

United States Senator

BOB BENNETT

Chairman, Joint Economic Committee

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REPORT SHOWS NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR FINANCING ROADS WHILE IMPROVING CONGESTION AND SAFETY

Washington, DC—A Joint Economic Committee report released today explored ideas to fund future transportation improvements. According to the report, toll lanes can be a vital component to ensuring safe, less congested roads. With the number of drivers increasing and traffic congestion worsening every year, states are facing a growing challenge to finance new roads and relieve gridlock on existing roads.

“Most large cities desperately need new and improved highways to deal with the dramatic increases in traffic that have occurred in recent years,” said Chairman Bennett. “By giving states the flexibility to explore innovative practices, we give drivers the opportunity to enjoy better roads and make better choices in their daily commutes.”

One alternative states might explore is the implementation of modernized toll lanes, through which federal, state, and local governments can offset a significant increase in surface transportation expenditures. Rather than the traditional toll booth, these toll lanes could utilize technologies such as transponders that electronically charge a fee and do not impede the flow of traffic. Additionally, the toll charge could be varied based on the current congestion level on the road, thereby encouraging drivers to use mass transit during peak travel times.

The report noted successful toll lane projects that have already been put into place. Domestically, perhaps the most successful pilot project is the High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes project on Interstate 15 in San Diego. The project has led to several dramatic improvements in road performance, and an increase in the number of people carpooling. Overseas, London has introduced a congestion pricing scheme that charges vehicles entering the central city. The average driving speed in London’s central city has increased 37 percent and the total number of cars entering Central London has decreased by 20 percent.

Currently, there is a bill in Congress that addresses this issue. The *Freeing Alternatives for Speedy Transportation* (FAST) Act (H.R. 1767) would remove the current prohibition on tolls for federal highways, as well as ensure that states would not be penalized for coming up with innovative ways to fund transportation construction.

The report is available online at jec.senate.gov, or call Rebecca Wilder at (202) 224-0379.

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