

January 30, 2012

While I'm not surprised the current administration is working to advance vehicle tolling on CT's major interstates, I'm disappointed it's gotten this far. How is it that a legislative body which is designed to represent – not preside over – its citizens has advanced yet another money grab, and given any consideration to the economic, safety, and long-term effects of those citizens it purports to represent?

It's common wisdom that ultimately, the consumer pays for everything. Politicians who believe that excessive taxing and financial assessments to corporations are penalizing those corporations refuse to acknowledge that it all gets crammed down to the consumer. One can easily make the connection that the companies which are sending the trucks which will be assessed at the tolls carrying everything from concrete to furniture, to food, and medications, etc., will simply increase pricing to the consumer to cover the increased cost of the tolls. This is simply another tax crammed to the Connecticut consumer, disguised as something other than what it is. Those firms which are forward thinking, are likely taking into consideration the additional traffic nightmares which will occur when the tolling gantries are constructed and building those delays, as well as the costs of excess fuel and depreciation into the current pricing models. For any politician or proponent of a tolling effort to not acknowledge this very real fact is evidence that they're not fit for the job and should be removed from office. How does a state legislator justify that he or she is representing the constituent interests knowing that pricing of all goods transported on Connecticut's interstates will have a significant price increase due to the construction of and institution of electronic tolls? Also, what could a cost-benefit analysis possibly show to validate tolls on a 1.4 mile stretch of I-684 in Greenwich, after one takes into account the multiple lawsuits and obstructive efforts which will undoubtedly be raised by the State of New York, Westchester County, Village of Armonk, NY; Village of North Castle, NY, and others.

Having lived through an abundance of I-95 reconstruction, maintenance, updates, etc., I do have first-hand knowledge of the collateral traffic congestion, pedestrian safety hazards, motorcycle and bicycle safety hazards, and sheer frustration which comes with both cars and trucks taking sideroads to avoid certain areas of the interstate. There is no doubt additional volume on those roads adjacent to the interstates will occur and will occur on a 24-hour basis in the 12 areas of the proposed tolling gantries. There's a significant

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knock-on effect here. As local roadways and associated infrastructure (curbs, sidewalks, drainage structures, traffic signal systems, etc) will undergo unplanned excessive use and will reach the end of their useful life sooner than would otherwise occur. Furthermore, the local emergency services – fire, police, ems – will be constrained due to additional traffic volume and will likely need to augment forces to deal with the increased volume, potential pedestrian, cyclist, or motorcyclist injuries or incidents. Of the 12 areas impacted, at least 8 of them are in very densely populated areas which lend themselves to the probable circumstances noted above. All it will take is one EMS call in which a rapid response is delayed due to increased traffic volume, culminating with a tragic ending. This is a recipe for disaster.

If nobody has noticed, Connecticut was ranked as one of the 5 states most vacated by residents in 2019. While some legislators and policy makers in Hartford may pretend the exodus is due to weather, New England winters, and the like; it's time to look at a hard truth. Connecticut has had confiscatory taxes since the implementation of the state income tax, which carried an implied sunset clause. Tragically, the sun is still high in the sky, and our taxes and fees are among the highest in the US. As reported by the Tax Foundation, in 2019 the state tax burden in Connecticut is \$2,218 per capita, second only to New York which tops the list at \$2,249 per capita – a mere \$31 more than Connecticut. Connecticut is also consistently ranked as one of the most business unfriendly states in the US, and when businesses leave, employees and their families follow their employers. Those of us who have lived through the birth of the state income tax have no doubt that the potential car exemption from the tolling will be short lived.

Soon we'll be doing one of three things: (i) paying more to drive roads for which we already pay excessive and ever rising taxes, (ii) take secondary roads further congesting neighborhoods and destroying municipal roadways as noted above, (iii) join the thousands who have already left the state. There is a fourth possibility, which is (iv) all of the above. Either and all of the facts noted contribute to a long-term effect which blemishes Connecticut as a business unfriendly, tax and fee excessive state which has no promise to those stuck here, and further erodes Connecticut's struggling economy.

It has been noted that the revenue gained from the potential tolls will allow the State to receive federal infrastructure loans at a more preferred rate. What is not revealed is where the revenue will actually

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reside. Will the future revenue stream be sold to obtain a slug of cash? Will the revenue remain in Connecticut and be used for infrastructure upgrades as advertised? There does not appear to be a great deal of clarity surrounding these questions. Additionally, with regard to the construction of the apparatus, nothing has been published with regard to cost, timeline, interruptions, DEEP review of impact, local collateral effect, traffic studies, etc. Further, we've not seen a valid and agreed upon projection of revenue, handling of revenue, expenses, licensing, etc., nor has any reliable and fact-based summary been provided which delineates the funds which will be available to the State for use in addressing its transportation infrastructure.

The continued efforts to extract cash from Connecticut residents is a worn out sideshow which sours the taste of those of us who are mandated to fund the very individuals who have contributed to our excessive per capita tax burden, our decimated home and real estate values, and has failed in any effort to attract and retain significant business interests willing to make an investment in Connecticut on its own, without the promise of incentives or state funding. Never has the citizenry of Connecticut seen an original and creative thought to reducing expenses rather than simply grabbing cash at every possible turn in the last 20 years. The idea of a dozen – or possibly more – tolling facilities is another in a long list of cash extraction ploys by state government which contribute to the ever-mounting long-term erosion of any possibility that Connecticut's economy will seed growth and ever thrive again.

Respectfully submitted,

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