

RE: Raised Bill 5391 AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Chairmen Guerrero, Leone, Boucher, Ranking Member Carney, and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony. I am Joe Sculley, President of the Motor Transport Association of Connecticut (MTAC).

MTAC has deep concerns about the immediate fiscal impacts of this bill, as well as longer term economic impact on the State of Connecticut.

FISCAL IMPACT

Connecticut residents and businesses are being told that \$4.3 billion worth of transportation projects are postponed because the Special Transportation Fund will be insolvent, and that the State cannot sell bonds on Wall Street. Yet Section 2 of this bill mandates spending more money.

Affiliates of MTAC who specialize in tolling policy have provided high-level cost estimates to MTAC. They state that if an “investment grade” traffic and revenue analysis is done, that by itself is likely a 1 year, \$1-2 million study. Layer on top of that a NEPA review, and that could add 6 months to a year, and at least another \$1 million, maybe substantially more depending on how extensive the system is that CT is considering. It’s probably safe to say that a widely-rumored 70 – 80 toll gantries can be classified as “extensive.”

Let’s not waste any more time money on this highly controversial proposal. No state has ever converted a toll-free interstate to a fully congestion-priced interstate. Connecticut wants to do it for nearly every limited access highway in the state.

Since one legislature cannot bind another legislature, passing this bill mandating spending on something that may never be voted on is not good policy.

\$47 TO TRAVEL 10 MILES

Interstate 66 lanes in Northern Virginia recently implemented a similar (but not identical) scheme to what CT is proposing, and the result was tolls as high as \$47 to travel 10 miles. <http://www.governing.com/daily-digit/4675-toll.html> If the General Assembly allows CT DOT to “implement tolls on Connecticut’s highways,” it is completely possible that the tolls could rise to these rates.

The system used on Interstate 66 is known as dynamic tolling. This bill allows for dynamic tolling in CT. From section 2: *The tolling proposal shall identify the highways, or the portions thereof, where the proposed tolls may be located and the toll amounts that may be charged, including the use of dynamic pricing and discounts, if any.*”



To be clear, congestion pricing purposely sets tolls so high that they force drivers off the highway in the name of “reducing congestion.” In Connecticut, these are highways that are already paid for through fuel taxes, registration fees, and other costs. This is double taxation that will devastate the local economy.

CONGESTION PRICING PLANS NOT LIKE OTHER STATES

Toll proponents have stated that congestion pricing on interstates in Connecticut would be like congestion pricing on interstates in other states. Congestion pricing exists on interstates in other states because a new, express lane was built. Only the new lane(s) are tolled. Drivers have an option whether to use the toll lanes or stay on the toll-free lanes when the tolls get too high. Connecticut wants to congestion price toll all existing interstate lanes, which is something that no state has ever done before.

REVENUE CAN BE DIVERTED; MOTORISTS USED AS PIGGY BANK

Section 4 states that revenue can be spent according to 23 USC 129(a)(3). According to that statute, “if the public authority certifies annually that the tolled facility is being adequately maintained, any other purpose for which Federal funds may be obligated by a State under this title.” Some of those projects include “construction of a transit project eligible for assistance....,” “Bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways,” and “Control of noxious weeds and aquatic noxious weed.”

Claims that toll revenue cannot be diverted from the highway are not true. CT DOT already spends an unsustainable 62% of its operating budget (which is funded by highway users) on transit subsidies. Highway users currently get next to nothing for the taxes and fees they pay, and this proposal is adding insult to injury.

Section 10 requires notification when Special Transportation Fund resources exceed 2.5 times estimated debt service payments for transportation. This is again another signal that the State would continue to tax cars and trucks and spend the money on transit services from which the motorists draw no benefit. There is nothing to prevent the state from bonding at will for transit services and making highway users pay for it. If spending 62% of DOT operating budget on transit is not enough, how high should that ratio go? 70%? 90%?

LACK OF PUBLIC INPUT

Section 6 calls for “one public information meeting in the general vicinity of the proposed toll location.” There have been estimates for 70-80 toll gantries across all highways in the state. Where would this ONE public information meeting be?

EXHORBITANT PENALTIES

Section 9 allows penalties of “one hundred dollars for each violation...” Could a driver who goes from the NY border to New Haven, who hits 12 toll gantries but never receives the bill, be charged penalties of \$100 X 12 for \$1,200?

CAN'T HAVE TOLLS LIKE OTHER STATES

Toll supporters point to the fact that surrounding states have tolls, so Connecticut can too. The fact is that federal law currently prohibits Connecticut from installing fixed-rate tolls on our highways. The fact is there is no comparison between, the Mass Pike, for example, and interstate highways in Connecticut. The Mass Pike was built with tolls. The tolls were not installed on the highway decades after the fact. All that the Mass Pike did was simply swap toll booths for electronic tolls. That is why the Mass Pike has fixed-rate tolls, which CT cannot implement on its highways.

MTAC appreciates the passion of toll supporters, but strongly disagrees with them. Congestion-price tolling existing lanes is highly controversial. That's why no state has ever done what CT is trying to do in the 27 years that federal law has in theory allowed it.

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ABOUT CT TRUCKING INDUSTRY:

85.8%: number of Connecticut communities that depend exclusively on trucks to move their goods

\$3.2 billion: total trucking industry wages paid in Connecticut (2016)

59,390: trucking industry jobs in Connecticut (2016)

\$53,430: average annual salary in Connecticut (2016)

\$8,258: average annual CT-imposed highway user fees paid by tractor trailers

\$8,906: average annual fed-imposed highway user fees paid by tractor trailers