

# Transportation Tolling

## Background:

Today's technology provides new opportunities in the efficiency of using tolls. New tolling concepts exist, such as high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, express toll lanes, truck only lanes, corridor tolling, and mileage-based pricing. Tolling continues to be a primary solution by a few states with intense traffic needs. Economists believe that using flat user charges such as the gas tax does not reflect the true value of highway travel under congested conditions. In Washington, the legislature enacted a statewide tolling policy in the passage of HB 1773 in the 2008 session while at the same time we are testing these theories with two pilot projects on the use of tolls. The Narrows Bridge is collecting tolls to help finance the new construction. Some state subsidy exists for this pilot project. The second project is the SR 167 High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes. This four-year effort will test a new congestion management tool that allows solo drivers with a Windshield e-Sticker Transponder to pay an electronic toll without ever stopping to use the carpool lanes. Toll rates will fluctuate with the level of congestion to ensure that traffic in the HOT lane flows at least at 45 mph, even when the regular lanes are congested.

## Problem:

The 1998 Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation and other studies have identified nearly \$50 billion in transportation investment needs throughout the state. The 2003, 2004 and 2005 funding packages set us on a course for improvement, but leave significant needs unmet. The Association of Washington Business believes transportation infrastructure is crucial to improving our state's business climate. Washington can no longer rely on the traditional funding mechanisms to finance these projects. Tolls will be a critical part of the solution as we look to the future funding of transportation projects. For tolls to be successful in Washington, the toll revenues will need similar constitutional protection as motor vehicle fuel taxes to ensure they are not used for unrelated purposes.

## Solution:

1. Tolls are an appropriate long-term financing mechanism for transportation projects.
2. Tolls should have a similar constitutional protection as motor vehicle fuel taxes to ensure revenues are not used for unrelated purposes.
3. Revenues from toll projects should be dedicated to the project corridors from which they are collected.
4. Utilize public-private partnerships for road construction, preservation, maintenance and tolling authority.
5. Substantial infrastructure projects should consider the feasibility of implementing tolls.
6. Tolls should ensure a seamless, efficient and interoperable system.
7. A combination of revenue accountability and sunsets on tolls should be considered by the legislature to promote support from citizens for tolls as part of financing our transportation infrastructure.