, it’s about $9 billion to $30-billion dollars. I’m wondering if, the room wasn’t as packed for my public/private partnership bill that I put in, and I’m wondering if that’s something, Commissioner Redeker, we had tried to do this before, the three P’s, and it didn’t work out, it was too difficult for the private sector to get into. Maybe it’s an
appropriate question for Mr. Lehman, too, but is there a public/private partnership plan so that the $9 to $30-billion dollars to widen 95 at that bottleneck that we were talking about could do it faster and cheaper than the private sector or the public sector, excuse me?

JOE GIULIETTI: I’m gonna, I’m gonna say that everywhere that I’ve been at, we’ve been open to that idea. We would love to go and make that work because it is a way of accelerating the project. What we would, I’ve always cautioned this. What you need to do is make sure that we put the right people in place that can negotiate this because the people that you’ve invited in know how to do this very, very well. We have to be very, very diligent in making sure that we’ve put in all the right protections and make sure we’re getting the most equitable deal out of it. And with that I’ll, you’ve had a little more on that side.

DAVID LEHMAN: I think that’s right. It’s the trade off of efficiency and cost because the private sector’s going to demand a return on that capital. And we should have a discussion, is that the right price to pay for the efficiency you’re getting. But it’s something that I think we should have a conversation about. It’s not clear to me right now that that’s the right answer or the wrong answer.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): I just want to point out that Commissioner Redeker, we had a public/private partnership legislation, it didn’t work, it was unusable, it didn’t get any private sector monies in. I just hope that when we look at to do it again that we actually encourage some private sector money to come in and do it.
TOM MAZIARZ: Can I just add on that. Because of the existing legislation does not work well, that’s what you were just referring to, so we would need new legislation that is more appropriate.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): That’s the purpose of my bill. Thank you.

JOE GIULIETTI: We will focus on that as we go forward.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative for those questions. Next Senator Hwang, followed by Representative Morin.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you all for being here today. And I want to welcome again, Commissioner Giulietti and Commissioner Designate Lehman as well as OPM Secretary McCaw. This is one of our short meetings. But as we’ve heard repeatedly from you all is the fact that this is an alternative revenue source. And with the incredible number of gantries and the presentation of financial solutions to our obvious transportation challenges, I really worry whether we have the courage to not divert this money into other areas as they arise.

And I think the general public’s lack of trust and competence in the legislature as well as past administrations and even currently with the diversion of the dealer car taxes from the STF Transportation Fund is just an example that the fact is, once this gets put in, and we’re talking over and over again about revenue, that it’s going to feed the beast that just has not been stopped.
And so, I really worry about that and I’m really concerned that, you know, we’re presenting this hole in your shoe as an infrastructure transportation fix. But I’m extremely concerned that there has been no guarantee, even despite the lock box that this will not be diverted and it’s not an alternative source of revenue.

Saying that, I just actually have a couple of questions. I’m very sensitive of time. So, rather than calling it a tolling bill, wouldn’t it be more appropriate to call this a mileage tax with gantries and the segue to ensure that people don’t jump on and off and the fact that it is a revenue source. You know, usually when I think of tolling, it’s to fix a bridge, it’s to create a new road. This is a comprehensive revenue source to kind of fix a catch all. Because right now we don’t have any prioritization from 1 to 10, we’ve got a five-year plan, but we don’t have a real prioritization laid out that says, we’re doing this one, we’re doing this two, we’re doing this three.

So, what would you say to that, that we should start calling this a mileage tax instead of just simply a tolling bill?

JOE GIULIETTI: Well, the Representative that spoke before and wanted to cut around and say that it was an actual fee for utilization, and I want to hit both of your statements. One, I already told you that I have FHWA here in the room, and they would also tell you, they’ll be the first ones to come after us if we were ever to take this funding and use it in the corridors for which the, the tolls are being generated. It has to be done that way, it’s the federal rules that are on it.
The second part that I would turn and tell you is that from the standpoint that this money also is to be utilized for congestion mitigation, if we’re not proving that we’re doing that, then we are not gonna get the approval to be able to go and do this going forward. So, that’s part of what has to go in. So, in terms of it all, you know, the other part of your question in terms of the lockbox, I can’t talk about what happened in the past, but I’m here with the OPM secretary, who will also confirm for you whether or not there is, you know, any sort of an intent to not be transparent on this and say where this money is going for.

MELISSA MCCAW: Sure. It is clearly the, as stated publicly, as stated in the written documents and if it needs additional solidifying, the goal is that this, the intent is that these dollars would be expressly used for infrastructure. I think your points are very valid. Obviously, you know, four to eight years from now, there could potentially be a different Governor in office. Perhaps the beautiful faces across the table will be different faces. The piece of what Commissioner Giulietti stated that gives me the most assurance and certainly you’ll see a different OPM Secretary here as well but would be that in order to comply with the application and the documents with the federal government, we could not do what you’re describing. And so, that is the piece that I hope would give our, our taxpayers and their residents a greater assurance, the fact that we would be out of compliance with the federal government if we were to do what was described.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you. But you can the reservation that people have. I mean, I go back to,
I wasn’t here, but just as you stated, 20-plus years ago, the impact was going to solve all of our problems, but unfortunately despite record tax increases, we still don’t have enough money to fund our basic critical services in our state, not to mention our infrastructure. With that said, I think the other question is, the common refrain in our district is the fact that people are frustrated sitting in traffic on the Merritt Parkway or 95 or waiting for delayed trains. And with all the inconsistencies of what we have in century old bridges, this toll or mileage tax, if implemented, won’t solve that within a year, will it? Because that’s the presentation down in my district that as people are suffering and sitting in traffic, you put in tolls, it’s gonna solve that congestion, it’s gonna solve the rail inefficiencies. But you won’t see that in the first year, will you? You won’t see that in five years, will you? Tell me, will we see that in five years, one year, 10 years?

JOE GIULIETTI: To turn around, first off, you’ve already seen the report that we don’t even see the money start coming in until 2024, but what it does change, okay, is our economic forecast and what we do know will be coming in. So, therefore, we’re able to work with the department on those projects that we know, just letting those projects go is going to be a year’s worth of planning, a year’s worth of setting up. So, we can start on those projects knowing that we have that revenue stream coming in.

So, the answer is, yeah, you’re not gonna see anything completed in a year, but what you will see is the initiation of projects that we now will be
able to go forward with and we can now come back and say to each one of you, these are the projects that are going to be able to go forward in your district and to come back as somebody challenged me with, I better have a prioritization of my plans. Okay. The prioritization of those projects, based on the funding levels that will come in, that’s a much more positive note than what we have right now in front of us, that’s the way I would respond.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I hear you on that. And I know that the glacial pace of improvement takes forever. And, and having driven the Merritt Parkway with the road expansion, that’s been literally an eight-year roadwork. With that being said, I just want to add that, so it’s important to make people aware that tolling will not solve their immediate congestion frustration in two years, in five years. That’s important because we hear quite a bit that tolling is going to solve all of your frustrations. And I just want to be clear that this is not happening for the next five-plus years before any improvements can be seen, whether there’s tolling or not, correct?

JOE GIULIETTI: I think the right way of saying it is that funding is what is necessary. What we’re looking at is various ways of providing the funding because without funding there is no answers in the next five years. What we’re looking at is ways of presenting. I was challenged when I came in here to come back to this legislature and although there are various levels of what, when the Governor mentioned tolling, what that tolling revenue would bring in. To me, at the end of the day, it’s, you’re right. It’s not to say that it’s tolling, it’s to come up
with the funding that is necessary to move this state and move our projects forward.

Tolling happens to be the one that we, a study already began. We already have good knowledge base on it, good understanding of it and we know what the projections are for it. So, that’s what allows us to move forward.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I appreciate that and you’re --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Senator, if we could just please summarize. We do need to get on to others.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Happily, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, I will simply say this, you’re right, we have a difference of opinion in regards to the funding mechanism. I’m looking at it from a standpoint of prioritized progress, the ability to bond. As I’ve learned in school, infrastructure commitments are the best rationale for bonding on a long-term usage basis.

With that being said, I will respect the Chairman’s time and I think we’ll have further discussions about this. But again, thank you very much for all being here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Next up, Representative Morin, followed by Representative Altobello.

REP. MORIN (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I just want to thank you all. I really appreciated the collaborative approach to presenting this to us and I, you know, I appreciate the knowledge that you’ve all brought forth in this discussion. It’s always great to follow my friend
from Fairfield. I know many will find it hard to believe that we may not necessarily agree on this whole thing, but that’s okay.

A couple of comments and maybe a question or two. I wish my friend, Representative Camillo was here because he submitted testimony and some of the comments we’ve heard and concerns we’ve heard is that people are gonna be jumping off and driving through local streets to get away from tolls. And Representative Camillo and I have a mutual friend, my stepfather was his cousin and he lived in Greenwich. And anybody that was around, some of us old like me, remember Mianus River Bridge. I would ask the residents of Cos Cob what their thoughts were on the traffic that went through their community on Route 1 every day for as many years as that took for that bridge to be completed. And I don’t want to be sensational, you know, have this sensationalized view that, you know, oh, my gosh, bridges are gonna fall down if we don’t do this. But let’s be honest, the needs are many, the resources are few to meet those needs. And that is a reality. So, let’s ask those folks what their thoughts were and their memories of what it did to the business climate, what it did to peoples lives, what it did to their quality of life, not for just the commuters and the people that travel through the State of Connecticut, an interstate highway that was shut down to send people through Route 1. So, I won’t pontificate, sorry, Mr. Chair.

The question, I’ve heard a lot of things from a lot of people, but I’m glad that you’re here to talk about what the intent is because everywhere I see, especially on social media and in some of the press
areas, they're talking about 83 gantries and they're talking about this and they're talking about that.

Let's talk about apples and apples, that's all I want to do. And what we're talking on the process, you've answered it. But can these funds be utilized to fund education, if we have tolls? And I know the answer and you know the answer. But let's talk about the same things, whether you like tolls, don't like them, I respect that discussion. But we need to keep ourselves focused on what is the real answer to those questions.

And Commissioner, you touched on a few things. And I'm so happy that you just mentioned a few projects, the 84 viaduct, the Mixmaster, just two projects alone by my rough math in today's dollars are almost $12-billion dollars. We can discuss as a state, as a committee that, hey, you guys just don't have your priorities straight. You guys aren't doing this, you aren't doing that. Well, guess what folks, $12-billion bucks for two projects that if they're not done and are not gonna meet and are not going to meet the needs of the traveling public, doesn't make sense to me.

Maybe one of you can answer this for me. What's the return to our economy for every dollar of investment in transportation infrastructure? If you don't have it, maybe you can get it to me at some point or get it to the committee.

JOE GIULIETTI: I was gonna say, I've used it in the past with APTA, but it was, and I'll get this number for you again, but it's between $4 to $5 for every dollar that's invested.
REP. MORIN (28TH): And I know that, you know, the department and those of you that have been around, I feel very strongly, men and women that work for the Department of Transportation do a terrific job. They have, they have, there’s, there’s great knowledge into place and there are some people that are disparaging about any state entity that they’re just, you know, wasting taxpayers dollars. So, I don’t feel that way. I know the integrity and the knowledge of these people. And maybe we should start listening. And I spent some time in my life looking under bridges. I don’t like to do that anymore. I really don’t. Yeah, well, yeah, somebody called me a troll, that’s probably fairly accurate. I may have lived as part of my job duties, but let’s say this. In all seriousness, I don’t like doing that anymore and there’s a real reason, because of the conditions that we’re facing.

I appreciate your indulgence, Chairman, that I will work, and I will listen. And I know people get preconceived, right, they, if people are hearing my comments, they’re shaking their heads either yes or no. It’s time for us, I get it, we need to at least listen to each other and, and have a respectful discussion on this. It’s, it’s how this process is supposed to work. And I look forward to listening to, to many, it looks to me like quite a people testifying and I think our work is cut out, but you touch on so many things that people around here. And if you touch again about what it does for our, the process for our commuters even, never mind the cars on the bridges. Get us into the seriousness of our infrastructure, you touch on that, on the rail system.
We have real issues. Keep beating down to people. Anybody that’s here, if you’re gonna talk about this issue, the monies have to be used, how they’re going to be used, how they have to be, whether it’s a lockbox, I heard leaking stuff, we don’t need the rhetoric. If you don’t like something, you don’t like it. But we need to be able to answer honestly what these dollars can and can’t be used for.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. We are getting close to our two-hour mark, probably about 10 minutes away from that. But we still have about six members or so, plus our follow ups from our leadership panel. So, if we could just try and, not to take away from anyone’s important questions, but let’s keep it moving. And then we’ll go switching back and forth with the public.

So, with that we have Representative Altobello, followed by Representative McGorty and then Representative Perone.

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To Representative O’Dea’s point, I was at the Office of Fiscal Analysis probably about a week or 10 days ago and requested a new report regarding the monies that have flowed from the general fund to the Special Transportation Fund and vice versa and that should be out shortly. I think it’s gonna show some differences. There’s a sweep versus a, you know, let’s speak to money, number one. And so, I think that should be very enlightening for all of us and I’ll of course share it. Last, last year, the last iteration of the toll bill, which did not move forward, included language that was actually
requested by the commissioner that said, let me put together, give me authorization to put together a plan. I can go to the federal government. We can talk about this and come back this year with the plan for you to vote on. Are we in, is this bill the same or not? Is this a two bite at the apple or is this a one shot and you’re out the door?

JOE GIULIETTI: First off, I don’t know what was said last year. But I know that when I’ve told you that I’ve already sat down with the federal government on this, I have. I know that everything that we’ve presented, including in the report that has gone out, was, was vetted and we’re comfortable with where it’s at. And I, to turn around and say, is this where you’re at in terms of voting, though I’m not totally familiar with your legislative process, where we’re at right now is that the Governor asked us to look at the tolling, come back with what the numbers are. He actually told us to look at truck only tolling, which was an add on to what was done before. And we did that as well to go and bring it back forward. So, where we’re at right now is, we are presenting you with an option, okay, as to what tolling can do and, yes, we can then go forward and expend the funds that have been appropriated to start a need for process and begin this process going forward. That’s where we’re at at this point, I would say. But again, wanting to reiterate again that the Governor has not given us the okay to go forward on that at this point because he wants to work it out with the legislature. Go ahead, Tom.

TOM MAZIARZ: Can I just point out what we’re talking about. You’re talking about the $10-million
dollars that was put to bond, okay. All right. In any case, that $10-million dollars, what that is necessary are for the two next steps, both of which we need to do for federal approval. We need to have an environmental document and we have to have a final toll plan. They need both of those in order to provide an approval for Connecticut to toll as well as getting enabling legislation.

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): Thank you. So, we’re not sure whether or not, if we pass the bill as is and we picked one of the options, would you still have to, and the Governor signed it, would you still have to come back next year for some sort of other approval from the legislature or is this a one, one-year deal and we’re out of it?

JOE GIULIETTI: The answer on it, and, and, and --

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): And maybe you don’t know the answer today, so.

JOE GIULIETTI: Well, I think the answer is that it can be shaped any way that is going to be comfort levels in it, and that’s what we would look to go into it, and have it be a bill that would be shaped that way.

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): Could we have a breakdown of the, the $10-million dollars? I think there was a lot of confusion about what that money was for, the money that went through the bond commission last year? Just the figure, forward that to our Clerk, is actually, sure -- there was a lot of confusion about this as duplicating other things, but actually it’s not and it’s federally required. So, I think to clear that up would be useful. And lastly, on the capital costs on this, let’s say the 52 gantry
plan, that’s different, obviously than the 80-something gantries. So, what’s the capital cost on the 52 plan?

TOM MAZIARZ: Capital cost for the scaled-back plan is $230, $213 million.

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): Versus $300 and, I forgot.

TOM MAZIARZ: -- 72.

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): $372. Could you also forward that to the committee so we could --

TOM MAZIARZ: I’ll send you, I have a chart here in front of me that I’ll send you that compares --

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): Send it to the, send everything to the Clerk and he’ll get it to all of us, so.

TOM MAZIARZ: But the chart compares all three alternatives.

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): Oh, terrific. And approximately half the cost of the $370-something was for trenching and laying cables, is that correct?

TOM MAZIARZ: Yeah, that’s gonna vary between the 41 and the scale back. The --

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): My question is, do we have an opportunity while we have a trench open to share that right-of-way and share that trench with somebody else out there or maybe we’ll even find somebody who will do the trenching for us and we won’t have, we could avoid that cost completely?

TOM MAZIARZ: The answer is we’ll look --
JOE GIULIETTI: Let me take it, Tom. The answer is, there has been some approach, so the people that might want to get involved with the fiber optic and whether or not there’s opportunities there. And, of course, we’ll look to leverage that in any way that we can.

REP. ALTOBELLO (82ND): I think there would be large opportunity, I’ve been thinking about it for a year. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. Next up is Representative McGorty, followed by Representative Perone.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank everybody for coming in today and I wasn’t going to bring it up, but Representative Morin did, and he left the room right now. But I’m from Cos Cob, and I’m not related to Freddie Camillo. But I live six houses down the street, and I grew up there. I was one of the first two responders for the fire department, I’m a member of the fire department in Cos Cob the night that bridge collapsed. I was on the other side of the bridge with another firefighter and we had pagers, told, came in, we responded over there. I was there probably maybe 36 hours before I really had to go home and get my life back together and get to work. I happen to work right off of Exit 4, there’s Indian Field Road, and there’s, I don’t know if you’ve been over there, it’s a train bridge that goes over, it’s very narrow, trucks couldn’t really do it.

So, they had to through a neighborhood to Cross Lane and Post Road, where I worked at a gas station. It was a one way, one-lane road, one-way, very narrow
and it was a nightmare for months and months and months. All US 1 from Exit 4 to 5, you couldn’t park, you couldn’t shop, you couldn’t do anything because of the traffic. It was a total disaster.

So, I just wanted to touch on that. I’ve seen firsthand knowledge of the lack of maintenance on bridges. It was a night I’ll never forget.

So, today a question I have for you is, does the revenue collected from the I95 tolls only go to corridor improvements and facilities along the revenue or are shifted to projects along 84 and 15?

TOM MAZIARZ: Federal law requires that the revenue be spent on the highway that it’s collected from. Once you’ve paid the expenses for that particular highway, which there are gonna be large expenses on 95 with the projects we’ve got planned for that, then any excess revenue could be spent on other highways. But that, I mean, with I95, with the number of projects we’re anticipating doing, I anticipate all of that is gonna go directly back to I95.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Tom, just to be clear, that’s other, other highways within the corridor, it’s not to move it from one end of the state to the other?

TOM MAZIARZ: Right. At this point we’re not, we do not have federal approval to move it from, say, 95 to 84.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Okay. Thank you for that. And the other part is, our neighboring state, Massachusetts, last year had 1.3 million drivers slip through the tolls. And that’s because the cameras couldn’t read their plate, plates are on
dashboards on a back deck, they have bike racks, they have trailers on the vehicles, they have plates that reverse and flip, so they’re just fake covers, so they’re blinded and sprays that they put on it to distract the cameras. What is the way of tracking these people down that evade these tolls?

TOM MAZIARZ: Well, I think in most toll agencies, Massachusetts included, direct fraud is an issue, but a relatively small issue. The bigger issue is when the plates are covered by snow or something like that or badly worn. In which case, what will happen, you’re using video tolling, the chances are video tolling are capturing out-of-state, out-of-state cars, and that gets a little bit more difficult to collect. But Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire have all entered, and Rhode Island soon, entered into a reciprocity agreement, whereby, they, that each state will help to collect from violators in their own state.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Okay. So, if I was from Alabama or Florida or Texas and go through, you’d send me a bill, I don’t pay it. How would we do, collect that?

TOM MAZIARZ: Some of that is going to be lost revenue. We have estimated what we call, what they call that in the industry, leakage. We’re estimating that at the start of service in Connecticut because it’s brand new service, we’re gonna have about 6 percent leakage. We know that over time more people will switch to the E-ZPass. there is very little leakage with the E-ZPass system. It’s just the cameras that allow for the leakage. We anticipate cutting that leakage down
from 6 1/2 percent to about 3 percent over a 10-year period.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Okay. Thank you. That’s the questions I have. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. And the fact that you were there for the Mianus Bridge, I think speaks volumes, so thank you for that. Next up, Representative Perone and then followed by Representative Kupchick.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your testimony, it’s obviously very thorough and very enlightening. I just had a question, in the modeling that you did for different, different scenarios and how to preserve and keep the Special Transportation Fund from going insolvent, did you look at a combination of alternative investments, you know, RRIF to feel like some of the federal programs along with, you know, factoring in, you know, P3 that we had legislation that actually allows us to take advantage of that, basically federal programs?

JOE GIULIETTI: I will turn around and say to you that it’s my full understanding we’ve gone after every federal dollar that we can. There’s been a couple of situations in the past where we did not have all the money to go and leverage what was available in terms of federal dollars. But it’s one of the things that I’ve sat down with the OPM Secretary on. And we’ve looked at making sure that the funds are there to go after every federal dollar. When you talk about things like RRIF loan, you will know that we partner with the MTA and the
MTA went after RRIF loan funding to be able to go into the positive train control on the rail system. So, yes, we do go after every, and again, I’m stepping into someone else’s shoes right now, but we go after the federal funds, where those federal funds are available, and we try to make sure that we’ve never left an opportunity off the table.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Thank you. And I understand certainly the trepidation about P3s that --

JOE GIULIETTI: Yep.

REP. PERONE (137TH): -- not to be, not to have the right people in place in order to succeed at that for obvious reasons.

JOE GIULIETTI: Yes.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Hypothetically if the Special Transportation Fund goes insolvent, what happens?

JOE GIULIETTI: I’ve already given you some of the projects, if it stays at the level we’re at right now. But if you’re talking about if it goes insolvent, you know, the answer is it can’t go insolvent.

REP. PERONE (137TH): It’s not good, yeah, it’s very, very un-good.

JOE GIULIETTI: Yeah.

REP. PERONE (137TH): So, the, but with that in mind, but we’re still obligated to pay the debt service that’s part of the Special Transportation Fund?

MELISSA MCCAW: That is correct. So, obviously --
REP. PERONE (137TH): So, even if we put a stop to projects, you know, and we laid off people at DMV and DOT, we’d still have the debt service to deal with.

MELISSA MCCAW: That’s correct.

REP. PERONE (137TH): We’d still have to get that money from somewhere?

MELISSA MCCAW: That’s correct. That’s correct. We, I mean, to prevent going insolvent, you’d have to stop issuing bonds. You could not continue to issue bonds with an inadequate fund balance. They’re revenue bonds, so you need to show revenue adequacy. But, you know, to avoid insolvency of, and where we’re currently at, then you’d stop issuing bonds. You would not be making any investments in state of good repair. I mean, they’re all options that really are not options, quite frankly.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Okay. So, and we’re, we’re, even though that hasn’t happened yet, I mean we’re at the cusp to the point where we’re having challenges and forgive me if I’m wrong. Moving our, our special tax obligation bonds in the market, are we getting, are there concerns from Wall Street that because of the current status of the Special Transportation Fund that there’s, you know, reduced interest in our STF’s or no?

MELISSA MCCAW: It’s a great question for Treasurer Wooden in his office. I’m not aware of that of recent there have been challenges, but they will look at table 8 in the final budget that you approved and if it shows a pass, it indicates we’re not sustainable and that we’re moving in the
direction of having fund balance deficits then, yes, we would have challenges with issuing revenue bonds.

REP. PERONE (137TH): So, even the threat of insolvency or the threat of not being able to make our payments is enough to, you know, cool interest?

MELISSA MCCAW: Absolutely.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Okay.

MELISSA MCCAW: It could also impact, you know, our bond ratings and things of that nature.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Right. Well, that was, you know, I was gonna ask, you know, if the, you know, if it went insolvent, what would happen to our credit rating, but I think we know. The, look, you know, for the last 30 years NJ Transit has been investing in our infrastructure and New York State has been investing in our infrastructure. You know, they’ve reduced their commuting times by 14 minutes in New York City. The value, their property values have gone up along that route. You look at Virginia, they’ve spent the last 30 years investing in their infrastructure. They have a phenomenal, you know, highway plan infrastructure plan, they follow it religiously. And for 30 years, Connecticut’s been underinvesting in rail. And, and, in our, in our capacity, I mean, not, you know, we’ve been building our road projects, we’ve been, you know, doing well by that, bringing, keeping roads and bridges at a state of good repair. But I think that, you know, if we think that we’re gonna be able to survive economically by underinvesting in our infrastructure going forward over the next 30 years, we’re delusional.
And so I think that, you know, focusing on generating a dedicated revenue stream towards, you know, keeping us, keeping us in the black, but also, but not just, you know, at survival levels, but really to the point where we can actually invest and grow and build out our infrastructure and make us competitive with the other 49 states and internationally I think is an important consideration looking at this. So, I thank you for your testimony.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Are you all set there, Representative? Sorry, I got distracted. I’ll have to take -- it turned out to be dramatic. Representative Kupchick, followed by Representative Ziogas.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Commissioners. So, I want to go back a little. You talked about the list of projects, all the projects that we need in the state. Do you have a total list of cost of that entire list?

REP. HAINES (34TH): No, we don’t. We could easily provide that to you though, but if you need to see it.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): Yes, I would need.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Commissioner Giulietti read to you previously --

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): Yes.

REP. HAINES (34TH): -- yes, we can provide that to you.
REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): Okay. So, I mean, just, just, I mean just thinking about all those numbers that you, it’s billions, right, billions --

REP. HAINES (34TH): Oh, yes.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): -- upon billions.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Yep.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): It’s a gigantic number. So, then I’m thinking about what you said about 30 cents approximately every six miles it would cost the average resident in the State of Connecticut just so people wouldn’t avoid it because it’s about 30 cents. Then there’s discussion about discounts for Connecticut residents, discounts for people who are frequent users of the roads. I would assume that would mean a company like mine, I have a small heating and cooling company. You know, we travel all up and down Fairfield County, our men do. I would add painters and electricians and all of them, they would also get discounts, people who deliver would get discounts. So, what I’m trying to figure out, in my own mind, is with, with the amount of money we need to get to do all the projects that have been, quite frankly neglected for a long time, how do we get to $920 million or $1.1 billion, after the maintenance, after installing these gantries, the costs that it costs to install, the cost for maintenance, discounts to everybody; how do we, how are we going to get that to $1.1 or $920 with just 30 cents every six miles?

JOE GIULIETTI: Well, it doesn’t, first off, we, the $1.1, which was first put in there, Okay. , was with all of the systems and the allocation there. We dropped that number down and we gave you a gross
number and a net number. And I believe that net number is $800-million dollars right now that we’re looking at. And that is after our capital costs are, are weighed into that. So, that’s why that, that number takes into consideration our disbursing our capital costs over the projected timeframes.

MELISSA MCCAW: So, $800 million, $800 million net, is after, after the operational and capital investment costs required to install the tolling system, you’d have $800 million of new revenues on an annual basis. So, one, it provides to the Special Transportation Fund with our current practice, where we currently issue $800-million dollars of debt, but above and beyond that, it begins to generate surplus, where decisions can be made on do you increase the level of debt issuance to north of a billion or are you then or alternatively, do you start making, you know, cash investments for large projects. And so, I’d be happy to send to you what that 10-year projection looks like because once you’re, you know, three years beyond the implementation of tolls, you’re at the point where you would have had, you know, $6-billion dollars, which is almost a good, you know, half of the list of the major items that you just conveyed. So, I think the point is that this significant revenue source, if this is the will of the legislature, does create the revenue streams to allow the Department of Transportation to start making some of those strategic investments that they mentioned to you earlier today.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): So, based on all of this, these calculations that you put together, everyone here, what are you assuming the average cost is
going to be per resident in the State of Connecticut every year?

JOE GIULIETTI: We were asked that before and we’d like the opportunity to again send that back to the entire committee. We weren’t looking at it in terms of all the residents. We knew what an individual going through this system, we do have some material that estimates how many miles an average resident is on one of those roads, but we would like to turn around and have the opportunity to go and send that back to you in a report.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): Because Commissioner Redeker had that information before when they presented this in the past.

JOE GIULIETTI: Right. And right now what we’ve done is we’ve modified what was first put in there by the latest that we went back to go and look at when we looked at it from both the trucking standpoint, when we looked at it on all the highways and then when we looked at it on specific highways or targeted highways. So, that’s why I’m saying, we just need to update it, that’s all.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): Okay. And, you know, I just want to say, you know, as a statement. When the tolling issues first came out as a Fairfield County Legislator, I was very open minded to it because our traffic is so serious, and our transportation is awful. Metro North has been frankly ignored for many years and it shouldn’t have been. There was funds, there were the funds in that fund to be able to fix it and it wasn’t done. You know, we had a busway, we had transportation from Hartford to
Springfield when the economic engine in the state has been ignored.

But I’ll tell you, the more I watch these toll proposals over the last several years, it just doesn’t look very good to me. And the things that I see happen in this legislature and how money is swept, and things are done in the dark of night and the public has no idea what’s going on, it makes me extraordinarily concerned. I’m not saying you, Commissioner, I’m saying the legislature. So, I am going to be very cautious in any decisions I come to. But thank you for your time.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. Next up Representative Ziogas, followed by Representative Haines.

REP. ZIOGAS (79TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’d like to thank the proponents for coming in today and sharing their expertise with us. I think we lose sight of the big factor here, the big picture.

Connecticut has been subsidizing Providence, the MGM in Springfield and Boston for years. We’ve been a bridgeway from the south to the north. And they’ve been coming over our roads from New York and points west and south for nothing for all these years. The Connecticut taxpayers have been subsidizing the growth and the benefits in all these other sections of the country.

I think it’s time that we are able to access the 40 percent odd number that come through, according to their studies. It’s other peoples money. Obviously, it’s money from a different source. I think it’s a source that we ought to be able to capitalize. And I think the Governor has been brave
in terms of promoting this toll study. I think maybe it needs a little tweaking here and there, but I think in large measure it’s, it’s an avenue towards our success.

I would just add one notion for OPM, and maybe it helps mitigate some of the pain to the Connecticut taxpayer, but you using our Connecticut income tax and using a tax credit within that income tax as a way to offset some of the expenses to maybe the small commuter that was discussed traveling one or two exits, et cetera. But that’s it for me. Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. Those are ideas being discussed. It may not be in the bill at the moment, but potentially could be, but those are all potential avenues to provide extra relief that are being discussed. So, thank you for those comments.

Next up, I think Representative Haines is off to another committee, so we’ll give her a chance to do that. Representative Carney, then followed by Senator Bergstein.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, thank you all for coming here and discussing this proposal with us.

So, I know we’ve discussed about receiving federal dollars. Now, the prior Commissioner of Transportation had told me that we do receive additional funds, I believe at the end of the fiscal year, when states, let’s use an example, Montana or Wyoming, states that really don’t have as much infrastructure as we do, that when those states don’t use up all of their federal dollars, that
Connecticut because we don’t have tolls is viewed favorably and does get additional federal funding; is that accurate?

TOM MAZIARZ: Tolling has nothing to do with it. Tolling has nothing to do with it. It really has to do with the good work of our engineering department and our finance department. The key is, they have to get all their obligated money or, yeah, ensuing obligation out the door and bid out to projects and then demonstrate to the feds that they’ve used all the money available, they need more money. And so when they do that, and our finance and engineering department are great at doing that, they become eligible and we have a track record of about 20 years, where every year we have gotten the additional funds, while other states have missed out on that opportunity.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): But would receiving additional funds from tolling jeopardize that?

TOM MAZIARZ: No. We have written documents from federal highway that clarify that we will lose no funds, no federal funds of any sort, let alone that extra money we can qualify at the end of the year for.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. I appreciate that. My other question, are any other options, I know the trucks proposal, but are there any other serious options being considered in addition to the Value Pricing Pilot Program one?

TOM MAZIARZ: There are relatively few options under federal law. There are basically four. One would be the conversion of HOV lanes to hot lanes. A second is a pilot program that’s available to three
states, that’s been available for 20 years. None of the states have used it because it’s too onerous to use, basically. The third is, there’s an exemption, the feds realize that, you know, 50 years after the interstates were built, a lot of bridges and tunnels would have to be rebuilt and yet their funding levels at the federal level were not sufficient to help out. So, they allow states this exemption to put tolls on bridges that were going to be reconstructed. The third option is another pilot program, the one that we’re trying to apply under, the congestion pricing program.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. All right. Now, my other, I want to get into something a little bit different. Now, there, I’m just curious, does DOT have the infrastructure in place to collect the toll dollars, mail out bills, things like that or if it doesn’t, about how much that would cost?

TOM MAZIARZ: That’s all covered in our capital costs and operating cost assumptions. So, the net revenue you see is reflective of that already being deducted from it. It is now the standard practice, as the industry has shifted from cash collection to all electronic tolling, that most those operations are now put out to separate contractors. Mass DOT never used separate contractors, but when they converted to all electronic tolling on the Mass Pike, two or three years ago, they now have two full-time contractors; one who operates the gantry system and maintains it, and there for a term to 10 years, and the other that operates the back office system, which is the one that processes the toll transactions and sends out the bills or processes the E-ZPass accounts.
REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. So, it sounds like then, if this is implemented, DOT may be able to handle it. So, does that negate the necessity for a separate transportation finance authority? I mean, how does the DOT feel about a separate transportation --

JOE GIULIETTI: Again, you know, I have to go back to both the will of the legislature and the will of the Governor, but from the standpoint, if you’re asking me right now and when I sat on, and I’ll go back to when I was on the transition committee, you know, we, we have to hire expertise in order to handle these things, okay. We have to hire expertise even when we’re talking about P3’s. But when you’re talking about whether or not you set up a separate, what I’ll call oversight, basically what you’re doing is you’re adding on a layer of management, a layer of cost and, you know, you’re, I’m finding myself in a position right now of dealing with a hypothetical situation, but I’ve been there before. And I’m usually opposed to that unless there was a reason, unless you saw that there was fraud, unless there’s a distrust. But, you know, based on the fact that I would tell you walking in here, there’s a tremendous relationship your OPM and between your Department of Transportation and there’s total, at least from my standpoint, not only transparency but openness. And I’ve had these open discussions with everybody that I’ve met with. So, that’s why if you catch a reluctance on my part, it’s a reluctance of adding an oversight on that doesn’t have that direct connection with the legislature and the Governor. That’s my, that’s my personal response back to you on it.
REP. CARNEY (23RD): I appreciate that. I just want to ask real quick about, I know you had mentioned this commuter discount. You had said if somebody goes through a gantry, I guess, 20 times or 40 times --

JOE GIULIETTI: Right.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): -- so, if that person isn’t necessarily going to work and they go through a toll gantry 40 times, would they get that discount as well? How would you be able to prove that?

JOE GIULIETTI: No, we called it a commuter discount based on the fact that they’re doing it 40 times. What actually is is a volume discount. You’re looking at it from the standpoint of somebody that’s doing it more and that’s to try and protect our businesses and everything else that are out there, that you’re not making it more onerous on them, you’re giving another discount that’s there as well as our commuters that are doing it on a daily basis.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. On the topic of discounts, would there be any talk of an income-based discount? And if so, how would that work?

JOE GIULIETTI: We’ve already, in the opening testimony one of the things we’ve mentioned is the fact that, you know, we do have to look at equity and fairness issues. We have to look at other ways of going and being able to pay and whether or not we can do it the same way, like with our lotto system, where there’s stores out there that they can go and make payments on or the same way you can go in and make payments on your utility systems. So, say that again, and loading credits on. And again, that’s gonna come back to the will of the legislature as
well in terms of how do they want to go and handle that and what type of discounts are we gonna offer out there.

TOM MAZIARZ: Representative, I would just add that when we do the environmental impact document, that is going to be focused on that issue and we are going to have to demonstrate to the feds that we are providing some type of relief for the very lowest income groups.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. I’m not sure how I feel about that. So, there’s a user fee, everyone pays the same fee. But I do have an additional question on that. So, has anything been looked at then to provide sort of an income tax credit or anything like that for Connecticut residents to make the tolling as revenue neutral as possible for Connecticut residents?

TOM MAZIARZ: That wasn’t included in the toll scenario we put together for the 2018 report. That certainly is something that could be done. The drawback to it is it’s a little bit more cumbersome to, to administer, but we’re open to discussions about that.

MELISSA MCCAW: Sure. If I may add, my office is in the beginning stages of shaping what that could potentially look like. The Governor has made it very clear that any tolling proposal that is considered as partnership with the legislature has to minimize the burden on Connecticut residents and particularly our lower income families. And so, the tax credit is one way to do so, thanks to the work that DOT has done, they’ve been benchmarking this particular issue with other states and so they’ve
also come up with a creative option that where you would load credits onto an E-ZPass at the start of the year.

One of the challenges with the tax credit is a low-income family has to incur an expense and wait one time per year to get those monies returned to them. So, I think there are a couple of options that can be shaped, you know, in collaboration with the legislature.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): And wouldn’t that affect, and wouldn’t that affect revenue?

MELISSA MCCAW: It would. And so we’re starting to cost out what the, what that could potentially look like and what the net impact to the current $800-million dollars would like. So, I’d be happy to share that with you.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. Because the way this is all sounding to me, I know the good Senator from the 26th had mentioned a user fee. It’s kind of sounding like a tax though, and we’re gonna give a different tax to different people. I know that, and the way I look at taxes is, you know, you’re kind of

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Representative, if we could just summarize.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Yes.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): And you kind of, people pay different, you know, they have no real option. And I just got to say, in my district it’s divided by a bridge, the Baldwin Bridge. And I did see the toll
plan, whether it would be old line and old -- both have toll gantries, so I won’t have to assume that probably one would be on the Baldwin Bridge. So, if it’s a user fee, well then what’s the option? Should my constituents kayak? Should they take a bike? And I don’t mean to be funny, but it’s a tax. I don’t think of it as a user fee.

And my final question is, so you’ve got the sticker that says 40 percent, so what is 60 percent? How much in your estimation would Connecticut residents be on the hook for if, and this is a generous estimate on your part, for 60 percent, I think it’s more like 70, but 60 percent, what would they be on the hook for?

MELISSA MCCAW: So, the $800-million dollars, then they are going to be paying about $480-million dollars, as opposed to another option, which would require Connecticut residents to pay the whole $800-million dollars that would be needed for this plan. Again, this is the only option that actually makes out-of-state travelers bear some of the cost that they are helping to create. And so, we do think that in terms of the interest of the State of Connecticut, that that return on investment is stronger because we don’t have to pay that bill entirely.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): But we do have to pay $480 million. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. Thank you. We don’t need the applause. We’ll get there eventually. Thank you. Next up is Senator Bergstein, and then we will go into ranking members for cleanup.
SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Secretary McCaw and Mr. Giulietti and everybody else who’s come to testify. I apologize for being late. I had a slight medical emergency. And I know you’ve been here a long time, so I’m gonna be very brief.

I just wanted to echo something our colleague referred to, which is sort of a general distrust possibly that the public has now, given decades of lack of appreciable improvement in our infrastructure. So, I do think that’s a legitimate concern and actually polling data shows that when people are asked, are you for or against tolls, 57 percent say they’re against tolls. But when the question is reframed as, are you for or against tolls, if you’re assured that all of the revenue from tolls will go to improved transportation, the number flips to 57 percent in favor.

So, I think it’s a really, really critical issue that we need to address, which is accountability for how the funds will be spent. So, I just wanted to bifurcate that into two sort of general questions for Secretary McCaw, what sort of assurance could you give the people that funds generated from tolls and for transportation would actually go to those projects and then Commissioner Giulietti, what sort of assurance could you give people that funds would be spent efficiently, and project costs would be at least reasonable? Thanks.

MELISSA MCCAW: Senator Bergstein, great to see you today, and thank you for joining, I’m glad to have you. There was testimony that Commissioner Giulietti offered prior to your arrival, where he’s indicated that the federal government will not allow
us to use these toll revenues for anything other than the related purposes. I know that there are concerns that lockboxes are not always honored and there have been historical sweeps of these funds. So there’s a, you know, changes in the legislature as well as in Governor and between now and, you know, the end of time.

I think the piece that gives me the most assurance is that we will be in compliance with what the federal, federal authority expects of the State of Connecticut, and that is built in accountability that we have to comply with. I’ll ask Mr. Giulietti to take your second question.

JOE GIULIETTI: Your second question has to deal with, and it’s a question that all of us here in the public sector are constantly asked and that is, you know, are we wasting the public’s money? Okay. I explained even when I was being hired by the, I was offered a job by the Governor and then confirmed by the representatives here that part of my background has been to be a trained facilitator in looking at business processes and costs. We always turned around to try and treat public agencies as if they were private companies and look for the efficiencies that are there.

I can tell you that I’ve come into a department that is constantly looking at where we can bid out projects. That bidding process looks to be, follow both state and federal rules, depending on the project, which goes to go and make sure that we’re getting the best values for those projects that we’re putting forward. We always evaluate whether or not it makes more sense to do it in-house with in-house forces, where you’re not paying profit and
overhead, but in other cases the expertise is out there in the industry and it’s a well-spent dollar going out into that industry to bring in that expertise.

So, I can assure you that the, the legacy that is here, which has also shown that even when confronted with looking at, filling all the positions that were open, I never came and said, we need every one of those positions. I said, we will reevaluate every one of those as we’re going forward and we’ll come with what we feel is the need going forward and that will continue, and you’ll see that going on here. We look to be as efficient as possible. We are good stewards of the public money and we will continue to be good stewards of the public’s money.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you so much. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Senator. So, that will conclude members questions. We will then turn it over to Representative Devlin, followed by Senator Martin. And then we will give you the opportunity to take a breath and maybe go grab a bite to eat. But let’s move on from here. So, Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for, to both of you, for your stamina in answering questions from the committee. We really do appreciate you being here.

Through the discussions, just a couple of questions, one related to the STF and the other related to the comments about widening I95. So, the good Representative had mentioned, in fact, about bond rates, which was a good point because when the
Special Transportation was created as a source dedicated to revenue to support Special Transportation Bonds and because there was a solid plan, we had very favorable rates on those bonds. But it’s regrettable that over time every expense related to transportation has been moved into the Special Transportation Fund, yet not all of the revenues. And we’ve had a lot of discussion about, you know, toll money, can it be diverted? And you’ve made it clear that needs to be spent in the corridor. But what hasn’t been mentioned is the fact that other sources of revenue actually could be diverted out. We have $500-million dollars in gas tax alone, that’s just what we pay to fill our cars, on top of the $300, almost $400-million dollars that is collected through the petroleum gas excise tax. So there are, and there’s an abundance of fees and licensing costs and all of that. So, the doors aren’t necessarily closed just because if we were to proceed with toll revenue, other revenue wouldn’t be diverted to fund this ongoing issue of deficits and spending at the state level.

But Secretary, you mentioned a comment I just wanted to get clarification on, regarding savings in, I believe, it was benefit savings that were calculated within the budget. And I just wanted to be clear on two points related to that.

First, is that specific to the Special Transportation Fund or the General Fund or both? And secondly, I don’t think any of those benefits have been agreed upon yet. So, we’re talking about solid numbers in the budget, is that a solid number?

MELISSA MCCAW: So, let me answer that more broadly. The Governor’s proposed budget included policy
changes and savings and with respect to pension and healthcare. With respect to healthcare, the proposal as with respect to Comptroller Lembo and the rates that he negotiates with providers, this is allowable, does not require union negotiation. The second piece of the, and we’ve shared these ideas with our union partners; the second piece of that would be with respect to expanding the site of shopper program, which basically is a cash incentive program to select higher quality providers, they happen to be lower cost. We currently do this in Connecticut. We’d like to be strategic and expand this to regions that have a high concentration of our retirees. This is all within the spirit of the SEBAC agreement that is currently in place. So, no negotiation required there. It’s a broad initiative and it will, would lower our cost for healthcare for both, within the General Fund and the STF.

The second piece was with respect to the pension side of the house, you might recall that one of the proposals is to, to reamortize.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Correct.

MELISSA MCCAW: And so obviously the portion of our annual required contribution or ABEK that is borne by the FTF, would benefit from the re-amortization in the lower annual payments.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay. So, just to be clear, all four finding saving wherever you possibly can, but want to make sure we’re really talking solid numbers and solid numbers --

MELISSA MCCAW: That’s right.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- and not questioning some and versus others?

MELISSA MCCAW: That is correct.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): So, the other question I have, if you could please clarify, and Commissioner this might go directly to you or your team, there was comment made about widening six miles of I95. And in the study that was published on November 14th, it doesn’t get a lot of attention, but the second part of it, the study kind of says that, you know, if tolls were to be put in place, 83 or now 52, however many we’re gonna put all over the state potentially, that it really doesn’t do anything to mitigate congestion, but what would is what’s called the build scenario. And the build scenario uses that toll revenue to expand, widen I95 and I84, which would be under construction through 2040.

So, my question specific to the six-mile widening of I95, south of Bridgeport, that is an area where exits are one mile apart. Would there be exits that are closed? That is an area where not too long ago the state just invested a tremendous amount of money to put in modernized rest stops, which are quite nice. I’m imagining that might be impacted. Would eminent domain be required in any aspects of that?

MARK ROLFE: So, this was a corridor study that the department undertook to look at the 95 corridor. We split it in half in New Haven, so there’s a 95 west and 95 east study.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right.

MARK ROLFE: What the 95 west study showed a couple things. First of all, that we owned more right-of-
way than we thought we did. That we wouldn’t have to acquire a great deal of property in order to widen 95. But then the second thing, and this is where we collaborated with the folks in the planning side of the house, we looked at more targeted investments on I95, knowing that the vision was to widen the whole, whole facility. But what can we do in the short run, the medium term and the long term to affect change, to reduce congestion, to improve traffic flow on I95? And we’re about to release a study that will, will outline what those things are. One of them being the six-mile widening in one direction of 95 that because of the simulation, we called a micro-simulation, it’s a traffic simulation of the 95 corridor that showed making improvements in this area had positive impacts, 10, 15 miles away.

So, so, we think that that’s a model for how we need to do business. Let’s not just talk about what the vision is, let’s talk about what we can do in the near term and affect change.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Sure. Thank you for that. And granted there’s a unique thing about our state and particularly I95. And when I moved here years and years ago from Chicago, I was pretty amazed that we use our interstates as a local road. So, we’ll hop on Exit 22, get off at Exit 23 or Exit 24, it’s very common, particularly within Fairfield County, where it gets a lot of traffic.

Would this plan include closing any on and off ramps within the corridor?

MARK ROLFE: The plan that we’re looking at today does not close any ramps.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay.

TOM MAZiarZ: And Representative, I just want to jump in, particularly because we may have the highway people from the federal side still here. The plan also does look at mitigation by the fact that there’s commuting hours and there’s non-commuting hours. So, there is a discount, if people are using it during non-commuting hours that will move traffic from the commuting hours to the non-commuting hours, that’s part of how what this plan is.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): My final question for you, Mr. Commissioner, I heard, I shared with a member of our committee I think in a news piece yesterday who said, oh, my goodness, there’s no possible way the DOT could handle this, you’re so overwhelmed with everything else. We need a separate agency to take this on. What is your sense in that regard?

TOM MAZiarZ: You know, I’ve, first of all, I love a challenge, okay. And this has been a challenge, you have challenged me in a number of ways. But we do have an extreme good agency, all right, and where I have been very candid about it is that we do have to hire some expertise to deal with some of the things that are coming at us, okay. In other words, we want to have the best and the brightest dealing with these contracts that are coming in. But that’s then what your DOT has been doing for the last 30 or 40 years. We’ve looked at what is the most efficient way of doing it. And I am telling you that particularly right now if I did not feel comfortable and you’ve already seen that there’s a team up here that works very, very well and interacts very well and reports to this body very well, I’m very
comfortable that we’re in a position to handle this going forward.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay. Thank you for your answers. And despite our good intended and maybe sometimes difficult questions, we are very glad that you’re here. Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. We are getting close to the end, so we’re almost there. Senator Martin, you’re up next. Thanks.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to come back a little bit to the Federal Highway Administration, the communications and the meetings that you’ve had, how long have those been going on?

JOE GIULIETTI: We made application for the value pricing program back in 2011. This study didn’t actually get started funded and started until about 2013. And we did that over a period of two years. So, you’re going back to us actively involved in it, back to 2013, looking at different options and eventually evolving towards the concepts that we’re presenting and putting on the table.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): And currently you have a plan that you’ve been discussing with them?

JOE GIULIETTI: Yes.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): And is it the, I would assume it’s somewhat of a detailed plan that you’ve, that you’ve been talking to them about. And if so, then could we have that information sent to us so that we know what you’re talking to them about?

JOE GIULIETTI: We’ll try to, we can get you the 2012 plan, which is what they’ve been involved in.
SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): But it sounded like you guys have been talking on a regular basis, where in 2019 --

JOE GIULIETTI: I’ll try to put that together, kind of a summary of what it is. What I’m being told is that not everyone has gotten a copy of the 2018 plan?

MELISSA MCCAW: So, just to be clear, the department is utilizing the report that had been issued in November 2018, there is no new report that has been compiled that has not been shared with the legislature. This is the framework for their conversations.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): The November study, that is the plan. Okay. Now, I know you’re here from the Governor’s, Governor’s bill, but there’s the other bill, 7280, which talks about the creation of a transportation finance authority, so to speak. And I’d just like to have you answer a couple of these questions. It was asked by Representative Devlin, sorry, eminent domain, will this authority have that ability?

MARK ROLFE: I did not see that in the bill. Presumably the authority would work through the Department of Transportation.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Okay. Thank you. And the bill also requires a public hearing for the final plan that the, that you submit to the legislature. And once there’s a hearing, can the DOT amend that without coming back to us after the hearing?

JOE GIULIETTI: I think the way that particular is, not the Governor’s bill, but the one you’re
referring to now, it was written in a way that the legislature was approving that final plan.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): I’m sorry --

JOE GIULIETTI: I think the bill you’re referring to, which is not the Governor’s bill, was written in a way that requires approval of the plan by the full legislature.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): And that sort of leads me to the next question here, would projects selected by this infrastructure authority need to be approved by the General Assembly or this committee?

JOE GIULIETTI: I think we’re preparing comments on that that we will get to you.

TOM MAZIARZ: Yeah, give us a chance to, you know, look at it and get back to you. I hear your questions. I’m not in a position to respond to them, so, give us a chance to look at it and then because obviously we’re gonna have to give testimony into that as it is. So, let us work on that and get back to you.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): All right. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Senator. Mr. Chairman, I believe you have a few comments.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, all of you for coming out today and closing things down this afternoon, moving on to our public session. I just want to just give you my appreciation. I thought this was a really well done presentation. The questions were on point. Your answers were on point. The things where we don’t yet have the, were requested, we will
have the opportunity to get to all of us and we’ll certainly take that on as our committee leadership to ensure that every member has communicated all of the information that you’ve been asked for today. And so, I just want to say thank you for your willingness to engage on both the issues that you before you, plus the ones where you’re not quite sure, aware of yet. I know there’s a lot of dispute about how we move forward. Some of the things today that are not disputed, that there are nearly 1500 miles of Connecticut’s roadways rated as poor, that 250 bridges in Connecticut are rated as poor. It’s not disputed, but the average age of bridges in Connecticut is 10 to 15 years older than that of the national average. It’s not disputed. But the average age of the railway bridges in the most heavily traveled corridor in the country are over 100 years old. It’s not disputed, that despite there’s new technology and new trains, the average commuting time from New Haven to Grand Central Station is 30 percent longer than it was 30 years ago.

No one disputes the fact that mayors and first selectmen from both parties, republican and democrat, have asked for additional stations on the Hartford Line, have asked for additional stations on the CTfastrak. That no one disputes the fact that the Waterbury extension and New Caanon extension need serious improvements. In fact, we’ve had proposed bills for legislators from both parties submit bills suggesting that we put additional rails on both of those lines and increase travel time, increase the number of trains that serve those communities. It is not disputed, all of the facts here that lead you to one certain conclusion, that
the current available dollars that we have can only do upkeep. It can never change any of those underlying facts. And if we’re going to change those underlying facts that are not disputed, we need to make investments in the 21st Century.

I thank you for offering us a plan forward. It is my hope that we can come together with all of those undisputed facts and desires to move it forward and reach a plan that satisfies those needs. And I thank you for the last few hours of presenting your thoughts on how to move forward. Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, that will conclude our time with you today. I want to thank you, Commissioner, Secretary, Mr. Lehman coming and to your whole team. Just for purposes for the benefit of our Clerk who is tracking everything, if you just don’t mind, if each member of your team could just briefly just restate your name for the record. I think, in the back and forth that might have got mottled for the recording system. We just want to make sure we capture everybody.

TOM MAZIAZ: Tom Maziarz, M-a-z-i-a-r-z, Chief of Planning.

MARK ROLFE: Mark Rolfe, R-o-l-f-e, Chief Engineer.

BOB CARD: Bob C-a-r-d, Chief of Finance and Administration.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Again, I want to thank you all for taking the time to be here to answer many questions, many pointed questions, very informative for the public at large as well, as well as our benefit. I do want to close by saying and
echo some of the comments from my Chairmen, we’re at a crossroads literally as well as figuratively in terms of how we proceed in the future to maintain our infrastructure and not just maintain it, but to try and make it world class to compete with all the neighboring states that are doing just that.

So, what we can’t do is afford to fall behind. And the one thing I’m unwilling to do is to manage by crisis or by emergency, meaning we direct dollars only when something reaches a level of that we must act; otherwise, we will have a calamity before us. That is not the way to move forward for the benefit of the state.

So, our job is to take difficult situations, difficult questions, difficult concepts and try to figure a way forward. If we can find different ways to get there, I think we are all open to that. But until such time, we do have a plan in front of us that does point a way and hopefully we can find consensus to move forward.

So, I just want to say thank you for your time, spending it with us here, answering the questions. Just please, again, make sure any information that was requested to you or any of you from your team to make sure it gets to the Clerk and then the Clerk can make sure it gets to every member of the committee as well as the rest of the legislature.

So, with that, thank you. So, while we are in the middle of them moving on and we’ll be moving into the elected officials and the public, we’re not gonna go through the full, but we’re gonna go back and forth to be respectful of everyone’s time. We did run a little bit over time, but I think it was
a, it was a worthwhile endeavor to hear from everyone to have their questions answered.

So, while we take just a few minutes for people to clear out. First up on the deck will be Rudy Marconi, then followed by, and then we’ll be flipping over to the public, Patrick Jones, and we’ll be going back and forth as we go through the list.

So, just give yourselves, we’ll take a quick five-minute interval, just to give a chance for everything to get set up.

(RECESS.)

REP. LEMAR (96TH): All right, everyone. I need you in your chairs, clerks, legislators, public alike. All right. As folks have now found their chairs, we’ll reconvene our public hearing. Mr. Marconi, you’re first up. Mayor O’Leary and Mr. DeLong, you are also on the list for later on in the afternoon. So, we’ll take you together, if you can consolidate your timeline, that would be very beneficial to all of us, so thank you.

Mr. Marconi, the time is yours, delegate to your guests as you speak.

RUDY MARCONI: I appreciate your allowing us to sit here today in the interest of brevity. My name’s Rudy Marconi. For the record, R-u-d-y, M-a-r-c-o-n-i. And with me are Joe DeLong, CCM, and Mayor Neil O’Leary, from the great City of Waterbury. And I’ll turn it over to Joe DeLong to kick things off.

JOE DELONG: Thank you, Rudy, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee. Again, it’s Joe DeLong, J-o-e, D-e-l-o-n-g. I’m the Executive
Director and CEO of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. We are an organization that currently, I should say a nonpartisan organization that currently represents 168 of the 169 towns and cities in Connecticut, comprising about 99 percent of the state’s total population.

I just want to lead off today by stating that while we are here to testify in support of House Bill 7202, I should make it clear that, that my comments as a group are not reflective of the individual views of each one of our members, but rather are reflective of the collective majority views of our membership and how they have been relayed to us at this time.

What I’m going to do to in interest of brevity, is I’m going to go ahead and send this on, as you know joining me today is, Rudy has mentioned, is Rudy Marconi, who is on CCM’s board of directors as well as is the current President of the Council of Small Towns. And then to my far right is Mayor Neil O’Leary, who is currently serving as CCM’s President.

So, at this time I’m gonna hand it over to First Selectman Marconi to give testimony.

RUDY MARCONI: Thank you, Joe, and thank you members of the Transportation Committee. I’ll be brief. I was here in 2010 testifying, many years ago, on the issue of tolls in support of. This year in support of Bill 7202. For many years we have been trying to figure out the issue of transportation in our state. And although a lot of the conversation this morning has been directed toward ‘84, ‘95, the Merritt Parkway, ‘91, we also have a rail infrastructure as
well that’s in bad need of funds. And related in the southwest part of Connecticut, there are, there is opposition, there are people that are concerned about it, there are people that commute back and forth to New York City every single day. And they’re afraid that yes, this is another tax. But I don’t believe that it’s another tax. As has been said, some people are calling it a user fee. I don’t care what you call it, to be very honest with you, you can call it a tax, you can call it a user fee. The fact is, we’re starving for money in the State of Connecticut. And if we don’t make some tough decisions now, we’re gonna continue to be in the negative part of this country for years to come.

We have lost jobs. We’re losing residents. Everything is negative. We need some positives. And although a lot of people may look at tolls as yet another negative, I’ve got to tell you, that the end result is gonna be a positive return for the job market, for education, for the quality of life in the Town of Ridgefield and southwestern Connecticut.

An interesting fact, I don’t know if many of you heard it, in CBS News, they’re talking about increases in fares in New York City, tolls, subways, buses, everything to support their infrastructure. And even through all of that, with all of our residents that continue to commute to this city, I haven’t heard one objection about New York. I haven’t heard one person come to me and say, are you weighing in, can you participate, can you let them know that we can’t afford our commuter fees to go up, no one. But in Connecticut, there seems to be a very loud, no. I think we need to accept that and move forward and get the job done.
Thank you for your time this morning, this afternoon, I should say.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Mr. O’Leary.

NEIL O’LEARY: Thank you very much and it’s an honor to be here with all of you today. I am not only the Mayor of the City of Waterbury, as mentioned, President of CCM, and I was quite surprised. We pulled out executive committee, which is very partisan, but made up of half republicans and half democrats, and I was really surprised. I anticipated the democratic support because the representation of the major cities, but the republican support surprised me.

Obviously there’s concerns, but the conception was if they’re going to, if the legislature is going to ensure what the voters passed in November and the revenue generated here from tolling goes into, goes into where it’s supposed to go, right. We’ve heard enough testimony earlier today about the, you know, the trust level and the things that have happened in the past and I’m not gonna go backwards, you were all here for that.

But I was surprised. And so the question is, as leaders of cities and towns, you know, a positive and, and steady revenue stream is what all of us dream about so that we can do our budgeting each year, real budgeting on real numbers and run our cities and towns the way that you would expect us to as legislators here.

So, I’m here just to briefly tell you about a success story, about transportation. Waterbury, as many of you know, had been a bottleneck for the last, I’m in my 39th year with the city, my 8th as
mayor, by the way. But for the last 39 years, Waterbury has been nothing but a bottleneck up until the 84 widening project, which started about five years ago and was completed just this past year.

The impacts have been transformation, transformational for that city, and I mean that. There are businesses that have moved into the eastside of Waterbury. There are car dealerships that are popping up, leaving other communities and popping up on 84. There has been an unbelievable grand list growth, there’s been unbelievable employment opportunities because of that growth. Obviously, the four-year construction project created numerous jobs, not only in the region, but also for the state itself.

Look, we are now moving on to the Mixmaster project. So, the Mixmaster project, I’m sure you’re all very much aware, is about 55 years old, has not been maintained properly merely because of a lack of funding. Our credit goes up with the Department of Transportation, but when I became Mayor in 2011, the Mixmaster project was in a new drawing and redesign phase. And then a couple of years later, I had DOT in the office and the door was shut and I said, listen, we’re getting nervous about the condition of the Mixmaster.

And then a couple of years later it went from a back burner to a front burner to a front-front burner. And the next thing you know, you know, we’ve got bridge inspections going on all night, every night, holidays and weekends and here we are now in a Mixmaster project that just started out, it’s gonna be 4.7 years in duration, but it’s not redesigning. It’s just putting repairs in that are necessary to
keep the safety of those commuters who travel across and through the Mixmaster that was designed for 50,000 cars a day and now it’s quadrupled that.

So, it’s amazing to see and that’s what I’m urging all of you to recognize and understand. If the Mixmaster, so we’re gonna spend almost $200-million dollars to repair the Mixmaster, $200 million. And then after we do that, according to the DOT, we’re gonna do the redesign and study plans.

My point is, it’s crucial to the cities and this state. You’re all very intelligent people, you’ve heard a lot of testimony here today from, from the folks that were before you. I don’t need to repeat their testimony, but I need to emphasize as a Mayor, how important it is for the transportation infrastructure to keep our cities going in a positive direction as what’s happened just on the eastside of Waterbury.

And just in closing, I will tell you that there’s over a thousand people that commute down to lower Fairfield County and into New York, out of Waterbury, the greater Waterbury region alone. Many of those people take the train and our single-rail system is scheduled for new signalization and improvement and we are very, very welcoming of that. But people, when our school district is one of the few that has grown every year. And the people who are filling our schools are coming in from New York. And the questions asked, why are you coming to Waterbury? It’s affordable, it’s safe, and it’s got great schools.

So, we’re doing, we are doing what we want to do, right, what all of you want us to do. But we have
to keep our eye on the ball and make sure that we continue to recognize that without this infrastructure improvement, we just are not going to move the needle forward.

And I thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you all for your testimony today and for putting this in perspective for our towns and cities across the State of Connecticut and the needs that they have moving forward.

And the first group of testimony, referred to us as beautiful faces and you refer to us as remarkably intelligent. And I thought the toll conversation today was going to go in a different direction, so I really appreciate that.

Are there questions? Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I know, the day’s starting off a little better than we thought, huh? So, thank you for your testimony and you’re right about influx of people coming in from New York. It used to be that New York had higher house prices, but very low property tax, sorry, the other way around, very low house prices, but very high property tax. Connecticut had very low property tax, but very low or very high house prices, and that whole dynamic is shifting. So, we are seeing a greater migration.

I couldn’t agree with you more about the importance of getting to work seriously regarding the Mixmaster as well as the other infrastructure projects ahead of us. Our only question is the pathway to get there. So, I’m with you 100 percent in terms of solving that problem. And I get the short-term
investment for, I think what was described as the 20 to 25-year fix before, is it a $7-billion dollar investment to totally overhaul. I have great confidence in our Commissioner of Transportation, and we all look forward to working with him to find a pathway forward that we can accomplish that. We just have to solve the answer of how we go about doing that. So, thank you. And you have very strong advocates in this committee for the City of Waterbury, I will tell you that.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Any other questions? Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): One quick question, not so much a question as a comment. I want to thank you all three for coming up and presenting your testimony. I think the quickest segue was when you used the word transformative as a result of the investment in the, in, in repairing those roadways in your town. And I think that’s the overriding message that we need to keep in mind as we try to go forward is that if we do the right thing for our infrastructure, the transformative affect, the positive transformative affect it can have on our economy can be quite real and quite immediate. And if we don’t do that, then the reverse is true.

So, I thank you for your testimony, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Reyes.

REP. REYES (75TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Gentlemen, thank you very much for testifying here. Mayor O’Leary, thank you very much for those words. We talk about the infrastructure of the State of Connecticut and I then, I’ve not been shy about
talking about the Mixmaster in Waterbury and especially the trains.

The infrastructure dollars that are needed to upgrade the single train line is probably one of the biggest and fastest fix that we could help with the transportation for the City of Waterbury. So, Mayor, I’m glad that you brought that up because every time I see the new commissioner, that’s all I talk to him about. So, I think that all three of you guys are spot on and I am also a proponent of the tolls. And we’ll continue to listen on today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Thank you again for your testimony today.

NEIL O’LEARY: And if I may, just one further comment, and as far as the transformational improvement, it really, Senator, is the fact that the 84 on the eastside of Waterbury form Waterbury to Cheshire and Southington was widened, so there were lanes added right into the downtown portion of this city. And that’s really what’s made the difference. So, the capacity is able to be met with that, with the widening project, which allows people, quite frankly, to get through Waterbury and then in and out of Waterbury in a much easier fashion, even during rush hour. Where before, it could take up to an hour. I just wanted to point that out.

Thank you, sir.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you all. Next up is Patrick Jones.
REP. NOLAN (39TH): Good evening, State Rep, Anthony Nolan, from New London. Thank you for allowing us to come before you. I am going to accede my time to Patrick in regards to discussion. Patrick is from the IBTTA, the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association. And he’s gonna speak on some of the things that he has done and answer any questions needed.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative, and congratulations and welcome to the Connecticut General Assembly. You both signed up, so we’ll just take you together as one, that sounds terrific. Thank you.

REP. NOLAN (39TH): Thank you.

PATRICK JONES: Thank you, Representative, Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Patrick Jones, P-a-t-r-i-c-k, J-o-n-e-s. I’m the Executive Director and CEO of the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association.

IBTTA is the worldwide association for the owners and operators of toll facilities and the businesses that serve the industry.

I am here to testify in support of H.B. 7202 and H.B. 7280. In the U.S. today there are 129 distinct tolling entities that operate more than 6,000 miles of tolled highways, bridges and tunnels in 35 states. Some of the most important and heavily traveled highways and bridges in this country would never have been built without tolling. Facilities like the Pennsylvania Turnpike, the Golden Gate Bridge, the George Washington Bridge and many others, many other facilities that carry volumes of...
freight and huge volumes of passenger vehicles every day.

In the last 25 years, we’ve seen many states and localities turn to toll finance as a proven method to fund the rebuilding of their infrastructure and to attack the problem of congestion. If you remember nothing else from my testimony today, I’d like you to remember this, what is the cost of doing nothing? I think the cost is quite high. Doing nothing means failing highways and bridges, more congestion and pollution, lower safety. It means less productivity and economic growth.

With tolling, if you properly invest in toll finance in this state, you will have a dedicated, reliable and sustainable stream of revenues to support the rebuilding of infrastructure and the tackling of congestion. You’ll have less congestion, less pollution, greater economic growth and productivity.

If you implement tolling, you will ensure that everyone who uses Connecticut’s highways and bridges, whether they are state residents or they are from out-of-state, will pay their fair share to support your highway, bridge and tunnel infrastructure.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I’d be happy to answer any questions you may have.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Jones for your testimony today and for coming up from D.C., was it?

PATRICK JONES: Yes.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): And I appreciate your testimony and your broad national experience and perspective
on this. Are there any questions for Mr. Jones? Representative O’Dea.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have 10 hours’ worth of questions on tunneling. But that’s not why we’re here. Actually, I will ask you one thing about tunneling. Have you done any deep dive into the Boring Company and their proposals, the Elon Musk company, which I know immediately has credibility issues, but because of the chairman, but the company itself has opened up a test tunnel. Have you looked at that in California?

PATRICK JONES: Well, I’m not the expert on boring companies and my members are operators of tolling facilities, not the tolling companies themselves, I mean, the tunneling companies.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And so, so your companies are, is it a private quasi-public private or is it mostly private companies?

PATRICK JONES: Most, well, my members are organizations like the Pennsylvania Turnpike, the New Jersey Turnpike, Golden Gate Bridge, George Washington Bridge, anybody that operates toll facilities in the United States as well as in 25 other countries. So, they could be state departments of transportation or they could be special purpose authorities that are set up specifically to create a toll facility.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Did you hear the testimony of the Commissioner, I’d asked a question. I had been told, based on somebody who had worked for the New York MTA about congestion pricing does not work when it comes to trucks; that they, when they took a look
at it, they, even discounting 40 percent, there’s only about a 4 percent divergence of truck traffic during heavy-use times. Have you seen any studies like that? Are you aware of that?

PATRICK JONES: I did hear the Commissioner’s testimony and I would say that most of the congestion charging systems that are in use in the United States are for the purpose of having dynamic pricing or reducing congestion for passenger vehicles, not trucks. I think he was talking specifically in the New York metropolitan region they have such a crush of traffic flow that it’s difficult to make congestion charging work.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, as I understand your testimony it’s mostly, congestion pricing is mostly to address passenger traffic and not commercial traffic?

PATRICK JONES: Correct.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And are you aware of any studies in Connecticut about the percentage of traffic that’s out-of-state versus in state? I’ve seen numbers varying from 30 percent to 40 percent out-of-state. Are you aware of any studies on that?

PATRICK JONES: I’m aware of those studies and I would not offer any further expertise on those numbers.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): All right. Well, I’ll turn it over. I know we’ve got a busy day, but I’m gonna keep your information and you may hear from me later on. Thank you very much --

PATRICK JONES: Thank you, Representative.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): -- for bringing them up.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Nice to see you, Pat, thank you for being here and Representative Nolan, welcome aboard.

So, just a couple of questions and a comment. You, I think, mentioned, you know, the importance and we’re hearing this a lot from the Governor of having a sustainable, reliable revenue stream and that is a common thread, something that, you know, that’s why we got the income tax implemented in the State of Connecticut. That was how we agreed to casino revenue, lottery revenue, increase in sales tax, our gas tax, our petroleum gross products tax. So, a lot of these were supposed to be sustainable, reliable revenue sources. And one of the news pieces that came out recently, and you mentioned the State of Pennsylvania, that their turnpike authority is actually facing bankruptcy with $11-billion dollars in debt, and they have increased the price of tolls 200 percent over the past 10 years. How could something like that happen?

PATRICK JONES: I don’t believe it’s accurate that the Pennsylvania Turnpike is facing bankruptcy. They have increased their tolls in recent years, but they’re not facing bankruptcy.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I think to the extent that the Governor said it’s chasing business out of the state because tolls have increased so much.

But my question to you is, have you ever seen a state undertake the magnitude and density of tolls that Connecticut is contemplating?
PATRICK JONES: Well, you mentioned the example of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. There are numerous states that have hundreds and hundreds of miles of tolled facilities in them. So, Connecticut is perhaps unique in being one of the states that’s planning to put tolls on facilities that are not currently tolled, although there are a number of projects all across the country that are under the Value Pricing Pilot Program under FHWA, that are doing this kind of thing.

Connecticut certainly, with the number of routes that you’re talking about, is a, big one.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I think New York State is the only state that slightly would have more mileage of tolled road than the State of Connecticut, based on the new numbers the Commissioner shared today of 330 miles of tolled road in our teeny-tiny little state in the northeast corner.

PATRICK JONES: Well, actually, Representative Devlin, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Florida and New York all have more miles than Connecticut would have in terms of tolls.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Our data must be incorrect then, so is New Jersey at 356. So, I guess that’s 20 miles more than Connecticut. All right. Fair enough. We’ll take that. Okay. Well, I appreciate that, your answers very much and it’s a pleasure to see you. I hope you had a great night and enjoy your time visiting friends tonight as well.

PATRICK JONES: Thank you very much, Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Chairman Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, Representative, good to see you. Thank you, Mr. Jones for being here. And I just want to ask a quick question. Your association, right, so you --

PATRICK JONES: Yes.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- have the, the states that currently have tolls are part of your association?

PATRICK JONES: That’s correct.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): And I take it that these states continuously have conversations to make sure they share best practices and lessons learned so that as things go forward, they’re just open conversations on how to do things better, is that correct?

PATRICK JONES: That’s exactly right, Senator Leone. One of the, one of the reasons for the association is for our members to come together to share knowledge and ideas to promote an enhanced toll finance transportation and to raise the level, the state of the art of tolling.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): And within that association and the multiple states that are part of that, there are different ways that they may have approached tolling, whether it’s through their DOT or through another agency. It’s not like one is better than the other, it just seems that whatever made sense for that particular state at the time is the way that they went forward. But nevertheless, they’re able to get the job done and still keep information and transportation flowing, is that correct?
PATRICK JONES: That’s exactly right. All toll facilities bear some similarities, but there are a lot of difference and I’d like to say that when you’ve seen one toll facility, you’ve seen one toll facility. There are many variations as to whether it is one of the State Department of Transportation or whether it’s a separate authority, whether it might be operated by a private operator or a concessionaire. There are many different models that have worked successfully here in the U.S. and around the world.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): And as, as we are as a state contemplating, and we’re the only state on the eastern seaboard, there may be one other up north that doesn’t have the tolls, but they’re further away not proximity wise, we are sort of behind the eight ball in the sense that we’re unable to keep with some of our infrastructure needs, when other states have incorporated tolling, they have incorporated gas tax, and yet they’re still trying to catch up. So, the fact that you have an association that is able to be a resource for us going forward, I think will be very helpful and we would be able to utilize again any best practices or lessons learned so that we don’t fall into a situation that we were not hoping to. So, I think that’s gonna be very important, very crucial. So, I would just ask that you’d be available for us as we try to continue this discussion going forward.

PATRICK JONES: Senator, we’re happy to be supportive in any way we can.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Thank you again for coming up today, I really appreciate it.

PATRICK JONES: Thanks for having me.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Congratulations again, Representative Nolan.

REP. NOLAN (39TH): Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Hilda Santiago, coming up with Don Shubert.

REP. SANTIAGO (84TH): Good afternoon Senator Leone, Representative Lemar and Representative Devlin, Representative Martin and members of the Committee. Thank you for holding this open forum, open hearing today on the tolls. And I would like to seed my time to Donald Shubert, who is a Connecticut Construction Industries Association Representative.

DONALD SHUBERT: Thank you, Representative Santiago. My name is Don Shubert, I’m the President of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association. CCIA supports Bill No. 7202, for three basic reasons. I think we’ve heard it all today that the current funding streams supporting the Special Transportation Fund cannot sustain current systems and services into the future. Electronic tolling system provide a solid policy basis as a long-term user-based dedicated funding stream where the users of the systems pay for the systems.

And additionally, this proposal on electronic tolls presents the only solution that we have seen thus far that does not burden the CT taxpayers with 100 percent of the burden of the cost to repair, maintain and improve the systems across the state.
I think after hearing a lot of testimony today and being in Connecticut for a long time, it’s pretty obvious that for decades limited funding has forced the state to make investments in some areas of areas of transportation at the expense of others. Basically, leading the system down the slow road of deterioration. And it’s well documented that Connecticut’s transportation systems are inadequate, congested and deteriorating. We cited a couple of reports in our testimony. And it’s also very clear that at current levels of funding the situation only continues to decline. An electronic tolling system would provide an additional means to help fill a growing gap between current revenue streams and much need transportation investments. An electronic tolling system can be an integral part of a longer term comprehensive strategy on transportation. An electronic tolling system would provide funding for projects that are not easily support through existing state transportation and highway programs. It would enhance funding sources by providing new revenue for projects, which would leave more of the traditional funding for the core transportation programs.

In Connecticut, we’ve heard it today, there are several mega projects, any one of which could basically devour the current funding streams. And we’re thinking that a tolling system would basically be able to take some of those projects so that, pay for pay for those projects so that the core funding can go to other things.

One thing we didn’t hear about today was long-term fix operating expenses for transportation. And we’re thinking that with the tolling system, some of
those mega projects and road and bridge projects can be actually taking out of the current funding scenario that we have today to leave room for more growth in other areas of transportation. There’s little time to waste.

Some of us are concerned that the current revenue streams will not support the current system and services long enough to make it to tolls. We’re hearing estimates anywhere from four to six years to tolls and we’re wondering even with the adjustments that were made in the last legislative session, whether the current revenue streams are going to be enough to get there.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify today. We think this is a discussion that’s very important to put in Connecticut’s public transportation and highway programs on a solid foundation of fiscal stability. And thank you for having me here. I’ll be happy to answer any questions.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative Santiago for coming up today and thank you, Mr. Shubert for your time, for the work that you do, the men and women across Connecticut that you represent and the great roadways and bridges and rail lines we’ve been experiencing throughout the State of Connecticut is a lot of folks that you work with on a day-to-day basis. You’re a steadfast advocate for the State of Connecticut in D.C. for us, and you’re a great source of information for a lot of us on the committee outside of tolling. So, I do appreciate you weighing in on this specific issue as well.

DONALD SHUBERT: Thank you.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Other questions, Chairman Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Representative, and good to see you Don. I appreciate your comments and very helpful in moving the discussion forward. You mentioned on the, well, maybe you didn’t mention, but it’s part of the construction trades in participation with our infrastructure and the relationship that we need, as we have projects going forward, we need to make sure that we have the expertise here outside of the DOT to build and go forward and all that that entails.

In the recent past, as we’ve had some constraints on our ability to fund projects on a, not just a year-by-year basis, but in five-year windows and then beyond, if we’re unable to meet those immediate needs, and you have to scale back or our suppliers have to scale back, how easy is it to then be out of work for a number of months or even years because we’re not designing and building something and then have to start that back up. What’s the, what are the hurdles there for even a, what used to be a construction agent or supplier on hand to no longer be there and when we do find the money, do we have the expertise still in house?

DONALD SHUBERT: Well, Senator, you make a very good point with your question. The construction industry is not very good at fits and starts, especially in Connecticut, the industry’s been hanging on by our fingernails since the economic downturn in 2008 and 2009. We heard earlier today, and I know through the trades, that a lot of the Connecticut trades people are working in Massachusetts, they’re working in Rhode Island and they’re working in New York because they see a lot of work there.
We can ramp up rather quickly bringing those people back to Connecticut. But our struggle right now is, with this instability in the marketplace, we’re losing talent. And as we lose talent, it’s going to be very difficult to recruit high-level talent back to Connecticut. And at some point it’s going to be very hard for us to just -- if it reaches, there’s a whole generation of people my age in the construction industry that are building roads and bridges and transit facilities in Connecticut for years. And we recently saw one close up just over in the last year. Several others are just barely making it.

You start losing your good Connecticut contractors and you try to get a construction program going, you’re not gonna get the same economic benefit to the state that you may get if you, if you have a very, very, vitality, a lot of construction vitality in the state.

You know, we pay good wages. We provide benefits. People spend money in this state. And you have to remember, this money resonates, you know, there’s Connecticut producers, it’s not just going to the general contractor, it’s going to subcontractors, it’s providing opportunities to smaller contractors. There’s material producers. There’s suppliers. I can tell you that a lot of out-of-state contractors don’t buy their equipment in Connecticut. And they’re not having Connecticut equipment dealers service that equipment.

One of the biggest benefits of transportation investments and we’re only the initial return on investment. But one of the biggest benefits is keeping that money in the state and turning over the
economic activity in the state. And if we risk slowing down any more than we’re working right now, I think you’re absolutely right, there’s gonna be a negative impact to the whole system. And I think that it’s just going to resonate, you know, through the economy.

I don’t know, Senator, you know that last year we had an analysis done of just what transportation investments, the jobs they create and the economic activity they create, not only in the construction industry but in every economic sector of the state’s strategic plan. And we looked at financial services, we looked at advanced manufacturing, we looked at tourism, and the jobs are not only construction jobs, the jobs resonate through every other economic sector in the state. So, yeah, the construction jobs and the net economic benefit of that is, is something that’s important and is something we need to preserve right now.

But at the same time, there’s a bigger picture where it’s preserving jobs across the state.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, I appreciate that. It’s very helpful because what we want to do is keep everything moving in the right way and not do fits and starts as you mentioned because there’s a negative affect there and ultimately that’s a higher cost. And to then have to bring in outside expertise, then that just increases it even more so. So, hopefully we can avoid that. So, I appreciate your comments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Representative O’Dea, followed by Representative Carney.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your testimony. I guess I’m gonna ask, at the risk of alienating the entire committee, I probably won’t ask everybody this question, but one of the things I’m concerned about is, so we’ve got a, let’s use rough numbers, $20-billion dollar budget. Tolls are gonna add roughly a billion. And so my question to you is, do you want the new budget with tolls to be $20 billion or $21 billion; in other words, right now the OPM consensus revenue as of November of 2018 had the STF fund getting a million-six, almost a million-seven, a billion-seven, excuse me.

My question is, tolls are gonna come in. Would you see tolls as replacing that revenue so it could go elsewhere or in addition to that revenue? Do you understand the question?

DONALD SHUBERT: Yes. I think you’re right, Representative O’Dea, the rail message today is we need net new revenue for transportation. We have, we have billions of dollars of transportation needs in this state. And the discussion today was interesting because it seemed to focus on bonding and capital investments, it didn’t talk about operating expenses. And there’s another equation to the transportation programs, you know, another part of it is the problem with the Special Transportation Fund right now is long-term fix operating expenses that the state has entered into over the last so many years. We’ve heard the last Commissioner talk about those for a long time. You know, years ago I think Representative Devlin commented about it earlier today, the Special Transportation Fund was basically set up to bond money to fix roads and
bridges in the state after the Mianus River Bridge collapse. But now, it’s interesting because the operating expenses in the Special Transportation Fund are increasing at a point, that service is the lower percentage of the Special Transportation Fund today that it was 15 or 20 years ago and we’re in trouble.

So, I think the real discussion today is net new revenue.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, in other words, you want that $1.6 to stay in and tolls to be on top of that; in other words, I don’t want, my point is, if we’re gonna add new revenue, I don’t want to divert because we’re all talking about how bad the roads and bridges are and we all agree on that. There’s a difference of opinion as to how we fund that. What I don’t, I think is hypocritical is to say we’re gonna add tolls and then divert the current money that’s going into the STF to other things; do you understand what I’m saying?

DONALD SHUBERT: Okay.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, your point is, so according to OPM, the STF had funding of $1.684-billion dollars for 2019. You don’t see that, those revenue sources going to the STF now being diverted elsewhere, you see tolls going on top of that funding, correct?

DONALD SHUBERT: That’s, I think that’s a legislative decision. Here’s what I see, Representative --

REP. O’DEA (125TH): No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

DONALD SHUBERT: Here’s what I see --
REP. O’DEA (125TH): I want to, I’m asking you your opinion?

DONALD SHUBERT: Okay. My opinion is, my opinion goes back to the analysis that was done when ConnDOT was conducting the transform CT study that basically became the let’s go CT proposal. There was an underlying study done. And they were looking at $100-billion dollars over 30 years for first in class transportation --

REP. O’DEA (125TH): I got it right up on my screen.

DONALD SHUBERT: -- and part of that, when ConnDOT was analyzing that study, I heard Commissioner Redeker say it over and over again. He said, 60 percent of that is just to maintain the state of good repair for the next 30 years; and that stuck in my mind for one reason.

If that’s correct, that $60-billion dollars over 30 years, it’s $2-billion dollars a year, we’re not spending that now. We need new revenues in order to reach the funding level that would, would, would bring us up to that at least $2 billion just to maintain what we have and then go further to reduce congestion and have a more effective transportation system in the state.

That’s my simple analysis from where I sit. I think that’s a very important simple analysis for everybody to keep their eye on.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, you’re answer is, yes, you want to keep all the monies that are going currently and put tolls on top of that, that’s what you’re saying?
DONALD SHUBERT: Depending on how the legislature funds the transportation, and I’m not, you know, Mr. Card was here from Finance at DOT, so. I can tell you, I’ve been watching this for a long time and I’ve still yet figured that out. But depending on what the needs are at the time, I think that tolling is the way to bring in net new revenue. It’s the only, the only, the only proposal I have seen to bring in net new revenue without saddling the Connecticut taxpayers with 100 percent of the bill.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Well, I don’t think I’m gonna get the answer, but go ahead. I will turn it back to Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Carney.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Don, thank you for coming here to testify. So, I just have a couple of questions.

My first question is, you mentioned to Senator Leone about some companies are doing business in other states, getting their supply or getting their equipment fixed in other states. So, if we implement tolls, will they be coming back and having their work done in Connecticut?

DONALD SHUBERT: I don’t know if I can answer that question. You know, we have, we have some very established Connecticut companies. A couple of them are, you know, performing work in Connecticut. A couple of them are from out-of-state. Many of them are from in state. It’s very difficult for me to project what their business plans are. My concern is when I see members of CCIA performing work in other states, when I see people in the trades working more in other states than in Connecticut,
that’s a cause of concern for me looking into the future.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. So, would you have, aside from tolls then, to try to bring that business back to Connecticut to get these companies, to get their equipment fixed in Connecticut, to purchase equipment in Connecticut, what else needs to be done?

DONALD SHUBERT: I don’t know to what extent that could be controlled. You know, you have to have open competition, you know. And I think the commerce clause may have some limitations on how we could control competition from out-of-state, producers and contractors and things like that. We have some concerns, you know, with the petroleum gross receipts tax where the in-state producers are paying it, but out-of-state producers don’t. And they have a big infiltration area in Connecticut that just that alone helps them have a competitive advantage. It created an unbalanced market.

But other than that, it’s very difficult for me to say. We would like to see that Connecticut-based companies thrive. We would like to see the money stay in the state. We would like to see opportunities. You know, we’re very good at creating opportunities, it happened in Waterbury. For people to go to work, we have very established apprenticeship training programs. We would like to see all the activity stay in Connecticut as much as possible.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): So, I just want to just clarify. I want to say, so do you think the cost of
doing business is too high in the State of Connecticut? It’s a yes or no question, Don.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Let’s hold on a second here.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Mr. Shubert, just for a second

DONALD SHUBERT: -- answer these questions.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I get it, there’s a lot of emotions in this room today and people are gonna have their opportunity to speak. We’re trying to have a conversation between a Representative who is asking a question and someone who’s still going to testify. It’s my hope that we won’t have people in the crowd interrupting you, when it’s your turn to speak. So, let’s try to keep this civil and on point. And, you know, this isn’t a court room and there aren’t, you know, juries and witnesses. This isn’t yes or no questions. This is just like we’re trying to have a conversation and get some answers here. So, please accommodate and please try to keep it cool. Thank you.

DONALD SHUBERT: Representative Carney, I could tell you that I don’t hear from my members that it’s too expensive to do business in Connecticut. I don’t hear that from my members.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. All right. And my final question, I know last year you worked with myself and Senator or sorry, Representative Guerrera on getting that car tax, that sales tax on new car sales into the Special Transportation Fund. So, I’m sure you heard from the OPM Secretary that now they want to take that out. So, I’m just curious, your
thoughts on that; do you think that’s a good for your industry?

DONALD SHUBERT: No, I do not. I’ve been very clear about that. I think that the legislature made a very calculated decision, scheduling, moving up the schedule for the car sales tax last session. I think it’s very important for the sustainability of the Special Transportation Fund over the next five years. I’ve been pretty objective about that. No, I think that is not a good idea. I think that the legislature should pay very close attention to that and make sure that the sustainability, you know, we’re trying to figure out right now what a table 8 is going to look like in two years.

Representative O’Dea, I couldn’t answer your question because I don’t know what the operating expenses are going to be two years from now at DOT. And I don’t know how that’s going to affect the STF. And I don’t know how that, you know, there’s pressure right now between operating expenses and debt service. And I don’t know how this dramatic rise in operating expenses since 2007 are going to continue to put pressure on our ability to issue bonds.

So, we’re trying to figure out what the coverage ratio is going to be that fifth year out, two years from now, and if that car sales tax transfer is going to be enough. But we think that is a very calculated critical move that this legislature made last year that needs to stay in place.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Okay. I appreciate your answers to my questions. Thanks.

DONALD SHUBERT: All right.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Again, thank you for your testimony today. Are there any additional questions for -- oh, I’m sorry, I apologize again. Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): That’s all right, you were looking that way. Thank you very much for your testimony. I just wanted to touch on a couple of things. You were talking about, I think, did you mention about tolling in Massachusetts and did I hear that from your testimony?

DONALD SHUBERT: No, I mentioned, my employers are working in Massachusetts.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay.

DONALD SHUBERT: There’s more work up there.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay.

DONALD SHUBERT: And there’s not any, there isn’t enough volume of work in Connecticut, there hasn’t been since 2008 because of the uncertainty and the economic situation and we, we have, we’ve been hanging on by our fingernails since --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right.

DONALD SHUBERT: -- then. So, our members, I have many members that are doing more work in other states than in Connecticut.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right. So, we do have, no doubt, a challenge ahead of us. You did mention the petroleum excise tax, and that is something unique to Connecticut. Our Connecticut residents, as you said, businesses pay $300, and I think $38-million, it could be $78-million dollars. Our Connecticut residents pay $500-million dollars in gas tax. And
I appreciate the need to share 40 percent of additional revenue with out-of-state people. But the reality is for Connecticut state residents, if there’s somebody from my community in Fairfield, just traveling to Stamford, it’s gonna be out of their pocket almost $800 a year, more than $900 a year, if they’re going from Norwalk to Hartford. We’re talking real cash. So, there’s a difference between let’s share the pain, because we’re talking about it coming out of your kid’s lunch money, coming out of your grocery fund, coming out of your ability to let alone do work, just live life.

So, I think we really need to be careful about that in terms of looking at really what’s fair because the residents in the State of Connecticut keep getting burdened and burdened and burdened. So, now the mantra is well, 40 percent will come elsewhere. At least 60 percent as a going in rate of $650-million dollars will come out of the pockets of our residents and that is a big concern.

So, I’m all for investing in our infrastructure, we’ve got to do it, we’ve got to be more competitive so businesses can thrive. I just don’t think more taxes is the way to do it, but we’ll find a solution.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Again, we’re going to try to tamper the emotions in this room a little bit. We’re going to try to allow people to ask and answer questions without, you know, applause or booing or anything else you might find at a baseball game, but instead at a hearing, where we’re having information presented to us. We want to give everyone in this room an opportunity to have their testimony heard. It’s going to take a very long
time if there’s a lot of statements and clapping every time we hear something we like or don’t like. So, please bear with us and we’ll give you your three minutes. Thank you. Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, again, and thank you folks for being here. Again, as we move forward, we want to talk about this proposal with tolls and the impact it will have, right, and, and the impact on the state. As we’re trying to talk about all the different revenues that come to Connecticut and what Connecticut residents have to pay or not pay, that’s a bigger discussion because as we try to figure out how to solve the problem of infrastructure, one way or another, we are going to have to fund it and the funding has to come from somewhere. We can disagree on how the funding needs to come, but at some point, the State of Connecticut is going to have to pony-up and pay all the bills that are due.

The other alternative is to decrease services. And I can tell you from direct experience as well as from many constituents not just from my town but from other constituents that are not part of my district that I get many calls on, they don’t like their services decreased when it affects them personally. But we still have to pay that bill.

So, this is about a discussion about how to pay for our infrastructure. And yes, there are costs for the state, across the state in all sorts of ways. So, we’re focusing on one aspect here. We’re not throwing in all the other revenues that need to be part of this discussion for infrastructure. Because yes, we, if we don’t move forward on this plan, we will have to fund another, we will have to find
another source for revenues to manage not just this but everything else we have to manage.

So, you may clap if you don’t like the revenues here, but it’s gonna come from somewhere eventually because we cannot afford a broken infrastructure system.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. One more question, Senator MacLachlan. I apologize, Representative.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, sir, for your testimony. Representative Santiago, thank you for being here.

Really quickly, I’m really confused, not clear exactly on how, you know, and in-state discount would work. I’m a little bit skeptical about how an in-state discount would work for Connecticut drivers. If, if there’s precedent for, you know, working effectively. I don’t know if your association or your members would have any, any input on how, on how that would, how that would function?

DONALD SHUBERT: I’m sorry, Representative MacLachlan, I’m the wrong person to ask that question to. I run the construction industry association and we build transportation infrastructure. I do not know how tolling systems operate. What we’re here today is to discuss a new revenue stream for transportation, and this is one new revenue stream that we think has some solid policy backing to it.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Sure. I appreciate that. Thank you.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you both for your testimony here today, I really appreciate it.

DONALD SHUBERT: It’s a pleasure to be here. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Jason Wall, followed by Susan Johnson.

JASON WALL: Good afternoon and thank you Chairman Lemar, Chairman Leone, Ranking Members Martin and Devlin as well as the rest of the distinguished members of the Transportation Committee for allowing me to offer my testimony today.

My name is Jason Wall and I am the CEO of A-to-Be. It’s a tolling and back-office solution provider. It is my pleasure to testify in full support of H.B. 7280 and H.B. 7202 as well, has offered innovative solutions to maximize transit and revenue streams.

A-to-Be is a leading innovator for tolling and back-office and transportation solutions in the United States, worldwide, with operations in Washington, Colorado, California, Illinois, South Carolina, and Virginia.

We process over 1 billion transactions annually and we are the nation’s only tolling company that has the ability to integrate its back-office solutions for all transportation-related revenue streams.

Connecticut’s aging transportation infrastructure is in desperate need of repair. It is evident from my experience in running successful tolling programs around the United States, from rolling out entirely new, ground-up tolling programs throughout Europe. That tolling Connecticut’s highways is the most feasible, practical, and sustainable solution for
providing the state with the adequate capital to fund the transportation programs and for providing Connecticut with proven, efficient and monitoring congestion management solutions. That is the direction of the industry and the direction of the direction of IAG and E-ZPass group, which Connecticut will be a part of. Connecticut currently has a rare opportunity to create a tailored towing package, exclusive to its needs. Due to that fact there is no existing program in the state, Connecticut is able to bypass having to integrate new hardware into existing infrastructure. It is also not beholden to antiquated regulatory parameters that limit the future enhancement and expansion of its revenue.

The state has the opportunity to be innovative and include additional revenue streams such as parking garages, ferries, fuel stations, and other treatment plan-related revenue drivers under the same administrative program as tolling.

Connecticut’s program can serve as a pioneer for your state’s mobility as a service model. The model has seen tremendous success in Europe and that the industry agrees that Europe is more than 10 years ahead of any current program in the United States.

In this model, Connecticut’s pursuits of all transportation-related revenue streams would be combined and administered through a single, centralized back-office that manages accounts linked to each driver operating on Connecticut roads.

The approach utilizes a proven shared efficiency structure that that would maximize Connecticut’s
revenue through streamlining the process through a single entity.

Not only would system automations save the state money, due to it only needing to build and maintain staff one back-office instead of many, but it means that on-duty personnel can enforce violations in the service center instead of on the street, in the parking garages or at other locations, significantly reducing the costs associated.

In addition, I understand that there’s a need to modernize parking garages in the State of Connecticut. Legislature has recently introduced S.B. 715, AN INITIATIVE TO ENHANCE PARKING INFRASTRUCTURE. Parking problems continue to persist in areas such as West Haven, New Haven, Stamford, which is home to the STC and Bradley Airport, two of the most critical transportation centers in Connecticut, according to Stamford Mayor, David R. Martin. These are prime examples of areas standing to benefit from a broad and inclusive piece of tolling legislation that accommodates the combination of multiple modes of transit.

The bills before this committee are a great step to expand Connecticut’s transportation-related revenue, efficiency, traffic management, and ease of use for commuters.

I recommend that this committee considers all approaches in its legislation for maximizing all of tolling’s benefits, which include job creation, economic development, and increased efficiency.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my testimony, which I have submitted in full with
additional supporting information. And I’m available to answer any questions that you may have.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Wall, for your testimony. Thank you for showing us the ways if we do consider going down a tolling option, how we could run intra-operable efficient system and take advantage of potential partnerships with other folks and making sure that we’re optimizing the utilization of these things. I really do appreciate your time.

JASON WALL: You’re welcome.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Are there questions? Representative O’Dea, followed by Representative MacLachlan.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, sir, for your testimony. Are you from Chicago?

JASON WALL: No, sir, I’m not. I actually live in Florida. We have a headquarter in Chicago, yes.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Okay. I’m sure it’s proprietary to an extent, but can you give us a ballpark on what you would charge as a percentage, typically, you know, let’s say the toll was 10 cents. The administrative costs, what is the typical administrative cost for something like that?

JASON WALL: It depends on, it’s state-to-state. That depends on, if you guys are gonna run it yourself, if you privatize it, that’s completely different. How many violations there are at the beginning, how many people you need to, I have to mail out a paper certificate. I mean there’s way too many variables to discuss right now.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): Okay. So, what’s the range, could you give me the high end and the low end?

JASON WALL: 8 cents, 6 cents on the dollar, max, and that would be a very high range. And that’s involved for the entire operation.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Okay. So, 60 to 80 percent on a high range, low range if we did it ourselves, 10 to 20 percent?

JASON WALL: If you did it yourselves, it would be significantly more expensive.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): More expensive?

JASON WALL: Significantly. If you, if the DOT or anytime you operate it internally with the government, it’s gonna be significantly more expensive.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, if the 60 to 80 percent on a high range, what would be the low range?

JASON WALL: 5 to 6 cents, 4 cents.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, 40 to 60 cents. So, administrative costs would be anywhere from 40 to 80 percent?

JASON WALL: Somewhere around there.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Okay.

JASON WALL: No, no, 4 to 8 percent on the dollar.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Oh, okay. I was doing 10 cents, sorry, that’s where I was confused.

JASON WALL: No problem.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): All right. So, on the dollar, you’re talking, so it’s 4 to 8 percent, not --

JASON WALL: Something like that, give or take.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And what’s the last state you guys went into to run the toll program?

JASON WALL: We’ve done South Carolina, North, Northwest Parkway in Denver, in Colorado. So, we just upgraded the back-office in Southern Connector and also Northwest Parkway.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And what are some of the fiberoptic requirements you would see, like with our system, we don’t have any of the infrastructure, which I understand from your testimony is maybe a good thing --

JASON WALL: Uh-huh.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): -- because you don’t have to replace any, you just put it in. Do you have an idea, have you done a brand new system like we would be asking and what kind of cost --

JASON WALL: We have planners that do that for us. So, we would, we are supplying the technology and then we partner with groups like AECOM or other entities too.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Any idea on what, what, is there a kind of an infrastructure cost?

JASON WALL: You can look at Rhode Island, if you would like.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Okay. All right. Thank you. That’s exactly what I was looking for. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Representative MacLachlan, followed by Representative Morin.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Wall for your testimony. Two quick questions and forgive me if you end up repeating yourself, if I missed other parts of your statement. So, you guys regularly engage in public-private partnerships with states, is that part of your business?

JASON WALL: That is part of our business, yes.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Okay. Thank you. What, what type of work with the State of Connecticut, particularly the DOT, have you guys done in a private partnership type of relationship?

JASON WALL: We supply the technology. Normally we would not even be the main subcontractor, so that would be up to whoever we partner with because the construction costs and the operation cost would be the significant portion of the bill, not the technology portion. So, I can’t answer that question.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Okay. I’m trying to get some clarity on a major aspect to a potential tolling plan, which is the ability to offer in-state drivers a discount, how would that work? Would you have any insight on precedent for how that’s implemented, or the technology used to do that or --

JASON WALL: It’s embedded, you could build business rules to create that for the in-state drivers, anybody with the toll tags that are marked for the in-states would get the discount. It just depends
how you build out the business rules which we would, of course, develop with you.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): And how would your, how would your industry, your company or your industry, partner with, you know, the implementation of, you know, of a discount, particularly, you know, with the business rules that you’re talking about?

JASON WALL: Well, the business rules would be created by you, not by us. So, we would implement whatever you so desired.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Okay. How, I’m trying to understand how the tech works, how the technology works?

JASON WALL: I can’t answer that question, I’m the CEO, I need somebody much smarter than me to --

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): I respect that. I respect that. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Representative Morin.

REP. MORIN (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hello, Mr. Wall, thanks for coming up.

JASON WALL: Thank you, sir.

REP. MORIN (28TH): I’d just ask if you could explain how you see us incorporating other infrastructure needs, you know, when we’re looking at this concept as a whole?

JASON WALL: Well, if you look, I’m gonna use another country because it’s probably the best operation and most efficient operation in the world
inside of Portugal. So, first it started with tolling, then we went on and said, hey, look, in the inside of our back office we can also have a bus, a ferry, a train, taxis, rideshare, carwash, pharmacy, you can pay all with your toll tag. You can do virtually everything, and you lower the administration cost because right now you have a bus back office, you’ll have another back office, you’ll create these silos and each silo has this huge operating cost. If you, the more that you combine everything, obviously, you’re gonna create efficiency.


JASON WALL: You’re welcome.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you again for your testimony today, Mr. Wall.

JASON WALL: You’re welcome.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Appreciate it.

JASON WALL: Have a wonderful day.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Susan Johnson. Representative Johnson, you have a guest with you today, so if you could both introduce yourselves, that would be great.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, thank you so much for giving us an opportunity to speak. I’m Representative Susan Johnson, and I’m here supporting House Bill 7280, AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE CREATION OF THE CONNECTICUT TRANSPORTATION FINANCE AUTHORITY. And also House Bill 7202, AN ACT
CONCERNING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CONNECTICUT’S TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE. I’m so appreciative of your having these hearings and also, I’d love to introduce my guest, H. Darrel Harvey, he’s the Chief Executive Officer of the Ashforth Company, which is a real estate development company. And he’s here to talk about our real estate and the impact that our antiquated transportation systems have on the real estate that he has to develop and that he’s been working with for several years.

So, glad to introduce him.

DARREL HARVEY: Thank you much. Thank you, Representative Johnson and Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. As Representative Johnson mentioned, I’m co-CEO of a real estate, a commercial real estate company based in Stamford. We own properties in Stamford and Greenwich. And, in particular, we actually own office buildings at the Greenwich train station and we also own office buildings in Stamford that are not near the train station.

I’ve been a Connecticut resident for 41 years. I live in Darien. I’ve been very involved in the Business Council of Fairfield County. I’ve been a long-time board member. I’m a former board chair of the business council and I’m here on their behalf as well. I’m also a former chair of the Stamford Hospital, which is the biggest employer in Stamford. So, I’m very familiar with why companies come to Connecticut and why they leave Connecticut, how they attract employees here, whether employees choose to stay here, whether employees are happy working here.

This particular bill to us and the business community is extremely important. It’s very
important because we think at the highest level that this creates a revenue stream, which we believe and we’ve been told, will be directed toward infrastructure improvements and that it will also be directed in a way that Connecticut taxpayers get the best possible performance because it’s hopefully, possibly will be going through public-private partnerships when it’s invested. In any event, we’d be getting the best performance for the dollars that Connecticut taxpayers would be paying. And I do happen to fall in the category of calling this a user fee that we’re talking about.

A quick perspective, I’ve been working on transportation for about 40 years at the business council; 20 years ago I was warned directly by a person named Michael Gallis, who is a consultant who deals with strategic planning and metropolitan growth throughout the country, and he issued a report, which actually in effect, predicted exactly where we would be today. He was drawing also from Joel Garreau, who wrote Edge City. And in that, which was about 1993, Joel also met with us and described the five limits on the growth of Edge Cities and two of them were mobility and accessibility.

If you start losing your mobility and your accessibility, you start to stop growing. Well, Michael Gallis built on that. He wrote that to be connected to the global network, Connecticut better look out because our infrastructure was stagnating. We were starting to have congestion. And he predicted that if we did not address our congestion problems in lower Connecticut, that Connecticut
would become an economic cul-de-sac, basically a dead end economically.

Well, we chose not to invest in our infrastructure, problems have done nothing but get worse. And I think we saw part of what he was predicting by being left out of the recovery over the last 10 years and with our economic growth stagnating. And that goes back to mobility and accessibility and not having an infrastructure and a transportation system that allowed our tremendous human capital to move around within the state.

So, Michael predicted it and now it’s happened. So, from a real estate perspective, the market has changed dramatically because of transportation. The example I’m gonna give, I’ll give two examples. One is, when we add our buildings in Stamford that were near the train station, no one cared that no one wanted to be down near the train station. Everybody drove. They just wanted to know how convenient you were to the highways and how quickly you could get in and out of the buildings and that was it.

So, for those of you know, Stamford, actually up between the Merritt and 95 was a terrific location because you could go on either, you could go on the Merritt or 95. Well fast forward to today, same location, where we happen to have building, we now spend significant amounts of money, hundreds of thousands of dollars to provide private service, shuttle service from our building to the station so people can take the train because they’re so sick of trying to deal with the traffic.

So, it’s a radical change from where we were back in the old days and back when we had tolls that you
came up to and couldn’t find your change, were worried about being hit by someone from behind you and you were emitting fumes as you, from your car as you sat there. That technology has changed dramatically too. So, it’s all E-ZPass, you don’t stop, you’re not gonna get hit and you’re also not polluting the environment.

So, that’s one way that the environment has changed dramatically. It’s the 21st Century, and I think it’s time we moved into it with our infrastructure and use of technology.

The second example I’m gonna give you of many is that the President of Yale told me that he was losing faculty members at Yale to colleges in New York. And one of the primary reasons he was losing them was because of the distance and time now that it took for his faculty and more particularly his faculty’s spouses to be able to get to New York where they either had a business or they wanted to work. And it was now taking more time to get from New Haven to New York than it was in 1976, and we have those statistics at the, at the business council, so --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I’m sorry, we need you to summarize.

DARRELL HARVEY: Yeah, so the world, the world has changed, is the background. And the reason that I think this is now an opportunity to turn it around, that the business community is and should be very excited about is the opportunity to accomplish several objectives through this legislation.

One is the decongestion of the roads. If we don’t have congestion pricing, we’re not gonna have a way
of making improvements to the roads. So, first of all, I’m a believer in that. We’ve researched it and I believe that it will work.

And secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it will allow the funding of a project that we’ve been working for now about eight or nine years, which is the 30/30/30 project, which is the travel time between our major cities. It links the cities together and accomplishes what Michael Gallis was talking about in terms of connecting us to New York, to the global network. And that is not gonna be funded, I don’t believe, unless we have a source similar to the tolls, which from a business point of view, any time I can get financing where 40 percent of it is being paid by somebody else, I’m very happy to take it and I’d love to have that for my own business.

And the last part is, if we do as a public-private partnership, I would very much like to see it talked about, both the tolling and 30/30/30, as more similar to the Tappan Zee Bridge experience, which was done through a public-private partnership versus the financially disastrous Big Dig, which was not. So, for all those reasons, we’re supportive of the bill.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Harvey. Are there any questions for Mr. Harvey? Representative O’Dea.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Real quick, Mr. Harvey, thanks for coming up. Your partner in Ashforth is a friend of mine from New Caanion, he’s been very active in our community. So, you immediately have some street cred.
DARRELL HARVEY: Okay, thank you.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Tell Andy I said hello. I guess my one question to you that I’m going to be asking and boring my committee members, right now the STF fund has got a $1.684 billion in it, according to OPM as of November 13, 2018 analysis. Would you see tolls on top of that, meaning toll money revenue would go into the STF in addition to the money that’s already going into the STF?

DARRELL HARVEY: It’s not my area, but I would assume so. I’m doing this as an investment being made in our infrastructure, which is critical for all the reasons I’ve put forward. And if you aren’t willing to spend money, particularly if 40 percent of it is from someone else to achieve what I think is the most critical thing to our future, economic development of the entire state, 9 of the 10 largest cities in Connecticut are connected by rail. And if we can have high-speed rail, I just need to travel around the world and realize we’re nowhere near the 21st Century when it comes to rail. It’s much easier to speed up the rail and to get more people using rail, which also reduces congestion on the highways. By the way, as Michael Gallis said, it has to be multi-modal. You got to be dealing with cars, you got to be dealing with trains, and you got to be dealing with buses also. And if you can get that congestion down on the roads, you’re gonna have the possibility of having some buses also. So, it’s an investment in making all of those things happen, and I think that should be on top of what we’re doing now.
We’re so underinvested over all these years that we’ve got to be bold and invest, believing we’re gonna get a great return in terms of economic growth. So, I’d say on top of it.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you very much. At the risk of telegraphing my favorite response, I agree it’s a yes if we’re gonna have to do it. But with the disagreement as to whether or not we need to. But the fact that you believe it should be on top of it, I think is consistent and I think is the right answer. But thank you very much, sir, for your testimony and coming up.

DARRELL HARVEY: Thank you.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Chairman Leone, followed by Representative Devlin.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon, Representative, Mr. Harvey, good to see you. Thank you for taking the trek up from our lovely area of the state, some may consider the best, but there might be some disagreement there and that’s okay, that’s a good thing. All of Connecticut is a good thing.

I guess, as you’re mentioning, you’re right, I see it as an investment also that we have to invest for the future. But as someone who’s been involved in the business community for so long and the fact that the STF monies have ebbed and flowed, the biggest thing I always hear, the most important thing I always hear consistently from the business community is they want predictability. And if we don’t do anything and we still are arguing over how to best
fund the current needs, then there is a high-level of unpredictability that I think has a negative consequence in the business community because you won’t know how to adjust, not just for the two or three years out, but five and 10, 20 years out, if we can’t figure out how to get our needs under control.

And having that predictability, I would then think helps business make their business decisions, have their negotiations with furthering their cause and bringing business and growth to the state. So, since we haven’t been able to do that in a way that has been predictable, can you share some of the every-day consequences to that that you may have occurred because we haven’t been able to address that in one form or another? I mean, what’s the consequence of us not figuring out how to do something here?

DARRELL HARVEY: The employees that deal with and it doesn’t matter whether it’s our, my own employees, the hospital’s employees, the business employees in our area, everyone is asking, is there a chance this is going to get better or is it just going to continue to get worse. And so if you have a plan, and by the way on 30-30-30, major improvements can be made very quickly in a few years. A full long-term effect doesn’t come for 10 years so, until you get the bridges which we’ve talked about fully built. But there can be major steps made within the next year or two, and that by itself would start giving people a predictable path for how this is going to get better. But if a day doesn’t go by that people in our office and elsewhere in the state because I talked with a lot of people in the state and we’ve invested elsewhere in the state or talking
to people in New Haven, if people don’t talk about how this is unsustainable, that their quality of life is, is going downhill. They’re spending more time on the roads. They can go work in other areas of the country, where that won’t happen. The millennials are questioning their lifestyle, what kind of life do they want to live. How much time do they want to spend on the road. And that’s impacting tenants that I deal with on, do we want to renew our leases? Do we want to stay here, or do we want to move elsewhere?

So, it’s a, it’s, it’s, as I’m glad you’ve pointed it out, it’s every day this issue comes up. And if you could see a path that your commute was going to be reduced and at what cost to you in terms if you’re paying the tolls; I’ve been saying to a number of people today that if you ask the employees, if we could free up half an hour to an hour of your, of your day, what’s the value of that? Ask the employers what they’d be willing to contribute to have employees working at their offices for an additional half an hour and their employees being happier. There’s no comparison to the value of the people’s time versus the cost of these tolls. This was laid out by the commissioner.

So, the predictability of a path coming back here is critical and arresting the downward turn. It’s been getting worse, particularly the state of good repair on the rails and the congestion on the highway. So, it’s quality of life for people and it’s also economic growth and keeping businesses here and attracting new businesses. Sorry for the long answer.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Devlin, followed by Senator Bergstein.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for being here and spending time to testify with us. So, I just, what puzzles me is, I get it, right, we’ve got to invest in our infrastructure. The roads, particularly in Fairfield County, it’s horrendous. And you never know if you’re gonna get where you need to get to on time. But for the business community to say yes, absolutely, this is the only path forward, we have to institute tolls to start on 61 percent of our limited access highways, potentially 100 percent of our limited access highways, in a state that is one of the worst in terms of competitiveness to be able to do business, not just the business taxes and the regulations, but the cost of living here. We have some of the highest property taxes. Just in U.S.A. Today, our residents have the second highest tax, next to New York, where the Governor’s already said, people are also leaving.

So, and when you talk about your involvement with Stamford Hospital, I think about the healthcare workers who are going to have to pay tolls to get to work. Businesses are gonna look at increase in minimum wage. Employees are gonna face another half percent of their pay, whether or not they’re gonna use it or not for a new state-funded program that taxpayers are also gonna pay to organize and to administer.

So, I totally get investing in our infrastructure is it. But as Senator Fasano said yesterday, it seems like the discussion, tolls, no tolls, maybe there’s
a targeted place for them. But we’re talking a swath across the entire state.

So, is it true that the business community is just doubled down, tolls are what we have to do? Or is the business community really saying, get serious, Connecticut, about investing in your infrastructure because we want to stay here, we want to grow here, and our employees are federal up?

DARRELL HARVEY: Very fair question. The business community would be open to any, any way that you could come up with the money to make up for the tremendous amount that should have been invested in infrastructure. We haven’t seen a better one than this one. And Connecticut’s gonna be paying for it anyway. We’re paying for it now. So, if we’re paying for it anyway, not have 40 percent of it paid by others? It’s all dollars that’s gonna have to come through to benefit the state somehow.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Are those businesses gonna reimburse their employees for the tolls?

DARRELL HARVEY: I would, if the tolls are working and we’re getting some relief on congestion. I’m a believer that this will work. So, I think it’s worth that gamble, it’s been proven, we researched it, we’ve seen other areas to do it.

I’d be more than happy to have another funding source, but we don’t see one that’s realistic. We think it’s a huge advantage that 40 percent would be paid by outsiders. And I’m also getting very tired of driving through other states all up and down the eastern seaboard and giving them the money to do the kind of things that we want to do in Connecticut.
And they drive through us and they won’t, they don’t contribute, sorry, they don’t consider a cent.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): It must be part of your trips because the majority of the roads in those states are not tolled. And the revenue that they get, plus, it does not compare to what Connecticut would be taxing its residents on top of the taxes that are already in place for driving that other states don’t have. But I appreciate your answers and it is shameful that our infrastructure hasn’t been invested in, despite the number of new taxes we continue to put in place, in order to do just that.

So, thank you.

DARRELL HARVEY: Well, I believe that we have to decide whether we really do want to invest in our infrastructure. And if we want to do that, let’s find the cheapest, most effective way to do it. I’ve never heard or been offered, as I’ve said, 40 percent paid by somebody else, who’s coming through and ripping up our roads anyway, so they ought to be paying for it.

Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Thank you again, Senator Bergstein.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you so much for your testimony. I think we need to look at this issue in a broader, through a broader lens. Obviously, nobody wants to pay more taxes. As you keep saying, others have said before us, we need new revenue, in this case 40 percent of which will be, at least 40 percent will be paid not by Connecticut residents. In the alternative, doing
nothing, we have already learned, we will fall farther behind, companies will not move here, companies are leaving the state, people are leaving the state, revenue is going down. What does that do to our property taxes?

So, property taxes will have to go up by a lot more than what people would pay for tolls. So, pick your poison, if you don’t want to pay higher property taxes, which would probably be a lot more, then whatever it is you were gonna pay on tolls, then, okay, be against tolls. But if you’re concerned about your property taxes and you don’t want them to go up, then we need to, we need new sources of revenue and new companies and jobs and taxpayers to grow the base, to grow the revenue base in our state.

So, I think that’s, you know, we really need to keep that in mind. And I really, I appreciate what you have said today and since you are in the real estate development business, perhaps you could just sort of flesh out how property taxes, you know, what role that plays and how you see this, the relationship?

DARRELL HARVEY: You know, I definitely see as one of the next funding sources that people will turn to. And they’ll turn to the individual municipalities, will have to pay up. And if infrastructure is going to be addressed, and the other option is just don’t address it all and let it continue to crumble.

I forgot to mention that Michael Gallis, when he talked about the economic cul-de-sac, he predicted it would be just after Stamford. So, that you’d see growth up through Stamford, but beyond that
everything would be congested, and you wouldn’t have the transportation infrastructure you needed to expand it.

So, our little area down, down there continues to probably squeeze by. But the rest will stagnate, and the property taxes would definitely be going up for a variety of reasons. But one of them is going to be more businesses won’t want to be here because they’ll say, this is just gonna get worse, why do we want to stay?

We have to make up for the lack of infrastructure spending that we’ve had, and nobody likes digging into their pocket. But my point, my big point is we’re paying for it now. Whatever we’re gonna be doing, we’re gonna be paying for it ourselves. So, let’s find the best method to fund it and be able to tell businesses this problem’s being addressed.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you. And it’s also a way to mitigate the inevitability of increasing our property taxes.

DARRELL HARVEY: I would agree with that.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Nobody wants higher property taxes

DARRELL HARVEY: I don’t know if it’s gonna be income or property or whatever, it’s gonna be something else because you’re gonna have to pay the piper on this at some point.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you again very much for your time and your perspective on this issue and for
making the trip up this morning and staying until this early afternoon, I really appreciate it.

DARRELL HARVEY: Thank you all for working on this.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. P.J. Prunty, followed by Representative de la Cruz.

P.J. PRUNTY: Good afternoon, Chairman Lemar and Leone and Ranking Members Devlin and Martin. My name is P.J. Prunty, I’m the President and CEO of the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce. Our organization represents nearly 700 employers throughout our region, which encompasses the western corridor of Interstate 84.

I stand before you today to convey our opposition to the proposed implementation of a tolling system in our state, specifically Bill No. 7202. I’ve provided written testimony and I’d like to hit a few of the high points that I believe are worth mentioning, and I promise to be brief, as I know we have many folks that want to speak as well.

Implementing tolls will undoubtedly put more money into the Special Transportation Fund, but the question is, will it solve the problem or be one more roadblock to recovery by increasing the cost of living and doing business here in our state. Sound fiscal policy for both government and business demands examining both spending and revenues.

How we spend our transportation infrastructure, which was discussed earlier today is questionable. For example, why according to some studies are our administrative costs about $83,000 per mile when the national average is $10,000? And why do we spend
about $480,000 per road mile versus a national average of around $160,000?

We also believe it is highly misleading to represent that tolls will make someone else pay for our projects. More specifically, the residents throughout the greater Danbury area will feel the pain significantly. Many of the businesses employees that we represent strongly feel this would end up being a regional tax in western Connecticut and the Danbury area and would negatively impact commerce.

I believe our state and our Chamber believes it has an opportunity and that opportunity is to think outside the box to develop new and innovative revenue streams that do not simply rely on passing the burden on to residents and businesses of Connecticut.

And this is where I believe our time, energy and conversation should be spent on, instead of settling on improving policies that negatively impact the overall business climate of our state.

I thank you all for your dedication and our service to our great State here in Connecticut.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Prunty for your testimony and lending your perspective as well. Are there questions for Mr. Prunty. Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here and waiting and giving your testimony.

P.J. PRUNTY: Sure.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): You mentioned, did I hear you right that you represent 700 employers?

P.J. PRUNTY: Yeah, within the western Connecticut and region of greater Danbury, yep.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): So, those are all Connecticut-based employers?

P.J. PRUNTY: Correct, yeah, we have a few that are on the New York border inside, but, yes.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): So, we heard testimony that the business community supports implementing tolls. But could you speak a little bit more, just in regards to why the business community that you are representing is not in favor?

P.J. PRUNTY: Sure, you know, we just, we have created a legislative council within our chamber and we just spent about two weeks and formulated a stance on this in opposition. Many of the comments that have come from those conversations has been the ultimate burden that needs to be passed on to the consumer. So, the businesses would be paying twice, one with the, you know, the money that they have to outline, but then they have to pass it on to the consumer. So, what they talk about is the issue with just more expenses on the budget. You know, they don’t have that outlined, but now moving forward they would have to. They see it as increasing, you know, the cost of doing business overall. And it ranges, it’s from, you know, small to medium-sized businesses with two to three employees or 25 to 50 with many different trucks throughout the, the entire western Connecticut and state as a whole.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): And you also have that big mall in Danbury?

P.J. PRUNTY: Yes, yeah, the Danbury Fair Mall, which is located on the westside.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Are there shoppers from New York that would go to that mall that would have to pay a toll to go to that mall?

P.J. PRUNTY: The way I understand it, I’m not sure exactly where that gantry would be located, but my assumption would be, yes, as it’s on the border of New York State. You know, within New York to the 684 corridor going north and south and the 84 going east and west, they do not have tolls on that. So, they would only be paying tolls when they cross into the State of Connecticut, into Danbury, yeah.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay. Thank you for that. And you made a, two good points actually. That if they did get to the mall, the goods they’d be buying would cost more because they had to pay tolls to get there. And you said that in Danbury you were looking at, you know, coming out potentially against tolls and it’s interesting. I don’t know another issue in the State of Connecticut that we have ever had cities like Stamford and towns like Enfield and Sherman and Trumbull stand up and say, state, stop, no.

So, thank you for coming to testify and sharing your perspective on what some of the business owners think.

P.J. PRUNTY: Sure. And I appreciate the opportunity.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Morin.

REP. MORIN (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Prunty, thank you for coming and testifying. I just have a couple questions. I want to make sure I heard you correctly. In your testimony, you mention obviously you don’t support tolls, but you thought it was time for us to look for other revenue sources or forms of getting revenue to fund the STF. Would you mind expanding on that?

P.J. PRUNTY: I mean, if I had, you know, a single solution there, I probably would have run for Governor this past election. But what I would say is that, you know, we are presented with opportunities to really think outside the box, I think. What our Chamber sees the tolling as sort of the low-hanging fruit, if you will. Now, whether it be investing in revenue sources that don’t require hundreds of millions of dollars of up-front investment to see revenue five or six years down the road, you know, our members see that as trouble. And they would like to see potential revenue opportunities that are, you know, more instant if you will.

So, whether or not there we can identify one, I don’t have that answer. But and I understand that’s what we’re struggling with here. But in terms of what we think that answer is in terms of up-front money, I believe it’s a wise investment.

REP. MORIN (28TH): Well, and that’s an interesting point because, you know, you’re listening to, so I guess I’m hearing that you do get that there’s an infrastructure commitment that the state has to make. And I’d be interested to hear from some of my
colleagues that are saying that this is just a grab from people of the state. If we were using some other form of revenue, I’m guessing they’d be saying the exact same thing. So, that’s one thing. But I appreciate your answering and then I’m, again, I want to make sure I heard you properly.

P.J. PRUNTY: Sure.

REP. MORIN (28TH): You spoke about that your members feel that it would be a regional affect, a regional tax. I’m not sure if I said it 100 percent right, but based on what the Governor is proposing as opposed to the, the 83 gantries that I saw on every social media post that we now know is not accurate, if it’s spread out statewide and equitably, how do you, how do you figure it’s just regionally approached? Were you just meaning that you feel it would impact your region?

P.J. PRUNTY: Well, I just mentioned about the component of New York State residents coming into the City of Danbury as well. That’s a significant sales tax generator. The Danbury Fair Mall generates a very large amount of the sales tax within that specific region. So, what we’re talking about there is potentially having a significant regional impact on sales tax and the businesses within, you know, that area on the border of New York and Connecticut.

REP. MORIN (28TH): Okay. And like I said, maybe, maybe we just disagree on it.

P.J. PRUNTY: Sure.

REP. MORIN (28TH): And that’s all right. But I appreciate your coming up and testifying and
answering, that’s fair, and I do appreciate the back and forth.

P.J. PRUNTY: Appreciate it, thank you.

REP. MORIN (28TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, and I thank you Mr. Prunty for your testimony today and thanks for coming up and sharing it with us. I think you do actually hit the crux issue is, is ultimately, I think, around the state people are starting to understand the need for a significant transportation infrastructure and how we sort of let the last few decades go by without making the necessary investments that we need to. Other states around us have done that. And I honestly, you know, we all go back to our communities and we have to have this conversation openly and honestly with folks. And I think we are actually just at that point where we disagree on how to do it. And I think there are a few different proposals coming forward. A number of us feel strongly one way or feel strongly the other way. But the right way, and so I think, while I may disagree with you on ultimately --

P.J. PRUNTY: Sure.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): -- how to solve this problem, I think there is an understanding across Connecticut about the urgency and the need for it though. And that’s at least a good place to start from.

P.J. PRUNTY: Yeah.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): So, I appreciate you coming up today.
P.J. PRUNTY: Thank you very much for the opportunity.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Representative de la Cruz.

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for coming out. I know you’re in for a long meeting. There’s still a lot of people out in the hallways. I’m Representative de la Cruz from Groton and New London. I’m gonna speak from a different, a couple of different perspectives.

First, I run a sheet metal factory on the, in Groton, Connecticut, which is about 12 miles from our border. I’m also a resident of Groton, which is 12 miles from the border. And I want to talk about how gas taxes impacted not just our area, but I think the whole state. And the way we currently raise money through the gas tax incentivizes anyone that lives on the border, I call it the 10 mile strip, whether it’s running north to south on the Rhode Island border or east to west on the Massachusetts border, if you live in that 10 miles, my guess is anywhere from 20 to 30 percent of folks drive across the border to buy their fuel now. You know, in fact, my wife and I have a favorite restaurant in Wesley, Rhode Island, and we make sure that if we know we’re going to eat the pizza over there, we’ll drive over there, we’ll buy our gas and the grocery store is very close to it, we’ll also buy our groceries and gets our points from Stop and Shop, that’s how a lot of folks are doing it.

And I think talking about increasing the gas tax at all, I want to lower the gas tax, but increasing the gas tax to make up for this infrastructure deficit
that we have just won’t work. So, I’ve looked at all the options and obviously tolls to me is one of them and the only one that I can actually see. We keep talking about this 60 percent, 40 percent. I think the folks that live in the center of the state would be shocked to find out how many of us that live on the border never buy gas in our state. B.J.’s at Exit 8 in Rhode Island, if you have a B.J.’s card and you’re gonna go and have lunch anyway, folks will not buy gas until they need it.

And the high mileage gas cards that we have currently, basically you can get back to Rhode Island, you can go all the way through Connecticut and back without having to buy gas in Connecticut. That cuts into the 70 percent ratio.

The other thing that I did, I debated this on talk radio with some good representatives from my area, and they apparently don’t believe that the electric car is coming, which concerns me on a lot of different fronts because China on 60 Minutes is planning on building 5-million electric cars. So, that’s 60 percent now and if you don’t, if we don’t pass tolls, I was the poster boy for the tolls last year because I said that we’d get together, get reelected and put tolls on our state road, that’s what my intention was. I’ve told people in my area that’s what I was gonna do. I got reelected and the electric car scars me in a lot of ways because if we are 60/40 currently, if one person buys and electric car, that is chipping away into the 70 percent, because there’s absolutely no way for us to capture any money from an electric car in support of our bridge.
And the Governor was great enough to come down to my part of the state last week. And as we had a discussion about the work, the $300-million dollars that’s gonna be needed to fix the Gold Star Bridge, we looked up and it was positioned in a certain spot, you cannot make, you cannot have a press conference directly under the, the southbound bridge or the northbound bridge, I’m sorry, because if you do, you run the risk of pieces of concrete falling 155 feet from the bridge down on top of your head.

The local longshore men that work there, they’re instructed that their whole entire day they don’t require a hardhat at all because they’re driving big equipment and it’s just moving heavy pieces, but if they go under the bridge, that they need to have a hardhat. I’m not sure how that helps because a piece of concrete from 155 feet is not gonna feel good, whether you have the hat on or not. So, but that is, that’s been the directive by the folks that run that down there now and it’s been the directive for years. If you, when you look up in the air, you can see these chunks that are 30 or 40 feet long that are missing concrete.

And the last thing I would just want to quickly touch on is Rhode Island did put tolls in, so we do have metrics. They thought that, they underbid. There were actually 200,000 trucks in a month that went across their tolls, 200,000. What does that mean? Four, that means 2.4 million trucks are gonna go through Rhode Island in the course of a year. And I when I keep hearing that why would we tax trucks, they pay their way anyway through this federal gas tax. If, if that’s the number that we’re gonna extrapolate from Rhode Island and say
2.4 million trucks are coming through our state and we know it’s gonna be far more than that because we have other highways, take the $14-million dollars that they gave to us, divide that, that’s $5.38 per truck, what a deal.

I’m driving a tractor trailer straight through the State of Connecticut, 90 miles on I95, and I pay $5.38; it doesn’t, it sounds like a great deal but for the trucker. And those are the, and that’s why the way that it works now is we have to rely on truckers to do their books at the end of the year, call our newly elected Governor and say, Governor, I’ve been driving through your state about 280-million miles and this is what I think I owe you. How many people on this board have bought something online and not paid taxes? Did you call the Governor and tell him that you owe him the extra 67 cents or $6.70, whatever it was?

So, it’s ineffective. And, you know, the myriad of different ways that everyone’s talking about collecting money doesn’t really, it doesn’t add up. And if electric cars are even 10 percent of our market, which a lot of people are predicting, yes, electric cars exist; if they become 10 percent of our market in 10 years, imagine what happens to that 60 percent who are paying now? And we say folks that are middle class and can’t afford it now, how else are we gonna raise the money? We’re just gonna raise our gas tax or the answer, just don’t do anything? I don’t think any of those are an option.

So, I thank you guys for allowing me to speak on this bill because I think we have a long way to go. I told everyone if we don’t, if tolls do not pass, Joe de la Cruz is getting rid of his truck and I
will have an electric car and I’ll drive for free on all the Connecticut roads, which we can all do currently.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you very much, Representative de la Cruz for your testimony and for your consistent articulation of what you see in eastern Connecticut with respect to the increased cost for gas because of our sole reliance on that as a revenue source for our roads. The only question I have, again, for the second time in two weeks, someone who is within 45 minutes of New Haven is deciding to go to Rhode Island to get pizza, there’s just, it’s the second time in two weeks someone has told me a story about going somewhere --

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): Wesley has good pizza and they’re close. So, yeah, so, but yeah we continually do that. I mean that’s something and most middle class families probably don’t talk about it much but they, people that have their eye on the dime. I know people, and the technology right here, I have ways, if anyone has ways on their phone and then you put in the, the suggestion of lowest gas anywhere, where do you go? You will drive, and people actually do it to their detriment. I know people drive too far and they end up losing money on the deal. But if you’re gonna combine it with trips. And I forgot to tell you that, if I go to B.J.’s and I spend $200 at B.J.’s because we’re getting gas and going over there, that’s all revenue lost by the state. That’s all, there’s a B.J.’s in Waterford. If you live in Stonington, Connecticut, it’s 20 minutes to B.J.’s in Waterford and 20 minutes to Waterford, Rhode Island, and you can get 40 cents off on your gas, why wouldn’t you?
The real reason is, so you’d have to start questioning the person that’s buying their gas for extra money. So, we really need to start a campaign where we’re telling Connecticut people to go and spend higher gas prices in state or figure something different, and I think that’s what we’re here to do today.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative. Are there any questions? Representative Carney, followed by Representative O’Dea and Representative Devlin.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you Representative de la Cruz for your testimony. I just have two questions, I guess more related, not the Governor’s bill, the other proposal. And I just want to know your feelings on two things, being a member of this legislative body.

Would you support the creation of a transportation finance authority that would oversee this program or leave it up to the DOT?

P.J. PRUNTY: Oh, I haven’t thought about that aside too much. I think as the bill develops I’ll form more of an opinion on that. But, you know, I just want to see, you know, the study come back and see what the suggestions are from that.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. And my question is, in that legislation it talks about the study and us getting a toll plan, probably, I believe that would be discussed in this committee and presented in this committee. In that bill it says, it would be deemed, that plan would be deemed approved if the legislature does not act. Do you think the legislature should be required to accept or reject a
toll plan or it should be deemed approved if we do not?

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): I think we should be accepting it. I mean, I obviously think that should come to the floor and vote. It’s what I ran on. I think it should go through. That’s my personal opinion that nothing should be just goes, pushed through that way. And I think that’s the way most of my colleagues feel.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): I appreciate that. I agree. Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Just a point of clarification on both of those issues. The process outlined in that bill definitely negotiable, essentially to get a framework in place to have that discussion. The department would go out, hire a consultant who can develop the plan. The plan would have to be approved by the federal highway authority, come back to the State of Connecticut, which isn’t required under the federal approval, but we thought it was important to have an additional step for this legislature to take. Not just, you know, we give them blank approval right here today or the next time we vote on it, but to have them come back with something. And so, the 15 days, 30 days, whatever, we do think it’s important that the legislature have an opportunity to review it and this committee particularly have an opportunity to have a public hearing so the public can hear about it. And so, a lot of that stuff, the days, that’s all negotiable and we’ll figure out what, you know, what our ranking members tried to figure out what the appropriate timeline is. I appreciate you commenting on that. Representative O’Dea.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your testimony. I love decreasing the gas tax because I agree with you, it will increase revenue because of more people buying gas in Connecticut. I completely agree. I need your bipartisan support. I submitted a bill six years ago and I couldn’t get a bite anywhere.

So, I appreciate your testimony on that. I completely agree with you. My question I’m going to be asking everybody in support of the tolls is, the Transportation Fund move all its sources between motor vehicle fuel tax, oil company tax, sales and use tax, sales tax, DMV, motor vehicle receipts, licenses, permits, interest income, federal grants. It’s gonna be a billion-six, almost a billion-seven for 2019.

You see toll, and it’s projected at least as of November of 2018, it was projected to be $2-billion dollars as of 2022, if our fix had been left in. Do you see tolls on top of that? In other words, that STF fund money would stay where it is, and the tolls would be on top of that; is that the way that you see it?

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): The reduction I would see and I’m sure there’s a whole bunch of proposals out there. But I see the need to get rid of the 25 cent gas tax, whether it’s moving in a direction because, you know, we already pay the $375-million dollars towards that. So, and I don’t know if that quarter would go away completely, but I think we have to, we do have to chisel away at that fund. And I get it, we are behind on a lot of different ways. But I absolutely feel the way you do. I think that folks will still make that trip that I’m talking about.
If we still have the highest gas tax and tolls, folks will still leave the state to buy gas. Truckers will still drive through our state because we’re only 90 miles, any truck can make it through.

And again, I get to see it from my business perspective, because I actually, I send stuff to Massachusetts and New Jersey all the time in my trucks. And when they go to New Jersey and Massachusetts I get an E-ZPass bill at the end of it.

When the same people sending the same product the opposite way, they get an E-ZPass bill, but it’s only from their state. So, we have, we can’t even, we’re talking about tractor trailers and all these other trucks. A lot of the products I make, it’s either electropolishing or Teflon coating, things that are done in New Jersey and Boston. There’s trucks that drive through our state every single day that don’t look like those big trucks that you always assume are ruining our highways and using our roads for free, but these trucks are also with the instruction of the driver’s, buy gas in Connecticut and you’re fired. You’re leaving New Jersey, buy gas for 40 cents cheaper. Go deliver it in Boston and you’ll make it and then come all the way back and re-gas up in New Jersey, it’s a, pretty simple, pretty simple math.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): All right. Thank you very much for your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Representative for being here and your
passion in testifying. I had to joke with our chair and I’m sorry that Senator Hwang isn’t here because you’re right, people do drive for lower gas taxes or gas prices. And in Fairfield County, we try to not buy gas there because the zone pricing, which costs on average 25 percent more than anywhere else in the state. So, I totally feel your pain. I imagine that the B.J.’s in Waterford, if we have tolls, you’ll never, they’ll never get your business because why not keep going to Rhode Island instead of paying tolls to get to the store.

But you made a big point about electric cars and that’s going to impact the gas tax collections, which for the motor fuels tax is about $500-million dollars and it’s the petroleum gross earnings tax that is $330-million dollars. So combined, we pay already about $800-plus-million dollars in gas taxes in the State of Connecticut.

But another factor that also has to be put into that equation are the growing expenses. So, when the Special Transportation Fund was created, it was designed purely to back bonding for projects, for infrastructure, in Governor O’Neill’s 10-year plan. And now we’re left with just 40 percent of that because every expense related to transportation and growing expenses, the entire department of the Department of Transportation, the growing, the pension costs, the fringe costs of all of our employees who would deal with anything related to transportation are handled out of that fund. So, that’s really concerning and something that just needs to be part of that equation. Because as those expenses go up, and if we’re faced with threatened
revenues because we’re going to be getting electric cars, that’s a real problem.

And where I appreciate the Commissioner’s earlier testimony that while they may dispute numbers that have been published about the cost per mile of road in the state that he is committed to looking at increasing efficiencies and we’ve go to do that across the board with all of these different categories of expenses.

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): Yeah, and to go back to the cost per mile, being a union sheet metal worker in Connecticut, that actually quotes work on fedbizops.com and lose regularly to out-of-states because they’re cheaper. Their labor is cheaper. The difference is, when we look at a road mile, and what I would say in Florida, and Connecticut I call it a retirement job. You get a job with, you get a job and you’re gonna have a retirement and you’re gonna work, you’re gonna be able to support yourself your whole life. In Florida and these other states that we compare mile-by-mile by, I call it a relia-ment job. As you’re working your whole entire career, you rely on the state and federal government for food stamps, for earned income tax credit. You rely on the government with every, every single breath that you take has to do with government and government subsidies. So, that road comparison, apples to apples, it can never be done until we’re on an equal system where, when, when 33 percent of people from Mississippi file their taxes and qualify for their earned income tax credit, when it’s just 11 up here. So, the folks that are doing the work in Connecticut, as they work and as they live their life, they build their own retirement. And that’s
what we’ve done as a legislature. But what I’m afraid of is how we’re getting away from that model and we’re trying to match what these other states do.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I’m just saying I appreciate the Commissioner looking for greater efficiency across the department. So, regardless if that number’s right or wrong, but also just related to trucks, let me just set a couple of things straight because I’ve spent some time with some truckers lately. And actually the trucks contribute about $30-million dollars to our state and it’s just not ad hoc, they actually have to file on a quarterly basis, based on the miles that they drive in any given state, with their home state Department of Revenue. And so whatever portion is due to the various states is issued kind of out of this clearing house and they are audited on a regular basis. And you can bet our department is also ensuring that that money’s being paid in. So just so that you’re --

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): And in response to that, I would say, taxes, cigarette taxes should be, should be a stamp on every Connecticut pack of cigarettes. And we know that it’s only about 63 percent of the cigarette or 72 percent of the cigarettes are actually not brought from out-of-state and brought in here. There’s a lot of things that should and shouldn’t be. Right now, and again back to my business background, credulous, I can go on and have anything shipped. These are guys that are coming up that own a truck and a flatbed. The reality is, that guy’s not gonna call the Connecticut legislature and say, hey, this is what I owe.
They’re buying gas in Florida, it’s almost impossible to track.

I mean, I get it, you know, if you’re a main carrier, if you’re UPS and FedEx, I guarantee that right to the T, they’re paying what they should. But it’s all the other guys. They come in and they drive through our state. And they’re usually the ones with the trailers that aren’t the safest. They’re usually the ones that, I happen to live in an area where 95 breaks down two or three times a summer and I can sell lemonade and hotdogs in my front yard. I have enough people that stop traffic next to a stop sign and two or three times a summer. Do you know what the funny part is, the DOT knows the problem by the Mystic Aquarium, they know how to fix the problem. They know, they know exactly what’s wrong —

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I know that intersection.

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): — and we don’t solve it because we don’t have money. Imagine, imagine how many times my local fire department is on that highway, supporting out-of-state drivers each and every day, we’re just talking about the highways, though. What’s the overall cost of the community? East Lyme has another problem. Just 15 miles down the road, where 395 leaves 95, and the amount of lives that have been lost in the last 20 years. We couldn’t count how much it would mean to us to have that bridge go up and over and do 395 and let 95 go straight. But that, you know, I do believe and wish in unicorns, you know, they’re not real as someone told me, either is fake money. We need to invest in our infrastructure, and it has to be real money and I think this is a way to do it, this is real money.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you. And we do agree that it’s shameful that it’s been neglected for so long, despite the revenue sources that we’ve had. So, thank you for spending your time and --

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): Thank you.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- sharing your thoughts with us today.

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): Thank you.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Senator Haskell.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Representative for your time and your testimony.

I’m hoping that you might be able to combat the notion that there’s this tremendous popular uprising against tolls because it sounds as though we had a similar experience on the campaign trail and that’s what I campaigned on, tolls, when I went door-to-door. I heard from constituents that they’re frustrated, the trains are slower today than they were in 1950, they’re frustrated. We have over 100 structurally deficient bridges. They want to see real substantive improvements in our infrastructure. And I’m hoping you might be able to share some of those stories of constituents you’ve encountered, who elected you for the purpose of bringing tolls to Connecticut, not just an indifference, but also, in fact, you know, an expressed interest in this modernization of our infrastructure.

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): I think when people, the talking points when we first had our discussion two
years ago were, not only are you gonna lose every single dime of federal law funding, but you are also going to pay back every single dime that you’ve gotten from the federal government, since 1983. We heard that over and over and over again. And as we started smushing those rumors about exactly how it works. And again, the people that were saying it were saying, yeah, we could lose all of our funding. What they were forgetting was, if we put a toll right on the border of Rhode Island and Connecticut, in fact, yes, we would have lost all of our funding. It’s almost like me telling you, did you realize your house wasn’t covered if it burned down to the ground. And you would say, well, well, what do you mean it’s not? I said, well, I forgot to tell you, I meant if you burned it down yourself and they caught you that it wouldn’t be covered.

So, there was a lot of misinformation out there and we were going door-to-door and with a very quick, you know, to let people know that, that 30 percent of the cars or 40 percent of the cars on the road were out-of-state drivers because we are a unique state. You know, we’re never gonna be Boston and we’re never gonna be New York. And they keep telling us that we need to look more like a business and act like a business as legislators. If Disney owned I95, it wouldn’t be free, but it would be really, really nice and we probably wouldn’t have a 33 minute backlog on the western side of the state, 33 miles per hour is the average rate.

So, but a lot of the constituents, I would say, of course, the first reaction is, oh, I don’t want to pay another tax. But after about 10 minutes of describing what I just described to this body, they
get onboard very fast. They understand how important it is and especially being a business man that is on the other side of the bridge from where a lot of heavy loads come over on Gold Star, there’s 3-500 trucks that get routed up 395 over the Mohegan-Pequot Bridge and then back down to Electric Bolt, to me, that’s time, it’s money, it’s more fuel in these trucks.

I’ve had people that had to stay overtime, where I work, with the union sheet metal workers it’s $72 an hour with benefits and we have to make a decision when the truck driver calls and says, hey, I’m in Stamford, it’s Monday morning. I can pretty much count on him getting there Tuesday afternoon, I’m kidding, but it takes about four or five hours to get from that side of the state to our side of the state, it’s only 90 miles. So, sometimes we have to put people on overtime in our business to just sit there and wait for a truck. And I can’t have just one person, it’s got to be two because if they’re handling a heavy load, we can’t have somebody get hurt, but it adds to our cost.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much, Representative for your advocacy, but also sharing some of those stories that you’ve encountered. So many of my constituents are in the building advocating for tolls today and I appreciate you doing the same on behalf of your constituents. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. And I look forward to visiting you for hotdogs and lemonade in the summer, but you got to stop in New Haven for that you said. Thanks again.
REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Cindy Penkoff.

CINDY PENKOFF: Good afternoon. Before I start, I want to be very clear. We need to invest in our infrastructure. This is not a secret. We all know it, we’ve all said it, we all agree to it. How we do that, that is up for discussion and it has been up for discussion for a very long time because this is my eighth time coming up to Hartford to testify on this particular subject. I’ve submitted a complete testimony and I’ve shortened this to sit before you today.

My original testimony, starting eight years ago, when I started coming to Hartford, included dangers, the danger of tolls. As many of you know, I lost members of my family in the Stratford Toll accident. But the reality is, we lost a lot more than that. When the push back became, these aren’t the same old tolls, as if that made it better, my testimony and knowledge on the subject became deeper.

I have spent years reading reports, resolutions, proposed bills and listening to testimony as I spent hour after hour sitting in this room or one just like it before the transportation committee. Because I believe you don’t change anything by staying home and complaining.

Let me be clear. I oppose any and all bills that lead to or leave the door open to tolling in the State of Connecticut. Because the reality is, respectfully, you cannot be trusted with the money, as you have proven time and time again. And this will be a never-ending vicious cycle. This will just become another bottomless pit of money you’ll
need to feed off of, proven time and again. With the Governor’s first budget, what was the first thing he did, sweep money that was supposed to go into the Transportation Fund and reduce the car tax going into the fund to 8 percent. It’s very hard to look at that and believe that infrastructure is a priority. What it says is money is the priority.

With the implementation of tolls, life will now have another price tag on it. Go visit a sick parent, pay a toll. Take your kid to the doctor, pay a toll. Kids on travel sports teams, pay a toll. Meeting friends for dinner, pay a toll. Grocery shopping, pay a toll. Travel to the beach that you already pay taxes on, pay a toll. Take someone to the train station, pay a toll. Go visit your child at college, pay tolls. Go to a funeral, pay a toll. You will have made everything we do everyday a little less joyful and a lot more expensive.

The constant need for revenue is irresponsible and, quite frankly, lazy. Your plan is irresponsible, untruthful and an insult to the people that voted for you and put their trust in you. Tolls are not the way to make Connecticut better or to improve the transportation and all that goes with it.

Most importantly, they do not improve the quality of the life for the people that you serve. Now, a Representative said something about this being a way to avoid property tax increases. I think people have forgotten, there are property tax increases being proposed across the board on basically every single thing that we buy, use, look at, need, it doesn’t matter, and the list goes on.
We continue to take money out of this Transportation Fund, things that we pay taxes on, specifically that we were told for transportation infrastructure and you keep taking it out. That lockbox is ridiculous. I said it when you proposed it and it’s been proven to be so because as long as you sweep it before it gets in there, you have access to everything, especially when it gets funneled through the General Fund.

So, please, there has got to be a better way than literally hitting the middle class and the lower class every time we step out our door, knowing full well that we have to pay and never really knowing that the money is going for what you say it’s going for. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Ms. Penkoff for your testimony, for coming up today and for your commitment to testifying before this committee on things that are passionate to you. I really do appreciate it. For folks who are clapping, please, I’d like to remind you again, there’s a lot of testimony we’ve got to get through. I do want to hear from you. You all have a right to testify. I would appreciate if we could applaud and other outside examples of clapping, booing, whatever to a nonexistent level, not minimal, nonexistent level. We wouldn’t expect anyone to be booing in this Chamber. We won’t expect anyone to be clapping. If you want to talk to Ms. Penkoff after and tell her that you appreciate what she said, just find her in the hallway. I think that’s the most appropriate way to do so.

CINDY PENKOFF: Representative Lemar, can I say one more thing?
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Sure.

CINDY PENKOFF: People don’t mind paying their fair share, they don’t, we never have, okay. We pay for our schools, we live in communities and choose those communities and pay those taxes, choose to pay those taxes for the things that we know that we want, and we need for the benefit of our family, our neighbors, our friends. We don’t mind paying our fair share. But to continually be hit with new tax after a new tax after a new tax promising for it to do something and then not having it happen, that is what we mind. And that is why we are so passionate about these things.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Ms. Penkoff. Are there any questions for Ms. Penkoff? Representative Devlin, followed by Representative Haines.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Cindy, for coming up and spending the day with us to testify. And your testimony is very compelling. And I know this is an issue near and dear to your heart. I think that we met the first time when we were talking about this issue.

You’re right about the lockbox. In the previous session where I was the Ranking Member on GAE, I asked the question flat out when we had to approve the language to go on the ballot. We couldn’t change the language, we could just approve it and we had to kind of approve it, not a good process.

But the question was, how does this differ from the Special Transportation Fund and the answer was, it doesn’t. And your point about the property tax, I’m a little bit puzzled as well, because unless that implies that some other revenues will be freed up to
relieve property tax burdens, I’m not quite sure what that whole scenario is. But I appreciate your concern and expressing the view of many that we have a spending problem, not a revenue problem. And we wholeheartedly agree across the board, I think united about investing in our infrastructure. And it’s just the question of how do we do it and get serious about doing it and taking action quickly.

CINDY PENKOFF: Thank you. And I truly appreciate hearing from the commissioners this morning because they answered a lot of questions and clarified a lot of numbers for me, which was awesome. I would love to have access to everything that’s gonna be flooding your email boxes, to be honest with you.

But the thing that was not addressed when people asked about, well, are you gonna take this money and spend it on something else, well, no, federal law will not allow us to do that. But federal law is not stopping you from taking the stuff that’s already going in there.

We have money that is supposed to be going to infrastructure. Tolls, as I understand it, are supposed to be on top of that. But the federal laws around tolls and what you’re doing are not going to stop you from taking the rest of the money that’s already going into there. And that is one of our biggest fears. If you’re just shuffling deck chairs on a sinking ship, don’t bother, you’re wasting everybody’s time and energy and our money.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you. Thank you for coming up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Next, yes, Representative Haines and then Representative O’Dea.
REP. HAINES (34TH): Thank you, Ms. Penkoff for coming up today, appreciate it. I appreciate you bringing the voice of reason to this room, I really. But I do have a question because you did mention that you have been here for eight years coming up here and testifying in front of this committee. This if my first month with this committee. So, I haven’t seen and heard all that you have. And I’m just curious as to what you have heard. Is there any kind of thoughts that you say, from the years that you’ve been listening, is there any other revenue stream that has been mentioned today that could have been mentioned in prior years?

CINDY PENKOFF: I keep hearing this 40 percent’s gonna be paid by out-of-state drivers. I have concern about that because for all the years that I’ve been doing this, none of the numbers have ever matched, ever, no matter what we’ve ever been told, the numbers have never matched.

I’m not convinced and no one I’ve talked to is convinced that 40 percent is going to be paid by out-of-state drivers. I have concerns that tolls now all of a sudden are going to be on 95 and 15 and they’re going to penalize the people that are on those roads. Okay. I can tell you, with every breath that is in me just because of how I feel about the subject, I will go out of my way to avoid every single toll gantry. I already pay way too much in taxes, okay. To be penalized for going to visit my mother or going to visit the -- I don’t know what the answer is. To be honest with you, I would rather see them bonded. We know what the bond is for. We know exactly how much it’s going to cost, and you can’t use it for anything other than
what you bond for. What you say, that’s it, that’s all there is to it. At least I know what the cost is, if I buy my car, I know what the cost is. If I have to have it repaired, I know what the cost is. This is a never ending stream of money that I don’t know what the cost is. I don’t know how much it is going to increase. I’m the one that sent Representative Devlin the article on Pennsylvania. They are $11-billion dollars in debt, having tolls. And the increase has gone up 200 percent in 10 years and they are still $11-billion dollars in debt. This is not the answer.

I’ve been listening to this now for years. And quite frankly, I’m really ashamed and disappointed that a body with this many people, this many smart, educated business people, can’t come up with something better.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Thank you, we’re working on it.

CINDY PENKOFF: I know you are.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Thank you for coming in.

CINDY PENKOFF: And I’ll keep working on it and being here, doing what I do.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative O’Dea.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you very much for your testimony. I would ask, as one of the people that is skeptical and agrees with the testimony, clapping is really inappropriate. So, I would join my co-chairs. Please don’t clap in the audience or boo in the audience. And I would just point out, this committee, I believe in my seven years here, is the most nonpartisan because of the former Chairman, Mr.
Guerrera, who was a toll advocate, but he made sure that every voice was heard.

So, I want to commend the current co-chairs in taking the same attitude and making it a bipartisan discussion and I’m very appreciate of that and I’m very appreciative of your testimony and thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative O’Dea for your addition and your kind comments. Very much appreciate it. Next up, Representative McGorty.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hi, Cindy, I want to thank you for coming up and testifying today. Your passion is definitely there. And I appreciate the hard work that you put into coming up here today and you made all excellent points. Everything was spot on, I couldn’t agree with you more.

But when you’re gonna get off of 95 and take all the back roads, you’re not gonna be alone. I’m gonna be there and a lot of other people are gonna be there. I was from Greenwich, I was born and raised there. I saw what, you know, the tolls were when they were there, everyone used U.S. 1, that’s what they did. 95 follows U.S. 1 up, that’s what they’re gonna do. They’re just gonna get off and they’re gonna go around and get back on again and that’s what’s gonna happen.

So, I think it’s, you know, you’re not gonna be alone. I just want to say thanks again for coming up and you’re right on.

CINDY PENKOFF: This is a conversation that’s been going on for a long time. And a few years ago I
came to one of these meetings and I saw a report that was about this big. And it, one of the points that was made on there, thank you, were the facts that the surrounding towns and cities and municipalities around those toll gantries are gonna have a massive influx of traffic.

This has a domino effect, so not only are we paying tolls, not only are we increasing taxes, but now those cities, those towns will have increased traffic, which leads to an increase in accidents, I don’t care if it’s 1 or 2 percent, which is a strain on our first responders, which is an increase in taxes. It’s a big huge domino effect that happens.

I live in Trumbull, but I’m originally from Milford, okay. I avoid the Post Road in Milford like the plague. I know every single back road there is, and I get off over the Sikorsky Bridge and I take the back roads all the way through Orange, up into West Haven, okay. I don’t have a problem doing that. And there are a lot of people that are going to do that. I’ve talked to them.

As you know, I’m a former town council member, former Board of Finance member. I talk to a lot of people on a daily basis. Most of them have my personal phone and my email, okay. And this conversation has been happening daily in my house. I hear it from everybody. Nobody wants to do that. We live in a town with a major mall. That is going to affect us as if the retail establishment in, in the state, in our country hasn’t been hit bad enough, let’s hit them again, okay.

We can’t, we can’t just keep doing this. We’re better than this. We’re smarter than this.
REP. MCGORTY (122ND): So true. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Any other questions? If not, thank you, Ms. Penkoff.

CINDY PENKOFF: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Next up is Mike Passero.

MIKE PASSERO: Good afternoon, it actually says good morning on here, but. Thank you all, you’ve all had a long day also. So, good morning, Chairman Leone, Chairman Lemar, Ranking Member Martin and Ranking Member Devlin. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address you and the Transportation Committee about the Governor’s bill, AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CONNECTICUT’S TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE. I’m here in my capacity as the Mayor of New London, a diverse business friendly community with a rich articles and music scene, ample housing, fine dining, public parks and numerous recreational activities.

We work diligently to support existing businesses and attract small enterprise and large corporations to our city. The Gold Star Bridge, which the Governor recently visited just last week, carries I95 across the Thames River between Groton and New London and is a key representative of why the state needs to be more forward thinking, strategic and thoughtful about it’s transportation strategy. Originally built in 1943, the demand quickly outpaced the capacity and 30 years later, a parallel bridge was constructed to accommodate its sharp rise in use. With the original structure becoming exclusively used for the northbound side of I95. And the 973 bridge accommodating the southbound
lanes. Combined, the two structures carry 11 lanes of vehicles in addition to pedestrian paths, and average over 106,000 vehicles per day.

The 76-year-old bridge, which thousands of people depend on for their daily commute, has been rated as structurally deficient and in poor condition, with costs of rehabilitating the, with costs for a rehabilitation project estimated at $300-million dollars, this is what Representative de la Cruz was referring to when we stood under the bridge last week and concrete was falling away and falling on us.

With tens of thousands of daily commuters and locally important jobs hanging in the balance at locations like Electric Boat and the naval base and critically important access to the state pier and the potential growth of jobs in the emerging off-shore wind industry, we need to keep these investments moving forward to protect our economic future.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation is currently designing a two-phase comprehension rehabilitation project of the northbound bridge with construction planned to begin in 2020. It’s been fits and starts, we’ve been promised and now we are being told that it will finally get underway in May of 2020. But ladies and gentlemen, the clock is ticking down on us and you have to measure what’s gonna happen to the economy, not just in southeastern Connecticut, in the state, if something goes wrong with this major bridge.

The work will include replacement of support structures, strengthening and replacing the steel
elements of the girders, approach spans, replacement of bridge bearings, and finally, the total replacement of the bridge deck. It’s anticipated that this job will take until about 2025 to finish.

In addition, the Governor has spoken about enhanced rail connections and service to New London, which would significantly impact our ability to attract and grow business. If you compare Shoreline East, the service we have in eastern Connecticut with what the folks in the western part of the state have with Metro North, there’s just no comparison at all, you could barely call it a commuter rail line, and it ends in New London, it doesn’t even proceed further east to connect us with westerly. If you wanted to, it’s not really a commuter train because you can get to work if you’ve got to go to New Haven and we do have commuters, but you’re stuck there until the end of the day to get back essentially.

And just to wrap up here, I’m just about done. Without a dedicated and sustainable funding stream, such as the one the Governor proposes, I do not believe that the state will be in a financial position to continue to bond for projects of the magnitude of the Gold Star Bridge reconstruction. Without a reliable revenue source, the state can maintain its current transportation infrastructure, let alone fund the enhancements necessary to position Connecticut for the economic growth and development I know our state is capable for.

So, I thank you again for your time and allowing me to testify. This is an incredibly important issue to southeastern Connecticut and especially to my city.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Are there any questions? Well, thank you. We appreciate your testimony and I believe this committee is committed to finding solutions for that bridge because we know the importance that it is in that part of the state. So, thank you for the testimony.

MIKE PASSERO: Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Next up is Keith Brothers. Is Keith here? If not, we’ll, since Keith is not here, we’ll keep it on the public side. Is Patrick Sasser here? All right. We’ll get him on when he returns. So, with that, Senator Logan. Welcome, Senator.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Thank you, it’s good to be here. Chair Leone, Vice Chair Bergstein, Vice Chair Simms, Ranking Member Martin, Ranking Member Devlin and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. I am Senator George Logan, I’m here testifying in opposition to House Bill No. 7202, AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CONNECTICUT’S TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE and House Bill 7280, AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE CREATION OF THE CONNECTICUT TRANSPORTATION FINANCE AUTHORITY. Will Senate Bill 7202 allow Connecticut Department of Transportation to put tolls on state highways such as I84, I91, 95 and Route 15. Approval of Senate Bill 7280, will provide Connecticut DOT with funding to produce studies and present yet another tolling plan to the Transportation Committee and then the General Assembly for approval.

As currently written, the tolling plan shall be deemed approved by the General Assembly if both the Senate and the House of Representatives fails to
vote within a 15-day period. In addition, this bill will create a Connecticut Transportation Finance Authority, which will be a quasi-public entity and charged with tasks such as creating a transportation infrastructure bank. This entity will also set the tollway rates.

As our state is in the midst of a financial crisis, we must resist the cycle of taxing more, being less responsible and less respectful of Connecticut taxpayer. All of these proposed tolling bills have the same objective of the mileage tax bills that were proposed during past legislative sessions.

Connecticut republicans have a plan for our long-term transportation needs. First, we need to commit to make transportation a priority and create a predictable and sustainable funding stream to meet our transportation needs. Prioritize progress is our plan, would allow us to meet our long-term transportation needs. Key components of the plan would require the state to reserve a set amount of general obligation bonds to be used solely for transportation priorities, maintain the Special Transportation Fund, preserve special tax obligation bonds dedicated to transportation and it would reestablish the Transportation Strategy Board to work alongside Connecticut DOT to assess proposed projects and identify community needs.

Projects would be prioritized with the legislature included on that Transportation Strategy Board. Benefits of Connecticut republicans prioritized progress plan, annual Transportation Funding mechanism guaranteeing $1.5 billion or more annually in state funds for transportation.
No tax increases, no tolls, operates under the new state bonding cap, when fully implemented to reduce debt. Flexibility in setting transportation priorities. A sustainable and predictable funding plan to support future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition of House Bill 7202 and House Bill 7280. I urge the Transportation Committee to reconsider the ramifications of implementing tolling in Connecticut and vote no on these bills. The Connecticut taxpayer cannot afford to pay these tolls, either directly via toll gantries or indirectly via increased cost of goods and services because of tolling.

In addition, tolling in Connecticut would greatly contribute to the further erosions of Connecticut’s current fragile economy. Tolls will make our state less affordable for more people, less attractive for employers to stay in Connecticut, and less desirable, and make it a less desirable location for businesses that want to come to Connecticut.

Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Senator. Any comments? Yes, Representative.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you very much, Senator, for your testimony. I’m just curious, the same question was asked of Representative de la Cruz, when you were out there campaigning for reelection this year, what did your constituents say to you about the potential for tolling?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Overwhelmingly, residents in my district, Ansonia, Derby, Bethany, Woodridge,
Naugatuck, Beacon Falls, Hamden, were opposed to tolls. They understand that it’s another money grab, taking more money out of Connecticut taxpayers’ pocket. Connecticut, as I mentioned, is becoming less and less affordable for more and more people. And as we continue to burden Connecticut taxpayers, Connecticut residents with increased taxation, it is only hurting our economy, that has been proven by the history of increasing taxes and spending that we’ve been doing over the last decade, plus. It has only hurt Connecticut as we implement large tax increases on our residents here in Connecticut. Whether it’s the income tax in the ‘90s that was supposed to be temporary and solve our problems, whether it was the large tax increase in 2011, hundreds of millions of dollars, that was supposed to solve our financial problems here in Connecticut. That was followed by 2015, another multi-hundred-million dollar tax increase, also didn’t solve our problems. And in 2017, if we did not have that tie in the Senate and we had almost parody in the House, and we really worked together and came up with a bipartisan budget that did not include any tax increases because some of the budget proposals that were put forth included over a billion, Senate over $2-billion dollars in tax increases. They said, you cannot balance the budget without increasing taxes, that’s what they said in 2017.

We worked together, democrats and republicans. We came up with a bipartisan budget that did not include tax increases. I am here to let you know that I am of the opinion that we can accomplish what is being said needs to be done to fix and maintain out infrastructure without installing tolls.
SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you very much. Okay. Thank you very much, Senator Logan.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative Morin.

REP. MORIN (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, hello Senator, how are you?

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): I’m doing well, how are you?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): I’m doing well.

REP. MORIN (28TH): So, I’m trying to hear everything you were saying. You mentioned basically $1.5-billion dollars of funding coming from, much of it from general obligation bonds or some of it. So, operating under the bonding cap that we have, what types of projects would you support not funding to go this, and the one thing I’ll say, and I’ve had respectful discussions with everyone on this committee about it and the people, so, I hope you take it this way. But we’ve heard numerous times that bonding is just kicking the can down the road. We’re gonna pay 20 or 30 years down the road to fix the roads of today. So, what, what’s your answer to that?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Well, under the, Lamont’s plan, no one is talking about --

REP. MORIN (28TH): You mean Governor Lamont?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Governor Lamont’s plan, no one is talking about not bonding. That is a mechanism that is used, when it’s used properly it has its place. Your question was, what are we cutting or not bonding. I’ll tell you what we would be cutting under the state republican prioritized progress, we would be cutting out pork. We would
not be funding pork through bonding. We would limit our bonding to the core government services. What are some of those core government services, just to give you an example and calendar year 2020, half a billion dollars, this is what’s included in the prioritized progress plan, when we’re talking about general obligation bonds. School construction, school security grants, half a billion dollars. UConn to help them pay off their debt, $186-million dollars. It also even includes a gubernatorial contingency for when things come up, about $100-million dollars. Clean water fund grants, $85 million. Housing trust fund and housing programs, $50 million. It includes money for bioscience, Board of Regents, manufacturing systems grant, urban acts, small town economic assistance programs, capital improvements to state-owned buildings, Town Aid Road, local capital improvement plans, crumbling foundations, Connecticut bioscience collaborative program, it includes Connecticut strategy defense investment act. When you take a look at the statutory bond allocation cap of $2-billion dollars, and if you fund those core government service, you have a difference there of $700-million dollars.

So, when I mention prioritized progress, it has three components, major components to it. It’s the general obligation bonds. So, not funding pork, staying within the areas that I mentioned, that’s $700-million dollars. When you look at average special tax obligation bonds, which is a shored up and secured by the Special Transportation Fund, that would be another $750-million dollars in calendar year 2020 with our plan.
And then assumed federal funding, we receive funding from the federal government for transportation, that’s another $733-million dollars. So, in calendar year 2020, that would be over $2-billion dollars and I was just trying to be conservative when I said over $1.5 billion because certain things could, certainly could change.

So, there’s a way of doing this. So, when folks tell you, folks tell us that the only way for us to solve our transportation problem, to handle and maintain our transportation needs, that we have to have tolls, I would say that is not correct, it’s not correct at all.

When Governor Lamont says, hey, if you don’t want to add tolls to fix our roads and bridges, give me an alternate plan. Connecticut republicans have a viable alternative to tolling. Tolling is not the answer. And not to mention that even if we decided today to install tolls, it would take four to five years before we started to see any revenue from tolls.

With the state Connecticut republicans prioritized progress, spending our money more efficiently and prioritizing where we spend our money, within, within a couple of years, within a couple years, we could actually start ramping up funding towards transportation. And that is the alternate plan that we are proposing and pushing and that will solve our transportation needs, not just for the short term. This is for the long term. We’re talking about a 30-year plan that would provide predictability and sustainability in terms of how we fund our transportation needs.
REP. MORIN (28TH): So, I guess I would just again say, I almost have to chuckle a bit, I serve on the bonding subcommittee and I also served on the commerce committee for many years. And there’s some of my colleagues, I certainly will not call anyone out, Senator, but there are many projects that have been bonded by the State of Connecticut that you are gonna consider pork that have been initiated and supported by the republican caucus.

So, let’s, let’s just call it how it is. I’m gonna ask you that. And again you’re saying, general obligation bonds are a way to fund this, okay, that’s a fair discussion. But is it not putting things out 20 or 30 years down the road? You’re saying it’s not gonna do that?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Bonding is a part, a mechanism, a viable mechanism for running state government. No one’s, we’re not talking about eliminating bonding. This certainly falls within Governor Lamont’s debt diet. I’m talking about cutting out pork. And this is not a partisan thing.

REP. MORIN (28TH): It is if you’re calling out, you know things and consistently alluding to Connecticut republican progress plan, that is a partisan thing, in my opinion. So, I’m just saying, I respect that you don’t think tolls is the way to go, fair enough. It’s a good discussion. But the bottom line, did you have a chance, and I know you’re probably serving on a gazillion other committees as Senator. Did you have a chance to listen to the Transportation Chairman, Commissioner.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Commissioner, yeah.
REP. MORIN (28TH): Just two projects I’m gonna mention I84 in Waterbury and I84 via the viaduct, today’s dollars, $12-billion dollars to do those jobs. It’s, it’s, it’s pretty remarkable the amount of money it’s gonna take. I won’t beat that horse. But I do appreciate your perspective and I will try to listen to it.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): So, can I respond?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator, why don’t we just move on to Senator Martin. But you’ll be able to answer your question, but I would suggest, you keep using the word, pork, it’s a very vague term. Be very specific on what you’re gonna cut or what you’re gonna offer, that’s just an inflammatory, in my opinion, terminology that doesn’t offer any solutions. It’s vague, it doesn’t give us anything concrete. So, if you want to cut something, state what it is. With that, Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, thank you, Mr. Chair. I was going to ask Senator Logan to explain prioritizing progress and you did a great job with it. So, if you want to use this time to answer or respond, please do, to the previous, to Representative Morin’s comments.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Sure. So, Chair, I will so refrain from using that term. What I was defining in terms of, again the question is, what is going to be cut, I turned it around to what would we use bonding for. And I will again indicate that we will limit bonding for government services. And again, I listed a number of areas that would be funded through bonding.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Steinberg.
REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator, for testifying today. As you probably got a sense, things are getting a little heated on this subject. And I am particularly interested in your comments with regard to prioritized progress. As you stated, this is effectively the same plan that’s been trotted out for four or five straight years now, even though Connecticut’s circumstances regarding bonding have changed dramatically and we also now have a commitment by the Governor to put us on a debt diet. So, I find it harder and harder to fine prioritize progress as an effective response, given how drastically Connecticut’s bonding circumstances have changed and our desire to reduce our very high per capita debt, which used to be one of the most important things that we heard from republicans year after year after year our indebtedness was the worst thing ever. And it sounds like maybe that’s not as big a problem.

It reminds me of what’s happening at the national level where it used to be about not having deficits, but now apparently deficits are okay. So, it’s a very disappointing change of face here.

I understand that DOT has responded to the prioritized progress proposal and I just want to read back to you, since you were so kind as to provide us with some of the elements of prioritized progress. Some of the things that DOT recognized as concerns with regard to prioritized progress. First of all, it does nothing to address the operating budget needs and transit subsidies for transportation.
So, we recognize that much of the needs are capital, this doesn’t do anything on the operating side. It doesn’t really, using general obligation bonds does not protect funding for transportation programs. I’m sure you’re familiar with the distinction between general obligation bonds and special transportation bonds.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Yes.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): The plan assumes the same level of capital funding for 20 years with absolutely no inflation. We’ve heard some general rounding, you know, $1.75 billion over 35 years, that’s $60 billion, no actually it’s a lot less than $60 billion. And if you take into account the cost of money and inflation, it’s a lot less and a lot less than $60 billion. So, I think the real number out there in terms of its availability is significantly less than prioritized progress puts forward.

It does not account for specific capital programs such as the Mixmaster or the I84 viaduct in Hartford. And certainly, from what we’ve seen, does not sufficiently fund them to the level that DOT suggests would be necessary.

And lastly, and I’m not gonna get into an argument about pork, but you were very good again in enumerating some of the things you were for. But there are a number of things that most of our communities have looked for from the state for a long time, including recreation fields, rehabbing things and the like. Am I just to assume that anything that’s not on your list, you’re prepared to say that you would not ask the state for any grant
money related to that going forward, that basically you will issue any applications for grant money going forward for anything that’s not on your list?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): So, one of the items that’s on the list to the gubernatorial contingency of at least $100-million dollars, which actually goes up to $150-million dollars in calendar year 2024. So, there is flexibility for items that are outside of the list of core services, so there is a room for that.

Also, keep in mind that we have a current bonding cap in prioritized progress stays within the bonding cap that we establish. So, there’s no issue there in terms of looking to bond more. It’s a matter of bonding more smartly, bonding more effectively. Prioritizing, what we utilize those bonding monies for because we’re all saying that transportation is a priority and so we should put our money where our mouth is and put the dollars that are available towards that. Not going back to Connecticut residents and looking to tax them more.

Also, you mentioned the I84 viaduct, let me tell you something, I got an issue with that because we’re talking about tolling, so maintain our roads and bridges, building a viaduct or a tunnel underneath Hartford would cause tens of billions of dollars. We’re talking about $1-billion dollars a year in revenue.

So, if you’re telling me, we’re gonna use toll money to build a tunnel underneath Hartford, you’re telling me, in listening to this, that you are going to increase those tolling fees so that you can pay for that because you are not gonna be able to pay
for a tunnel underneath Hartford that’s going to cause $10, $20, $30-billion dollars with the toll plan that you have now.

And communities out there, even folks that are supporting the toll idea, they think that that bridge in their town, in Fairfield, in Greenwich, in New Haven, that road is gonna get fixed. And the plan is just so undefined that that is not the case. There are assumptions that some folks are making. The plan does not, has not been sufficiently developed enough for us as a legislature to pass a bill, to pass a law to include tolls that has not been appropriately thought out and, and we haven’t been able to get the feedback from the communities in terms of what those toll monies would be used for.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Senator, you brought up a couple of good points. First of all, I agree with you. I am not a tunnel guy and that some of these tunnel projects, it reminds me if Elon Musk can be able to tunnel everywhere with this new equipment, I think those are things that are, sorry to tell you, I don’t think it’s happening.

But I think you raised another point; the entire name is prioritized progress. And you continually bash DOT for not prioritizing their projects. And, you know, I tend to agree with you. We need to set priorities. I come from Fairfield County, I would submit there is no greater need for transportation infrastructure investment than along the I95 corridor and the trains in Fairfield County.

So, it’s really a matter of having to prioritize. I’d like to understand that within prioritized
progress, are you prepared to say, yeah, you’re right, Fairfield County has the greatest need; therefore, we should prioritize their needs, perhaps the inclusion of your district or districts throughout the rest of the state because we’ve got to set priorities. So, once again I’ll ask, would you be willing to say, look, I will, I will subsume any requests for my community until we take care of the problems in Fairfield County, which are extremely acute and have the busiest corridor for rail and, and cars in the state?

If you really are serious about prioritized progress, would you commit to prioritizing the corridor in Fairfield County at the expense of your own district going forward?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): And I got to tell you, I’m still relatively new to politics, I’m only in my third year, but I’m feeling like I’m in Washington, DC here taking the questions, I’m digging it, I’m loving it. So, look, let me tell you, what I’m committed to say, what I’m committed to say, part of prioritized progress, I mentioned three points. One was reestablish the Transportation Strategy Board. the whole purpose of that is to work alongside Connecticut DOT.

I’m not bashing Connecticut DOT, I think they do a fine job. They get instructions from the leadership. This is a leadership issue, working alongside with Connecticut DOT to assess proposed projects and identify community needs. Now, who would be on this Transportation Strategy Board? It would include legislators, it would include the DOT, it would include labor hands, it would include
contractors, it would include the towns all working together to set what those priorities are.

And I agree with you because I commute, and I work within the Fairfield County as well. And I do believe that there are absolutely party issues in Fairfield County. But it wouldn’t be any one individual, it would be the Transportation Strategy Board, made up of a number of folks with different expertise and experience and it would also include folks in the community and from environmental groups, working together to prioritize how we spend those precious dollars that we need to solve our transportation needs here in Connecticut.

You have to look at the impact on the community. You have to look at economic development. You’ve got to look at the actual condition of the bridge in terms of safety. All of those factors need to be included and that’s where, that’s where I would answer that question.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Excellent answer, Senator. But I guess what it really comes down to the end of the day, prioritized progress is unwilling to actually tell us what their priorities are. You’re just like DOT in saying, you know, we’re gonna take care of the whole state at the same time. There’s certainly not gonna be enough money under the prioritized progress plan to possibly do what you suggest and take care of the whole state.

So, until I hear the real priorities from prioritized progress, I’m gonna remain skeptical.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Mr. Speaker, do you have a question?
REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Senator. I just want to clarify one thing. What you just described, that you call the, the transportation oversight board, what was it called again?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Transportation Strategy Board.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): Okay. So, I think that’s exactly what the Chairmen of this committee have envisioned for the authority, transportation authority, although it’s being spun out in the public that somehow it’s gonna incur debt and it’s gonna be another layer of bureaucracy. I’m really happy to hear you say what you did. So, if the transportation authority board assumed the exact responsibilities that you laid out there, I would guess you’d be supportive?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): No, I would not be. It’s a totally different type of organization.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): It will be bullet-by-bullet what you just said, but it will be called the transportation authority, will not have the ability to set rates on its own, it will not have the ability to incur debt, but it will do exactly that, work with the crogs and the other associated bodies, the municipalities, business leaders have a board made up of the very same type of people that you described, it would just be called a different name?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Well, I would also, I would suggest that it, the language certainly weren’t to meet anywhere near that comparison. Some of the language of the current bill would have to be changed because I really don’t like the provision
that indicates that if the, both the Senate and the House of Representatives were to vote within a 15 day period that that plan would become law. I have an issue with that as well.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): Look, the ultimate goal, and I don’t know if you heard the Governor this morning and I know the chairs are committed to this as are the co-chairs, is to a process where we can engage in a dialogue. I think that’s a fair conversation to have. And if we want more adequate time, I think we can get there.

And just going back to the viaduct project, just to be clear, I don’t think anybody’s saying that we’re in favor of tunneling under Hartford. What we are saying is the viaduct system which we currently have in Hartford, we have the elevated 84, and underneath the highways we actually have the viaducts where the river runs essentially. It costs almost $20-million dollars a year to upkeep that. We haven’t spent that money, so now we’re finding ourselves in the situation where you have bridges in other areas that really need upkeep.

DOT actually says that the viaducts themselves are at risk of crumbling, which would bring the highway down at some point. We don’t know when that’s gonna happen. So, I just wanted to clarify, I know Congressman Larson put forward a plan talking about sort of like a big dig proposal. I don’t think anybody up here is on that. So, I just wanted to clarify it. But I do appreciate your comments on what the Transportation Strategy Board would look like. I think those will be incorporated into the final bill, at least from my perspective. And please be assured that an ongoing conversation is
what we want to have. But I want to just refrain from is political soundbites to really gin people up because it’s gonna be a hard discussion. I know you’re passionate about what you believe, as Senator, Representative Steinberg is, but we just have to talk exactly where we’re at and how we’re gonna get there in as open and honest as we can.

So, I appreciate your comments.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Thank you very much, thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Senator Logan for your testimony today and for helping to outline prioritized progress. I know there’s some interesting ideas in there and like some things I’m hopeful to work with ranking members and you as well to try to attempt to accommodate. And so, I think that there are opportunities for us to recognize the important role that the Transportation Strategy Board should have played in the past and hasn’t. That was the original idea what we’re thinking about with the authority. Maybe we got to call it something different. I think there’s a discussion about what it should be allowed to do and not do.

But I do think that there are numerous ideas that have been brought up over the course of the day and that we’ll look at together and reach an agreement that the infrastructure needs of the state are overwhelming and vitally important to invest in, starting right now.
And we have a disagreement over how to prioritize it, how to fund it. I worked well with you in the last few years. I look forward to working with you in the next few years. We’re gonna find a solution that we might not all agree on, but I think we can all agree that we’re on the same page.

So, I do thank you for coming out today and let’s work together and try to figure this out. Thank you.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Thank you, Representative Lemar.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Yes, we have Representative Garibay and then we’ll go to our, one of our newest members, Senator Fasano.

REP. GARIBAY (60TH): I think we all agree that transportation and infrastructure is important. I also don’t want to raise taxes. I don’t know yet how I feel about tolls. But when you talked about last year’s budget and being proud that there were no new taxes, we forget when we are prioritizing that there were approximately 13,000 seniors and special needs adults whose Medicare and Medicaid was cut last year because of that bipartisan budget, which eventually was put back in by the end of, by June. But during that time from November, when those parents got letters and their loved ones were being cut, medical services, then it was saying March 1st, then it said, you know, a little bit later.

In some families they were able to absorb whatever was gonna happen, but others suffered through that. So, when we’re talking about all these ideas and all
these budgets, taxes, tolls, when we’re prioritizing people come first. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Next, Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for recognizing me, I appreciate that. So, look, I know your passionate about the tolling issue as well as prioritized progress. And I agree with the comments around this table that nothing is more important than our infrastructure of the state, if we’re to get businesses in and people to places they have to be and the amount of hours people spend on the highways, quite incredible.

With respect to prioritized progress, would that be an immediate infusion of capital into the transportation system? Through you --

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Yes, that is one of the aspects of prioritized progress that I like. That we can get on to this very important issue of addressing the needs of our transportation system. And certainly, we can get on it a lot, on with making those investments now or close to now, compared to the toll option.

Make no bones about it, we will not see any toll revenue for at least four to five years. And that’s another big issue I have with tolls as well.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): And if my recollection is accurate and maybe you said this, I apologize. In the bipartisan budget that we did, was there money that was infused into our transportation system immediately by virtue of bipartisan budget that we put together, was there money infused into the
transportation system immediately, if you recall, and if so, how much?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): Absolutely. I believe for 2018, correct me if I’m wrong, we had a surplus I believe of at least $70-million dollars in the Special Transportation Fund.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): So, it also, I think that that budget put in $250-million dollars of money to be used for transportation immediately in that bipartisan budget, which was something that I think that republicans and democrats came about. So, you know, we did have a conversation and we did put that in and immediately we saw $250-million dollars available for transportation infrastructure; is that your recollection as well?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): It is and that’s exactly the kind of thinking we need moving forward.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): And although we could have, we should have a lot more discussion on this. This is a big issue. And I will be testifying later, so I take an odd position at this point, so I won’t go into that, but I just want to be clear. I understand your passion and frustration and I thank you for your testimony.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): And I want everybody to be clear. My passion and frustration comes from the energy and what I’m hearing from my constituents in my district. My constituents are passionate about this. They are screaming at the top of their lungs, please, not another tax, not another mileage tax. I’m having a hard time just paying for gas every week to get to work and now you’re gonna add, now you’re talking about adding tolls. That is why I’m
very passionate about this because I am getting it in terms of emails, letters, telephone calls. When I stop in the grocery store, when I get gas at the local gas station, I am hearing it over and over again, please stop taxing, stop increasing taxes, don’t install tolls. Folks are very, very concerned about the toll plan that’s been presented before us.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Thank you, Senator for your comments. Thank you for your distinguished members for some of their comments as well. And I understand the opinions that you and some of your colleagues share on the opposition to tolls and the prioritization plan that you set forth as a, as a team, is, it will, it is interesting. We, not only us, but the experts will look at it to make sure it is viable, it’s out there for everyone to see. So, we’ll have that ongoing discussion. I know you mentioned that it will put the priority on the transportation. I do have some concerns and that will get flushed out on, on the GO side of thing because I know that our general obligation bonds, the bulk of it, about 75 percent goes toward our school construction, our higher education, our economic development. Another high percentage goes to our municipalities, so all that might get crowded out and that’s for us a body to deliberate. So, I appreciate it because what was asked to provide alternatives if not for tolls, this is an alternative, so I commend you for bringing forth another plan and it’s for our body as well as all our constituents to try to measure up each different plan that might be proposed to look at the merits and the benefits.
So, it is an alternative, it will get discussed, and I appreciate you taking the time to bring it forward. So, thank you very much.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH): And thank you all for listening, thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): With that, we go back to the public. I think next up is Mr. Pat Sasser, Patrick Sasser.

PATRICK SASSER: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Patrick Sasser, I’m the founder and organizer of No Tolls CT. I sat in front of this committee last year and here I am again, shocked and amazed at what I’ve been listening to today and for the past year. I can’t believe a representative just sat up here and talked about how he leaves Connecticut and buys gas in Rhode Island, goes shopping in Rhode Island, goes to dinner in Rhode Island because Connecticut costs too much. And here the body of this legislation wants to tax the people even more with tolls.

I sat and listened to the Governor speak at 10 o’clock this morning and he talks about kicking the can down the road and we’re gonna stop it. Many of you legislators that work in this building have been doing it for decades. And here it is falling on the backs of the taxpayers once again.

When does it stop? Mr. Haskell, you mentioned that you were elected and telling people --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Mr. Sasser, hold on.

PATRICK SASSER: I’ll speak to the committee, I’m sorry.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Mr. Sasser, you need to take it down a notch. This is an open discussion, you go through the Chair. We do not address different and we don’t call people out here.

PATRICK SASSER: Okay. Sorry about that, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): This is a respectful Chamber, we will treat it as such. I understand your passion and your anger, but you need to take it down --

PATRICK SASSER: Okay, Mr. Chairman --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- otherwise, you will not be allowed to talk.

PATRICK SASSER: Understood. So, back to my point, several representatives and senators in the legislative building have talked about how their constituents want tolls and that they ran on that fact. The fact is, we had a Governor campaign on truck only tolling. The public was lied to. The voters were lied to. A promise was broken. So, the frustration, the trust has been broken with the taxpayers in this state.

And that’s why we’re so passionate about this. I know you all have a difficult job. I know it’s not easy. But when do the taxpayers of Connecticut finally get a break? It is so difficult to survive and live in this state day-to-day, people that own businesses and several people talked today about the business community, the business community, what about us, the small businesses? What about the nurse that travels 40 miles a day, single mother, to get to the Stamford Hospital to work all day and
then has to drive back 40 miles to get back home to take care of her kids and has to pay these tolls?

We talk about discounts for tolls. What discounts? What are the numbers of these discounts? Do you know what it should be, it should be zero. We pay our fair share already in this state. That’s why I’m here today to testify. That’s why there’s still people sitting behind me to testify on this. We have 53,000 people that have signed our online petition already and that number is growing every single day because people are fed up, fed up with it.

There has to be better solutions and better ways of doing it than putting in 53 to 82 tolls peppered throughout our state. And people want to say, we need to be like New Jersey, when did Connecticut want to be like New Jersey? Massachusetts has one turnpike with 13 tolls on it, think of that.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Are there any questions? Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Patrick, for being here. I completely understand your frustration and your passion around this issue, and I hear the same thing.

And you have provided an organization that has made it easier for the residents of Connecticut who may or may not know how or get the attention of their legislators to share their voice. But my question to you is, one, more around your direct business. So, I understand that you have some trucks, I don’t know, that’s about all I know.
So, could you tell me from an individual perspective as a business owner, what would this mean to you?

PATRICK SASSER: Correct, okay. First off, I am a full-time career firefighter for the City of Stamford. I’m an owner-operator of a small excavating company and I’m also partners with two of my brothers that we own two dump trucks for our trucking business. I am small potatoes, and this is not why I started this fight two years ago or last year against tolls, it’s because I’m a taxpayer in this state.

But the impact on the tolls for business sense and any other business that speaks about it, we will have no choice but to pass those costs down. And when you look at the videos and the testimonies that were done, they were put on YouTube, of about 12 or 15 local companies in our own state and they talk about the $50 to $100 to $200,000 they’re going to incur from tolls, they make it very clear, they’re gonna pass that cost along to the consumer, us. We’re gonna pay for the tolls when we drive down the highway, we’re gonna pay for them again when we go shopping in the stores, and we’re gonna pay for them on our local roads when people get off the highway to avoid tolls because it’s congestion tolling.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you for your answer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Sasser for your comments today. And you are to be commended for the organization that you’ve help lead and it has driven thousands of pieces of testimony to the General Assembly. I mean, you are, it, it, you’ve done a
wonderful job in organizing, it is commended. And certain advocacy groups across the state would love to model how you’ve been able to build that organization.

PATRICK SASSER: On a shoestring budget.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I am serious, you are to be commended.

PATRICK SASSER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): What you’ve been able to do. I would just ask you to understand that those of us who think tolling is a potential option, aren’t engaging this as a money graph. We’re not trying to drive businesses out or hurt the nurses going to school or going to the hospital. We see the same things that you do. We see an infrastructure that’s falling apart and collapsing. We see a lack of investment for our businesses, for commuters, for our places of tourism, our places of employment.

We’re hearing from industry leaders, environmental leaders, labor leaders, people who work and build these 21st Century transportation options. We’ve seen other states make dramatic leaps forward and how the type of transportation they can offer to their consumers makes business in that community more attractive.

I know it’s easy to point at government and say, you people doing all of this wrong. And I promise you, you are pointing at people who are just as sincere in their hope that we can build a better future for our state as you. And so I hope over the next few weeks, we don’t lose sight of that. That we see, we keep our eyes on the ball.
I think you and I could agree that statement, that slide earlier in the day, where we said over 1500 miles of Connecticut roads are rated in poor condition, hundreds of bridges rated in poor condition. That the average age of our most traversed railways in Connecticut are over 100 years old. That the average bridge in Connecticut is 53 years old, 11 times the national average, 11 years more than the national average.

Despite new technology and new trains, it’s slower to get from New Haven, Bridgeport and Stamford into New York City than it was 30 years ago.

The mayors and first selectmen, both republican and democrat, have come to this body asking for train stations, asking for stops on Fastrak, we’re hoping to expand lines into the valley and up to New Canaan. Everyone believes in the investment in transportation. We have a disagreement on how to get there.

And there’s sincerity on both sides about how to do it. And so it’s my hope that your organization recognizes that those people who are pro tolls aren’t out to grab money out of everyone’s pocket, but instead to try to provide the same future that you’re envisioning for our state.

So, hopefully the next few weeks we can have a real conversation and not a rhetoric fight. And I, you have my commitment to work on that.

PATRICK SASSER: Sir, I promise you, it’s not rhetoric. I promise you that. And I appreciate you reading those bullet points again. But the fact is, communities are speaking up and I’m happy that both of my Senators from Stamford are sitting right in
front of me because the City of Stamford spoke up. The town of Trumbull spoke up. The town of Sherman spoke up. The town of Enfield has spoken up. And many more others are going to speak up on this topic.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Hold on, Mr. Speaker, yep. Thank you, Patrick and you’re right, people are speaking up. And to be fair, people are speaking up on both sides. You don’t like tolls, I get it. I get people that say they do like it from my town, your town. So, it’s, we’re trying to figure out where we need to go on that argument.

So, I understand, and I appreciate that people are speaking up, that’s what they’re supposed to do, to tell us what they feel. But you’re not the only voice. There are others as well.

PATRICK SASSER: Oh, you’re right, Senator, there are many other voices behind me, that’s true.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): And we’ll here from all, pro and con. I get the point. Mr. Speaker.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): Mr. Sasser, thank you for your testimony. It’s nice to actually meet you. I think we’ve spoken a couple of times --

PATRICK SASSER: We have.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): -- on Facebook.

PATRICK SASSER: I think you were sitting over there last year.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): I don’t know if I sat in the meeting. I might have.
PATRICK SASSER:  No, you were here, I think you were chairman, yeah.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):  No, no. Actually no, it’s Tony Guerrera -- guy, much better looking, more hair. Not that much more.

PATRICK SASSER:  I’ve lost a lot more since last year.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):  Well, hopefully we’ll limit that for you and, and, and engage you in the conversation. And look, I understand what you’re saying, none of us came to this Capital to just figure out more ways to take money from people. But what we did come to this Capital is try to make our state a better place. And I think Chairman Lemar talked of it earlier, so did Chairman Leone and many of the members.

You see, this is the problem, and this is the problem I have with the cities you listed off moving forward for no tolls. Because those are the exact same cities that are up here every single year asking for more money. They’re asking for more money in ECF funding, they’re asking for more money in special education funding. They’re coming up here with bills to have their schools bonded. They’re coming up here for their parks to be bonded. They even come up here saying they have a business that wants to move to town, can you give us an exemption and allow us to offer them tax breaks, and I get it. Each municipality has to look at, but we have to look at the state as a whole and the answers aren’t so easy.
We always hear, just cut spending, that’s great on, on it’s face. I sat in a room with both democrats and republicans for almost six months, every single day, 12 hours a day, trying to find $400-million dollars in cuts so we can pass a budget and send it back to the communities. It was hard because every line item in a budget also has a person’s face next to it. If it was MSP, it was dropping it to 100 percent poverty from 211 percent. On paper it looks, 211 percent of poverty for Medicare Savings Program, we can cut a little bit, those people will survive. No, we received almost 200,000 phone calls from people saying, that’s the difference between being able to make it and not make it.

So, look, I understand that tolling isn’t the perfect option, but I will tell you this, as long as I’ve been involved in the budget process and you guys can try to look at me, democrat, Speaker of the House, we know how he votes. No, no, I voted against budgets before 2010. When I came into leadership I said I was gonna do it differently. I involved republicans in the processes, equal members, no, no, no catches. I’m not trying to play gotcha.

But I will tell you is in pension funds, that and transportation, we haven’t done our jobs. The money is not available to do what we need to do. There will be a bridge collapse. There will be something terrible happen in this state. And you look at neighboring states, the only way out of this budget crisis, and I think I’ll get agreement on all parties, how we get there is different. It’s through economic development.
PATRICK SASSER: I can take liberties and speak as long as I want without questions, just to be clear.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): So, getting there is difficult. So, now I will get to a question. I understand what you’re saying, towns are frustrated and they’re saying no more. We sort of had the dialogue with Representative Steinberg back and forth about bonding with Senator Logan. Those same municipalities, are they in agreement if we prioritize progress, that they’re gonna forego any school construction, forgo their ECF’s funding, forgo any LOTCIP funding to ensure that we have the funds available to prevent a tragedy or to bring our transportation infrastructure in the State of Connecticut into the 21st Century?

PATRICK SASSER: Sir, I’m not an elected official. I don’t know that answer.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): Okay. Thank you. I appreciate you --

PATRICK SASSER: I can speak to you as a taxpayer.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): Okay.

PATRICK SASSER: We pay our fair share. We pay. We pay and pay and pay. And I think someone just a little bit ago spoke about property tax. I think you, Senator Bergstein, where it’s a proposal to put a mill rate on our property tax to send to you all in Hartford on top of tolls. When does it stop? When does it stop? I can’t speak on what municipalities want for their budgets, their money. I can tell you as a taxpayer.
REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): It just sounded like you, I don’t know if your organization, and again your organization is --

PATRICK SASSER: The town has recognized the impact. You guys are talking about --

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): But do you understand --

PATRICK SASSER: -- congestive tollways.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): -- but do you understand the balance for us?

PATRICK SASSER: I can --

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): -- and beg for money --

PATRICK SASSER: I get it, I understand that. I understand that. But visualize this, 53 to 83 tolls through Connecticut and I’m a husband and father and I live in another state and I say, Jesus, I want to move to Connecticut because they’re done such a great job with their state and all of those tolls. I’m a businessman, I want to move to Connecticut. Jesus, I want to pay all that freight to move in and out of my state. I’m sorry that New Jersey has tolls. I’m sorry that Massachusetts has 13 of them. That’s not my problem, it’s not my fault. And that’s why we get federal funding, let’s not forget that.

It’s up to you all, the elected officials to spend our money wisely. That’s all we ask. That’s all we ask.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30TH): And I believe we do. Thank you.

PATRICK SASSER: Thank you, sir.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, the state does have many expenses. We have to pay the bills and we have to find the money to do so. When there’s a gap, that’s when the problems arise and that’s where we are. We still have to find the ultimate solution, but that’s where we are at the moment. You can like it or not, but that’s where we are. So, are there any other questions? If not, thank you, Mr. Sasser. Senator Bergstein, I apologize.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hello, Mr. Sasser.

PATRICK SASSER: Hello, Senator.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): So, you and I have interacted many times before via email and in person. You always are very angry. You’ve misrepresented what I said, insulted me. I’m willing to absolutely forget all of that if we can, right here right now in this public forum, take a deep breath and commit to being civil with one another, to being fact based in our discussion, to not misrepresent one another or misconstrue our words. It’s a radical proposal, can we be calm and civil with one another?

PATRICK SASSER: Senator, I’d love an example, please.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Okay. I’ll take that as a no.

PATRICK SASSER: Senator, I would like an example, please. You, you accused me --

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Right now this is our example.
PATRICK SASSER: -- of speaking ill against you. I would like an example, please.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Okay. Okay. So, my original bill --

PATRICK SASSER: Because it’s your point to embarrass me here today, because I like this --

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): No, no, no.

PATRICK SASSER: -- this is great.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): My original bill --

PATRICK SASSER: No, Senator, I’d like an example.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Hold on, hold on.

PATRICK SASSER: You made it, she made an accusation.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): I’m giving you an example.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Hold on. The Chair has control here. Mr. Sasser, Senator, we are talking about an opinion here on whether we are gonna support or not support tolls moving forward. This discussion that was just about to happen will be taken offline. Stick to the facts.

PATRICK SASSER: I’m happy with that, sir, thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): If there’s a question it will be answered and if not, we’ll move on.

PATRICK SASSER: Thank you, sir, appreciate that.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Senator.
SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): The question is, the question is, have you considered the cost of not having tolls? And I know you said that you are in the trucking business. There is very robust data put out by the American Transportation Research Institute showing that the trucking industry actually suffers $74-billion dollars in lost business every year because of congestion. And which, which state is in the top five of truck congestion? It’s Connecticut, one of the smallest states has one of the highest costs per highway mile for the trucking industry because of our congestion.

So, there’s a direct cost to your specific business for having the conditions that we have. And I’m asking you sincerely, have you considered the cost to your business of the congestion that we suffer and what it’s doing to damage, to hurt your bottom line?

PATRICK SASSER: Yes, Senator, I have considered that. And my answer is this, my brothers and I with our trucking company already spend a fortune to run that small business. With the taxes we pay, the income tax we pay, the $10,000 a month in fuel bills that we pay to operate those trucks. We don’t have the luxury to just go out and plant a money tree and pull money off it where these tolls would act in that fashion because as we see in Pennsylvania and other states around us, when the state, you know, they can raise those fees any moment they want. I don’t have that luxury. I can’t just go out there and raise my fees to my customers.

So, I’m gonna, one or two things are gonna happen, I’m either gonna shut the business down because it’s
not worth it or I’m gonna pass those costs on to others.

And Senator, you talk about the traffic and the congestion, and I’m glad you brought that up because my God, all day long and for the past two months all I’ve heard about was trains, 30-30-30. And then I hear everyone talk about tolls are a user fee, a user fee. But then the next sentence, we’re gonna speed the trains up. So, how is my user fee driving on the highway supposed to be used to fix the trains and speed them up so that people can get to New York, making probably $400 or $500,000 a year; I don’t know, just a guess, to get them there five minutes quicker, 10 minutes quicker, is that really worth killing the Connecticut taxpayer to get that train going five minutes quicker on the backs of Connecticut?

So, yes, Senator, to your answer to your question, I have thought about it and I’ve thought about it long and hard.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): So, I’m glad you raised that because faster trains are one very demonstrable way that we can bring more companies and jobs and businesses into our state. So, how do we keep our taxes low, how do we lower the property taxes in Stamford, which are too high, how do we minimize financial pressure on cities and the state overall, by bringing in new taxpayers so that the burden is not all on you or us. And the only way to do that, if you ask the business community, is we need to improve mass transit and congestion.

So, companies like Amazon and others that employ hundreds and thousands of people are not going to be
interested in moving to Connecticut unless we create the conditions that make their business possible.

So, I understand that there’s pressure on your business, but there’s pressure on all businesses and on all taxpayers in this state. And what we need to do to reduce that pressure is to grow the tax base, which means bringing in more companies and people who will put money into the system so that your tax rates don’t go up.

So, we really have to look at this as a big picture and not just one, one aspect of it, tolls. It would be like saying, you know, do you want to go to the dentist? No, nobody wants to go to the dentist, but will you go to the dentist so that you can avoid having pain and disease and surgery and, and, and other enormous costs that will happen if you don’t take the preventative measure. Then the answer changes to yes. So, I just encourage you to look big picture, down the road, not just for your particular business but also for the state as a whole and for all of us taxpayers.

PATRICK SASSER: Thank you, Senator, and we will. And I ask you this, look for spending cuts.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): We are. Thank you.

PATRICK SASSER: No, because I haven’t heard it ever said once --

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

PATRICK SASSER: -- in this session.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Sasser. Are there any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much.
PATRICK SASSER: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next up is Senator Somers, Senator Fasano, were you taking over for Senator Somers?

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): No, I wasn’t taking over.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): You will be up very shortly, hold on, she’s not here. Let me give the next in line, Jennifer Siskind and then I can call for you, Senator.

JENNIFER SISKIND: Thank you very much to the Chairman and Ranking Members, Vice Chairs and distinguished members of this Committee. I’m probably one of the few citizens that are here today, but many people that I know out in my community and around the state are in favor of tolls. The reason being is that we clearly understand that we are deficient in our revenue.

I don’t believe that we are paying our fair share. I think we have had many years of don’t increase taxes or increase them only so much, but then take away from this fund and put it over here, you know, the sweeping has occurred across multiple budgets.

The fact is, we need to raise this revenue and whether it comes out of our property taxes, our business taxes, our income taxes, it needs to happen. And the only solution that I see, where it doesn’t completely fall on the backs of taxpayers is if we are having people from out-of-state contributing to this revenue source. So, that is why myself and many other people in my community are for a tolling system.
You know, we have 308 bridges that are structurally deficient. This impacts every county. Tolin County has a dozen.

We are 4th in the nation with the most structurally deficient bridges, 308 as reported last September by the TRIP study. The fact that this number is so high currently points to a lack of revenue to repair and replace them to date.

Every county in CT is impacted:

Tolland County has a dozen deficient bridges, Windham has 17, Middlesex almost 2 dozen, New London County almost 3 dozen, Litchfield has 39 and Fairfield and Hartford County top the list at 61 and 65, respectively.

Every person that traveled to this building today and does other days, came across a deficient structure. That’s just the fact of it. And we need to get income increasing. And we need to have that shared by other businesses and other drivers. I used to live out-of-state, when I was in high school, my parents drove through Connecticut to visit colleges in New England.

We have people driving through Connecticut to go skiing in Vermont. We have people driving through Connecticut to spend their summers at Cape Cause of death. We have one percenters from Manhattan coming into Connecticut to Litchfield County and to expensive shoreline properties.

We need to be able to have these people contribute to the wear and tear of our highways, our roadways and also improve our larger infrastructure.
To state the obvious, everybody coming into New England and everybody leaving New England virtually comes through Connecticut. So, it’s a tremendous source of income. And I hope that we do move forward for this. Thank you very much. You’ve been called good looking, you’ve been called intelligent. I think it’s incredibly brave to put a toll system through and face the wrath of many people that don’t immediately want to be impacted.

And I know that many people in my community, many people that I talk to, we appreciate your integrity and your honesty and your bravery to come forward with this plan.

Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Ms. Siskind, those comments are very kind. I think we could all use an uplifting moment at the moment. Are there any questions? If not, thank you very much.

JENNIFER SISKIND: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Senator Fasano, if you please.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): I’m bringing up Peter Malone from Thurston Foods with me.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Sure.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): And I’m going to have him go first, if that’s okay with the Chairs. Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Please proceed.

PETER MALONE: Thank you. As the Senator said, my name is Peter Malone, and I’m the Chief Executive Officer of Thurston Foods. We’re a wholesale food
service distributor located in Wallingford, Connecticut. In the interest of brevity, everybody’s been here a long time. I want to thank the committee for allowing us this opportunity to testify.

Everyone recognizes, I think everyone here recognizes the need for investment in infrastructure. I don’t think that’s a debate. So, with that said, it was raised very early on in the meeting today that one of the things that businesses don’t like about Connecticut is the failing infrastructure. And believe me, the effects of the failing infrastructure felt on a magnified level by somebody who’s particularly in the, in the trucking industry.

But what wasn’t pointed out was businesses also recognize that one of Connecticut’s biggest problems is the extremely horrible history of mismanagement, fiscal mismanagement that comes out of Hartford, Connecticut. There’s an absolute distrust and it’s been borne out by things like the abuses to the SCF. Another example, while it’s not directly the state’s fault, there’s something wrong with the system that’s gonna require us as a state to spend $10-million dollars just to get the okay to throw a shovel in the ground. There’s a problem here and it’s a governmental problem. It starts at the federal level and it trickles its way down.

To move along, Thurston Foods has been in business for 72 years, we’re family owned. We’re an entirely private company. We employ 215 people. We service over 3,000 customers throughout Connecticut and all of New England. We have one location, that is in Wallingford. We are the largest public school K-12
food service supplier in southern New England. We service over 75 percent of the municipalities and regional districts in Connecticut and Massachusetts. We operate a fleet of over 60 trucks and nearly 15 more vans and cars that depart and return to our Wallingford distribution center each business day. Literally, our trucks, our vehicles drive millions of miles a year.

Our best estimates on the cost of this, tolls to our company exclusively, is somewhere in the neighborhood of $250 to $300,000 a year. That’s a tax. But I’ve always found that whenever anybody in government uses the term investment, it really is, is code for tax. So, this is a tax. And those are actual dollars that have direct and immediate impact on things like hiring, new jobs, our existing staffing, wages, reinvestment in our plant facilities alone with a host of other expenditures that will have to either be constrained or eliminated.

Eventually the costs of tolls on business will get passed on to consumer. In our case, a huge chunk will be borne by the school lunch programs. There’s a pretty good chance that anybody in this room, if you’re from Connecticut and you have kids, your school system is buying food from Thurston Foods. Now, we’re gonna have to eat any immediate costs, but eventually those are gonna get passed on. There’s just no other way of doing it. We don’t make that kind of money and we can’t continue to eat it.

So, you know, I’m just reiterating what another dozen people have already said. Costs are gonna get passed along. This is a tax. So, let’s fix the
problem, but let’s also recognize that prioritized progress and things like that are viable sources of revenue.

Now, all we talk about here is revenue, revenue, revenue, so I’m not gonna get into it. Senator Leone asked that we don’t get, you know, off the beaten path. With stick with what we, you know, we’re here to talk about.

But let’s not forget that there are other things to just be getting revenue. Representative Devlin stole my thunder earlier before when she said, you know, Connecticut does not have a revenue problem, it has a spending problem. That’s a bigger picture.

And last but not least, I just want to say that everybody’s aware of it, but no single economy has ever taxed its way into prosperity, never been done. There’s not an example of it in the history of mankind and this is another case where it’s gonna happen, so.

Thank you very much for your time and I do appreciate it.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you both. I appreciate those comments. Oh, Senator Fasano, you still had some comments.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): Yes. I’m not gonna, I think a lot of you know where I stand on the tolls for various reasons. But before I get into that, you, a couple of things I just want to make sure is clear that the committee knows with respect to a few things. Out-of-state, some of the arguments have been 40 percent of the tolls are gonna come from out-of-state. CEN’s Smith report that cost us $20-
million dollars in five years, says, 30 percent. I have no idea. It says 25 to 30. I don’t know where anybody gets above 30 percent, unless the idea is to play with numbers to achieve that goal.

Number 2, if you’re not in Connecticut, and you charge a different rate in Connecticut, you must by constitutional law and there’s a Supreme Court case on this, allow an out-of-state resident to buy an in-state transponder. So, in New York, 18 percent of the transponders are owned by out-of-state people. In Massachusetts it’s 14.3. No one has factored in that, in the number.

In addition to that, we talked about frequent users of the road would also get a discount. No one has factored that into what we have. When you also talk about out-of-state people needing to pay more, we got to look back and say, do out-of-state folks pay some of our transportation infrastructure, and the answer is yes and here’s how; for every dollar of federal tax that Connecticut sends to Washington, we get back about 72, 73 cents. New York gets back, between New York, Massachusetts and New Jersey, I forget which one’s which in terms of percentage, it’s between 25 and 40, 25 and 37 percent.

So, people filling up in Nebraska, some of that money is coming to us. And I came across that when Chris Murphy left the Senate, ran for Congress, and wanted to raise the gas tax. And I called him up and I said, why are you doing that, raise the federal gas tax, that sounds like political suicide. He said, no, Len, it’s good Connecticut because we get back 70 cents on every dollar. So, if it goes up we’re getting more money. That’s when I started to look into it and obviously, he was right.
So, out-of-state people are inadvertently albeit, giving us some money. So, I just want to make sure people understand that.

The other thing I want to talk about, the fear I have of tolls is this, think about what the budget that the Governor put before us. He put before us a budget that says, we are gonna have tolls, it’s gonna help with transportation, because transportation infrastructure is the most important thing we can do in Connecticut. And with the same stroke of a pen, he’s taking back 92 percent of the new car sales tax money we were putting into the Transportation Fund to keep it solvent. I don’t think those two positions are consistent. You can’t say transportation is so important, but I am going to stop the import or the intent of this legislature to keep the Transportation Funded by cutting that money. That’s what’s gonna happen with this toll. Whether it’s this legislature or the next years down the line, they’re gonna say, you know what, DCF has got transportation in their budget, DSS has got transportation in their budget, renting cars, fixing cars, buying cars, whatever the heck they do. We’re gonna take those line items out of that general fund, budgeted out, stick it into the transportation account, and raise the toll. That’s what’s gonna happen.

And why do I believe that, because the history in this building going back to 2010, and I’m sure if I went back and I could go back to prior administrations, it isn’t a democratic thing. Where we cheat the Transportation Fund time and time again. Petroleum receipts, you add them up, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, we stopped the money that’s
supposed to go to transportation, we kept it in a general fund. 2014, we swept the Transportation Fund of $80-million dollars. Then when we put the sales tax revenue of .5 because we want to go up in the sales tax and put that in Transportation Fund, 2016, 2017, we didn’t make the full transfer. Why, because we had to balance the budget. It was a fiscal decision to the detriment of the very item everybody’s clamoring over the microphone to say it is what we need to do in this state.

That’s the problem with having a new tax monster get under our belt in this building. So, when you think, what are the ways to get around that? Prioritize progress came about not because of it was a Machiavellian idea but because what it did is it says, we’re gonna take bonding and we’re gonna specifically allocate it towards transportation period. You can’t steal it, you can’t transfer it, you can’t intercept it. It has to be because it’s bonding for transportation. No monkey business by anybody in the legislature. That’s why it came up.

Same thing, if you were to do something like a private-public partnership that perhaps I think someone may be testifying to later on this afternoon or this evening, I’m sorry, this evening, may talk about because if you pledge the revenue, you dedicate the bonding. That’s the key to keep us on target on what we have to do. That’s why I think prioritized progress is so fundamentally important.

I just want to turn to the bills for a moment because I think everyone’s talked about everything but the bills.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Great. Thank you, Senator. Continue, but if you could just --

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): I’ll wrap it up.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- wrap it up quickly so we can ask any questions.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): So, with the bills, the concerns I have is that both of these bills, the Governor’s bill and the Committee’s bills subverts the legislative process. I don’t think it’s fair that two people in this building will make a determination whether 187 legislators vote on policy. One of the bills says, you know, if it’s gone through the Committee and it gets to the House and the Senate, if it’s called within 15 days, well, two people make that decision, that’s all. I don’t think that’s fair.

We have changed in the Senate by our law, rules, and in the House you’ve done it by procedure to say, union contracts will be voted on. Because we understand how important that is. Well, this has got to be equally important.

As a final note, I don’t think there’s any law that we ever passed, union contracts we change. And the only other one we do is settlement of cases, if not decided they go through. Other than that, there is no policy that I know of, we’ve done in this legislature where we say inaction results in approval for policy; and I have major concerns over that.

I’m sorry to take so much time. Your patience is phenomenal. People got to know, I know people are
still here from this morning to testify, but sitting out there and doing this, I applaud you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Senator, and thank you, sir for the testimony. And we don’t want to make it any crazier than it is, and I appreciate the comments. There is a difference of opinion here, but they’re both respected. I very much appreciate your comments. And you’re right, this kind of an issue should not be decided by any two people, whoever they may be. This is an issue that should go to the floor, where everyone weighs in and everyone has a chance to say their peace for the benefit of their constituents.

The bills as you mention and some of the details that are in those bills, these two bills, they are just the details, they still need to be worked out. None of that is a guarantee that that is exactly what the end result will be. It is a conversation starter so that we have a framework to discuss the pros or constituents of those issues.

So, whether it’s about an authority, whether it’s about how many days for an approval, whether it’s about a number of gantries, this is everything we need to work through. We need to get a bill out of Committee so that we can continue this discussion, so it is not decided by relative few.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): This is something that we all must weigh in on. And I don’t think anyone should duck from that decision. There’s probably a few people that would choose not to have that happen because it’s a lot easier, but this is a difficult decision, it’s of such extreme importance that I’m
hopeful that we can get a bill out of Committee so that we can bring it to the Chambers for everybody to weigh in on because that’s what this state deserves, regardless of where people stand on it.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I thank you for that. Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Senator, thank you Mr. Malone for your testimony today and thank you for your investment in the State of Connecticut and for your willingness to come up here and testify today. It is deeply appreciated.

Senator Fasano, thank you again for highlighting what we, I think, have reached agreement on in this room at least today, is that the vital infrastructure needs of our state are paramount. And we need to ensure that we’re investing properly and fully and what we can all recognize in every corner of our state is an urgent need for investment. We’re all, we’re all there.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): Correct.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Whether you’re sitting in the audience of sitting up here, whether you’re republican or democrat, business leader, labor leader, we all, we’re all there.

And so I do appreciate you, your caucuses commitment to try to find an alternate solution. We could quibble over the details and you and I could probably spend an hour arguing point by point. We’ve got plenty of time to do that.
I do appreciate the sincerity with which you offered an alternate plan and willingness to come here today and talk about it. I do appreciate it.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Your comments with regard to the specific bills, you’re right. We’ve got to negotiate those things as well, there are parts of that that aren’t our best work and we’re gonna keep working towards it. And the goal is, as you know, by June do we have a product that the legislature can get behind and give to the Governor. And so, like always, you have my commitment to work with my colleagues here and with you and your caucus and every caucus in this building to try to get a set point. So, thank you very much.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to you both for testifying today. Mr. Malone, I’ve seen you around here all day. Thank you for that and taking time away from your business to express your voice.

One of the things that we’ve heard a lot about over the course of many, many months is the need for businesses to have predictability in order to have, consistency and predictability in order to build confidence. And we know the Governor pushed very hard that tolls would just be a truck only thing and he’s changed his mind.

And we’re looking at proposals that rather than the initial 83 gantry that tolled every or every limited-access highway in our state that going in
now is a proposal for 53. But can you speak to what these proposals do in terms of confidence in the business community in terms of predictability going forward and how you can run your business?

PETER MALONE: Well, let me start by saying, I appreciate the efforts of everybody on this committee, generally speaking, for even running for these offices. Everybody here and who’s preceded you dating back to, you know, the founding of this building, I give you credit for doing that. And pun intended, but the roads are paved with the best intentions.

So, while everyone means well and everyone has the best intentions when they get here, there’s, and, and don’t take this wrong, this isn’t to malign anyone individually, there’s an inherent distrust in what happens, not just here, it’s Washington and it’s, it’s probably not so much on a local level, of what happens once a revenue source is tapped. This is, this is, this is manna from heaven. This is found gold. And while the intention was, okay, it’s just gonna be trucks, it’s already advanced beyond that stage, it’s now trucks and cars. It’s gonna be 40 percent of out-of-state, well, maybe it’s 30, maybe it’s 20.

We’re only gonna put tolls and gantries in certain areas, but guess what, this is really working out well. Wouldn’t Route 7 look good with one of these towers on it? Maybe Route 8. How about 395, that’s a whole stretch, that’s a viaduct from New London all the way into Worchester. And we don’t have anything on there and boy are we missing out. So, you’re asking me what the predictability is; I can predict to you, that’s far more likely to occur.
Maybe it’s not with this body, maybe it’s not with anyone in this room, but is it five years, is it 10 years, I don’t know.

Now, we all remember when the income tax was implemented. The Kennedy Center out of Boston gave Lowell Weicker the Courage Award that year. That’s a lot of courage, boy. Okay. Well, I don’t think that was very courageous because what that was supposed to be, nothing, it bears no resemblance that initial thing. And there’s no reason that anyone in the business community that’s been in Connecticut for any period of time has any reason to believe that what’s being said here today, best intentions included, is gonna be anywhere near what it looks like in 10 years.

So, what’s the consistency or predictability, it’s entirely unpredictable that would be that. I hope I answered your questions.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): You did very much. Thank you, I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Any other questions. If not, thank you, gentlemen.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH): Thank you very much and thank you for your patience.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Senator. Next up Sophia Nirshberg, hopefully I said that correctly. And I believe you are coming up with Ms. Von Rosenvinge and Mr. Fuda, is that correct? Since we have the three of you, if you could, it’s already just at 6 o’clock. For the people in the audience or anyone in this building, the local cafeteria will stay open until 6:30. So, if anyone wishes to get a
bite to eat or a cup of coffee or something to drink, I would suggest you have 30 minutes to do that, otherwise you will miss out. We have quite a few people on the list, so we will be here into the evening. So, if you want to take a break, you should take advantage of it now.

But with that, we have the three of you up, please being. Try and combine your testimony, so that we can move quickly for any questions if there are any and then we’ll continue with the public, with the public at large. Thank you.

SOPHIA NIRSHBERG: Good, Senator Leone, Representative Lemar and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Sophia Nirshberg. I’m a professional engineer and I am a founding principle of VN Engineers, a small woman-owned engineering company located in North Haven, Connecticut. I’m also a member of the Board of Directors for the American Council of Engineering Companies of Connecticut. And I’m here to speak in favor of the House Bill 7202.

Being on the list of speakers that low, I have to admit that many things that I prepared in my testimony was already spoken many, many times. So, I really don’t want to take your time and repeat all this again and again.

And just would like to stress the point again that I am for, in favor of the 7202 Bill and I also would like to say that our great State of Connecticut really deserves a transportation infrastructure system that can provide a network of roads, highways and bridges that are well maintained, safe and less congested. Also provide improved public
transportation network, rails and bus systems that allow everyone from every corner of the state to participate in the economy. Provide design construction and maintenance programs that promote a cleaner, safer and healthier environment in which to live.

I strongly believe that Connecticut’s transportation network is integral to the success of the state’s economy. And this benefits for us business people, business woman, include in case, enhanced access to statewide reliable and highly skilled labor force, increase market share, an expanded customer base, business expansion and reduced production costs.

While we understand that it will take time to construct a comprehensive toll system, our economy and Connecticut residents cannot afford to wait. And therefore, I urge you please support the Bill 7202.

Thank you very much for your time.

TED VONROSENVINGE: My name is Ted Vonrosenvinge, I am the President of GeoDesign Inc., an engineering firm in Middlebury, Connecticut. I’m also a member of the American Council of Engineering Companies. And again, asking you to support 7202 and also the complimentary aspects of that in 7280.

I’ve been involved with Connecticut infrastructure since 19, the early 1980s. And I recall, you know, right through some of the major projects we were working on recently, like the Q Bridge. In the back of the 1980’s we were investing in our transportation system. But since then we’ve witnessed us really fall behind.
So, we all know that our infrastructure is failing, it’s a simple fact. Just last week, you may recall, the Speaker of the House posted a picture on Facebook showing some temporary kind of a gerry-rigged support holding up Route 84 in Hartford. That doesn’t, it’s not good advertising for us.

But as a resident and engineer I am reminded of Mianus, 1983, when the roadway and bridge fell, and people were killed. Well, I know that got the legislature’s attention then. So, I hope we can get your attention now and keep in mind that over 300 of our bridges, as you’ve heard today, are structurally deficient. This is alarming.

And by comparison, I am involved with the design of more transportation projects outside of Connecticut as a Connecticut firm than I am in Connecticut. It saddens me not only do I see more construction activity outside of my state and investment, but you’ve probably seen this, you drive down our highways and there’s a sign that says, Connecticut Welcome Center ahead. And what do you see on top of that? You see a sticker that says, closed. That’s depressing and bad advertising.

So, I know you’re gonna hear all kinds of things. You’ve heard about how tolls are a hardship, but it’s also a hardship on our residents not to, there’s a cost to not fix these things. Just like there’s a cost to not fixing a roof in your house in a timely manner. So, those costs, unless we act, are just gonna increase.

So, in closing, we just simply cannot wait any longer to address these concerns. I have a Connecticut business here and these things affect
me. But we also have, as engineers, some special knowledge about this topic. So, I urge your support.

Thank you.

JAMES FUDA: Chairman Leone and Chairman Lemar as well as distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be able to be here before you and provide testimony.

My name is Jim Fuda. I am also, like my colleagues, a member of the board of directors of ACEC, Connecticut. Also a registered professional engineer. And I’m responsible as Vice President for the Connecticut Division of Alfred Benesch & Company, an engineering firm, in Glastonbury that has had roots in Connecticut since 1959.

So, we’re very invested in transportation infrastructure in Connecticut. I won’t repeat a lot of the arguments that you’ve heard before. My testimony is, as my colleagues, is on record. But for the sake of brevity, I’ll be brief so we can get the questions and get you through. But I do think that there’s one point that I would make that I haven’t heard.

The American Society of Civil Engineers has provided nationally an infrastructure report card for each state. And Connecticut has received a grade of C minus, which is not great and probably not a surprise to any of us. But what was telling in that report is that it talked about each driver in Connecticut, it costs an extra $864 per year driving on Connecticut roads in need of repair. It’s saw time on the road, more time in commuting, all of the arguments that you’ve heard. But I do think that
that’s telling because it is effecting, in my opinion, our quality of life.

So, the one key thing that I think is important and I know you’ve heard is just the need for a sustainable funding resource. It’s a known fact that the gasoline tax nationwide as well as locally is, is declining because vehicles are more efficient and even electric vehicles are on the rise, as was stated earlier with the investment China’s making in electric vehicles.

Personally for my firm, it’s very important for me to have infrastructure here in Connecticut and we rely on a sustainable resource. 40 percent of my staff of 25 are graduates of engineering schools in Connecticut, UConn, New Hartford, and I want to make sure that they have an environment to live and work and stay here in Connecticut.

So, in closing, I just want to reinforce that I am in favor of House Bill 7202 and most aspects of H.B. 7280. The one aspect of 7280, is not in favor of establishing the Connecticut Transportation Finance Authority, I think that that’s a layer of additional bureaucracy that is not necessary with the current system in place.

So, I thank you for taking the time. Thank you for letting our colleagues testify together and we’re here to answer any questions or provide information in the future. Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you too, all three for your testimony in, on behalf of your organization. Are there any questions? I may just have one question as an organization in terms of the engineering community because I believe the
engineering community is critical, regardless of what we do, in terms of handling our infrastructure because it requires so much engineering.

So, are the engineers coming into your community or even the ones that are there, where are the constraints with where we are or where we need to be in improving our infrastructure or if nothing happens, our status quo, what would be the impact on your engineering capabilities, if any?

JAMES FUDA: It would restrain our growth, because we’re relying on those projects to provide the engineering design to build them. And if we don’t have the projects for any one of our firms to work on, then we’ve got to go to other sources outside of Connecticut to provide the growth opportunities for our Connecticut staffs.

TED VONROSENVINGE: I would add that in terms of hiring engineers and getting that talent to come to our state, anything that makes it harder to live here and more expensive and harder to commute is another negative. And we have enough problems with recruiting right now as it is.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Well, we have to solve that problem, too. So, that’s, that’s a whole other part of the pie, but we’re not gonna go there right this moment so but thank you for that.

Seeing no other questions, thank you very much for taking the time and for being here.

JAMES FUDA: You’re welcome.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next up, we’re gonna call up Mr. Don Patterson. We understand there’s some mitigating factors, we want to assist you in that.
So, we’re gonna allow you to come up. And following on deck will be Mr. Mark Anderson.

DON PATTERSON: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak to you all --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Your microphone, just hit the button, please. Thank you.

DON PATTERSON: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you on this toll issue and also giving me the opportunity to move me up because I’m a diabetic and I was getting a little shaky in the end. I’ve been here since, since, who knows how long. But anyway, I think we all agree that there’s a problem with the transportation system in this state. I don’t think there’s anybody in this room that would disagree with that. The problem is what do we do about it?

And there’s congested highways, potholes, and although I live in Manchester now, I was born and raised in Norwalk. So, I’m familiar with the Stamford and I work in Stamford, so I know what the Connecticut Turnpike was like back then. In fact, I served a lower position in Norwalk on the Community Development Committee. And I remember from some of the readings I had down there that there was like 95,000 cars a day and that was 1980. So, who knows how long, how many there are now. And I rode over the Mianus River Bridge. I remember it collapsing because a fellow coworker in Stamford went over the bridge an hour before it collapsed. It was thank God that the Met game ended early or he wouldn’t be here today.

But the bridge used to shake. And I was wondering why and maybe I should have told somebody. But I
think, where was the other 90,000 cars, why didn’t somebody else tell them about it.

But anyway, getting to the meat of the matter, my solution will make the roads not only better, but safer. And again, I hear all these figures. So, I don’t know if my idea will solve the problem or just cause a problem, because I hear figures of $800 million, a billion, $2 billion and how many expansions you have varies from one hour of this meeting to the next.

But I would suggest, instead of taxing the taxpayers who are already burdened to the state, why don’t we double the fines on the motorists who continually violate the law by drunk driving, speeding, reckless driving, distracted driving. I was almost hit by a distracted driver about two weeks ago on 384 in Manchester. And if we tax these people and double the taxes, not just tax them because they’re already taxed or already fined, I should say, not taxed. Fine these people and let it be known that the police in this state mean business.

And last night it was good to hear that the Governor is hiring more police officers as far as the reason for that I think is some of them are retiring. But if we have enough police on the road, and have these fines doubled, maybe we’d get some revenue in and it would at least if not completely cover the transportation, the crumbling infrastructure, but at least pay for part of it.

And, and also keep the, the $200-million dollars that the Governor has proposed for the trucks. I like that idea. So, if we got the doubling the fines, plus paying the trucks, tolling them, maybe
we’d get at least close to the figure and it would be a step in the right direction. And at least give a solution that I haven’t heard anybody mention about, I’m just kind of surprised and nobody thought to fine the motorists who continually violate the law and trans toll and senior, advertisement on TV. They said that Connecticut has the fifth highest rate of deaths due to drunk driving. And the drunk drivers are probably just laughing in their face because the fines are probably too low. So, they continue to drive drunk.

And I think it’s, in conclusion, that’s my solution to the problem. Okay.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Patterson. It’s a pleasure to hear someone who doesn’t particularly like an idea but at least then offer some solutions --

DON PATTERSON: Yeah, I agree with that.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- or an alternative view. So, I think that’s, that’s very appreciative because --

DON PATTERSON: I try to be that way because I don’t, I could very well come up here and yell at all you guys, but that doesn’t solve anything. If I’m mad at somebody, I try to offer a solution. While I was on the condo, president of the condo association in Vernon years ago, and I was in your position. And I was always appreciative if somebody didn’t like the condo increase, come up with a better idea, I’m open to it. And that’s why I try to put myself in your position, so come up with an idea rather than just complain. Anybody can complain about anything, you know. But I think I
would be crazy coming here and just complain about it and not offer you guys an idea whether what’s mentioned.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. That’s very much appreciated. And I’m sure the other members feel the same way. Are there any questions? Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, more of a comment and to echo on yours as well. Mr. Peterson, thank you for coming up here today. You have clearly given this a lot of thought. You have invested your entire day being here and that really, that really means a lot. And as the good Chairman said, you have come forth with solutions. Who knows if the math adds up, but at least you’ve been thinking of creative ways to help us move forward.

And to your point of everybody coming up with different ideas and being willing to listen to them, that’s what our Governor is saying. And I’m hopeful we’re gonna have some conversation through this process to get us to a good place.

Thank you very much.

DON PATTERSON: You’re welcome.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Next up, Mr. Mark Anderson, followed by Alisa Trachtenberg.

MARK ANDERSON: Chairman Leone, Chairman Lemar, distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Mark Anderson, I live in Granby, Connecticut. I’m also the President of the Connecticut Republican Assembly, a nationally chartered conservative organization. This testimony
is in opposition to H.B. 7280 and H.B. 7202. In the recent election, I was the campaign manager for a republican state rep who was reelected. So, yes, I am a partisan.

On the campaign trail, we did not hear about tolls. It’s a rural district, House District 62, it’s away from highways and also Governor Lamont downplayed tolls. He said he’d only toll trucks.

The scope of tolls now proposed is far beyond what the voters expected. The latest study with 82 tolls came out several days after election. Somehow I don’t think that was a coincidence. The partisan in me thinks that you’re handing republicans a great issue for the next election, the imposition of expensive tolls. But before I’m a partisan, I’m a citizen committed to good government, so I must oppose tolls, which are an unduly onerous burden added to already high levels of taxation.

At first impression, tolls seems like a fair way to pay for road and bridge maintenance. Those who use the roads will pay for the roads. But the record indicates, this is not likely to happen.

The Governor’s bill uses the phrase, sustainability, which is what we all want for our state government. But the financial path which this state is on is anything but sustainable. The implementation of tolling would make government larger and less sustainable. The now perennial multi-billion-dollar state budget deficits signal a need for downsizing, not upsizing.

These tolls, these tolling bills would increase in size and cost the government. The creation of a transportation finance authority and a
transportation infrastructure bank. These agencies would result in more government overhead for the same amount of roads.

This would certainly help Connecticut retain it’s dubious distinction of the highest per mile administrative cost for its roads. And also I’ve read that it’s the highest cost, maintenance cost, number one in maintenance cost per mile. I think what the Danbury Chamber of Commerce President described that we’re three times the national average in our cost for road, that’s real money.

The current course of action, stated by the Commissioner of Transportation this morning, 52 or 53 toll gantries and four named highways totaling 330 miles. This would be the most miles of tolled roads in New England and the seventh nationally.

The 82 toll gantry plan of the latest study would add up to about 532 miles and elevate us to number four. Plans that I’ve heard rumors of that include over 100 tolling gantries would likely catapult us to number one. Do we really, do any of us really want that distinction? The record is clear that all new revenue will go to fixed cost, which I believe Governor Malloy candidly admitted near the end of his term, until these costs are fixed, the leviathan, which is Connecticut state government should be starved of additional revenue. This will force hard choices to be made instead of kicking the can down the road.

Trust in elected government of Connecticut is eroding because of the trust that’s been violated repeatedly. Do you want to win back the trust? The
people of Connecticut, if so, please do not enact tolls.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Anderson, for your testimony, for your commitment to both public service both in your local town and to sending a member of one of my colleagues up here. I do appreciate you coming today and sharing your thoughts. In a moment of honesty, I must admit, I’m one of the reasons why that one bill has a P3 and an infrastructure bank and a tolling authority. I’ve been working closely with folks and house dems honestly, trying to figure out a solution that republicans and democrats have been talking about in this building. What are some of the potential solutions? And we thought of the infrastructure bank as a way to see if there were opportunities to bring in outside capital to do the types of projects that we know we can’t afford under our structure.

Similarly with P3’s, Representative O’Dea has been a leading advocate for those for about 12 years. We had a program on the books, it just hadn’t worked. So, I thought it was worth revisiting. And this might be the opportunity to have that part of conversation. And the transportation authority that is being much maligned, it structures exactly at the transportation strategy board that folks are saying what they want to remodel.

So, I’m hoping that these next few weeks and then the next few months, I hope that bill and ideas that people have are space for conversation because I think, like I said numerous times, whether you’re in the audience or you’re up here around this circle,
everyone recognizes the problem and we don’t have to have a fight over the solutions, we have to have an honest conversation and hopefully reach a conclusion that moves us forward.

So, thank you for coming up and taking the type of tone, I think, that we should all emulate over the next few weeks and months. I appreciate it.

MARK ANDERSON: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Other questions for Mr. Anderson? Seeing none, thank you so much. Alisa Trachtenberg. And, Alisa, I think you’re coming up with Gail Berritt.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Thank you. Hi, my name is Alisa. And first I just want to, I really like the idea of the other person who just went about doubling the fines on the people who drive drunk and are distracted and stuff like that. I don’t think it’s a question of having to add up three-place tolls or anything, but it’s a nice way to just add.

Anyway, so, I, with regard to tolls, I didn’t know how I felt about them originally and there’s a group of women that I belong to and we get together and chat about things. And so each side, you know, let’s figure out what’s going on with this toll thing. We decided to do some research. And when we did the research, you know, we looked at all the different kinds of documents, we looked at news articles, we read that 87 page report by the, was it the DOT or something. So we went for fact-based stuff.

And it was really kind of convincing that the best option was really to do tolls. Because the reality
is, we have a financial problem in this state. It’s not going away. We need to find a way to kind of help out the budget and tolls is not gonna be a panacea, it’s not gonna be the miracle cure. It cannot be the only solution, but it can be part of a larger solution.

And, you know, our infrastructure here has some significant difficulties, we’ve talked about that. And so, you know, when you look at it and you see, well, we had tolls in the past and the reason we got rid of them was not because we didn’t need the money, we got rid of them because there was a safety issue, which is no longer an issue as technology has advanced things.

And the new system that is available is safe, it’s efficient, it’s versatile. And I think one of the things that happened in our research is we came across that, what’s it called, the No Tolls Connecticut, from the guy that was just up here. And we started looking at it and we started doing some research. And in the packets you guys got, we put together with a group called the Resisters, we put together a pamphlet that’s called, MythBusters.

So, we went over some of the common things that, you know, people have issues with. And so, anyway, so some of the things we were seeing is, like people have mentioned before, the fact that, you know, Connecticut right now we are paying, so people talk about a tax, you know, oh, it’s adding more taxes. The reality is through our current taxes, we are paying, Connecticut residents, let’s be specific, Connecticut residents are paying 100 percent. 100’s a hundred, you really get more than a hundred. So, right now, we are paying 100 percent of the
maintenance and the infrastructure issues tied to Connecticut.

And on my way here, I came from Richfield, so I came from the other end of the state and I was here bright and early this morning, the six o’clock hour. And, you know, I passed by a number of cars with plates from out-of-state. And you know what, they didn’t pay a toll for anything. But when I go to New York to visit friends or when I go to Boston to visit my brother, every time, I pay. And, you know, with the E-ZPass you don’t notice this much. But the reality is we pay every single time.

And so we are the only state on the eastern seaboard that does not currently have tolls. I mean that’s just, it’s just crazy. And so, having the tolls really provides an opportunity to have additional income come in from someone paying who is not a Connecticut resident. And that, that’s like a gift. It’s like a gift. And so it’s something we should really consider.

And while I was upstairs today, there was actually some guy, I have no idea who it is, but he mentioned how like with your cell phones and everything they can track you. So, who knows, maybe in the next few years they’ll figure out something even better than the gantry things that are more efficient and less, less expensive. Anyway, so literally right now, the people who are coming from out-of-state are getting a free ride, literally a free ride. And I think it’s time that we deal with it.

One of the last things is, this system can be implemented instantaneously once it’s set up. You can change things, sorry, changes can be
implemented. The rates can be adjusted automatically. We can do things to help people who are less fortunate. And we don’t have to have it set up so that probably one of the things I would like to see is not being set up with the tolls right at the borders, so it’s not like a border toll to distract people. But when people commute, I used to live in New York for like 13 years. And so, when you commute, when you’re going there, you’re not really gonna go more than an hour. So, that puts us somewhere around like Exit 10 or 11 on 84. And otherwise, you’re gonna be taking the train. And I think it’s, like someone else said, it’s a multimodal system. You have to be working on all of the public transportation, the roads, the trains, the buses.

Compared to Europe, we are so far behind in terms of what you can do in trains. And we really need to take care of these problems sooner rather than later because honestly, I get nervous when I drive over these bridges and don’t forget, overpasses, every overpass is actually a bridge, it’s just called an overpass. So, every time you’re on an overpass, you’re on a bridge, and I’m sure there’s thousands of them. I don’t know how many there are. But there’s got to be thousands of them.

And in terms of prioritizing, I think those overpasses need to be near the top of the list for priority.

And finally, the last thing is, the volume discount sounds much better than a commuter discount because it’s much more inclusive. So, as you go forward, I would probably use that terminology.
And I thank you and I’ll pass you over to Gail.

GAIL BERRITT: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Gail. Yeah, just move the microphone over towards you, it will cover.

GAIL BERRITT: Okay. All right. Yeah, it’s been a long day for all of us. Alisa says she’s been here since 7 a.m. and I really commend here. I came at about 11, and I really appreciate the fact that you guys work so hard, including my two legislators that have stayed the whole day, I appreciate both Mr. Steinberg and Mr. Haskell for sticking around.

So, I wanted to just say that, that I’m a 20-year resident of Connecticut. I’m also very passionate, but I’m very passionately in favor of tolls. Not because I love to give money to my state, but because I think it’s the right thing to do. And I had, you know, the testimony that I submitted, I’m gonna skip all of it because we’ve also, between Alisa and everybody else, we’ve covered all of this stuff.

But what I really want to say are things that I think need either a further emphasis or clarification. And one of them is, we need to raise revenue without going into further debt. Bonding is not the answer. I’m gonna borrow from the example that I read, that is attributed to Senator Looney. Would you rather pay $1500 for a $1000 refrigerator because you had to take out a loan to afford it or would you rather pay $600 and receive $400 from your neighbor? I think the choice is obvious. I know the choice that I would make.
Tolling is the only proposal in this, and I’m quoting from lots of people who spoke today, tolling is the only proposal to bring in new revenue without saddling Connecticut taxpayers with 100 percent of the bill.

I think that is the message by the way that resonates most with your average citizen. I think that once citizens understand that message, that many people who may have been on the fence before or maybe even against tolling may be more open minded in hearing that message.

I trust that our legislators will apply the money raised by tolls in a, in accordance with federal and state laws and the lockbox referendum that passed in this last election. I have reason to believe that the legislators will act appropriately.

You know, I was thinking for example, can a legislature include, can the legislation include language in a bill that either prohibits or requires a super majority to move revenue from tolls, from tolls out of transportation. So, in other words, it can’t be done on the whims of a Governor. It can’t be done by a minority but requires a majority to do that. I don’t even know if that’s necessary given the lockbox and the federal laws and the state laws already on the books, but if folks are concerned about that, I’m hearing a lot of arguments about how we can’t trust you guys, which I don’t believe. I believe I can trust you guys. Especially the ones that we helped elect. But if, if that’s the case, if people, if, if citizens are concerned about that, then let’s do something in the legislation to show them that that is not an option. Put this money in a special bank account. You know, there are ways to
deal with that. I think it’s a specious argument to say that we shouldn’t do this because the legislation, the legislators cannot be trusted.

Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Alisa and Gail for your testimony and for making it out so long today. I know there’s at least one question, two questions. So, if you don’t mind, Senator, Representative Steinberg, followed by Senator Haskell.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Well, thank you for being here all this time and thank you for your testimony. But most importantly, thank you for doing the research, for putting together your MythBusters document, which you submitted to this committee as part of your testimony. There sure is a lot, there sure are a lot of myths out there and it’s about time that, there are documents out there that encountered a lot of things that people are buying at, you know, at face value, which is really very unfortunate because I think it makes a lot of people very emotional and really ought to be acquainted with the facts.

Facts really do matter. So, I’m hoping that, I guess the question I would have for you is, are you sharing this document broadly with those who would be very concerned about the impact of tolls, so that they have good information available?

GAIL BERRITT: Yes, in fact, I just received while I was sitting here. I just received an email from a coalition of grass roots organizations who are, asked us whether we can do that, and we will, in fact, do that.
We are happy to share it with whomever would like to see it. So, we are hoping, including, right, including any officials, including any, any persons who might be interested, we are happy to share it.

If there’s any input on that document, please let us know or let our representatives know. We think we got everything correct, but there’s another document that goes with it that actually supports each of these. So, what we did when we wrote our thing was we have a document that accompanies it that’s more detailed and everything, but just shows where all the information comes from so you can tell where in the reports it came, so. But you guys are welcome to stick it on your websites, do whatever you want with it, that’s fine. We’d love that.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Well, I found it very helpful and I just want to end by commenting on what you said before about being concerned when you’re driving over bridges. It reminds me of what we used to do as kids when you to go by a cemetery, you’d hold your, until you got all the way passed it.

GAIL BERRITT: Right, right.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): I’m afraid now the new habit in the State of Connecticut will be holding your breath while you drive over bridges until you get to the other side. So, thank you very much for your testimony.

GAIL BERRITT: You’re welcome.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Haskell.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much Mr. Chair, and thank you too, Alisa and Gail for your advocacy on this issue and so many others. Really
grateful for your patience and waiting all this time today to testify.

In your testimony you mentioned the safety of Connecticut’s roads. You talked about, as Representative Steinberg said, holding your breath when you go over some of these bridges. You also started off by saying that you wouldn’t be opposed, you might be in favor of doubling the fines on distracted drivers or drunk drivers.

Can you help dispel the notion that tolling would make Connecticut’s roads more dangerous? I see that’s one of the myths that you --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Yeah.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): -- that you look a little bit into in your testimony.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: So, most of us, so I remember when I was growing up. So, I grew up in Connecticut, actually right around here. And I took my driving test where you had to cross the five lanes on 84 to get to asylum, but part of the thing is, you have the tolls, and they were these giant things. And so you had to stop, you got to fish for the money, you’re stuck behind people. And so it’s, that’s not what’s going on now. These are not things you’re gonna go crash into. You’re not gonna crash into the car that’s stopped right in front of you and the guy’s not gonna slam on his brakes because he realized all of a sudden there’s a toll in front of him. So, that’s really what the issue is about the safety. I mean, they were not really safe for, they’re not safe with distracted drivers. So, now we got rid of the tolls in terms of the
physical structures and we can also work on
distracted drivers, I don’t know.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Wonderful. Thank you so
much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. One more question,
Representative O’Dea.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you. I greatly
appreciate your testimony. Is it Gail, did you
testify first?

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Alisa, I did.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Alisa, I’m sorry. You said
that you got a group together and kind of --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Yeah.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): -- dissected whether or not
you’re gonna support tolls and I appreciate that.
What, was that, how long ago was that?

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Fairly recently. So, I think
we started like a month ago, two months ago,
something like that. So, you know --

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Were some of you pro tolls and
some con or were you all con or all pro?

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: I don’t know what everybody’s
individual opinion was, it was more like one of the
things we want to do was, after the elections, was
we decided to be more active. And so, we decided
when there’s an issue of interest to us, we’re gonna
actually research it and do it fact based so that
we’re not just, because it’s easy to make
inflammatory statements and a lot of, you know,
that’s, there’s a lot of stuff out there these days
in the news. So, instead we focused really heavily on the facts. And when we wrote like our Myth Buster thing and when we wrote supporting, we wrote lengthier documentation as well and everything we did we tried to do fact based. And we kind of talked about it and read lots of articles and stuff like that, so, that’s --

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Are you, I don’t know if you heard my questions earlier about the fact that --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: We’ve been here the entire time.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Excellent. So --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Might not remember them, but we’ve been here, so.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, one of the things that I would like to point out for those that are pro-toll, we’ve got, the Transportation Fund, according to OPM, as of November 2018, had the STF at a billion-six and a billion-nine in 2021 and then two-billion in 2022, at least those were the estimates.

With tolls, would you want the tolls on top of that or to replace that? If you understand the question.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: I’m sorry, I’m lost.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Okay. So, right now we have no tolls. We’re not gonna have tolls --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: I know we don’t have tolls. So, are you asking like, should we do additional money on top of it with the budget?

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, right now, going in the Transportation Fund are motor fuel taxes, oil
company tax, sales and use tax, sales tax, DMV, motor vehicle receipts, license --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: I would leave the things how they are. I mean, in my opinion, I would leave what’s there there because if you get rid of them, you’re just making the budget hole bigger and so, I wouldn’t call this, and I don’t know if you’re aiming to call it a tax, but it’s not, it’s truly a user fee.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Whether you call it a user fee or tax, that’s not my point.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Okay.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): My point is, I like your answer in the fact because I think it’s frankly --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: It’s not a replacement. I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t look at it as a replacement. I’d look at it as we have a giant gap in our budget right now. Connecticut is suffering. We have a lot of things that need to be fixed, like all of these overpasses and some bridges and stuff. And the problem is that we need this money designated to be used for transportation and then we have to go, and we have to fix this stuff.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, and so I just want to point out to you --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Yes.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): -- so any money raised by tolls, and I’m gonna sound like I’m arguing for the tolls --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Yeah.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): -- but they have to be spent on, on the roadway, so, or bridges, so.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: I would like to see the money that we raise from tolls spent on bridges and roadways, that is, that is correct.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): That has to be.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Uh-huh. Gail wanted to add, so I’m gonna let her.

GAIL BERRITT: I think, I think, your, your question, I’m not sure, we didn’t research your particular question. So, I don’t think we can comment on how existing money is being used. I think our comments are limited to this new money. This new money needs to be used for the purposes of transportation, put into a, into an account, into a safe, into a, you know, Fort Knox, if it has to be. But someplace where it has to be used for that purpose legally and also, I think, from the standpoint of PR, it needs to, we need to get out there to the public that this money cannot be touched. Other money, we’re not commenting on.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: And it needs to be earmarked for specific projects. I think when you’re talking to people, one of the things that would really help is, you know, if you say, okay, we’re gonna be fixing this particular bridge and it’s gonna cost this much money. And the first, the first money that we earn from our thing, we’re gonna put to fixing this bridge. And then the next thing we’re gonna do is we’re gonna fix, I don’t know, we’re gonna fix this other issue. Okay. Whatever it is, the train thing, okay, we’re gonna fix some train thing in Fairfield County, whatever it is, whether
the storm hit the tracks and they’re eroded, and they got to be fixed or the cars need to be replaced. But I think you need to be specific on what you’re gonna, that would help out, I think, in terms of explaining this to people.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, I guess my last comment would be. So, you trust those that you helped get elected?

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: I actually do and whether you do or don’t, I was at a meeting you held, you know. I’m, I’ll be straight out, I’m a democrat, but I went to a meeting because I think it’s good to hear what people think and I wanted to hear what you thought. So, I think it’s good that we can try and work in a bipartisan fashion and really look at what our, our state needs. And quite frankly, like I said before, we’re already paying 100 percent of the maintenance and infrastructure and it’s not enough. A lot of people pointed out that our fund is going to have some problems pretty soon.

And so, why not get a gift of some extra money from people who use our roads and are used to paying it in every single state they go to on the eastern seaboard. And they also mentioned that the cost of goods are gonna go up, all right. And all these other people from other states somehow manage in every single state from Maine all the way down to Florida. And many of those people, like you look at, you look at, I don’t know, was it, Apple, Apple sells tons of products, okay. Do they give us a discount because we don’t have tolls? I don’t think so. I think the cost of their product is gonna be the same. And if you can get me a discount because
I live here, that would be great. I have a list of products.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Did any of the people you supported for election, did anybody oppose the tolls?

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: If anybody opposed the tolls?

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Was any of the candidates that you helped get elected opposed to tolls?

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: I did not know actually. Tolls was not on the forefront of my mindset when I, when I voted. I was voting on other things. For example, I heard from, I’m just saying that other things in terms of budget cuts to nonprofits and things like that that help poor and needy people. I would really work on maintaining those and not cut those.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): My last comment is, out-of-state people do pay towards our roads and you know how? With the gas tax. Now, I agree with one of our --

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Buy gas --

REP. O’DEA (125TH): -- hold on, hold on, let me finish.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Yeah.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): If we lower the gas tax. So, we raised the gas tax when we got rid of the tolls. And by putting in the tolls, would you support reducing the gas tax?

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: I don’t think I would at the moment. While I know it’s really tempting to say,
let’s lower the gas tax, then we’re just making another bigger budget hole to fill. And the problem is, we got this giant budget hole right now. And so if you just keep cutting here and there, and you’re saying, oh, well, we got tolls to balance it out, I don’t think you’re doing the state any service, but that’s just my personal opinion.

GAIL BERRITT: I mean, look, we could reevaluate that, right.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Yeah.

GAIL BERRITT: We could see how much tolls, how much money tolls bring, brings in and then we could reevaluate the gas tax.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Because it’s electronic, so it’s flexible and we can adjust on the spot.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): All right. We’ll agree to disagree. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): You’re welcome, Representative O’Dea. Representative Carney. You guys are very popular today.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): I just have one, I just have one question. I appreciate your testimony. So, I know you used the word fair and unfair in your presentation. And you put down some of the revenue that comes from other states, Massachusetts $395 million they get in revenue from tolls on their roads. Now, in the Governor’s proposal, it’s about $800 million that Connecticut would expect to get from tolls. $480 million from Connecticut residents.
So, I’m just curious based on what you think is fair and unfair; is that fair?

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Well, do you think like, oh, they’re getting a lot more money than us, is that good or not?

REP. CARNEY (23RD): We would be, so Massachusetts gets $395 million from tolls.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Okay.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Under the Governor’s plan, we would get, Connecticut would make $800 million in revenue, including at least $480 million in revenue. Now, we’re half the size of Massachusetts. Do you think, do you think $800 million is a fair number to ask our drivers to pay, including $480 million from Connecticut residents?

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: I don’t think you can answer that in the abstract. I think you need to know, and I know that this was asked for on, during the testimony, how it’s going to affect the individual taxpayers of Connecticut. I think once we know that and we can compare to maybe how it affects the individual taxpayers in these other states, we can probably have a good discussion about that.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Okay. All right. Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. I think you guys are done. Thank you so much for coming up today. I really do appreciate it.

ALISA TRACHTENBERG: Thank you.

I’m being told that Mary Ellen is here, she’s just a minute away. Jackie Kaiko. Mary Ellen and Jackie will be next as they arrive. Jim Lohr. Gregg Marchand.

GREG MARCHAND: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, Chair and Committee. Okay. I am Greg Marchand, I oppose the House Bill No. 7202. This proposal was basically the same of a subject that was brought up at a town meeting with Mae Flexer, Linda Orange and Susan Johnson and some concerned citizens. A man at the meeting mentioned how the gas tax is supposed to go towards road maintenance is why he’s ready to leave Connecticut because the Connecticut government did not use the gas tax monies for the road repair. Mae Flexer agreed more or less saying, the tax money went towards infrastructure. Mae and anyone else that has commonsense knows that infrastructure is not road repair.

The man also said, the tarred walking trails was a waste of money, there’s no one ever on them, where the railroad tracks used to be from Willimantic to Hartford. I say, speaking of the trails, trails to me is a dirt, not tarred. Our state government should have left them be so horses could go down them, down a trail, not tar. Plus there’s fences surrounding these trails; therefore, wild animals can’t cut through. You’re trapping animals from that.

So, how did Connecticut towns take over the railroad and tar them? Did they use the gas tax money and purchase the railroad tracks? And how much did it cost to build the bridge in Andover and the bridge in Bolton for this walkway? It’s pretty, but was it necessary? How much, how much to tar the walkway?
Is Fastrak part of the infrastructure? Does infrastructure include the construction of the environmental disaster idea for the tunnel to go under the Connecticut river? Where did the $10-million dollars come from for the ridiculous, oh, excuse me, lost my place. Where did the $10-million dollars come from for the ridiculous evaluation to pay for the toll booths from, was that from the gas tax also?

And if I’m correct, the tollbooth monies are for the road maintenance repair, that’s what the extra gas tax residents have been paying for the past 25 years. But our Connecticut government did not use that money for road upkeep. How can we trust our Connecticut government, they did not use that money for road upkeep. How can we use, oh, I’m sorry, lost my place again. I’m half blind. How can we trust our state government to use the toll monies for what they say is for road maintenance when they could use it for infrastructure again. Infrastructure I think is a farce in Connecticut. It was mentioned they want to put tolls on Route 8 and 2, but the highway isn’t wide enough. What’s the Connecticut government gonna do about that brilliant idea? Spend more money to widen these highways to accommodate the tolls?

It was mentioned to me just the other night about a couple, I know about the walkways paved where the railroad tracks were, it’s a pathway for possible easy access for an invasion by a group or gangs to invade neighborhoods and also easy access to leave and escape. For example, there could be a robbery plan like 20 people say, armed and driving those little motor scooters that don’t have to be
registered, therefore untraceable, can go on these tarred walkways. Notice, the walkways --

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Mr. Marchand, I need you to summarize, please.

GREG MARCHAND: Notice, the walkway is directly behind many houses. Again, the tarred walkway is easy access to enter backyards, easy access and unregistered scooters. There’s a lot of money spent on these walkways that are tarred from point A to point B, Willimantic to Hartford. Where did that money come from? I mean, that’s a, that’s a lot of lot of money which could have went to road repair. I don’t see any road repair happening or bridge repair. You’re making a walking. It just doesn’t make any sense. And --

REP. LEMAR (96TH): In summation, Mr. Marchand?

GREG MARCHAND: Excuse me?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): In summation?

GREG MARCHAND: That’s, that’s it. I just wanted to get them questions out there. And just this one last thing. And Governor Lamont says this morning, I heard him on TV, he wants transportation more accessible for people to get to work on time and have people move to Connecticut, including using the rails and the train. But there again the trails that are from Willimantic to Hartford, that used to be train tracks, you ripped them all up and put a tarred sidewalk on there. It just seems hypocrite.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Are there any questions for Mr. Marchand. Representative Devlin.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Marchand, I just want to thank you. You clearly have given this a lot of thought. I don’t have the answers to your questions, but you have dedicated an entire day of your life to participate in this democratic process.

GREG MARCHAND: Yes.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): And I am very grateful for that. So, thank you for spending your day and evening with us today.

GREG MARCHAND: Well, thank you and I appreciate you guys letting me speak and ladies, and have a good night.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you.

GREG MARCHAND: Thank you for your time again.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Just going back to make sure that folks have come in, Brian Hutchinsip, Neil Tolhurst, Mary Ellen Markowitz, followed by Jackie Kaiko.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: Good evening, Chairmen, Senator, good evening, Chairmen, Senators Leone and Representative Lemar, Senator Bergstein, Representative Simms and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is Mary Ellen Markowitz, and I live in Greenwich, Connecticut and I grew up in Bristol.

I am here to express my strong support of House Bill 7280 and tolls in our state. We have a severe problem with regard to our highways and bridges. I know you are all aware of the facts, but as a quick reminder I will mention just a few.
338 bridges in our state are rated as structurally deficient, 57 percent of our public roads are in poor condition and US News and World Report ranks Connecticut number 41 of all states in terms of infrastructure quality. These are scary statistics.

As someone who regularly travels on all our major highways and crosses many of our bridges to visit family members in Hartford, as well as my four daughters who attend college and work out of state, I know firsthand how abysmal our roads are. Reinstating tolls is the smartest answer to funding our urgent transportation needs.

During my travels, I am constantly paying tolls to travel on the highways in states up and down the eastern seaboard. And in doing so, I am financing the maintenance and repair of their infrastructure, while our neighbors to our north, south and west travel our roads for free. This is not equitable, especially considering that our state’s roads and bridges are an unavoidable passageway from the mid-Atlantic region into the northeast.

In the many newspaper articles, op-eds and letters to the editor, toll opponents have expressed over and over again that tolls are a regressive tax. I beg to differ. First, tolls are not a tax, they are a user fee.

Second, modern tolls can accommodate different pricing for low-wage owners, small business owners, municipal workers and teachers who commute to their jobs. The new toll technology can easily accommodate differing levels of pricing for each of these categories or I submit, teachers and municipal workers, many of whom cannot afford the high cost of
housing in my town, could be incentivized with discounted ticket pricing to use mass transit or possibly even travel for free during commuting hours.

Trucks could be charged more to use our roads during peak hours, thus, helping to ease our horrendous congestion problem which exists in Fairfield County and in the Hartford area. These are some of the many creative ideas that this bill can consider in its quest to improve our roads and make commuting and travelling a more pleasant and less dangerous experience.

To complete my thoughts about fairness to all, our current gasoline tax, which is highly regressive, could in the future be reduced as some of the toll revenue could serve to replace those funds.

In closing, I want to reiterate that implementing tolls will provide the most sensible, sustainable and reliable revenue source, which is badly needed in our beautiful state.

It will advance our economy for the near and long-term. I wholeheartedly support Bill 7280. And if passed, Connecticut, which I love, will once again be the state that young people, and people of all ages, will be proud to call home.

Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. And Jackie, do you want to quickly follow?

JACKIE KAIKO: Chairmen Leone & Representative Lemar and members of the Committee. My name is Jackie Kaiko. I was born in New Britain, grew up in Newington and I’ve been a resident of Stamford for
over 30 years. Clearly I like living in Connecticut. I have a lot invested in Connecticut. I’m here to support tolls, H.B. 7202 and 7280.

No one wants to pay tolls. No one wants, either, to live in a state like ours with congested & crumbling roads, failing bridges, and poor & getting-ever-worse rail service.

No one wants to be a taxpayer in a state like ours where 40 percent of the users of the roads are out-of-staters who get a free ride and stiff Connecticut taxpayers who foot the bill.

As has been stated over and over, tolls are not a tax, they are a user fee, paid by actual users. The State of Connecticut is leaving billions of dollars on the table by not charging tolls.

If tolls were to be implemented in Connecticut, the burden of maintaining our highways would be spread among users, as is done now in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware and many other states across the country.

Because of years of neglect and underinvestment, Connecticut’s transportation infrastructure is in a state of crisis. There are just no other revenue sources besides electronic tolls, that could deliver money on the scale of what’s needed.

The state income tax has already been increased five times in twelve years and the highly aggressive gas tax is not only declining, but it’s peanuts compared to what’s desperately needed to fix our roads and bridges.
Going with no tolls in Connecticut means going nowhere. It's time for users to invest in Connecticut infrastructure.

Revenue from electronic tolls could pay for maintaining and improving our hurting roads and bridges, make users of our highways share in the expense, and lessen the burden on our citizens. It would give us a chance to move forward, not stagnate; to develop our economy and improve our quality of life.

One more comment. So, if we invest in tolls, and we wouldn’t have revenue for five years, that’s why, we wouldn’t have revenue for five years, but if we do nothing now, we won’t have anything in five years, we’ll have a sick state with sick roads and bridges.

We have a historic opportunity. We can’t not take advantage of it. So, I urge you, please vote for these bills.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you very much, Ms. Kaiko and Ms. Markowitz for your testimony and for making it until 7 p.m. tonight. Senator Bergstein.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you both Jackie and Mary Ellen for spending your day coming up here to make your voice heard. And I hear you loud and clear that you are long-time residents of Connecticut, you love this state. You are advocates of this because you believe it is the responsible choice and doing nothing will only lead to more of a crisis, which will cost our children and future generations more.
So, I just want to thank you for framing the issue as one of collective responsibility and really helping us see the big picture. And it is about fairness to all. And that’s what a user fee accomplishes. So, thank you so much for giving us your time and testimony.

JACKIE KAIKO: Thank you.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you both. Hold on, you guys are popular this evening as well. Representative Devlin, followed by Representative O’Dea.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And may as well make good use of your time. You’ve invested a whole day to be here with us. But a couple of things, I think one of you commented that, you know, that nobody likes to pay tolls. And it’s not just that. It’s the continual sort of bate and switch, from the implementation of a state income tax that was going to solve all of our problems, casino revenue that was going to take care of everything, the lottery revenue that was going to take care of everything, the two largest tax increases in our state’s history, the first of which was a shared sacrifice that was retroactive for nine months that was going to solve all of our problems. The increases in the sales tax, before this latest proposal, which money was supposed to go to not only the Special Transportation Fund but back to our municipalities.

And now on the cusp of the third largest tax increase in our state’s history, we’re not only looking at a net revenue of at least $800-million
dollars to start, of which at least about $600 million would come from Connecticut residents, we’re looking at a statewide property tax, we’re looking at an expansion of the sales tax on every single service and product that you purchase.

So, residents are feeling a little bit tapped out. And I think that’s part of, you know, the issue around this. But two things I wanted to ask you related to your comments, because everybody agrees, we need a sustainable source of revenue and that’s what those were supposed to be. But in your commentary and it may have been, I don’t remember, Mary Ellen, it may have been in your testimony, and if not, we can deflect, but were you suggesting that depending on the job that you hold, you would pay a different toll?

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: It’s a possibility. For instance, when I talked about teachers, in Greenwich, Connecticut, we have some of the best teachers, right, I think the world of them, but they can’t afford to necessarily live in our town because of the high cost of the housing. So, they commute great distances, some from Trumbull, Stratford, Milford. So, I think instead of losing our teachers, maybe we make it equitable for them or fair for them or reasonable.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: To get to the schools and not have to worry about changing jobs.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I appreciate the thinking along that line because we talk about discounts for residents, discounts for commuters, discounts for low income, and then where does the revenue sort of
come from because we’re discounting it all over the place. So, but it’s a fair thing to consider.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: But in response to that --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Yes.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: -- because this was supposed to be three minutes, I didn’t add every single thought of mine.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Sure.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: But one of the thoughts that are that you have a fast lane for people who are willing to pay a little more, right, it would be similar to an HOV lane.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: So, I think there’s a way to grab the revenues from the tolls --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: -- but also make it fair for people who, you know, work, live in New Haven, but work in Greenwich, for instance, who are low-wage earners.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Sure. So --

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: And I know some of those people.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- that extra lane is actually part of the study that was released on November 14th, the week after the elections in November. And what it includes, and it sort of admits, that tolls, if we were to implement tolls and this was the ‘83 gantry study. So, if we were to do that, that
wouldn’t have any impact on any sort of congestion, but it does lead to what’s called this build scenario, I don’t know what page of the study that it’s on, but you can find the study if you go to the DOT website and put in toll study, and I think it’s the first thing that comes up.

And what that talks about is using the toll revenue, what’s left of the toll revenue to do just that, to construct on I95 and I84, so that in the year 2040, we will have expanded lanes and what they will do is increase the speed. So, instead of going 40 miles an hour, you’ll go 45 miles an hour on I95. So, it’s a, that in itself, I think it’s worthy to think about being able to add capacity.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: Absolutely.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): It’s over 20 years of construction for five miles of road and our going in rate is at least $800-million dollars net. So, it’s something.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: But to your point, Representative Devlin and all due respect --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Yep.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: -- we do have to have long-term goals --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Absolutely.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: -- or we’re nowhere in life, right? It may sound a bit aspirational in a way, but we do have to have goals so that we someday achieve them for my children and your children and our grandchildren.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I couldn’t agree with you more --

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: Driving on that corridor --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- you know, we have a 30-year-plan that will do just that because we look at things in such short cycles --

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: Right.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- but I agree with you. Let me ask you this as well because in Fairfield County particularly, where you both are from and where I live as well, I live in Fairfield and represent Fairfield and Trumbull, but the current study, and I think even the Commissioner spoke to it this morning, and while everything can change because we don’t have a plan, is that the toll gantries would be six miles apart. And in our area of Connecticut, our exit ramps are one mile apart. So, do you have any concern about traffic through the back roads, which, you know, between Greenwich, Stamford, it’s easy to kind of cut through and avoid, get off the Merritt and hop on I95 or get off 95 and, you know, cut through to get on to Merritt. Are you concerned about any increase in back road traffic?

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: I think people would find that it wouldn’t be very efficient to do that.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: And for the numbers that I’ve heard so far and certainly I don’t believe that any set numbers have actually been discussed in the legislature, the, the amounts that would, the amounts that people would save would not justify the difficulty they would have in navigating the local
streets and the time it would take. You know, we’re talking about time being saved for people who are sitting in traffic. They’re not going to add more time to it when they can probably save time by going back on the highway and paying what sounds to be not like very high prices for those short distances you’re talking about.

JACKIE KAIKO: I think the, I’ve heard too much discussion of things that have not been set yet. All kinds of projections of what kind of prices they would be, and I expect that there would be a whole lot more discussion before the bill comes to a final vote. So, it will be interesting to see as things get more clear what those prices end up being.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): We’re looking forward to that discussion. But all’s we have is what’s in that study. So, somebody traveling from Fairfield to Stamford, it would cost them almost $800 a year, but maybe it could be deducted and then we’ll just factor that in.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: Isn’t this the study from last year?

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Actually it was from November 14th, it was the latest study that was conducted by the CDM Smith Company. I think the DOT has invested about $16-million dollars so far with that company. So, these aren’t just throwaway ideas. There was a lot of thought and rigger. Now, I’m not saying I agree with them, but they’re not to be lightly dismissed. They were very well thought out plans.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: And I’m wondering if in that, when you’re saying it would cost $800, I’ve heard $600, but you’re not factoring the money that it
will save, which is probably around $2,300 a year in lost wages or more and, and being able to actually, maybe even put in more hours if you’re, in terms of minimum wage.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): No, I do understand that. It’s just a difficult thing when, you know, you have a teacher that maybe is struggling to be able to survive in such a heavily taxed state that it’s literally out of your pocket real time. But ladies, I so appreciate you being here.

JACKIE KAIKO: Just one question. Say if, if people are considering that it would prohibitive to have taxes because the burden would be too much on people and we’ve heard the discussions about it would be added to the cost of goods of the, the trucks and things that are going down the highway --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Sure.

JACKIE KAIKO: -- what will be the impact on the people in the State of Connecticut for the revenue that will be, of the taxes that will be assessed because for sure, the budget has to be fixed somehow. How are all those various solutions going to factor into things that are gonna hit people’s pocketbooks? You know, I have to think that that has to be a factor taken into account. Especially, since the value of having tolls and the revenue that can be gained as a source of income that can be multiplied if it’s used with the if search rank and all, has to be very important for guaranteeing the future versus the other kinds of revenue that will be on a temporary basis?

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Yeah, our future is, is critical, particularly with the number of people
leaving our state to return it to the vitality that it once had. An easy solution is always to be to grab more money out of people’s pocket. And it takes a lot of discussion, a lot of creativity, a lot of hard decisions, but we did it just last year. It was the first time we had a no tax increase budget, and, in fact, we stopped 17 new tax increases. So, it can be done.

JACKIE KAIKO: I would just dispute one thing that you just said.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Sure.

JACKIE KAIKO: The easiest thing is to say, no. And I’m hearing too much no. I’m not hearing no and a solution for how.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Oh, we have a solution for how.

JACKIE KAIKO: I think that’s what’s most disturbing to me.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): We’ve already discussed that tonight. But ladies, thank you for your commitment and being here all day and sharing your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

JACKIE KAIKO: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Representative O’Dea.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you ladies very much. I’m sorry, just real brief, and I think Mary Ellen, I understand, I think I know what your answer to this is going to be.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: Okay.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): And I think I’m gonna really like it. As I’ve been asking everybody, you know, the bipartisan budget that we passed, so I’m trying to emphasize, bipartisan is best, bipartisan is best. The bipartisan budget we passed fixed the STF, the Transportation Fund and was gonna have, projected by OPM, basically $2-billion dollars by 2022.

And so my question to you is, Mary Ellen, I think you said that you be, you agree that once the toll revenue started coming in, looking at putting the gas tax back to where it was makes some sense. And I love that answer because my point is, we’ve got $2-billion dollars without tolls going into the Transportation Fund. And a hypothetical, we’ve got a $20-billion dollar a year budget, all right. I think it should be $19 or $18 billion a year. I think we’re overtaxed, and we have a spending problem.

But my question to you, would you be, is your opinion, your thought process, toll revenue should go on top of the current money that’s going to the Transportation Fund. So, currently we’ve got a billion-six going into the Transportation Fund in 2019. And in 2022, the bipartisan budget had $2 billion. So, you, would you say the, the toll money goes on top of that or replaces that?

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: Let me see, I, I’ve answered it. The money that you’re talking about, as I recall earlier discussions, the list of the projects that had to be done in the State of Connecticut totally dwarf that money you just discussed. So, I say, yes.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, so, yeah, so, excellent. All right. So, thank you very much ladies. It’s 7:15 and I thank you so much for sticking around.

JACKIE KAIKO: It’s our pleasure and thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Just one more.

JACKIE KAIKO: Oh, okay, sure.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Chairman Leone.

JACKIE KAIKO: Okay.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and good evening ladies. Not so much a question, you’ve been grilled enough and held up quite well. So, I just want to --

JACKIE KAIKO: No problem.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- thank you both for coming up from such far away and I know other people have done the same and to you and to everyone else, it’s very much appreciated to hear all sides on this issue, and I welcome your comments. So, thank you very much.

JACKIE KAIKO: Thank you.

MARY ELLEN MARKOWITZ: Thank you.

JACKIE KAIKO: Thank you very much for having us.


CAROL LIEBAU: Good, I’m Carol, Carol Platt Liebau, President of the Yankee Institute and this is Scott, Scott Shepard, Yankee Policy Director.
We’re here to testify in opposition to House Bill 7202 and Governor’s Bill 7280, because we object in the strongest terms to imposing tolls on the people of Connecticut for several reasons.

First, the tolls being contemplated aren’t user fees, which in the right circumstances can make economic sense. Instead these bills aim to toll our state’s major highways simply to fund the general transportation budget. Introducing tolls as a general transportation revenue source is unprecedented and it leads me to our second objection.

State government already has plenty of resources to fund its transportation needs. Connecticut’s people pay this nation’s six highest gas taxes. Our problem is that money often is not spent responsibly. Transportation projects here cost more than in 46 other states. Our administrative costs are the highest in the country. And money has not been spent responsibly in the past.

For example, using a billion dollars to construct the Hartford-Springfield line to carry 3500 people per day, rather than to maintain Metro North, which carries 150,000 commuters each day.

Third, tolls are profoundly regressive. They are, in essence, a tax on driving to work. This burdens most heavily the working poor, who in order to find affordable housing, must often live far from where they work.

Finally, the people of Connecticut have been told that tolls are necessary to plug a gaping hole in the transportation budget. But if car sales taxes continue to be transferred into the Special
Transportation Fund, as they currently are, the transportation fund will remain essentially fully funded. We’re often tolls that tolls are essential to create, maintain and repair infrastructure in order to attract new businesses to our state. With all due respect, those serious about enhancing Connecticut’s image as a business-friendly state would be well advised to think seriously about reducing spending and controlling long-term obligations rather than slapping another tax on Connecticut’s commuters, in addition to the host of other tax increases now being considered by this body.

A final word, perhaps the most objectionable and offensive part of the legislation we discussed today is the deemed approved portion of House Bill 7280, which would let the General Assembly approve tolls established by the Toll Commission without even having to vote on them. That is taxation without representation, and it has no place in the constitution state.

Those who believe in tolls should have the courage of their convictions and be willing to vote for them. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Scott are you here to supply additional testimony or just in support?

SCOTT SHEPARD: Well, we’ve used up our time, so if there are questions, I’ll throw something in. But otherwise, I’ll just look pretty and intelligent and kind.

CAROL LIEBAU: Absolutely, we do not want --
REP. LEMAR (96TH): It’s a very complimentary evening tonight and so thank you both of you for coming up tonight, for issuing --

CAROL LIEBAU: Thank you for having us.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): -- a series of comments and reports over the last few days. And as you know, we could spend probably a two-hour dinner together and find very little to agree on. But I think we can all agree that the infrastructure of our state is in dire need of substantial investment. And we might have different ideas on how to get there, but I do trust that we all come to the same place here in Connecticut that we need to find a way to prioritize the very significant needs that we have as a state. So, thank you for coming up tonight.

CAROL LIEBAU: Thank you.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Are there questions? Representative O’Dea.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Good evening, thank you very much for coming up and testifying. And Scott, just to kind of lob in a question for you, to hear you talking, just not be eye candy. I’m sure that’s never been said to you before, no offense intended. It’s never been said, it’s never been said to me, either.

CAROL LIEBAU: How about a question.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, in any event, I’ve been here a while, I apologize. So, Scott, just administrative costs. We actually were talking briefly, and I ran out of time to question the Commissioner and his group. But do you have an idea or what’s your understanding as to administrative
costs for running a tolling and not only installation, but administrative costs?

SCOTT SHEPARD: Well, sir, two thoughts about administrative costs. First, I’m sure you’ve heard it before today, but the administrative costs of building a mile of highway in this state are higher than in any other state of the union, that’s not acceptable. Before coming back to the state, yes, we’ve got terrible transportation problems. Part of terrible transportation problems are the terrible costs to building transportation in Connecticut. That has to be fixed first. We’ve gone to the well of the public to, to raise money for the fisc, and its kinds without lowering its costs. Let’s get those costs down to some kind of New England average, then come back and talk to us with a much narrower package and a much more; but then the second thought in that range is this one, we’ve, one of the big sellers of tolls is we’re gonna get lots of money from out-of-staters, right, 20, 30, now it’s 40 percent, I don’t think that’s realistic. But that’s the number that we’re using arguendo these days and so 40 percent from out-of-state. That’s maybe $300-million dollars a year. But if construction of these tolls and all the environmental studies and everything that’s required, costs $150-million dollars up front, and then maintenance, and our maintenance costs are very high in the state, we were just talking about that, is another $100-million dollars a year, some ridiculous number. Then a significant amount of what we will raise by tolls disappears from out-of-staters, disappears into costs. And so the net of what we get out-of-state, from out-of-staters, compared to the total intake, what we pay in-state
to get a buck for out-of-state, turns out to be very, very small and not worth this whole, well, in our opinions, not worth this whole additional burden on Connecticut taxpayers to get a small net out-of-state, once the great expenses of tolls are considered.

CAROL LIEBAU: It’s also worth keeping in mind that relative to other ways of funding, I mean, we are not fans of the gas tax and we don’t think the gas tax should be raised. And, in fact, to raise $800-million dollars through the gas tax, you would have to add 53 cents a gallon. But if you were to do it, you would not incur all the administrative overhead that is involved in building the tolls, staffing the tolls, distributing the money from the tolls, chasing down the people who don’t pay the tolls and a host of other things that will now be involved in employing all the new people who will administer the tolls and do all these other things.

And so, I think that it is also important for us to be mindful that even as, you know, we look forward with rosy prognostications about what the tolls will do for us, we are also mindful of some of the costs that they will incur.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you very much for your testimony. And just so the transcript is accurate, I was trying to be funny with my previous comments and meant no offense.

CAROL LIEBAU: And they were taken as such.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. O’Dea for that clarification. Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thanks to the both of you for being here and testifying today. You know, we talked a little bit about the transportation fund, and it has been abused since it was put into place. And in fact, so much so that it was made statutory in 2015, still abused, put into the constitution as a result of the voters in Connecticut, just this past November, and still within a month of two of office, it’s been swiped, money swiped from it again.

So, two questions for you, though. And we’ve had a lot of people here testifying today, who are in the toll business who are telling us what a great idea it would be to implement tolls.

CAROL LIEBAU: And if I were in the toll business, I have not doubt I’d agree.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): And I’m wondering that maybe this is for you first. You were addressing this with Rep. O’Dea, but could you just speak a little bit further about, you know, what we hear is, it’s not fair to do it any other way because in any other way, other people aren’t helping pay for our infrastructure. So, we have to, you know, you give me a dollar, I’ll give you 40 cents back. But what were you saying about how we’re really not gonna get that much from out-of-state; could you just elaborate on that a little bit?

SCOTT SHEPARD: Sure. Well, I mean the number in the most recent study is 40 percent. That was a big shift from the previous year’s toll study that was gonna be 30 percent. An additional complication is
that the only way we can, under any federal rule, toll the whole state the way we’re contemplating, and yes, other states on the eastern seaboard toll, they don’t toll their whole states the way we’re talking about.

But if we were to do that and get federal permission because these are federal highways except for what 15, they’re federal highways that we have to get federal permission, in order to get that, we’re gonna have to go under a special exception, a special program for congestion pricing.

Now, we all live in New England and we have to get to the rest of the country. We never plan a trip to go out-of-state and go right through the middle of Manhattan, in the middle of rush hour, in the middle of congestion time. People who are traveling long distances can plan their, their routes around congestion. The people who are gonna hit by the necessary congestion pricing are the people who live here in the state and commute every day. That’s going to, that’s going to add to the heaviness of this burden on the state.

But then there’s the fact, and this was to the point that I was making earlier, there’s the fact that tolls cost a lot. They are a very expensive way to raise revenue for a state. And again, if you add to the gas tax, if you add, we’re not, we’re not in favor of these moves, but if you add to that, it doesn’t had much in the way of administrative costs.

Tolls have a very high set of administrative and maintenance costs, they have to come from somewhere, right? And so if the level of maintenance costs is half of what we’re gonna get from out-of-staters
than that effectively has to be subtracted from that out-of-state take because all the rest has to come for in-state toll payers.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right.

SCOTT SHEPARD: Right. And so when it said, oh, we’re gonna get 40 percent, no, that’s a very, first of all it’s far too high a number. But even if the real number were 30 percent, that’s gross. Then you take out what it costs to establish and administer tolls, then we’re down to about 10, 12, 15 percent. And we’re paying, we’re establishing a huge new set of taxes, not user’s fees. Because if you ran one new highway from New York City up to the, up to the Fairfield suburbs in order to have a pay lane, that would be a user fee because you could elect to use the other roads or you could elect, this is just a tax on everybody to pay for basic maintenance, all right.

And so, it’s not a user fee, but it is going to have these effects in state and we’re going to get a little bit of out-of-state benefit for a huge new payment in state.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you. You addressed my second question, which was also about defining the user fee versus tax, but also you raised, you know, with these gantries and the peak hour pricing, you don’t know what price you’re paying, and they can change as fast as every six minutes. And I don’t know, I am not the example to follow, but I have a New York E-ZPass and I don’t ever, I actually try to hold the thing up because you never know if it’s actually gonna read it and I don’t want to have to go through the hassle of saying, you didn’t have
your E-ZPass on you, so we’re fining you and so you’re kind of doing that.

But also, you don’t know what you’re paying. So, my bad practice is occasionally you get an email that says, we’ve replenished your account, meaning they’ve withdrawn from my bank account to pay for all of this. And my worst bad practice is I don’t go back to see what was each individual toll that was paid. If I went through, you know, crossed one of the bridges, you don’t have any idea if it was accurate. But it’s a real seamless way to just take money without you really knowing, you’re not opening your wallet each time.

SCOTT SHEPARD: And there are terrible horror stories, London lead with congestion pricing about 15 years ago and there was a horror story one day, and this was just in the City of London, the Banker’s section, so these folks could afford it. But suddenly somebody was paying 200 quid, 200 pounds to go four miles in London. That’s 400, that’s ruinous for the people of Connecticut.

And if you want a good example of how this, this congestion pricing works in the real world, have you ever tried to call Uber in a rain storm, right, then suddenly the Uber price that was gonna be $9 is, it’s an $80 surcharge.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right.

SCOTT SHEPARD: I’m exaggerating, but, but with that sort of thing on one’s daily commute, as you say, without knowing what it is, that’s really a dreadful way to try to --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I had a chance last night before leaving the office here to speak to one of the gentlemen who is a proponent of tolls in the toll business. And I asked him about the $46 peak-hour fair that was implemented last January outside of Washington, DC. And he said, oh, but that only affected a certain small percentage. But it was peak hour where you should have your rush hour congestion pricing. So, there’s lots of questions about it. But I appreciate you addressing my question regarding the sort of split. You’re right, the numbers shift, they were 30, 70, got some pushback, 60, 40, then the Governor saying 50, 50, so who knows, and also clarifying the user fee.

CAROL LIEBAU: One other thing, I would like to mention, you know, aside from people who are from out-of-state and if you’re from a certain distance away that the possibility people throw these things away and the administrative costs of tracking them down or the likelihood they just do throw them away and that’s that. But, you know, sometimes there’s discussion about giving certain people a break or certain people a reduced rate. And I’d just like to throw in a word for, you know, people who are not necessarily in the groups of people that are often mentioned, the teachers or municipal workers or whoever. You know, people like the small business people who hire two or three people. But who, nonetheless, are struggling to make ends meet in our state.

And we don’t often think of those people, but they’re important and they are worthy of our attention and they are worthy of our concern. And
no one talks about what this is going to do to their business or to their employees or to the people who staff restaurants or to the busboys or to the waitresses.

And, you know, at a certain point, if we start giving everyone a break on their E-ZPass, then we’re not bringing in the $800 million revenue that is competently asserted these tolls are going to bring in. And we can’t give it to everyone. But there are a lot of people in our state who are hurting, and this is going to make things very difficult for them if it happens.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you. Thank you for taking your time to be here today --

CAROL LIEBAU: Thank you --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- and testifying.

CAROL LIEBAU: -- thank you all for having us.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): You’re welcome. Thank you both for coming out this evening. I might want to quibble with a few of the representations and the testimony, but I will just highlight one specific issue that I would hope we could clarify for the record. Relying on that reason report as much as we have tonight in a lot of testimony, is problematic for one simple reason is the author of that reason report does not think that the way it’s been represented both by your organization or in the general public is an accurate depiction of the results of that study.
And, in fact, he’s written a letter to the DOT and members of this committee saying, hey, this isn’t really comparing apples to apples. It’s not a true fair comparison. So, I think there’s, there’s merits to a lot of the concerns that you’ve got, don’t get me wrong. It’s just I want to highlight that even the author of that report thinks it’s been represented.

CAROL LIEBAU: Well Representative Lemar, we’ve relied on a number of things. And it is certainly unequivocal. We do pay the sixth highest gas tax in the country. And a new report came out that shows that Connecticut is the second highest taxed state in the country.

So, I do appreciate your courtesy. And I appreciate the fact that you are trying to help us find a way forward. And I appreciate your responsiveness to our concerns.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Again, I’m going to refrain from quibbling with some of the details, but I do appreciate the comments this evening. Thank you --

CAROL LIEBAU: Thank you.


RICHARD LAVARIERE: Yeah.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I’m sorry if I got that name wrong, I apologize and feel free to correct me, I will not be offended.

RICHARD LAVARIERE: My name’s Richard Lavariere. I’m from Newington. And just for the record, I’m not from any institute, I’m not on behalf of any
organization, any group, and nobody’s paying me to be here today. I’m just a regular, regular Joe here in the state. And for the record, your paper says that I’m in support of the bills, and I’m opposed to the bills. So, I wanted to clarify that.

The Connecticut General Assembly is entrusted in doing what is good for the people of Connecticut. And this is one of the reasons that we’re talking about these new streams of revenue is because there’s a lot of so-called unfunded liabilities. And my concern is that, you know, is looking back on how the Connecticut lottery was implemented, the funds were supposed to go to support the education fund. And then we got the bait and switch from the politicians, they got it in. With the lottery, which enables people who may have a potential gambling addiction, good for the people of the State of Connecticut, no. Is legalizing recreational marijuana, medicinal perhaps a different story, but is legalizing recreational marijuana good for the people of the State of Connecticut? Is legalizing sports bettering good for the people of Connecticut? No, it’s not. It’s good for creating revenue for the government spending machine. And my concern is that even if these funds from the tolls were to be allocated for specific projects, who’s to stop the next generation of legislators from doing the same thing with what happened with the lottery with the bait and switch?

And there really isn’t anything because people have a short-term memory. They’ll forget about it in 10 years, okay. Which, and my next point I want to get to is, that if Connecticut implements its widespread tolls as proposed, that you may get some retaliation
from Massachusetts and New York. Massachusetts has tolls on the Mass Pike, which runs east from Boston up towards Albany. Excuse me, west Albany. It doesn’t directly connect to Connecticut. New York Thruway has tolls, which goes north, south, outside Connecticut. It doesn’t directly connect to Connecticut.

And if you end up putting in these tolls on every, expanding the ever-sprawling reach of government, that you might get some, some retaliation from other states, which would effect Connecticut commuters who may work out-of-state, even more than what the tolls already being would do here.

And I want to touch on the Governor’s campaign pledge that the tolls were originally going to effect only the trucks. And never mind whether or not that he was able to keep his word because of pending litigation and what the outcome of it. But if there’s tolls that were going to be planned on Route 15, where trucks aren’t allowed to go anyway, then was the intent ever really to be limited to only trucks? I guess it’s a rhetorical question.

And when I, there’s so much, recently I’ve heard something that’s called a user fee. Well, it’s a fee to use something that I wasn’t paying a fee for yesterday. That sounds an awful lot like a tax to me. And one other thing is that I think that the impact on the, on the average Connecticut family would be astronomical.

Earlier this afternoon, a number of hours ago, I heard something of approximately a billion dollars a year, $20 billion to $21, $19, whatever. But if you take a billion dollars a year, divide it by 3.588
million people, every man, woman and child, baby, that’s $278.70 per person. Not every family can afford to pay that. That’s more than $1,000 a year for the average family of four. Okay.

And then if you end up, you’re faced with a dilemma because you’re taxing the poor people at the, you know, at the exact same rate as you’re taxing the wealthy people. And then it becomes, is that really your so-called fair share? But then you’re sort of met with an opposing force because if you give discounts to certain groups of people, then who are you gonna be giving the discounts to, your voters, certain groups of people that are more likely to vote for your party? You know, and it’s, it’s a little bit of a slippery slope there and I think you should be very cautious about that.

And thank you, I guess if you have questions, I’ll do my best.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Richard for your testimony and for sticking it out this evening. And it is well appreciated that you’re not part of an organization or a group. You’re the exact person, we’re hoping, when we have these public hearings we hear from.

RICHARD LAVARIERE: Sure, thanks.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you so much for coming out. Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Just a quick comment. Richard, thank you so much for coming here and testifying.

RICHARD LAVARIERE: You’re welcome.
SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): All valid and really outstanding points that you made tonight. So, thank you so much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you again, Richard.

RICHARD LAVARIERE: Have a good night.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Joe Scully to be followed by Steven Kolenberg.

STEVE SCULLEY: Chairman Lemar, Chairman Leone, Ranking Member Martin, Ranking Member Devlin and Committee Members. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Joe Sculley, President of Motor Transport Association of Connecticut.

We’ve heard a lot about tolls and business today. So, I want to get to what some of my small business members have told me. I’m gonna give you some numbers. Coastal Carriers of Connecticut, they have a 30-truck fleet. They estimate this will cost them $200,000 to $300,000 annually. Paine’s Inc. 52 trucks, $200,000 annually. John DeGrand & Son, 26 trucks, $55,000 annually. Smart Choice Trucking, seven trucks, $40,000 annually. Herb Holden Trucking, 45 trucks, $100,000 annually. Anastasio & Sons, 25 trucks, $250,000 to $350,000 annually. Tuxis-Ohr's Fuel, 40 trucks, $450,000 to $500,000 annually.

Now, I want to go back to sort of the beginning of my testimony. Revenue to the Special Transportation Fund is not declining, contrary to popular talking points, I included in my testimony. The most recent OPM projections. The government’s own numbers show the revenue increasing every year. The pending deficit is coming from spending out of the
Transportation Fund on things that have nothing to do with roads and bridges, and I’ll highlight two of them. State employee pensions and fringe benefits paid from the fund in 1988, we paid $19 million. In 2019 fiscal year, we’re gonna pay $195 million.

Transit subsidy spending, 1985 it was $65 million. This year it’s gonna be $449 million. I’ve included some, to the point of user fees, a train ticket is not a user fee as most of that ride is subsidized by people who are not paying for the ticket.

Funds from the federal government are not declining, those are increasing every single year. Point being, there’s not a revenue problem. It’s on the spending side on things that have nothing to do with roads and bridges.

Out-of-state trucks do not come through Connecticut for free because of the IFTA and IRP, we get about $26 to $30-million dollars annually just from out-of-state trucks.

I want to talk about the CDM Smith studies. In the 2015 study, they said, they suggested either 10 cents a mile or 20 cents a mile. And this 2018 study that kind of came out of nowhere, they have nine different rates, all but one of which was lower than the rates proposed in the 2015 study. Why are they contradicting their own, their own work? What happened there? Their capital costs went from $450 million. In the first report they said it would be between $450 million and $605 million a year. Then in their November 2018 report, they established it would be $372 million. How is that, how is that possible? Did labor and material and anything get cheaper in the time between those reports? We went
from 30 percent out-of-state revenue to 40 percent
to 50 percent in the Governor’s debt that he
released. I would just point out that I’ve, I’ve
spoken at a high level with attorneys in the
trucking federation who state that just the mere
existence of those different reports, talking about
different levels of out-of-state revenue are, are
proof of intent to discriminate against out-of-state
vehicles and interstate commerce.

So, I think we need to be really careful with what
we do there. In terms of a volume discount, that
directly contradicts with the Value Pricing Pilot
Program, which is what Connecticut is trying to toll
under. The Value Pricing Pilot Program is supposed
to get you off the road, not reward you for staying
on it, which is what this, this volume discount
would do. Point being, I don’t see why the feds
would approve that. We’re talking a lot about
something that may very well never be a possibility.
So, the people should understand that.

Lack of notice of, of toll rates. If you read the
bill, it says there should be a sign that a toll
will be charged and how to pay the toll. There’s no
requirement that we tell people what the toll is.
Is that an oversight? Is that, is that by design?
And, you know, I point out even down in DC, where it
hits $47 to go 10 miles, they tell you that before
you get on it. Again, because they want, they
really want you to not take that highway.

So, under congestion pricing we should be telling
people, hey, this rate is getting up and up and up
and so people don’t take the highway or are we just
trying to catch people by surprise and take money
out of their, their bank accounts.
So, I can, I can stop there. And, and if there are any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Sculley for your testimony tonight and for the information you provided to the committee. Are there questions? Representative O’Dea’s been using your submission all evening. I presumed he’d have a question for you. All right. So, Senator Martin, Representative Devlin and then Representative O’Dea.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair, thank you, Mr. Sculley. One part of your testimony that caught my ear a bit was a volume discount and it maybe not qualifying for federal agreement or getting the government’s, the federal government’s approval for our toll plan here. Can you just elaborate on that a little bit more?

STEVE SCULLEY: Sure. Yes, so, the Value Pricing Pilot Program also known as congestion pricing, you can, can dress that up with euphemisms any way they want. We’re gonna, we’re gonna incentivize you to take transit or work from home or travel at off-peak hours or, or carpool or whatever. The point of congestion pricing is to make it too expensive for you to be able to drive on the highway. Thus, the government says, hey, look, the tolls reduce congestion.

If Connecticut does this, we have to set our, and I, I, on that point, I question how much flexibility Connecticut even has in terms of setting their rates. I don’t think we can really say, we’re gonna charge this and we’re gonna charge this. We don’t know what the, what rate is going to be required to get you off the highway. If it’s not four cents a
mile, is it eight, is it 12, is it 20? At what point do people say, okay, I can’t take it anymore. I’m not driving on this highway. So, in that same school of thought, if you’re rewarding somebody for, for continuing to stay on the highway, you’re, you’re, you’re deviating from the Value Pricing Pilot Program that we are trying to get approval under. I, just my, my, my, my studying these things and talking to experts within the trucking federation down in DC, this is the exact opposite of what you should be doing under the program.

So, I, so I point out to anybody who’s, who’s listening, who may be a volume discount super commuter, don’t count on this because it may very well not be there, if we proceed with this.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): So, I guess what I’m trying to understand is, or the way I understood it the first time you mentioned it, was should we provide a discount that when we submit that plan to the federal government that there’s a possibility they may reject it because we have this discounted aspect of a plan?

STEVE SCULLEY: Yeah, I, I, I, I mean, so, so you could try it, they may reject it. But then it gets back to, I thought we were getting a billion dollars a year, but we’re gonna, we’re gonna give it away and to, to volume commuter. We’re gonna give it away to teachers, to nurses, to emergency medical services. This seems like to me there’s a lot of people who have a problem with, with tolls and perhaps we should find another way to do this than to just raise a billion dollars and give it all back.
Of course, the other option is, if you’re seeking a billion dollars, you just inflate all the rates so then you can give it all back. And when you’re done giving it all back, you’re still at a billion dollars.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Sculley. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Joe, for your testimony. Could you just speak a little bit more. You went through some numbers with us from various companies. From, you know, $200 million here, $200 million, $55,000, $40,000, $100,000, $250, $350,000, anywhere up to a half a billion dollars for a Connecticut-based company running 40 trucks. We heard testimony before about how awful trucks are. They’re killing our roads, they’re just not good. So, so what --

STEVE SCULLEY: Yeah, I mean, these are small businesses based in Connecticut who pay their fair share in taxes at a time when people are tripping over themselves to try to give Amazon, the largest, wealthiest company in the world, giveaways to come here or we’re giving taxpayer funded handouts to the world’s largest hedge fund. But the small business truckers are the bad guys, right.

So, we put out a video, I would ask everybody to go watch it, if you haven’t already. We have a Motor Transport Association of Connecticut YouTube page. I have a long version and a short version of the video. The short version is just, is the business owners saying who they are and what
their company is and how much the tolls are gonna cost.

The longer version gets into the fact that they can’t just absorb $500,000 just like that. So, with that, with that company, Tuxis-Ohr’s, they bring fuel to gas stations or to homes or to businesses for, for heating. So, heating fuel and gasoline. So, they have to charge the gas station customer more money to get it there. That’s gonna result in the gas station charging more at the pump. And the person that goes to buy it at the pump has to pay more to get to the gas station from paying the tolls on the way there.

I, I say all that, but I would just, I do worry that this gets simplified to, okay, the truckers will just pass it on, which they, which they will. But, but I don’t want to oversimplify that because I think this is gonna have bigger damage to, to, to these, to these businesses.

I think we, we get careless if we say, well, they’ll just pass it on. When you’re talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars in a, in basically doubling the tax burden on a company, they’re gonna struggle to adjust to that. And my members are very smart people. But I’m just thinking, when we talk that much money, you can’t just dismiss it, so.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): You raised something I hadn’t thought about. So, if we go to fill up our cars, we’re gonna pay 44 cents a gallon essentially in gas tax between the petroleum tax and the gas tax. We may pay a toll to get to the gas station and then we’re gonna pay more at the gas station anyway
because there were tolls to deliver the gas to the gas station.

STEVE SCULLEY: Yeah, yep, it’s, it’s hitting everybody multiple times and, and the other thing I wanted to just, to just mention is, you know, back to us paying our, paying our fair share. We pay 32 percent of all the, all the road taxes, like fuel taxes and registration fees. Trucks are only 5 percent of miles traveled in Connecticut. And I mentioned the out-of-state trucks do pay. Unfortunately, there’s just, there’s just misleading and, and false talking points about trucks not paying their fair share for out-of-state trucks coming through for free.

Everything that we buy, what was on a truck, 94 percent of, of Connecticut’s freight is moved by truck. So, if all the trucks went away, which I’m sure some people would like, by the third day when there’s no toilet paper and milk in the store, you know, people would notice, so.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): But even things coming in by rail have to get on a truck to get it to the place they need to go, right?

STEVE SCULLEY: Yeah, I mean, I, I’ve never seen a, a, you know, a train pull up to a supermarket and start unloading, so.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you for your testimony. Thanks for answering my questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative O’Dea.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It’s getting late, but I do want to thank
you for your testimony, and I have been holding this up all day. And to make the point that according to OPM’s revenue assessment as of November of 2018, the Transportation Fund is gonna bring in $2-billion dollars as of fiscal year 2022, according to the estimates by the state, correct?

STEVE SCULLEY: Yes, and not just, not just one OPM estimate on that, but two. There was one from November I have and one from, from January, it’s consistent. The revenue was there and increasing.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And also in your table you’ve got an STF historical summary, which I would encourage everybody to take a look at. And that’s even with, including the diverging of approximately $600 million from 2011 to 2017, correct?

STEVE SCULLEY: Yeah, and, and if I could just say a word about this, this document. Perhaps my favorite, I’m gonna geek out on this, perhaps my favorite column in here is the last one, debt service as a percentage of the budget. So, I think that is a self-explanatory column.

This year, this fiscal year, it’s 40.3 percent, which is down from last year when it’s 40.7 percent. So bonding for transportation is not this new thing. We’ve been doing it, well, basically since the fund was created. And, in fact, there’s a 17-year period in the mid to late ’90s, going into the 2000s, where debt service as a percentage of the budget was higher than, for 17 straight years, than it is now. So, I have, I have to just disagree with, with all the talk that bonding doesn’t work and we’re doing it too much. We’re in great shape, if you look historically where we are in terms of debt service
as a percentage of the Special Transportation Fund budget.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And correct me if I’m wrong, and I meant to bring this out with the Commissioner, but we just didn’t have time. My understanding is, as I recall, and please somebody on the Chair, somebody correct me, I think 40 percent of the DOT’s budget is rail and bus subsidies, I think that’s about the number, it’s pretty high?

STEVE SCULLEY: That is, that is, if you, if you, if you do a calculation using this document, no, actually, so, 60 -- if you break, if you break it down by how does the DOT spend their money, which comes, which comes from this. So, I think we’re, I think we’re on the same page. But if you, the DOT readily admits, it’s somewhat to my surprise, that 63 percent of their operating budget is spent on, in the subsidies. Only 5 percent of people, I know there’s, the train constituency here is strong, only 5 percent of Connecticut commuters use public transit to get to work. Yet 63 percent of, of the DOT’s money goes, goes to that. So, you know, the rest of the 95 percent of commuters should just get what’s left over. That’s something that we should be, we should be looking at. We, we just, I see empty transit buses around the greater Hartford area all the time. We should at least attempt to quantify what is the benefit of running a bus, if only two people ever ride it, you know.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And I would, to my friends in the north of New Haven, I just point this out for, for illustrative purposes. The New Caanon branch line subsidized, I think it’s $2 each way of their,
their ticket. The going up above New Haven, I think it subsidized $45 each way, is that correct?

STEVE SCULLEY: Yep, Danbury line $17 a ride. Waterbury line $24 and change a ride. Shoreline East $49 a ride. Hartford line $47 a ride. And, and the CTFastrak, while I’m on that, $7.31 a ride. But I, I question, I think that’s a fraction of what the actual number is. I once wrote to the, to the DOT asking for CTFastrak ridership info, subsidy info. And they’re very candid in their response when they, when they talk about how the ridership numbers are tracked. They said there’s a sensor in the door. So, somebody gets on and it’s a rider, but somebody gets off and that counts as a rider. So, if this is, if this is $7.31 a ride, to me, it’s, it’s more like $15 at, at a minimum. And that doesn’t even take into account, are we double counting bus riders that were already riding other buses that existed before CTFastrak? I don’t want to get too far into that because it’s not necessarily my area of expertise.

But when you use a sensor, therefore, when you exit the bus, it’s counting like you’re getting on the bus, so.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And my final comment, I know we’ve been here a long time. But just, there was some questioning about the amount of the gas taxes coming in. I would just point out to committee members, there was a paper, a white paper by Ed Regan of CDM Smith, dated February 13, 2017 that I’ll provide to the committee through the clerk, that essentially still has the revenues, even taking into account the higher miles per gallon of fuel efficiency vehicles of, you know, our gross receipts
tax was in 2015 was over almost $700-million dollars, or, I’m sorry, a little over $600-million dollars. And in 2040, it will still be, according to this white paper, $600-million dollars.

So, the difference is not that great, at least according to this white paper from CDM Smith, back in February 2017. I don’t know if you saw any of that.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): I don’t think I am familiar with that particular report, though I would like to be. But in any event, thank you very much Mr. Chairman, I know we’ve been here a long, I just wanted to finish up with that. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Sculley.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): A few more. Representative Rosario, followed by Representative Haines.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good evening, Joe, good to see you.

STEVE SCULLEY: Good to see you again.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Good. I have a question.

STEVE SCULLEY: Okay.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): A company like U-Haul, I believe about 90 percent of their vehicles are registered out-of-state, primarily in the State of Arizona. So, would a company like U-Haul actually save money if they registered their fleet in the State of Connecticut?

STEVE SCULLEY: You might be being kind. It might be 100 percent that are registered in Arizona. The reason that they are able to do that is because of one of these systems that I mentioned that allows us
to collect taxes and fees from out-of-state trucks. The IRP, International Registration Plan. So, long story short, Connecticut does get some fee, registration fee revenue from U-Haul because those trucks are in the IRP. And they, they file reports through the IRP, which determine how much money is gonna come to Connecticut because of those trucks miles traveled here.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Do, do, do you have that number and how much it would be compared to them being registered in the State of Connecticut?

STEVE SCULLEY: I do not have that number. I’m not even sure if that, something like that is public. Per company numbers may not even be, be public. I’m not positive though.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): But if it is, so, would you be able to provide that to the committee?

STEVE SCULLEY: I can, I can see if that’s available, sure.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Okay. Just in closing, I just, I’m looking at it through the lens of an urban legislator. Right now in each and every one of our cities, we have these tax scofflaws who are living in the State of Connecticut with their vehicles registered outside of the State of Connecticut. And they’re literally dodging paying their fair share to the state. And I would assume, whether any type of form of tolls were to be implemented it would be in there positive just on the amount of people that are going to be registering their cars in the State of Connecticut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Haines.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Thank you so much for taking my, my question. I’m gonna let you geek out a little bit more. There’s a number that we’ve talked about a couple of times today that we’re spending almost a half a million dollars on or, I’m sorry, about a half a million, that’s right, half a million dollars. We’re the fourth highest state in the United States that spends that kind of money on their roads per mile. Do you have any idea how many miles of road we have here in Connecticut?

STEVE SCULLEY: I do have that number somewhere, just not, just not right here. It’s in one of the fact sheets that I, that I often hand out. I can’t recall. Do you know what it is?

REP. HAINES (34TH): I honestly, I don’t. But if somebody does that would be great. Does somebody have that number? No. Okay. So, but do you have any idea of that $500,000, the number is actually $499,659. Do we have any idea, have you looked at that number and said how much we can save, what can we cut out of what we spend in the State of Connecticut, out of that number, to maybe offset the need to toll everybody?

STEVE SCULLEY: So, I’ll, I’ll, I’ll wade gently into Yankee Institute’s area of expertise with the, with the, you know, administrative costs. My, my limited understanding in what went into that, that number; was the fact that we pay salaries and benefits and fund pensions through the Special Transportation Fund, I believe that is the reason why those numbers are, are so high. I have seen presentations where we talk about right after this
fund was created, the general fund was having issues. So, they moved some, you know, let’s move the salary expense for DOT into the STF and then for DMV and then for state police and then all their benefits.

So, even going back to, right after this fund was created, we couldn’t help ourselves. And, and this fund is different from many other states, where other states that have lockboxes, they say right in the constitution, fuel tax, regulation fee, whatever, they identify them by, by name, can only be spent on constructing a road or a bridge or a highway.

Our system is, is so different from that and we’ve already, we’ve already seen what the lockbox does and does not do by this proposal to just take money out of there that was, that was supposed to go there. That is one thing. I understand the general fund has problems, too. We should try to get those costs back to the general fund, where, where they were and then we’d really have sort of a truer transportation fund as opposed to what it is now, which is kind of a, a mess.

REP. HAINES (34TH): So, just one quick follow up. So, we spend almost $100,000 on an admin cost, which is the highest in the country. Isn’t that where the pensions and all that comes out of? So, in other words, we still have $400,00 that is not pension, that’s not benefits, like what is that, where does that come from?

STEVE SCULLEY: I see what you’re saying. And I am not sure that I, that I have the answer to that, other than I can anecdotally tell you that I hear
some of the weirdest things that my members complain to me about is when it’s the middle of November and, and it’s 40 degrees out and they drive past Ford DOT trucks with a crew of 10 people, nine of which are just kind of sitting there watching while one guy is, is mowing on the side of the highway in November. Is, is, can we cut some costs there? And so, if that approach is, is part of the way we do things when we build roads or resurface roads or what have you, that’s got to be what goes into that number.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. I’m just gonna encourage folks to try to not engage in hyperbole. I’ve already been tweeted at numerous times about numbers that have been used in the last few hours that are wildly inaccurate. Again, as was referenced in the author of the reason report, when instructed both DOT members of this committee and the Yankee Institute, that it was inappropriate to use the numbers the way that they were being used. When it comes to costs per mile, even when it comes to administrative costs.

STEVE SCULLEY: I was just answering a question.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I understand. And we then went into the fact that you might see 10 trucks on the side of a road, no one’s working except for one person. I think we went a little too far there. I just want to highlight, I just want to highlight that inherent and administrative costs is a fact that our STF does pay for transit, which is unique, a lot of states don’t offer transit. So, we could have an argument about whether or not we should pay
for transit costs out of the STF. I think that’s a fair argument. But to think that our administrative costs have anything to do with pensions, healthcare, and that’s where the differential is, in fact, if you actually look at these numbers and this what the reason report actually recognized, if DOT had zero employees, literally zero employees, we’d still have high administrative costs solely because the way they use that term as a catch-all for things other states don’t do. And it has to come from the fact that we do fund transit out of the STF where other states do not. They treat the funding of transit as an administrative cost.

Again, we can have conversations about those numbers, what we should and shouldn’t do, what the priorities are on them, but sometimes we go a little too far and make assumptions that are not necessarily backed up by facts.

Again, when we talk about costs per mile, Connecticut DOT maintains almost 11,000 highway miles. Reason report used the number 4,079 directional miles, they got the number wrong, they acknowledged in their response. We got the number wrong. That lead to a calculation per mile for costs that were more than 2.5 times more than they would if they were used by lane miles.

So, I just think it’s important for us to --

STEVE SCULLEY: I’m not as focused on that number or those numbers from, from, from that report. I, when I look at numbers, I like to go to the historical Special Transportation Fund and just look at, I mean, $449-million dollars in, in transit spending, which was up from the year before, $371 million. I
mean, that’s a huge jump. I don’t need to do gymnastics with the Reason Foundation report on that. These are DOT numbers. I focus on those things.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Understood. We’re late in the evening and sometimes numbers have a way of escalating as we talk. And I just wanted to, maybe I should have fought back on some of the assertions earlier in the evening. I want to give everyone a chance to testify. But they seem to be going in a different direction, I wanted to try and provide a little accuracy to underpin the next few hours at least. Thank you for testimony. Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good evening, Joe.

STEVE SCULLEY: Good evening.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): As we were talking about this, in terms of the transit costs, I just want to be clear. You know, our, our constituents demanded that we improve our Metro North railroads to the tune of multiple millions of dollars, and we bought new railcars. Very unique in the country where we have to have cars that are not only available on the third rail, but also on the catenary lines. So, there’s a huge cost there. There’s just, there’s no way around it. So, I would posit that there’s a reason why we have to subsidize that transit.

And as you may know, this committee has quite a few folks that use that Metro North, and they were very vocal in ensuring that we spend the money to improve that rail line. So, that’s on that point.
My two questions to you, as the trucking industry, and I get that if tolls were instituted it would increase costs for the truckers that come through the State of Connecticut, but how does the trucking industry survive or even make a profit, and I assume they do, in all the other states that have tolls; how have they adjusted to the fact that there’s tolling up and down the eastern seaboard; have any gone under because of tolls?

STEVE SCULLEY: New England Motor Freight, which, which was, they just declared bankruptcy. LTL, less than truckload carrier, in a, in a letter to the employees from the CEO, named a number of reasons for their, for their bankruptcy. One of which was high tolls. So, I think we should be aware of that. Yes, some states around us have some tolls on certain roads, certain bridges. They are not congestion price tolls. They’re fixed tolls.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): But there are trucks on those roads --

STEVE SCULLEY: Sure.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- right? And they’re surviving?

STEVE SCULLEY: Some of them.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I’d say more than some, but that’s debatable.

STEVE SCULLEY: I, I, I, so, so, yeah, there are some tolls in other states where, where trucks travel. Not every highway in those states are tolled. And I would, I would, that just reminds me, I don’t think I’ve said this yet. Comparing what we’re trying to do here to tolls in other states is
not a comparison. No state has ever taken a toll-free highway and made it a congestion priced highway and we want to do that not once, but with, but with essentially every highway in the state. The states around us don’t have congestion pricing where the rates change sometimes at a moment’s notice. So, there’s a big difference there.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): And that’s a fair point. But then we could then only pick one or two highways to, to mitigate that point. But then that would open up a whole other debate as to the fairness of that and why we should and then the whole thing about people moving to other roadways to not get on the tolls. So, it’s a chicken and egg thing here on what’s fair, what’s not and how to do this in a way that gets us to wherever we need to be.

My other question, I know that the court proceedings in Rhode Island over the contesting truck only tolling in Rhode Island that was passed by the legislature there that is now in the courts, that was one of the reasons why Governor Lamont said that he’d open up the door to other than just trucks here in the state as a potential alternative.

If the, if that court ruling were to be upheld, meaning that it was constitutional and justifiable, then would that be, then should Connecticut then consider, should, would they be in their right frame to then consider truck only, if we needed to?

STEVE SCULLEY: I mean, if we’re opposed to what we’re talking about now, we’re definitely going to be opposed when it’s, when it’s truck only. You know, and, you know, like I mentioned, we’re already paying six times our fair share. Why would we think
it’s fair to charge just us for roads and bridges that everybody is traveling on?

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): All right. Thank you. And, and that’s a fair point as well. But it just seems that no matter what the, all the details that you’ve mentioned that were, we shouldn’t do this, or we shouldn’t do that, as each and every issue can be addressed, it doesn’t matter if we address them in a way that, you know, you saw that immediate detail. As we’ve gone through this meeting, you’re either for it or against it and there’s no logic that is going to change people’s minds. And so as from a trucking industry perspective, even it were upheld as constitutional, and other states have done it, you still wouldn’t be supportive for Connecticut to do it when other states have done it?

STEVE SCULLEY: That’s not completely true. I’ve said before this committee, I’ve said on the radio, I’ve said on TV, if this state wants to look at doing something that other states have done, which is to build a brand new lane that doesn’t currently exist, and toll only that lane, I, I, I suspect that we would not object to that. You got to figure out the details and stuff, but the response I get varies from, we don’t want to widen the highway to that’s gonna be really expensive. And by the way, you could do that with, with, so private capital. So, for all this talk about public/private partnerships, that is the epitome of a public/private partnership, is having someone build a new lane and then you give them the right to collect the toll money.

But we don’t want to do that here, which, which tells me, and I submit with all due respect, if we don’t want to actually build new lanes and do
something that other states have done, this discussion isn’t really about improving our infrastructure, it’s just about money, that’s, that’s.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, you would be supportive of expanding the lanes if we could. And there was a question about eminent domain, you would be supportive of that?

STEVE SCULLEY: I’m, it depends on, we’re not gonna, not if you’re gonna put up the tolls and tell us like in a few years we’ll add another lane.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): No, no, no tolls, but we widen the lanes. DOT has some right of way, but maybe not enough. So, in order to do this properly and fairly, property would have to be taken and that would be something you would support?

STEVE SCULLEY: Well, do we know for a fact that in order to do it, property would need to be acquired because I am, in the 2015 CDM Smith report, and look, I still haven’t, I admit, I still haven’t read every single word of that, but they talk about managed lanes is an option. They wouldn’t have said it’s not an option, if it wasn’t an option. So, I guess I would question, do we, do we, is eminent domain even an issue there? Could we just do it already?

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Managed lanes is existing lanes, not expanding the roadway?

STEVE SCULLEY: I’m not sure. I, I, I think managed lane can be, I think more commonly it’s referred to what, to the way I described it. But, okay, to, to clarify then, we oppose tolling existing lanes. If
you want to look at building a lane that doesn’t exist and tolling only that lane, we’ll be, we’ll be a part of that discussion.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Sculley for your testimony this evening.

STEVE SCULLEY: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Kathy Hopperstad. Kathy, again, if I got your name wrong, please --

KATHY HOPPERSTAD: No, you did a great job.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): -- correct me.

KATHY HOPPERSTAD: And I’m getting really tired. So, please excuse me. Good evening and thank you. My name is Kathy Hopperstad, and I’m a lifelong resident and public servant of Connecticut and a Cold War Veteran. I vehemently oppose House Bill 7202 and 7280 and any bill that proposes electronic tolling in Connecticut.

I submitted my testimony online and I was not going to speak, but many who could not be here today, ask that I speak for them. And I would just like to make a few comments.

Firstly, there have been many numbers floated around with regard to 30, 40, I even heard the Governor say 50 percent on Inauguration Day, that non-residents will help pay our, for infrastructure. In reality 100 percent of Connecticut’s will pay directly or indirectly pay tolls on a daily basis, in addition to what we already pay in “user fees.”
I commute to work using 384, 84, 91, 2, and 9. I cannot afford another monthly user fee. My budget is spent. What will I cut to pay your tolls? For one, my daily Dunkin Donut coffee, which employs, that particular store I go to, employs minority students working their way through college. Because of them, I have yet to cut it yet.

The cost of that Dunkin Donuts coffee will increase too with the addition of tolls, the increase in the minimum wage and the paid family leave act. I’ve already cut cable, landline, home repairs, and as you can tell, my clothing, mani-pedi, and hair stylist budget is nonexistent.

If implemented, I will avoid tolls at all costs, which many will and that loss revenue, you will have to capture with another user fee.

Secondly, we all want 21st transportation systems, 21st Century transportation system. I’ve been hearing that my entire life. I grew up in New Haven and North Haven. Why is our infrastructure funding so insolvent? We already have a sustainable revenue source. And we know that that was the income tax; that was supposed to solve our problems.

We have a gas tax and many taxes and fees attached to cars to the tune of $1.2-billion dollars a year in revenue, based on your legislative report. That was supposed to be earmarked to the Special Transportation Fund, but it gets siphoned by the millions annually. And correct, it goes mostly for administrative costs, debt service benefits and funds, empty buses, packed trains and a priority of road projects.
I pay my fair share and I understand that our wealthy residents pay more than I do. However, everyone should be asking, what has the state done with our money? The state has not been a good steward of our hard-earned dollar. And I, for one, do not trust it or you with one more penny of it. It is not the taxpayer’s fault we are in the situation, but past administrations and legislatures. No state tolls every major highway or thruway, 53 to 82 gantries is just obscene.

The tolling authority is just another bureaucracy. Why would I want a Connecticut version of the NTA? Fines, penalties, all will hurt the middleclass and lower classes, still will be 100 percent of Connecticut residents who will pay. We could and should remain toll free.

The bottom line is the Connecticut middleclass cannot afford one more cent. Let the Special Transportation Fund do its job, conduct an independent forensic audit of it and of DOT to identify areas of mismanagement and savings.

And one and finally, stop feeding the beast of unfunded liabilities, which you and the Governor still have yet to address. And by the looks of things here today, it will not happen.

I support the republican prioritized progress plan, it is a viable solution. And lower taxes in a fiscally sound state will attract people and businesses. I thank you for your time. I also read Mr. Sculley’s written testimony and I agree with it. I think everyone should read it. It’s excellent. Thank you and good night.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you Kathy for waiting so long tonight.

KATHY HOPPERSTAD: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I remember seeing you in the cafeteria about, oh gosh --

KATHY HOPPERSTAD: 7 o’clock.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): -- it was a long time ago at this point.

KATHY HOPPERSTAD: And I’m ready for bed. You’re way past my bedtime.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I indicated we might be here until 10 and I thought you were gonna faint, so.

KATHY HOPPERSTAD: No. I already went to a doctor’s appointment and back and they all said, too, no tolls, so.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Well, thank you, Kathy. And we can’t have their testimony represented through you.

KATHY HOPPERSTAD: I know, but they all work, everyone’s working. They can’t get out. And I’ve already lost two days of work because of it. And this is it, so thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Any questions or comments for Kathy? Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to extend my thanks. And as you stated, taking two days off without pay and also representing people who couldn’t take the day off and didn’t have an employer paying them to be here, your testimony, you know, we greatly appreciate.
I’m sorry that it took you probably 12 hours at least that you’ve been here, but welcome to the democratic process and welcome to Hartford.

KATHY HOPPERSTAD: I’ve always been a local employee, a municipal employee, and to me that’s where the rubber hits the road. I have to say this process is very inefficient. You need to do better.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thanks so much. Have a good night.

KATHY HOPPERSTAD: You too.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Kathy. Len Suzio, followed by Jen Ezell.

LEN SUZIO: Good evening, it’s a pleasure to be here. And I want to say thank you to the Co-Chairs, Representative Lemar and Senator Leone and to the Ranking Members, Senator Martin and Representative Devlin and to all the members of the committee.

I’m here to speak out against Bill 7280 and 7202. There’s a lot I could say, but I’m not gonna say it. I’m gonna focus on three, what I think are serious, if not fatal flaws underlying the argument for tolls. And I think the proponents of tolls had better answer these questions, if they’re going to forward their and convince the people of Connecticut that tolls are the right way to go.

First, the very first argument that I’ve heard advanced for tolls is that gas revenue stream are drying up. In fact, last week, the Governor was quoted as saying, to be blunt, the gasoline tax, which used to be the engine of transportation money is disappearing as a source of revenue. Can you spell Tesla? Well, let me inform the Governor that
the gas taxes have been increasing. Back in 2005, we collected $650-million dollars of gas taxes, that’s the PGRT and the excise tax. Last year we collected $832-million dollars. Moreover, last year we saw an $82-million dollar increase in the PGRT and about $3-million dollars in the excise tax. Furthermore, in the first quarter this year, gas consumption is up as well as the revenues, the PGRT was up another 16 percent.

So, number one, it’s totally a false fact and it’s, it’s, if you’re gonna base your argument for tolls on that you really have a weak case.

The second thing, and by the way, there’s 2,900,000 registered motor vehicles in Connecticut, 9,000 are electric vehicles. So, that’s 3/10’s of 1 percent. They are gonna hardly make any kind of a difference in gas consumption and it will be years, if not decades, before they do.

The second fatal flaw or at least serious flaw is that was driving the projected deficit is, is this $100-billion dollar spending plan that Governor Malloy had put forward that, in my opinion, has not been seriously vetted by anybody. There’s a nice glossy report, there’s a series to them in fact and they lay out over 80 pages of what they want to spend money on. But there’s no prioritizing, there’s no timing, there’s no explanation of alternatives.

And last week it really got my attention when the Governor with the Commissioner was at the Mixmaster in Waterbury and they’re announcing the $200-million dollar project. And I almost fell off my chair when I heard that because I know in the $100-billion
dollar plan, the Mixmaster is in for over $7-billion dollars, 35 times what they’re spending. And I thought for sure that the Commissioner would then say, well, this is a temporary fix, it’s good for three or four or five years, while we’re getting our act together. But no, he said the projects going to take three years to complete and it’s good for at least 20 to 25 years. So, we’re not talking about spending billions of dollars on the Mixmaster in the next 20 years at least, yet that’s part of what’s driving the deficit.

The last thing I’ll end up saying is what I consider to be the third serious, if not fatal flaw for tolls, and that is the assumption that we will not get one nickel of additional federal funding for all the spending that we’re going to do.

Historically, federal funding has covered 70 to 80 percent of all the capital project spending in the State of Connecticut. For a forecast to be based on absolutely nothing, zero, is outrageous and unrealistic and the Trump Administration has announced that they intend to make transportation infrastructure a major initiative. And I, I, from what I can see in Washington it is being welcomed on a bipartisan basis. So, I think it’s very highly likely that we’re gonna see a huge surge in federal spending. And think about this, if federal spending, to help us out with our transportation infrastructure, merely mimics what we’ve had as history, that is 70, 80 percent, you’ve wiped out the $100-billion dollar deficit right off like that with no tolls and no increase in our gas taxes or anything.
So, I think it’s premature for this committee and this legislature to commit to spending hundreds of millions of dollars on infrastructure, which may not even be necessary. I think the prudent thing to do is to wait for the federal government to see what is approved by Congress and how it affects our state. And I’m very happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you, by the way again, for the opportunity to speak with you. I miss these late hearings. When I was a member up there last year, it brings back memories, I can tell you that.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Well, thank you very much for joining us. And thank you, I’ve seen you here, I think, at 10 a.m. this morning. And I --

LEN SUZIO: Yes.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): -- have seen you here at 8:30. I admire your commitment. It’s a legislative process, both having experienced it firsthand still deciding to come back and --

LEN SUZIO: I’m a glutton for punishment. I don’t know, I’m a masochist, I guess.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Well, I certainly appreciate it. Just to highlight, we used the Mixmaster again, that’s, that’s the Waterbury, I84, was that Route 8 interchange --

LEN SUZIO: Route 8 going down there, yeah.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): -- I think it’s about a dozen bridges.

LEN SUZIO: It’s complex.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): It’s a really complex project. Estimates have that again at almost a $7-billion dollar full replacement project. The current three-year project really is, it’s just to keep it standing. It’s not gonna provide any additional lanes, improve travel times. Joe Scully, who was here earlier, thought it was a fine temporary solution. But even he didn’t want tolls, as you need to spend the $7-billion dollars to make that thing functional.

And so I think, you know, it’s a small overall cost and it does buy us some life in that interchange, but I think it is vital to also recognize that we do need to do something significant there.

LEN SUZIO: Well, if I may respectfully suggest though, that I think that’s something that should be debated a lot more thoroughly before we go, it’s one thing to spend a few hundred million, what the heck is that, that’s chump change. But when you start talking about billions of dollars, I think, you know, the cost benefit relationship has never been debated by -- I was on this committee for two years, I was Vice Chair of the Committee and we never got into it. And frankly the committee structure is so unwieldy, and I don’t mean this in a disrespectful way at all, but when you’ve got 40 members of a committee and you got the commissioner in front of you and everybody wants to ask a few questions, it’s really not conducive to the kind of thorough robust discussion you should get into to really vet the numbers.

I met personally with Commissioner Redeker last year in, I think it was February and I, the whole purpose of that meeting was to talk about the $100-billion
dollars for the $100-billion dollar plan. And I asked him, I said, Jim, how did you come up with this? He said, well, the only numbers that are real are the first five, six or seven years. After that, it’s all just, who knows, I mean, you’re talking decades out, 30 years is a long way away.

So, but that $100-billion dollars is what’s driving the deficit. So, if it’s not really been thoroughly vetted and if, and especially look, if I’m running a company and somebody comes to me and says, Len, we want to spend $100-billion dollars. I’d say, okay, wait a minute. That’s gonna really push the company to the limits. What are our alternatives? What is the timing of the spending? What are the priorities of the spending? You know, and none of that was never, as far as I know, it’s never been asked by the legislature. And yet, we’re rushing ahead to tolls to fund $100-billion dollars in spending that in my opinion has never been thoroughly vetted.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Senator Suzio, welcome back.

LEN SUZIO: It’s good to be back.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you for sticking around. I’m just gonna ask one quick question. You know, I appreciate the fact that I’m now sitting in your seat and I respect what you had to do, while I was sitting as a member here. And so, I know with your experience with dealing with numbers, you’ve really taken a deep, deep dive in finding out what the real issues are. And my question is this, what is Connecticut’s history the transportation capital
projects and how much money have we been spending on these projects?

LEN SUZIO: Well, when Governor Malloy came into office in 2011, Connecticut had been spending about a billion dollars a year in capital projects. In fact, that was a high number. And, of course, the hundred billion that he proposed went over 30 years, is tantamount to $3.3 billion a year, it’s tripled the amount of spending, the highest amount of spending we ever did up until that point in time.

And I don’t argue that we have a lot of catchup work to do. No one’s gonna argue that our roads and bridges are where we want them to be. But at the same token, tripling the spending, not for five, six, seven, eight or nine years, but for 30 years is an awful lot of money that, in my opinion, was never rigorously vetted or justified. It’s, it’s, when you put in that perspective, it’s a gargantuan amount of spending. And it’s by far the largest amount of money the State of Connecticut will have ever committed to anything, $100-billion dollars. We’re worried about the, something like they’re talking about $60 billion or $70 billion of unfunded pension liability. Well, this is more than that.

And, you know, yet we’re forced into a crisis in the next few years, a financial crisis in Connecticut because we’re challenged to meet the unfunded liabilities to begin with. Well, this is like, if you go ahead with this $100-billion dollars, you’re more than doubling that debt.

So, the consequences are very profound. And I would urge you to seriously think about it. And again, at the very least, even if I agreed that we had to do
something, that we’ve got to spend this $100-billion dollars, I don’t think you should make any commitments until we know where the federal government’s coming from. Because if we get that historical subsidy from the feds, it totally wipes out 75 to 80 percent of all the spending that you’re projecting for the next 30 years.

So, let, there’s no harm in waiting and seeing what happens. And by the way, if you go ahead and start acting now, who knows, you may jeopardize the federal funding because you don’t know what the conditions are going to be. So, I think it would be almost really, it’s not only imprudent, I would consider it to be almost reckless to go ahead and commit to a toll plan, spending hundreds of millions of dollars that may boomerang.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative MacLachlan.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, good to see you, Senator Suzio.

LEN SUZIO: Nice to see you, Representative.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Welcome back, sir. Thank you for your testimony. Two quick questions. You briefly discussed and touched on the gas tax, the PGRT. I was curious, you know, if you knew off the top of your head what specific changes stick out to you most between, you know, now and 2005 and plus changes to the gas tax and revenue, revenue increases or decreases?

LEN SUZIO: The excise tax, which is 25 cents a gallon has not changed since then, but the PGRT has.
The PGRT was 5.8 percent at that time. It was increased four times between 2005 and 2012 was the last time I think it went up. It went to 8.1 percent, if you calculate that out, that’s tantamount to a 39.7 percent increase in the tax rate itself. And, of course, it’s being reflected in the revenues that we’re getting. Last year we took in $322-million dollars of PGRT money. That was $85-million dollars more than the year before.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Got it. Thank you very much for clarifying that. I appreciate it.

LEN SUZIO: Sure.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, and again, I just want to clarify. I know people watch it at home and they might not know the acronyms that we use sometimes.

LEN SUZIO: You’re right.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): The PGRT refers to the Petroleum Gross Receipts Tax, and it’s a tax that applies to gross revenue from the initial sale of petroleum products. So, just center this conversation on something that may be a little bit easier for folks at home to understand.

LEN SUZIO: Thank you, Representative Lemar, that’s a great point.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good to see you Senator.
LEN SUZIO: Good to see you --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Welcome back.-

LEN SUZIO: -- Senator, too.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I know you have a little bit of knowledge, being a former member of this committee, so thank you for your comments.

And you’re right, you bring up some valid points that I think we should investigate, and I think we will. And, you know, the whole idea of whether we should do tolling is a whole other, it’s all part of the process here.

The only thing I wanted to clarify, you mentioned about the $100-billion dollars that was originally proposed, that was former Governor Malloy’s plan to jumpstart our infrastructure, the lack of infrastructure spending for our roadways in the rest of the state. And it was a bold plan, it was over 30 years, you’re right. But we didn’t even come close to all of that. So, trying to re-start the wheel there, because that’s not what’s being proposed. There’s a whole other vision on board with the new administration. You know, we still need to figure out how to fix what we have today. And so that $100-billion dollar, 30-year plan was a bold plan, which was always at risk for any legislature coming into charter the course. So, I just wanted to make sure that we’re not going in that direction at this point in time.

LEN SUZIO: Well, Senator, if I may, that pretty much underscores the point I was making, that the $100-billion dollars, I think has got to be revisited. It’s a number that was proposed four or
five years ago and it’s something that I don’t think was ever thoroughly vetted. And if it’s going to change, it will have profound impact because the projected deficit --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): No, you’re right.

LEN SUZIO: -- you know.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): But it was, it was a plan to jumpstart, I mean, it could have been --

LEN SUZIO: Yes.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- maybe it should have been $50 billion, not $100 million or I mean $50 million, not a million, whatever the number was, it was to jumpstart the whole vision. You could contest the number, but I think it was aspirational in its demeanor. And even that got scaled back when we went to the Let’s Go Connecticut, where we cut down to a five-year plan. But what I’m trying to say is, I don’t want to rehash what a previous administration proposed when it’s not part of the discussion today.

LEN SUZIO: Well, then what is the current administration proposing? Is that clear to anybody at this point? I think it’s absolutely imperative that it be clear before you go ahead and approve tolls.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Well, that’s for this administration to understand. We’re talking about having money for our current infrastructure needs and for the future. And, and that is going to be debated as we move forward.
LEN SUZIO: Yeah, the ramp-up part of Governor Malloy’s plan was what you’re addressing the first five years. Basically, he took it from a billion a year to a billion-six, a billion-seven a year, that’s a pretty big increase there, 50, 60 percent increase in spending. But that still pales in comparison to the hundred billion, if you average it out over 30 years, so --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Right, but again --

LEN SUZIO: -- I’m happy, I’m happy that’s gonna be revisited.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- that’s the past. It’s not even part of the picture.

LEN SUZIO: Yeah.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): We’re moving forward with what we got today. This administration has to figure that out. The legislature has to weigh in. Part of the reasons why the hundred billion in the five-year Let’s Go plan didn’t go forward is because of the resistance in this building, mainly from the other side. And that’s okay, it’s justifiable. But we don’t want to revisit that whole --

LEN SUZIO: If I may ask, Senator, will the administration be making a presentation to this committee regarding that?

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I think that’s a question you can freely ask as a, as a person in the public.

LEN SUZIO: Okay.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you.

LEN SUZIO: I’m looking forward to further hearings.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I think that concludes your time here. Thank you very much. You can stick around, if you like?

LEN SUZIO: Oh, yes, this is so enjoyable. Thank you very much. I always enjoy my interaction with my, you, my colleagues and I miss being up here with you guys. Take care.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Jen Ezzell. Again, please correct me on names, it’s, I’ve been looking at names for 12 hours now. I might create some L’s and R’s where they don’t actually exist, so.

JEN EZZELL: Well, you wouldn’t want me to be pronouncing some names because I would never get them out right, but it’s Ezzell.

First of all, I’d like to thank you all for being here with us tonight and for having us here. I’m definitely opposed to both 7202 and 7280. And I want to go over a couple of things. I was gonna read my testimony, but you all have it in front of you and a lot of things have been said. But I want to mention something that I find very disturbing and that’s about the trust of the people with their government and the trust of the money.

It’s one of our biggest problems that I and many, many others have as being able to trust the Connecticut legislative body and the process, especially when it comes to handling our money. 7280 is a prime example of why there is little to no trust.
First of all, and I know you have explained it to people, but I’m still gonna, you know, say what I have to say about this. I find it very disturbing that you would abdicate your responsibilities as stated in H.B. 7280 to an unelected and unaccountable body to decide placement and number of gantries along with the prices to be charged to your constituents in regards to the tolls.

With the wording in Section 2, you are allowing unelected, unaccountable body to determine the number of roads and gantries to go beyond the four listed highways. You are allowing them to impose gantries on all of Connecticut highways as originally planned in that 2018 study. We were told a few years ago it was going to be 72. Then we were told in that study it was going to be 82. Then Governor Lamont said it was going to be 53 or 54. In you Transportation Committee Bill, you’re telling us four highways, but in reality it could be every single highway and it could actually be more than 82 gantries, if they decide to put them on every single highway. And you are abdicating your responsibility to determine what we’re going to be taxed and how we’re going to be taxed.

I also find it totally irresponsible that you allow passage of a taxation based on a deemed-approved status. As stated in H.B. 7280, which would allow you to abdicate your responsibility to actually vote on any taxation to be imposed on your constituents. That’s why you are here. It is your job. It’s not some elected bureaucrat to decide how and when and how much we’re going to be taxed by. This deemed-approved has been used before with the union
contracts, to the detriment of the state and the taxpayers.

You’ve allowed yourselves an escape valve to avoid the blame for increased costs and hardships to your constituents. My advice to you is this, at this point in time because you don’t have answers to us on how many gantries, how many roads, what the actual cost is going to be or anything else about these tolls, is that you shelf it for right now. It’s gonna be a few years before you even get the tolls up. So, come up with those answers before you present it to us to be voted on.

And I also suggest that you do a forensic audit, starting with the DOT, but in every single department. Open up the checkbook, let us see where the contracts are going for their payments, where are we having money spent and how do those contracts be obtained, was it through a bid or was this election process and how long ago was those bids; but get a handle on it.

There’s something wrong with this, our state, in the finances. You can’t deny it and you can’t hide from it and you must fix it before you ask us for one more penny. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Jen for your comments today and for sticking with us this evening. I know you two have been here --

JEN EZZELL: Yep.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): -- a long time today and I do appreciate you sharing your testimony with us.

JEN EZZELL: Thank you.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Jen, thank you for being here and it’s nice, did you guys have lunch, or you guys just saw each other, you could have had lunch together in the cafeteria. But, you know, change involves people getting involved and standing up and sharing their voice. And you are clearly doing that as a strong advocate against tolls.

You have highlighted some of the most troubling aspects of that particular piece of legislation. And having that go in a different direction or changing that up takes not just discussions with the legislature, but it takes listening to the people of the State of Connecticut. So, thank you for spending your day here and going through that process and speaking with us tonight.

JEN EZZELL: Thank you. Thank you all.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Next up, David Cox, followed by Mr. O’Brien, and then Bianca Cox. And then that will conclude our signups. Is David Cox here?

NEIL NARKON: I’m Neil Narkon, but I signed upstairs, but apparently I’m not on your list.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I’m sorry, what’s your name?

NEIL NARKON: Neil Narkon, N-a-r-k-o-n.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I will have to get you on at the end, if you don’t mind.

NEIL NARKON: Okay.

ORION NEWALL: Also, I would like to thank the committee for letting me speak. I come from Woodstock, Connecticut, far northeastern corner of the state. I got here this morning around 8 o’clock, so.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I appreciate you coming up from Woodstock today and spending the day with us. I need your name and spell it for the record.

ORION NEWALL: Sure. My name is Orion, O-r-i-o-n, and my last name is Newall, N-e-w-a-l-l, and I’m a Senior at the Woodstock Academy. I come here today opposing tolls and before I get started, I would like to encourage everyone, if you have questions, comments, please feel free to ask them to me. And I also have a young person’s perspective on Connecticut.

To oppose tolls, due to the fact Windham County is often left out of the conversation for the entire state. Not once was it mentioned in the Governor’s address and it continues not to be mentioned. In Windham County, we have rail service, the Providence & Worcester Railroad, all they had is freight service. We do not have an option to take a train to New London to get on Shoreline East and take advantage of our state’s infrastructure and rail service, which is comparable, very comparable to other states. But we don’t have that option up in northeastern Connecticut. So, we are forced to drive everywhere. And I had to drive here on 84.

And the one thing that concerns me is the cost of mile per roadway in the State of Connecticut. I know numbers haven’t been that accurate this evening. So, I’m not gonna state any. But that
would be something I would encourage the state to look into and getting that number down.

The second thing is, we already have a high cost of living in this state and a very high taxed rate. And this number again floating around, according to the USA Today, it was number 2, and the only state that beat us is New York and, you know, it wouldn’t be a good thing to be number 1.

And I would encourage also to keep that in consideration when making this decision on the tolls because if we have another tax, we, we first place for that record wouldn’t be the, something necessarily to be proud of.

I commute to the Valley Railroad Company in Essex, Connecticut, on top of doing Maple Syrup for myself and working for a local graphics company. The Valley Railroad is 70 miles away from my house and that requires traveling on 395, along the coast, which is 91, or 95, yes, and Route 8 to get to all my destinations at the Valley Railroad.

Now, it’s not necessarily a high paying job, but I enjoy what I do, and I buy my gas in Connecticut, I buy it in Essex, and I pay right now around $4 in tax on top of the vehicle registrations and other vehicle taxes to commute to the Valley Railroad in my truck. Adding to that cost, I would have to sit down and think, is that something I would like to continue doing? That’s a field I want to get into, but now there’s an added cost for me to drive down there, adding to my commute that I already for, and I gladly pay for because I do use the roads.

My third or fourth point here is, the private companies that would benefit from the tolling in
Connecticut. Granted, the state does not own the technology to put these tolls in, so we would be paying a private company to put this toll in, depending on what decision is made, if a private company was to manage it. So, every time I would drive through one of those tolls, a private company would be getting a percentage of my money, not the State of Connecticut. And the state and the state employees necessarily wouldn’t be benefiting from it if that was addressed, being operated by a private company or, you know, like I said, not 100 percent.

I’ll make this quick here. And for young people’s perspective in that Connecticut, unfortunately it’s not very good. The notion that I get, a lot of people don’t want to stick around due to the notion that it’s expensive, there’s a lot of negativity unfortunately out there that I hope we can fix. But I don’t think adding more tolls, adding tolls in the other proposed taxes is the right way of doing that, promoting business and promoting young people and young talent to stay here. Because I love Connecticut, I would gladly want to stay here, work for a railroad company locally. But when you have other states that are comparable and cheaper and have the same job, it’s tough to make that decision.

And the lower gas tax in other states that was touched on earlier. And yes, I do drive to Massachusetts sometimes to fill up the truck with gas. And even if Connecticut was offering other incentives, okay, we’re gonna put a toll on this one road, but we’ll lower the gas tax. I don’t see that being part of a conversation. What else, what other things would we benefit from if there was another tax added? It would be nice to see some things
taken away and that would be part of the conversation.

And my last point is, if we add the discount of tolling rates for frequent drivers, I don’t know if I would apply for that or qualify, but for frequent drivers or Connecticut residents, we would have to set up different departments and have employees at the state level to manage those accounts. So, that means we would be setting up another department or another set of offices of state employees that would be costing the money for something that we’re giving discounts to. So, that would also be something to consider.

And in conclusion, I would just, I don’t support tolls, but I would be, that’s why I’m here today to be part of that conversation and make sure the voice is heard from the quiet corner or the forgotten corner that normally isn’t heard about and I would definitely welcome questions regarding tolls or, and, you know, anything along that line.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, so much Mr. Newall for coming out tonight, for spending some time with us and making the trip from the quiet corner.

ORION NEWALL: Yeah, I think we have a few folks in the noisy corner who want to ask me some questions.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I just want to say thank you for putting in the effort to be here tonight. I know you got to get your car out of the garage before it closes. I just want to say thank you for coming out and sharing.

ORION NEWALL: Got to get it out by 10, otherwise, I’m stuck here for the night, so.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Maybe that quiet corner won’t be so quiet anymore. I don’t have any questions for you. Your testimony was incredible and maybe a little bit over three minutes, but you addressed any question that I have. And I have to tell you, I am so incredibly impressed. You were exactly the example of young people we want to have stay and have a career --

ORION NEWALL: Oh, thank you.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- and life in our state. So, thank you for taking your time and standing up as well to let us know your conflict so you could carry your comments with us, but we really appreciate you being here.

ORION NEWALL: Thank you. And like I said, this is an awesome opportunity that I hope by me coming here, and I was on channel 3 earlier, that other young residents realize that they can be part of the conversation as well.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): You’re a great example. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative O’Dea.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): From the noisy corner, New Caanon, Connecticut, not North Caanon, New Caanon.

ORION NEWALL: I’m familiar.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): You had said, how long did it take for you to get from home to here?
ORION NEWALL: Probably an hour, hour and 15 minutes, and didn’t hit any traffic across that bridge, so, got pretty lucky this morning.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, one of the comments, so, so, in your generation, the younger generation, there’s a lot of talk about if we put in tolls, maybe we’ll encourage more of the younger generation to take public transit. Being from the sleepy corner or the north corners as I think you stated, how easy is it to get public transportation for you?

ORION NEWALL: I, this is again what I’m glad you brought that up because in the entrepreneuring class a few days ago, I took a quick survey, who is really enthusiastic about, you know, not a lot of people want to stick around unfortunately because of all these conversations that are happening and high taxes and amongst other things. But I think obviously, I’m an avid supporter of rail. And, you know, I think that’s great. And the northeastern corner we have a rail line, we had a bunch of rail lines. The Air Line that has been turned into a pathway that the state has invested money into this paved pathway that was mentioned earlier. If we were able to have a service that stopped in 1971 because of Amtrak between Worcester and New London, even if it’s just, I would like to see that part of the conversation and have a committee or a report explore that option, just to see if people would actually take advantage of it. Because for us up there, we don’t have an option for public transit. If it was available, I think people would gladly try it.

If I could take a train to my, I would, but unfortunately, I can’t. When I volunteer at the
Danbury Railway Museum and I want to go see my grandmother, I will leave the truck at the Danbury railyard and take a train down to Greenwich. And I feel because obviously my tax dollars do go into that, taking advantage of the service and adding to the ridership member, but other people gladly do that as well. If I could leave my truck in my driveway or leave it down in Putnam and take the train, I would gladly do that.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Well, thank you again for your testimony here at about 9 o’clock at night and being here all day. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Representative Simms.

REP. SIMMS (140TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to thank you for your testimony. You know, as such a young man, you, you know, you’re very articulate in how you pose yourself and pose your concerns. And I just want to commend you for that because you don’t see too many young kids that come up here and testify and especially this late at night. So, I just wanted to say, just keep up the good work and hopefully, you know, someday, you know, you’ll be running for a local office and, and help getting Connecticut back on track. So, I just want to thank you for that.

ORION NEWALL: Thank you. And like I said, it means a lot and thank you for getting me in and accepting my testimony. And hopefully the, when I go back to school tomorrow, I’ll be able to write this off as an excused absence or something educational like that.
REP. SIMMS (140TH): Yeah, if you need a letter, you let me know. I’ll make the call for you.

ORION NEWALL: When I show them this video tomorrow.

REP. SIMMS (140TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, we can give you a citation, that way you can show it off.

ORION NEWALL: Get an email.

REP. SIMMS (140TH): Thank you for coming up, you know, the quiet corner is not always so quiet because you guys do stand up for what you believe in and I think that’s commendable. So, thank you for coming up. I do like your idea of reinstituting the rail line from New London up to Worcester. I come from that as area as a kid, so I used to see that when I would be in the back woods, not being utilized. So, if we could that rail line back up and running, I think that could only benefit the state. So, I’m glad that you think from your generation that would use it if we had it, that’s something to work towards, so thanks.

ORION NEWALL: Once again, thank you and talking to the residents up there. And, you know, like I said, if there’s, if there’s ever a toll on 395, we don’t have another public transportation option. And that would be a major concern for me.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Just wait and see if Representative Kupchick. So, we’ve exhausted the Fairfield County --

ORION NEWALL: Like I said, I will, if I have any issues tomorrow, I will send an email.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you again for your testimony here tonight.
ORION NEWALL: Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I have Bianca Cox. That appears to eliminate the folks who have signed up on my sheet. There seem to be a few more people here than we’ve heard from this evening. So, is there anyone here today who wishes to testify? If you would, can we head on over to the Clerk’s office, right in the corner, if you can give your names, so we have your name for the record. And then as you give your name, if you can proceed to the center aisle, we’ll take you one-by-one. Just give me one second, so my Clerk can get clear and ensure that your testimony is properly inserted as you begin to speak.

All right. So, my Clerk is now clear. So, as you begin to testify, if you could just state your name for the record, so we can ensure that the record and your testimony is accurately recorded for prosperity sake. Thank you.

CHRIS ZELLER: My name’s Chris Zeller, Z-e-l-l-e-r. I’ve got this prepared, but I want to say, to those of you who haven’t been here very long, this is gonna seem really harsh, and it’s not directed towards you.

So, regarding tolls, and thank you for having me allowing me to sign up in this late hour. Connecticut already has the sixth or seventh highest gasoline tax of any state in the nation and we apply our sales tax to gasoline in addition. I’m sure you guys know this, I don’t need to explain it.

Currently, fuel costs are higher in Connecticut than in New York and Massachusetts because of this fact, and most parts of New York. If you go to New York State, they’re cheaper, obviously in the city
it’s lower because of zone pricing, Fairfield County, same thing. But now, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New York all have lower fuel costs.

By CT law, and we talk a lot about this, the revenues from the gasoline tax have been appropriated to fund the construction of our roads and bridges, via the Special Transportation Fund. However, the legislature for many years now has been spending those revenues or at least a good portion of them for other purposes. Over the past 10 years, revenues from that tax in sum has exceeded $9-billion dollars. Where has that money been going?

According to an article in the Danbury News-Times, $1.26 billion of the petroleum gross receipts tax was diverted to the general fund between 2005 and 2014.

The largest withholding of transportation revenue came in ’14 and ’15, when the legislature diverted $345.6 million in Special Transportation Fund to the general fund. And swept another $76.5-million dollars from the Special Transportation Fund through a budget bill, according to progress, planned progress. The legislature also diverted $87.5 million in sales tax revenue for the STF between ’16 and ’17, all of this has been said. Let’s go on, in the past few years alone we spent almost $600-million dollars to tear down an existing rail track, to build a busway between the cities of Hartford and New Britain. We bailed out Hartford to the tune of about $500-million dollars, which they proceeded to help finance a $100-million dollar baseball stadium, which is losing $5-million dollars a year. Yet, we already had two minor league teams.
We could have put a train on the tracks from Hartford to New Britain probably for less than the busway. Now, we’re grasping in the air for money to build tolls we don’t want with money we don’t have.

Connecticut is consistently rated in the top five most-taxed states, worst states in which to retire, worst states in which to start or own a business. There is a simple reason for this, government continues to grow while our private sector shrinks. The legislature continues to spend money that we do not have in failed attempts to pay for our expanding spending. We tax a shrinking group of taxpayers to fund growing annual budgets.

CT has less jobs now, in 2019, than it did in 2009. What jobs I ask, will tolls create? CT’s GDP continues to shrink. What economic growth will tolls create? Can one business owner across Connecticut be found who supports tolls on our state’s highways, other than the people we heard from who are actually going to build them or perhaps a gas station owner at one of the exits where you will be able to avoid a toll?

Furthermore, I would like to add, and this has been said, that tolls unlike other taxes, have a significant cost to institute to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. That is to say they will do nothing to address our immediate budget deficit. They will only add to that burden.

Finally, and I’m sorry for going over here. Finally, tolls and gasoline excise taxes are regressive taxes, as opposed to progressive taxes. They burden the poor more so than the rich.
Additional cost to travel is negligible to the wealthy, and I’ve heard a lot about Fairfield County, but not so to the working class and the middle class, to our poor and vulnerable.

Working families across Connecticut will now have an additional cost that is a disincentive to visit family, to take a job with a commute, to go shopping, out for dinner, to the beach, to live the American dream. To any who find this language hyperbolic, go and ask your average working family, or young person entering the workforce what hundreds of dollars, even a thousand dollars in new taxes each year means to them.

I hope you won’t be surprised to hear that it means something and that tolling our roads without addressing spending, without any additional tax relief, will hurt the people of our state, and that the damage will be inflicted at the hands of the current governor and legislative majority. Rather than cutting our government’s spending, this governor and this legislative majority will pass the spending cuts necessary from them at the state level via a new transportation tax onto the household budgets of lower- and middle-class Connecticut families.

I for one, hope they, you, will not.

But if we get tolls, I hope you’ll sell the roads, because whoever will buy them, toll them, at this point we clearly shouldn’t have been trusting our legislature, our elected officials, to handle this money wisely. And I would rather have a private company do it, if they’re willing to take on that
cost, then maybe we can use those proceeds to address our immediate budget deficit.

With that, you know, I’ve already gone well over. So, if you have any questions, I’ll take them.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Zeller for your testimony and for sitting here all night. Are there any questions? Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for taking your time to testify. The frustration that you expressed is notable. And your testimony was quite powerful. I just want to thank you for taking time out and making the trip. We are listening to you and hopefully we’ll move our state down a positive path to the vitality we’re looking for for the 21st Century. Thank you so much.

CHRIS ZELLER: Thank you. And I’d just like to say one more thing before, I figure I’m not gonna get many questions, I went over so. I just want to go on note that there have been other states that utilize these tolls to measure an average speed; that is, if I get from point A to point B quicker than the listed speed limit, I will automatically receive a speeding violation. And I want to go on the record here that I observe that, and I hope that this legislature will address privacy concerns and open a new hearing if that is ever to be considered as part of this tolling package.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Zeller. And to that point, just to give you great clarity on that, we would not be allowed to do that under existing law. So, you are exactly right that we would have to reconsider that under a separate piece of legislation, so.
CHRIS ZELLER: Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. I have Neil Narkon, followed by Meghan Portfolio.

NEIL NARKON: Hi everybody, thanks for hanging in here. I’ve been here since 7, 8 myself too, but I appreciate everybody, everybody’s full attention here. You guys are at a real core of it now. As you see, we kind of thinned out a little bit here. So, we know who the decision makers are here, that’s what’s important.

But I’m from Enfield and I’m just gonna change gears a little bit to think about the cyberspace because he just brought up a good point about the privacy thing here. But imagine you going home and in your mailbox you’ve got a, your health insurance premium there and all of a sudden it’s made a substantial increase and/or your car insurance increase. And it can very well happen with this new system here with electronics and technology the way it is. They have the ability to track you. And they have the ability to sell that data, which a lot of towns and states are looking at as another source of revenue. And who are they gonna sell it to? Are they gonna sell it to the insurance companies, healthcare insurances and to me it’s gonna be a real invasion of privacy, you know, let alone the toll end of it.

But I’m just looking at one little facet here. I’m an electronics guy and I see this going on a lot. I follow this here. And that technology is in there to do that. So, your health insurance is gonna go up and of course your credit score is gonna go down because everything is tracked together now. You
know, if you got bad health or somehow your credit score goes down.

So, this is one little thing that could very well happen here. So, we got to make some very strong legislation here to avoid something like that, you know. I’m opposing the tolls anyway, but I’m just saying one little facet here, something to really look at close here. Nobody brought it up, but I read that going on elsewhere too. Okay.

And as I stated, I’m opposed to these two bills coming up here, you know. This is, this is not the time to be doing this, you know, we’re struggling now. Things are tough. The economy is kind of faltering right now. We have Wells Fargo Bank, which is pretty much insolvent now. And once those banks start going down and once our U.S. dollar doesn’t have its currency world standard anymore because it’s not backed by gold anymore since 1971, so it’s just paper; we’re gonna be in real deep trouble here. And I cannot picture this state going into a project like this, let’s say you’re putting all this money into this project now and then, you know, the market crashes something go on, it’s gonna put everybody in a real tailspin, you know, you know, let alone if that doesn’t happen and I hope it doesn’t happen. The tolls will definitely devastate this state, no ifs, ands and buts. Okay.

The other thing too is we already demonstrated, a lot of people demonstrated that there’s plenty of money already coming in, you know, from the gas taxes, what the motorist pays and all kinds of taxes, fees, DMV’s, penalties, traffic court system, if anybody’s ever been in there. Those cash registers are really cranking it out.
parts, repairs, dealership fees, license fees, auto sales taxes, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So, there’s a lot of money coming in for doing this. If we even just direct that money, grab it and put it to where it’s supposed to be, instead of being tempting to every other projects there, you know.

The states’ got a severe spending problem and we really got to, we really got to get that into perspective here. I know, Mr. Chairman, you mentioned spending is, is, it’s kind of a vague thing. But we’re really looking at it here and looking at what DOT is doing and everything, and they had some good reports, don’t get me wrong. But I think it wouldn’t hurt to do a full audit of what’s going in there because a lot of people have demonstrated that the cost per mile of building a road, it seems like all their other administrative functions are really kind of off the wall as far as pricing, they’re not competitive. And why is it so expensive in Connecticut versus other states? You know, it’s just not competitive.

So, I think a full audit is definitely necessary there.

Expensive studies done, you know, Malloy had one study done in 2009 on the, on the tolling, on the tolling situation. And if that wasn’t enough, he had to do it back in 2018. $10,000, I mean, $10-million dollars. And as we’ve pointed out and you’ve pointed out that, you know, the numbers and figures on these two reports are subsequently different. We haven’t really added that many new roads here. I don’t know what’s different here, you know, a little inflation coming into play, okay,
what. That’s really got to be looked at. And you spent a lot of money and now you find out that the data is kind of, well, now what? So, I mean, that’s got to be done too.

The trust stuff with the state, and I know you guys are doing a good job and stuff, but the trust with the other people handling the money, you know, people can’t afford any more gimmicks, you know, I don’t care what it is, whether it’s the tolls, you know. We’ve heard and we’ve demonstrated the lottery will pay for the education, that never happened. The income tax, temporary tax is supposed to solve all our problems, back, Malloy raised it twice, you know, saying he’d never do it. We have casinos would pay for that. We have a mattress surcharge or a mattress fee, if anybody’s bought any mattresses at any of these places, you’re paying a fee for that, you know, even though you throw it away separately.

There’s a paint recycling fee they stuck on a year or two ago, 75 cents a gallon, you know. Geez, I use a gallon of paint up, I throw it away, why am I paying for this? The tobacco settlement fund, you know, we’re the lowest of all the states as far as actual utilization for a smoker cessation programs. We’re the lowest. So, where’d the rest of the money go? You know, the clean energy funds that we all pay a little bit on our electric bills, there was $175-million dollars there, that got raided and there is a pending lawsuit against that.

You know, I’d like to put solar in my house, but now I find the money is not there to do that. You know, so all these little points here just show, you know, you know, they say something and like you’ve
said, the money, if it went to where it’s supposed to go, I think we wouldn’t be arguing this point today.

So, you know, I’d have a real tough time with supporting a tolls program with this type of thing. You know, I think if we just reign in the spending a little bit, get some audits, see where the money is going and try to redirect it, you know, I think we’ll be in pretty good shape. Questions?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Narkon for your testimony this evening and for raising a series of valid points, I think we will consider as we move forward. I’ll be honest, I think tolling might be the one option that we have available to us. But I hear your points around privacy versus technology.

NEIL NARKON: That’s scary. That is definitely scary.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): And I’d hope you’d look at the bill. I drafted what I think are some pretty decent data protections and privacy protections. But I’m a, I’ve taken criticism and I’ll take constructive complaints. And I get that we might not agree on where we’re trying to go, but if we do up in that direction, I’ll take all the advice I can get. And I do share your concerns.

NEIL NARKON: I appreciate you’re trying to protect us a little bit too. But like I say, you know, 10 years down the road all it takes is another bill or something and it’s scary, you know.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Oh, I understand that that --

NEIL NARKON: And the technology 10 years from now, electronics is gonna be unbelievable. They can
track anything and anything. You know, this 5G network that we’re being forced upon by the taxpayers, by the federal tax dollars, you know, that’s not for faster phone service, that’s more for those guys tracking you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I do appreciate you coming out. I think there’s --

NEIL NARKON: Anyway, it’s late. Thanks for your time.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you.

NEIL NARKON: And good luck, we’ll, we’ll --

REP. LEMAR (96TH): And try to recycle that paint, don’t throw it away.

NEIL NARKON: I do. It’s expensive stuff. You know, all they get is an empty can, but where’s the 75 cents, I mean, you know.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you for your time tonight, Neil.

NEIL NARKON: It’s just money after money after things, you know. Thanks, guys.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Meghan Portfolio, followed by Bob Beaumont, then Linda LaCasse, and then Ernestine Holloway.

Sanctuary State, H.B. 6269, Walking Trail, S.B. 18, Train Newington, S.B. 72, Forgive Payments on Student Loans, S.B. 101, Train Station in Stamford, S.B. 118, Windows and Improvements to Theater in Norwalk, S.B. 21, Athletic Field Improvements, S.B. 163, Free Wi-Fi on the New Haven Line, S.B 775, Central Connecticut Loop Train, S.B. 793, College Program, and my personal favorite, H.B. 6272, A Pool in Rocky Hill. These are just some of the spending bills I saw being proposed. I only have three minutes to speak, so I cut the list short.

You say we have a revenue problem. Clearly we have a spending problem. You have done nothing to prove to me that you can be responsible with the tax money you already take in and you want more. You must think I’m crazy to be okay with this. You want to show me a responsible and voting no on tolls will go a long way. Voting yes, tells me you have not learned anything and don’t really care what the people have to say.

Do you understand what it is like to live paycheck-to-paycheck? This is a struggle people outside of Greenwich live with every day. Where do you think the extra money is going to come from to pay for these tolls? We don’t have a personal transportation fund to raid. This is a flat-out attack on the middleclass in the state. You’re punishing us because you cannot control your spending habits.

And then I’d just like to close with, while doing my research on spending bills, I noticed a lot of bills that you guys want to introduce regarding voting. You can pass all the laws you want to try to get more people to vote. The reason why they aren’t
voting is not because it’s inconvenient it is because people are sick and tired with how our state government fails us time and time again.

What’s the point in, in, what’s the point is what people say. They don’t listen to us. The candidates say one thing during campaigns and do the complete opposite when they are elected. You want more people to vote? Approve tolls, every single one of you that I voted for will be looking for a new job come next election cycle. And that’s it.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you so much for your testimony. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you, Meghan very much for your testimony.

MEGHAN PORTFOLIO: Thank you.


BOB BEAUMONT: Good evening everybody. I’m Bob Beaumont, I’m from Wallingford. Yeah, I don’t believe 7280 should be law because a third-party authority should not be making decisions that you are required to make, especially by default if you don’t vote within 14 days. Allowing this toll authority would simply allow you, the legislature, to not be held accountable to we, the citizens. If a proposal is not popular, it should not become law simply so you, the legislature, can say, not my problem. We vote for you, not a third-party of bureaucrats that nobody knows. If you want tolls so badly, then you should be making decisions and be accountable to us.

And regarding 7282, it should not become law either because it’s a punishment on driving. It’s nothing
more than a road tax. And we should not be punished for the audacity of wanting to drive. We should not be paying more for groceries or other things because truckers will have to pass along the costs of a road tax onto us, which is what tolls effectively are is a road tax.

I’ve heard talk of the legislature and others being exempt from paying tolls, not necessarily in these bills, but I’ve heard this thrown out there. If the proposal is good enough for us, then it certainly is good enough for you. If we have to pay tolls, everyone must. The legislature needs to stop fleecing us and spending our money.

I wanted to make a few points that I thought of later. As an example, I used to drive 25 miles to work in both, actually here and at Park Street in Hartford, a few blocks from here as well as New Britain. And if I had to go through four toll gantries, that money adds up pretty quickly. You know, money is being wasted and there should not be a lockbox because it would just be raided at some point anyway when we’re not looking.

We should, and one great solution to this, grow our way out of our problems, not punish success. If a person can afford insurance, have a vehicle and its maintenance, we can all afford the same rates, not any of these special favors rates to people, depending on where they live or how much they make or what profession that they are in.

A point was made earlier about the trucks. I drive a bit, because I photograph trains in my spare time. And I’ve driven to other states and I noticed roads such as 81, 88, and Interstate 90, which was
mentioned as both the Thruway and the Mass Pike, all have people taking their trucks to use, to avoid 95, and especially avoid Connecticut. Trucks that are going to Rhode Island many time will go 81, 84, 90 and then down 495 to get into Rhode Island that way via 95 there and Mansfield Mass. But I mean these are, these are a lot of things that are just causing us a lot of problems for no reason.

I mean, another thing that was mentioned earlier was congestion tolling. I remember I read one day, this was a couple of years back, but this still applies. One day at rush hour on I66, going into DC, it was $47 one way due to this congestion tolling because of construction and because it fluctuates every six minutes, you know, the numbers just kept going way up. You know, the idea of picking of these different rates are simply picking winners and losers. And we have a lot of issues that are going on here and people should not be getting punished based upon what their zip code is.

And another one that comes to mind was, I remember back in 2016, the rest areas in Wallingford and on the rest, in Middletown as well as 84, suddenly from being 24 hours, as they are in New York and Pennsylvania to, you know, eight hours a day. And when you have that happen, you’re almost being punished for wanting to use a bathroom.

And I can understand not wanting to necessarily staff a place all day because, yeah, labor adds up. But what happens is an example in Pennsylvania, when you cross the Delaware River Bridge on 84, they have the welcome desk locked up, but you can walk in and still use the bathroom the rest of the time.
And something was mentioned about rail. I’m sure Chairman Lemar will be able to relate to this. You have the railyard there that’s just up on the north end of your district there. And that could be a very good use to encourage freight growth in this state, whether it’s there or other parts of the state. When Mr. Reyes was here earlier, Waterbury, there’s that empty yard there that could be put to good use for freight.

But everyone, but people should not get punished for wanting to drive or wanting transport. And I think that is something that needs to be more focused on than trying to just cause more grief and frustration financially and emotionally.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Beaumont for your comments and for again, staying with us this evening and sharing your voice to our proceedings here today. You raised a good point about freight rail and our need to try to figure out a way to help trucks get off the road that don’t want to be on the road and move product and goods throughout our state effectively and efficiently. Thank you. Are there questions for Mr. Beaumont? Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for being here. We had a chance to talk a couple of times earlier. You’ve been here all day long as most everybody, everybody has. And I just wanted to thank you for your testimony, for sharing your views. Also, clearly you’ve absorbed a lot listening to all of the testimony throughout today and to everybody who’s here and has already testified, your, your comments make a difference. So, when we go to discuss these bills, we’ll
definitely reflect on what you had to say. So, thank you.

BOB BEAUMONT: Well, I try to keep myself well informed. I think it’s important and, you know, like I mention these places, like the Beach Boy’s song, Get Around, and I try to keep myself up to speed on what’s going on in various areas, you know, whether it’s in-state or out just to keep tabs.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Linda LaCasse. Linda, again, if that name’s wrong, please correct me.

LINDA LOUISE LACASSE: I’d be delighted to correct you, it’s Linda Louise.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Very different than what I have on my notes.

LINDA LOUISE LACASSE: And LaCasse is my last name, so I’m L-cubed, there’s nothing square about me, so it’s not L, L, it’s triple L.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Linda.

LINDA LOUISE LACASSE: You’re most welcome. The last time I testified till, I think we got out of here at midnight, it was the Assisted Suicide Bill. So, I’m very passionate about what I believe in. And I don’t believe in tolls in Connecticut.

And for the record, my husband’s a barber, and you folks discussing if you haven’t already to tax barbers. So, we’re small entrepreneurs. As a matter of fact, my car is parked in the military parking lot because I got permission because your parking lot was full when I got here. And the military let me park there. But I don’t know if
it’s gonna be locked when I go get my car. So, Neil, from Enfield will be driving me home.

But all things considered, I’m from Somers, with my Boston accent, you can tell that I’m from East Boston, Massachusetts, anymore east, I’d be in the ocean. My four adult children live in Denver, Colorado. They couldn’t get out of this state fast enough and they’re very successful entrepreneurs. I can’t move to Colorado because I have a congenital heart murmur and they live in Denver. And a mile-high city is not good for my wellbeing. I don’t know if being in Connecticut is good for my wellbeing, but I certainly don’t want tolls to add to my agenda of what I need to pay for.

All things considered, my favorite quote is, the battle isn’t against good and evil, the battle is against good and nothing, just show up. And so I commend you, Mr. Chairman, and all the folks that decide to stick around tonight to hear what I have to say.

My background is dentistry. And someone brought up the dental field that was a toll person, one of the folks up in the audience here. My specialty is periodontal therapy. And what prevents periodontal disease is home care. What prevents my husband and I from going bankrupt is home care. Taking care of what we can afford, driving old cars and so on and so forth. I am, like the mayor of this condominium association. I’m the president. And we paid cash for this condo in 2004 and we thought the person who was managing the money, like we depend on you, was managing it respectfully and fiscally responsibly. And in 2013, 2014, we got a call, we need a new septic system. Now, the person who was taking care
of our finances also takes care, he is the treasurer of the KFC one time and he’s on the board of finance from one of the towns I represent. So, I had a lot of faith in him. But then we had a $40,000 septic system and no money. Fortunately, before our town bank merged with a bigger bank, he gave us the $40,000 loan. Since I’ve been president, we have the septic system paid for, a new roof and I have a considerable amount of money in a CD. Now, how could that be possible when no one’s condo fees were raised? And I’ll tell you how it’s possible. If you watch the money. And I also don’t get paid, so I’m not a property manager, but I know how to manage my home. And my husband is doing the best he can to manage the small business. And we got ourselves out of this horrible financial debacle with this condominium.

But then what did we find out? Our foundation’s crumbling. So, after all of that and the states not gonna help business condos, we’re not even on the docket. And I’d be ashamed to even ask you to help us. You know, but my point is this, you do need to have an audit. You do need to know after Meghan spoke about all the things that you’re spending money on. And then you folks have this audacity of hope that we can add one more thing. I’m a 63-year-old woman, but I don’t want to move out of Connecticut, but I’m in that place where I can hightail it out of here, but I’m not going to Colorado, probably Florida or Tennessee where there’s very low taxes.

But I love my state. I love New England. I don’t want to move. And I am part of the American Legion Auxiliary, so I’m concerned about our Veterans. Can
you imagine how Veterans paying all these tolls to get to New Haven Hospital, that’s where I volunteer. And, you know, didn’t get paid for today. Don’t get paid for managing the condo. Don’t get paid for volunteering. We love the state and we know you get paid a meager fee. But still, look at where you are today. I really appreciate you and what you’re doing, but I really would encourage you to really pay attention to the finances with unfunded pension liabilities. We have these ideas like AOC, that we’re gonna have this green planet. I don’t know what’s going in 12 years, we’re not gonna be around anyway, according to the, the assessment. So, you know, I guess we should drink and live merrily.

But I just want you to know that Lowell Weicke, as soon as he raised the income taxes, he got out of dodge. I think he’s in Florida. And I have witnessed from all my years in Connecticut, which is now 30, the mismanagement of funds. And it may not be your fault because none of you may have been there 30 years ago, I don’t know. This guy in the middle, Mr. Lemar, he looks like a young handsome dude, might be my son’s age, I don’t know. Now, I love Ms. Devlin and this guy over here, Mr. O’Dea, he’s talking about the gas tax and the toll tax. Mr. Leone, I have no idea where you’re coming from. And hey, laughter is medicine to the soul and the last shall be first in the kingdom of God. So, I think you’ve given me more than my time. Did the bell go off?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Oh, yeah.

LINDA LOUISE LACASSE: Oh, thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Oh, yeah.
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
11:00 A.M.
PUBLIC HEARING

LINDA LOUISE LACASSE:  Applaud all my friends in Somers, Connecticut. And if my mother’s watching in East Boston, Massachusetts, I love you, mom.

REP. LEMAR (96TH):  CTN doesn’t quite reach that far.

LINDA LOUISE LACASSE:  We’ve got to do something about that. With this technology, it’ll help you out.

REP. LEMAR (96TH):  No, I’m pretty sure you can download a clip later on.

LINDA LOUISE LACASSE:  I don’t want to be tracked everywhere I go, incidentally, right.

REP. LEMAR (96TH):  That’s fair. Well, thank you, Linda cubed, you’re definitely not square. I appreciate your testimony this evening. And frankly, I appreciate all that you do in your community, in your town, and in the State of Connecticut.

LINDA LOUISE LACASSE:  God bless you and I appreciate you, but I hope you vote no on the tolls. God bless you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH):  I think it’s a compliment tonight. People misled me on how this toll debate would go today. Ernestine Holloway. Ms. Holloway, you are our last member of the public for the evening.

ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY:  Yes, and I’m not sure you’re gonna like it.

REP. LEMAR (96TH):  You know, nothing can bring me down at this point. So, I’m ready for it.
REVEREND ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY: Okay. My name is Reverend Ernestine Holloway. I’m actually an Evangelistical Pastor.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I apologize for not recognizing you appropriately.

REVEREND ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY: God don’t see it that way, either. What we need to have a come to Jesus moment. I don’t understand all of this and I’m pretty good with math because I run an organization that fed 600 families with no tax dollars. We also gave out 650 book bags, hold ice cream parties for the kids in Meriden. And I ran it on a $3-$4,000 budget. And I look at your budget and say, if I ran, my ministry that God gave me, like you do, we’d be bankrupt and broken out of business.

I don’t think anybody today, I heard everything everybody said, it was repetitive. Nobody talked about the working class poor, the poor that works in McDonald’s that only get $10 an hour. And you’re putting up all these tolls. How are they going to afford it?

I have a family that the husband works in Portland that takes public transportation and a gentleman said something earlier about public transportation, everybody don’t have cars. So, he works in Portland. The buses stop at 6:30. I live in Meriden, I don’t drive because I have road rage, so it’s probably good that I don’t drive.

So, the buses stop running at 4:30, so that means that if I’m not on that bus at 4:30, I’ve got to walk home. So, you want to put up all these tolls and by the way, the elaborate train stations that you put up, where I live in Meriden, where only 25
people get on a day. Don’t make sense to me when you could of ran a bus up the Burlington Turnpike, ran one to Waterbury, so those people can get jobs.

Oh, speaking of Portland, there’s not a bus that comes down form Portland to Meriden. I don’t understand how you’re not so cohesive with your busing for the people that don’t drive. You want to know why a lot of people are not here? The trains stopped running at a certain time in those other cities. So, if I come here and you after 12, 1 o’clock like you did the other pregnancy thing, I can’t get home. So, somebody needs to explain to me what you’re doing with all this money and I can’t get home after 4:30?

And I did tell Governor Malloy that and I plan to tell Governor Lamont that. Here’s the deal, $10 an hour, that means I’m gonna make $400 a week because I’m only working five days because I’m a single mom with two kids, husband died. So, that means when taxes are finished, it may about $260. So, at $260, I got to pay rent. I got to pay light, gas, and the telephone bill and I got to buy my kids clothes and shoes and food because I made $2 over lunchmeat to get food stamps. So, how are we gonna pay for a bridge, and oh, yeah, I got a car. It may not be worth much, but it takes me to Point A and Point B. And I work in Portland or Hartford, so that means I got to pay all this money to get to this job. Where’s that money gonna come from?

And if you’re making the working class, the middleclass, working class poor and the poor poorer, how is that gonna work for this state? I don’t think anybody took a look at that. And I listened to Greenwich talk about, oh, yeah, we want tolls.
Well, why don’t you pay the tolls for all the poor people that can’t afford it? Put it over there.

I listened at the Mayor of Waterbury because I am a community advocate also. And I deal with teenagers and kids and I fight for seniors. Guess what they’re saying, because, guess what, I defend Waterbury also, Cromwell, Bridgeport, Norwalk, Norwich and guess what, and I’ve lived in Groton. Those poor people don’t want tolls. Did anybody up here say, well, my poor constituents that work for $10 an hour want tolls? I don’t think so because if they did, guess what, they’d be voted out of office. And I’m gonna tell you, if you pass this legislation, and by the way you asking me for money and you’re telling me I need to budget, but you can’t budget the $5 million that you bet from the gas tax.

So, what do you want? Put in legislation where it goes in the lockbox, you don’t snatch it before it gets there and use it correctly. If you land the state correctly and don’t bail out people, let them pull themselves up by their own boot straps, that’s what you’re telling us, the public. If we get this, we got to pay for it. Really? So, then why don’t you take the money that we already pay and pay for it. And Governor Lamont, you gonna have a come to Jesus moment. You want to tax everything? Well, why don’t you pay for it, you make enough money.

These are what the constituents are telling me. And I’m gonna say this in closing, I ran for office. I ran against Buddy Altobello and I ran for mayor. You know why I got 41 percent of the votes, because they knew he was going to vote for tolls. So, all the people that didn’t want tolls voted for me. And
guess what, if you pass these tolls, I guarantee you I’ll get into office the next time as State Rep because I’m gonna make sure they know that he voted for tolls.

I want you to think before you pass this bill, and I’m begging you, because it’s gonna hurt me. And by the way, I lived in New York City. You know why my kids don’t come to visit me? Because they can’t afford them tolls. So, if you put more in, I guess I’ll see my grandkids maybe once a year because I guarantee you my daughter and her husband that are barely making it aren’t gonna be able to afford them tolls. And please don’t tell me to take the train because the train stops running at a certain time.

Why did you guys tear up all them tracks that you have? I’ve been trying to figure that out for the longest. Every time that I go in, I see train tracks and they all uprooted. Why do Connecticut build something and then 10 years later, you guys come tear it back up? I don’t understand that. So maybe you can explain it to me?

And by the way, I want to say thank you for holding this hearing. I don’t know everybody’s name and it’s probably good because I just learned how to email you, you don’t want me emailing you. But I do want to say that you have a hard job before you. I’m praying for you guys, not that I like everybody because I don’t. But I love you guys enough to say that God has entrusted you with a responsibility and the responsibility is to make sure the little guy and the high taxpayer because we can’t leave them out, that there is a cohesiveness that it’s equal so that we could survive in the state together. Because guess what, the poor are gonna be with us always.
And I’m gonna give you this example and shut the heck up. Meriden tore down a housing complex. And what they said was, they didn’t want undesirables, they didn’t want the poor people. They said they didn’t say that, but they did. But they got rid of the poor people that lived in that housing department. So, now we lost revenue in the mall. So somebody said to me, well, why is the mall losing revenue? And I laughed, I said because them poor people that don’t really have money, they shop in those malls.

So, if you put up those tolls, I’m not coming to Waterbury to shop for them clothes that I can’t find in Meriden. I’m gonna stay home and I’m gonna order in the catalog and I’m gonna use Amazon and I’m gonna be all right. But guess what, the malls won’t be. We’ve lost Sears, JC Penney, and a couple of other stores. So, if you do this, you’ve better make sure you know what you’re doing. And guess what, Stop and Shop, aren’t hiring people. They just put a robot in. So, who’s gonna pay for this when there is no jobs? And that’s something you all better take into consideration because the next generation are our babies and they’re gonna inherit a bigger mess than what you guys came into.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Reverend Holloway for your testimony, for sitting here almost all day.

REVEREND ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY: Yes, because I had to go upstairs.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): For your passion, for the people that you work for that you represent and for your willingness to serve them all throughout our state
and for sharing your time with us this evening. We really do appreciate it.

REVEREND ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Are there any questions or comments? Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, I just have to make one final comment. You are clearly in the right profession. And thank you for your really clear testimony and also identifying unintended consequences that sometimes are overlooked in lots of things that we do. But we appreciate you. You’ve been patient throughout this whole day and thank you so much really.

REVEREND ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY: You’re welcome.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative MacLachlan.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, thank you, Reverend for taking the time to come and join us and for your advocacy for disenfranchised people groups, making sure their voices are heard today. And we will certainly be taking your testimony into strong consideration. It certainly has touched me deeply. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, and with that, I do believe we’ve exhausted our public hearing testimony for this evening. Is there anyone here who would wish to testify that has not been afforded the opportunity to do so?

REVEREND ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY: I just want to say thank you and you guys go home.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. And so thank you to the committee members for being here this evening, for sticking out the last 12 hours or so. I think that many times this could have been more heated than it was. I think by and large we had a good place, a good place where people felt comfortable providing the testimony that they wanted to provide without fear of comments or reprisal in the audience. And I think ultimately we had a good debate. And I thought this conversation was actually a healthy one for the State of Connecticut. So, I want to thank each and everyone of you for the time you’ve given us tonight. Senator Leone.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Representative O’Dea.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Yes.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): I just, I want to thank the Co-chairs. This committee, as I’ve said earlier, has always been bipartisan, Tony Guerrera, I’m sure he’s been watching, but he was, that was his main goal, to make sure everybody was heard and equal and you have done that and thank you very much. You both did an outstanding job today, thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): And with that, we are adjourned.