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Tolls in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association (WMCA) understands the need to explore alternative revenue sources to fund future transportation needs in Wisconsin. WMCA members are willing to discuss any alternatives that are equitable and reasonable. However, the association has serious reservations about the use of toll roads in Wisconsin based on the following concerns:

1. Tolls can often cause diversion of traffic to non-tolled routes.
 - Traffic diversions reduce safety because of additional miles traveled and greater accident exposure. Interstates are the safest roads and alternate routes can have accident rates 4 times higher or more.
 - The quality of life of those people who live along routes parallel to the toll roads will be degraded.
 - There are additional costs for maintaining and upgrading the lower-order roads that were not designed to handle the volume or type of traffic that gets diverted.
 - A study of car and truck tolls on I-81 in Virginia found that at 17 cents per mile for trucks and 5 cents for cars, 85% of local passenger and commercial traffic would divert, along with 35% of long-distance trucks and 45% of long-distance cars.
2. Tolling agencies are frequently governed by non-elected officials with insufficient legislative oversight. These agencies have in many cases adopted irresponsible and unreasonable rate hikes, which have resulted in further diversions.
 - The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission voted to increase tolls by 300%, partially for economic development, even though federal law did not allow them to use toll revenues for this purpose.
 - After a significant toll rate increase on the Illinois Tollway, truck traffic decreased by 9% and local authorities reported a much greater volume of truck traffic on local roads.

- A study by the Ohio DOT found that a decade after an 82% increase in toll rates on the Ohio Turnpike, growth in truck traffic on the Turnpike was relatively static, while truck traffic on some parallel routes nearly tripled. Furthermore, the road that trucks shifted to are far more dangerous than the Turnpike. For example, U.S. 20, which saw a 267% increase in truck traffic, has a fatal accident rate that is 17 times higher than the Turnpike rate.
3. Frequently tolls are not “user fees” because the revenue generated by tolls is used for other projects besides highways and bridges’.
 - The New York Thruway approved toll rate hikes of up to 100%, in part to finance a continuing subsidy of the state’s canal system.
 - After the commission in charge of Philadelphia area toll bridges spent more than \$400 million on stadiums, museums and other projects, it was forced to raise toll rates to cover a \$15 million shortfall in funds needed for maintenance of the bridges.
 - The Port Authority of New York/New Jersey imposed massive toll hikes, primarily to pay for construction of the World Trade Center and other projects with no benefit to toll payers.
 4. Trucks and passenger vehicles currently pay state and federal highway user fees on the roads they use and should not be double-taxed with tolls.
 5. Setting up another system to collect user fees seems inefficient given the administrative costs associated with building toll booths and collecting the tolls.