

FLOOR REMARKS

3/10/2010

DELEGATE JOE MAY

Chairman, House of Delegates Transportation Committee

Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, the solution to our transportation problems in the Commonwealth are much like the Second Coming, they are often predicted and seldom realized.

The transportation landscape in Virginia has gradually evolved into three distinct images—there's Northern Virginia with its major infrastructure needs, Hampton Roads with an infrastructure need only a little less urgent than Northern Virginia's and finally, statewide, road and bridge maintenance.

The statewide maintenance portion is particularly critical because of the rapidly deteriorating roadways and bridges. This winter exacerbated an already bad situation. Because maintenance funding receives first priority over construction, we end up being able to fund hardly any new construction and are not able to do an adequate job of maintaining our existing roads. So what do we do?

It is generally agreed that tolls are a reasonable way to pay for transportation needs. The more you drive on a road the quicker it deteriorates and the toll is applied to the user of the road regardless of their origin of travel. In other words, a toll is a user fee for roads. Certainly there are plenty of precedents for tolling.

The problem is that tolling can be difficult to do and expensive to implement and generally, cannot be applied to all roads. Now suppose we could toll all roads which would by-pass all those problems and we could apply a certain toll of, say $\frac{3}{4}$ cents per mile, on every mile we drive on every road in the Commonwealth. Various unsuccessful proposals to do this have been made.

The answer is we can toll and it is just laughably easy to do so. The CAFÉ average (MPG) for a passenger car is about 21 miles to the gallon and for a truck about 6 miles to the gallon. Because we know how far we drive on a gallon of gas, it is easy to add a known toll to every mile we drive on every road, whether dirt, secondary, primary, interstate, or what have you.

If we added a fee of fifteen cents to each gallon of fuel, this imposes a toll (user fee) of $\frac{3}{4}$ cent per mile. This is a direct toll collected whenever and how much a vehicle uses the Commonwealth's roads. A $\frac{3}{4}$ cent per mile toll would raise approximately \$650 MM which can be collected and spent according to where the money was collected.

HB 971 which Delegates Rust, Watts, and May proposed earlier in the Session would implement just such a system. It was denoted Transportation

Infrastructure Users Fee (TIUF). While we anticipated at the time we submitted the legislation that it would be shelved, we respectfully request that you consider the legislation in the Sessions to come because Virginia will not always be bogged in a recession and the need is great.

There may well be better ideas to address road maintenance in Virginia, but they are not apparent now nor have they been in the past. However, the tolling is based on solid, proven methods that uniformly distribute the cost of maintaining our roads and I would ask that we give such a proposal every consideration in the future.

Thank you.