

TOLL ROADS

BPR has a long-standing policy, disapproving interstate highway projects which would divert traffic from toll roads.

By affording financial protection to toll interests, this policy is entrenching and inviting the extension of tolls and is stimulating toll entrapment. The policy also has been exploited by toll road advocates to block construction of segments of the Interstate Highway System which should be built on the basis of traffic needs.

We urge Congress to amend the Federal-Aid Highway Act to remove this protection of toll interests and to discourage the construction of toll highways which are a part of, or may be substituted for, sections of toll-free Interstate.

We further urge you to amend the act to prohibit the relocation of already designated portions of the Interstate to allow connections with proposed toll facilities for the primary purpose of providing economic advantage to such facilities.

H.R. 14962, before your Committee, would reimburse states for the cost of constructing toll roads which have been incorporated into the Interstate System. The latest estimate of the cost of such reimbursement of depreciated value is \$2.9 billion, up from the \$2.3 billion calculated as of June 30, 1957.

As of June 30, 1967 the depreciated value of toll roads originally incorporated into the System had dropped to \$1.9 billion, but over \$1 billion of additional toll facilities have been incorporated into the Interstate System since then. Clearly, we are regressing in the intent of Congress to provide a toll-free highway network.

We oppose any attempt to "buy out" toll roads. The Trust Fund doesn't have the money, and additionally, the contractual problems raised in such an approach appear overwhelming.

We would hope that the Special Subcommittee on the Federal-Aid Highway Program, which thoroughly investigated the problems of toll roads in 1966, will submit legislative proposals in the near future in accordance with the subcommittee's recommendations.

DELAWARE RIVER TOLLS

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to discuss a most unhappy situation which has arisen with the Delaware River Port Authority. In February, the Authority, flouting requests by the New Jersey legislature and others for a temporary postponement, arbitrarily doubled the bridge tolls on the Benjamin Franklin and Walt Whitman Bridges. Proceeds of the additional tolls are to be used to further the Authority's interest in additional toll crossings and provide construction funds for fixed rail transit.

The Secretary of Transportation currently has authority, after the fact, to find that a toll increase is neither reasonable nor just. While the deliberations proceed, the motorists are charged the additional fee. What is needed is the approval of the Secretary before the tolls are increased, instead of fighting a rear-guard action.

We therefore ask that Section 526 of Title 33 of the U.S. Code, as amended by Section 6(g) of Public Law 89-670, be amended to provide the Secretary with this power.

Without this change, you will continue to find small authorities trying to emulate the New York Port Authority and attempting to build private kingdoms.

Would you believe that one of the reasons given for increasing the tolls on the two bridges was that the George Washington and the Delaware Memorial Bridges each charge 50 cents, so why not the Franklin and Whitman Bridges?

APPENDIX A

BILLS PROTECTING THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND FROM EXECUTIVE CONTROL

- H.R. 14641, Hon. William H. Harsha (R.-Ohio).
- H.R. 14841, Hon. Edward J. Gurney (R.-Florida).
- H.R. 14932, Hon. Ancher Nelsen (R.-Minnesota).
- H.R. 14953, Hon. Benjamin Blackburn (R.-Georgia).
- H.R. 15040, Hon. Robert V. Denney (R.-Nebraska).
- H.R. 15275, Hon. Jack H. McDonald (R.-Michigan).
- H.R. 15442, Hon. John M. Zwach (R.-Minnesota).
- H.R. 15483, Hon. Don Clausen (R.-California).