



ALLIANCE FOR
TOLL-FREE INTERSTATES

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Contact: Stephanie Kane
Phone: 757-373-9123
media@TollFreeInterstates.com

ATFI Applauds Long-Term House Highway Funding Bill Proposal

The Alliance for Toll-Free Interstates (ATFI) applauds the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for proposing a multi-year highway funding bill, the “Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015,” before the October 29 expiration of surface transportation programs across the nation. While ATFI urges the committee to eliminate the Interstate System Reconstruction & Rehabilitation Pilot Program (ISRRPP) entirely, ATFI commends the House for taking into account its constituents’ vocal opposition to tolling existing interstates. As a result of strong public opposition to tolling, the House bill does not expand the number of states eligible to impose new tolls under the tolling pilot program, nor does it allow funds collected through tolls to be diverted to other purposes.

The bill draft changes the ISRRPP in two ways. It would require states to have enabling legislation before the pilot is approved, and it imposes a 3-year deadline for approval before the slot can be transferred to another state. USDOT may extend that deadline for 1 more year if the state has made substantial progress. The states currently holding the slots, Missouri, North Carolina and Virginia, have 1 year to receive approval, or USDOT may extend conditional approval by 1 year if substantial progress has been made.

Unlike the Senate’s DRIVE Act put forward in July, the House’s bill draft does not include language that would allow the diversion of funds collected through tolls for purposes other than improvements to that road. Because tolls are generally upheld as a ‘user fee’ for the roads traveled, diverting these funds away from infrastructure improvements is a violation of the public trust.

“Though there are concerns with the bill’s ‘use it or lose it’ provision that forces slots to be transferred to new states after a short period of inactivity, we applaud the bill drafters for resisting any temptation to expand the number of slots in the tolling pilot program, for adding the enabling legislation requirement, and for not making toll funds fungible so that they might be redirected to any number of unrelated projects,” said ATFI spokesperson Stephanie Kane.

The ISRRPP has provided 17 years’ worth of evidence that tolling existing interstates is not a viable transportation funding method. Analysis and study have led to immense public, business, and legislative opposition as the facts about tolling become clear.

“History has shown that, when given full consideration, states recognize what all the impacted industries have always known – that tolling interstate lanes which drivers now freely access is not only unpopular, it is an inefficient financing mechanism that is the worst possible approach to raising transportation revenue. The ISRRPP is a failed pilot program that should be repealed altogether, not expanded,” added Truck Renting and Leasing Association (TRALA) President and CEO Jake Jacoby.

Electronic tolls can waste 14% to 20% of revenues on administrative costs. Tolling takes a huge bite out of commuter pay, and modern electronic tolling can discriminate against the tens-of-millions of Americans who are un-banked. Tolling also diverts traffic onto secondary roads, which leads to premature road maintenance costs for local taxpayers. And because secondary roads are less equipped to handle such volumes, diversion endangers public safety by delaying first responders and increasing accident rates.

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