



In This Issue

- 📦 Interstate Toll Plans Expand
- 📦 TX Organization Moves Forward with \$2.2B Toll Plan
- 📦 FHWA Approves I-80 Toll Plan
- 📦 Environmental Gas Tax Hike Faces Uphill Battle
- 📦 MTA Reports \$767M in Congestion Plan Costs
- 📦 DOT, FAA Directed to Find Air Congestion Solutions
- 📦 Audit: Congestion should be Top Priority
- 📦 I-35W Award Stands, Design Unveiled

Interstate Toll Plans Expand

The newspaper.com – October 9, 2007

National - The future of the interstate highway system may involve a nationwide toll road network as states move forward with plans to toll existing interstates in Pennsylvania and Maine and an entirely new tolled interstate has been approved in South Carolina. The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission announced a \$3 million contract has been awarded to the highly political McCormick Taylor Inc to install open road tollbooths on I-80. While the effort could be upset by pending federal legislation, Gov. Edward G. Rendell is moving forward with the plan, saying tolls are inevitable.

Lawmakers in Maine have come up with a plan to toll existing sections of I-95 and I-295 and the legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Transportation overwhelmingly approved a \$40,000 preliminary study to kick off toll efforts. Gov. John E. Baldacci (D) has vowed to fight the plans, saying they will not go through while he is in office.

In South Carolina, the FHWA has approved the first new interstate to be built as a toll road since the interstate system began in 1956. The 80-mile toll road plan would connect I-73/I-74 between the Myrtle Beach area in South Carolina to south of Rockingham, South Carolina. "The I-73 project is a great example of leaders at the state and local level using tolling as a solution to traffic problems," U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters said.

Transportation officials in Texas have been lobbying Congress for the right to toll existing interstates, although lawmakers and the public have responded coolly to the notion.

TX Organization Moves Forward with \$2.2B Toll Plan

Austin Business Journal – October 9, 2007

Texas - Five new toll roads are on their way to the Austin area, after the Capitol Area

Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) gave their approval to the plan Monday night. The new toll plan will replace a 2004 plan and includes tolling four existing roads and the proposed State Highway 45 Southwest.

SH 45 from MoPac Expressway South to the planned FM 1626 will be four-lane tollways with a free frontage lane on each side. The total cost of the five projects approved by CAMPO is estimated to be \$2.2 billion.

The other roads planned for expansion as toll roads are: U.S. 183 from Springdale Drive to Patton Ave., SH 71 East from Riverside Drive to U.S. 183, U.S. 290 East from U.S. Highway 183 to State Highway 130 and the convergence of SH 71 and U.S. 290 West in Oak Hill.

FHWA Approves I-80 Toll Plan

Evening Bulletin, PA - Oct 9, 2007; Land Line Magazine, MO - Oct 8, 2007

Pennsylvania - Gov. Ed Rendell's push to turn I-80 into a toll road in Pennsylvania is continuing as the Federal Highway Administration has given initial approval for the proposal. The FHWA approved the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission's Aug. 17 application to add tolls to the 311-mile roadway, under the Interstate System Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Pilot Program. The proposal will be one of six under the FHWA program established to authorize interstate tolling.

Tolling outside of the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFTEA-LU) legislation is prohibited. The six pilot tolling programs were created under SAFTEA-LU, along with other FHWA programs such as "Corridors for the Future." The toll plans have faced national opposition however, from Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-TX, and Rep. John Peterson, R-PA, who introduced legislation in September stop the FHWA's tolling programs for interstates.

Both of the lawmakers' bills, specifically targeting tolling efforts in their respective states, received approval as amendments to appropriations legislation. They are now waiting on the House and Senate to form a conference committee to agree on the language in the two appropriations bills versions.

U.S. Department of Transportation approval is still necessary before the I-80 proposal can be put into action. Over the next few weeks, the Turnpike Commission and PennDOT will complete an application as the next phase in the process.

Environmental Gas Tax Hike Faces Uphill Battle

TheReporter.com, CA - Oct 8, 2007

California - A ten-cent gas tax increase in the Bay Area to fight global warming may not receive an enthusiastic response from local transportation officials. The regional Metropolitan Transportation Commission is closely examining the tax hike proposed for the nine Bay Area counties, estimated to bring in up to \$300 million or more annually. The revenue would be used to fund transportation-related projects emphasizing public transit and efforts to reduce auto pollution.

Solano County Supervisor Jim Spering, a member of the Solano Transportation Authority as well as the MTC, said in the current economy, he does not see himself backing the regional gas tax. "I think it would preclude a local sales tax increase, at least in my lifetime," he said. "I think we

need to deal with some of the local issues before we deal with global warming, which is something that may not even be measurable.”

In 2006, voters rejected sales tax increases for transportation in both Napa and Solano counties. Other critics of the global warming tax package fear the regional tax hike would decrease hopes of a local tax increase to fight congestion such as in American Canyon and Napa County. “You get voter fatigue on taxes after awhile,” said American Canyon Mayor Leon Garcia. “There is obviously a threshold to what people are willing to accept.” The mayor would support the MTC proposal if it offered something to fight congestion as well.

The MTC hopes that although past polls have not been optimistic for the tax to win the necessary two-thirds vote, increasing public concern over climate change may help sway more voters than previously.



It seems that the passion for fighting global warming doesn't persuade voters to impose a tax in the Bay Area. Voters are astute and like to draw connections between what taxes they pay and the benefits they reap. This is probably an example of trying to connect two causes (global warming and congestion) that people care about which don't necessarily belong together. Apparently, it's just not working. TW

MTA Reports \$767M in Congestion Plan Costs

Newsday – October 8, 2007

NEW YORK - New York's congestion pricing plan would necessitate \$767 million in transportation improvements for commuters to switch from cars to public transit, according to a report by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Mayor Michael Bloomberg's congestion plan will have little impact on commuter railroads, however, said the MTA in its report to a state commission evaluating the plan.

The plan would increase the ridership on the Long Island Rail Road by more than 3,500 riders daily, and add 2,500 riders to Metro-North – about a 1 percent increase for each. The MTA also anticipates an additional 78,000 commuters to start using mass transit in the city.

MTA's report points out that the number of new rail users “from the northern and eastern suburbs is estimated ... to be substantially lower than those in New York City.” The additional suburban riders could also be “accommodated by adding commuter rail service in a limited number of locations where feasible, using the existing Metro-North and LIRR network,” the report says.

Included in the \$767 million worth of improvements is funding for 367 new city and suburban buses, 46 additional subway cars and two new bus depots in Queens and Brooklyn. The MTA anticipates receiving an additional \$184 million from the federal government to cover some of the extra costs of the congestion pricing plan.

DOT, FAA Directed to Find Air Congestion Solutions

Business Travel News, NY - Oct 8, 2007

Washington, DC - Air congestion delays are a top concern in the White House, and President George W. Bush has enlisted Transportation Secretary Mary Peters to consult with the aviation industry to develop solutions by the end of the year. This comes after last month when the Bush administration directed aviation officials to cut air traffic congestion and delays by next summer

in an effort to prevent a repeat of the worst travel season in the history of domestic airlines.

Air traffic modernization legislation is already making its way through the Washington, including proposals establishing new capacity caps. Congestion pricing and government-mandated flight reductions are all being considered. Industry analysts and airlines warn that each of those considerations comes with consequences, including fare hikes and service reductions.

"We're going to address customer concerns and address congestion," said Secretary Peters, adding the DOT's review will cover all angles and options. "Our preference is to get a bill and work with the industry, but if we can't do that, we'll follow the President's mandate."

Secretary Peters said the immediate concentration will be on airspace in New York City, where 75-percent of airline delays originate. A meeting is scheduled with the FAA, New York JFK carriers and other stakeholders to talk about de-peaking flight times and cutting back schedules.



Congestion at our airports continues to be a problem and increasing capacity is probably the answer. More gates and runways, changes in airspace management, better air traffic control computer systems, global positioning...the list of needs goes on and on. With 1/3 of the flights in August arriving late the pressure is on to fix this problem. The system is broken and all it takes is a bad storm near a hub to make it worse. It's going to take money and leadership. TW

Audit: Congestion should be Top Priority

KING5.com, WA - Oct 10, 2007

OLYMPIA, Washington – Congestion must be the top priority for the Washington legislature if traffic is ever going to improve in the Puget Sound area, according to a new performance audit of the state department of transportation. "We get slower and slower and slower unless there's some alternative," said Brian Sonntag, state auditor.

Adding lanes and redesigning roads are two of the top goals listed by the report, as well as establishing a central agency that would be directly responsible for solving the congestion problems. Currently, 128 separate state and local entities each make their own assorted policies. "They compete against each other some of the time and that much more bureaucracy slows things down," said Sonntag.

The auditor asserts that if all the recommendations were implemented, commute times could be cut by up to 20 percent over the next five years, and save the Puget Sound economy nearly \$800 million each year.

WSDOT officials disagreed with the audit, saying if congestion became the top priority, road maintenance and safety improvements would be sacrificed. "We believe first and foremost, maintain the asset that we have. Keep it working. Make it work better with operational improvements and then add lanes," said Paula Hammond, interim transportation secretary. "The issue around congestion first and only congestion really isn't workable for us," Hammond said.

I-35W Award Stands, Design Unveiled

TwinCities.com-Pioneer Press – October 8, 2007

Minnesota - The selection of Flatiron Constructors and Manson Construction Co. as the winning

bidders to rebuild the I-35W bridge will stand, said the Minnesota Department of Administration, following protests by two regional bidders not chosen. C.S. McCrossan and a joint team of Ames Construction and Lunda Construction, which each submitted cheaper bids with shorter timetables, called the Mn/DOT bidding process flawed.

However in a 17-page report, Department of Administration chief procurement officer Kent Allin and contracts manager Betsy Hayes wrote that nothing in the bidding process was "arbitrary or capricious," as alleged by the protestors. Their opinion said Flatiron received "significantly higher" ratings by all six of the technical evaluators who examined the proposal, and there was evidence that the bids were evaluated with "seriousness of purpose, professionalism and integrity."

Mn/DOT's project manager for the bridge replacement, Jon Chiglo, said the 27-member panel that evaluated the technical portions of the bridge proposals were not told about their proposed schedule or cost. The Department of Administration's rejection of the protest came just hours before the unveiling of the design for the new bridge.

The \$234 million replacement bridge will combine twin five-lane spans to form a highly durable concrete structure with built-in sensors to monitor its structural integrity along with multiple backup systems not present in the collapsed steel structure. A ceremonial groundbreaking will likely take place next week, although construction probably won't begin until November, said Flatiron Constructors Inc. project manager Peter Sanderson. Completion is planned by Christmas Eve 2008, although the builders can earn multimillion bonuses for finishing early.

Copyright © 2004-2007 The Tom Warne Report, LLC. Quotation or distribution for political or commercial use is not permitted. For questions about how this document may be shared or distributed, please visit TomWarneReport.com for contact information.