



OPINION BY SUPERVISOR CURT HAGMAN

KEEPING THE FREE IN FREEWAY

August 7, 2017 – Toll lanes are being added on freeways around the state, including on Interstate 10 in San Bernardino County. I oppose this idea because the taxpayers of San Bernardino County have already paid for construction and operation of our freeway system. They pay for it every time they fill up their gas tank, because that price includes a gas tax to pay for construction and maintenance of our road system. They also paid for it years ago in approving Measure I, an increase to their sales tax in San Bernardino County to be used to fund transportation projects.

Adding more freeway lanes to accommodate the traffic we have now and provide for future growth is a great idea, and one long overdue in implementation. Making drivers pay yet again to ride on these new lanes is not a good idea. The people most heavily impacted by these tolls will be the ones who can least afford it. Wealthy people won't miss the dollars it will cost every time they ride the toll lanes. Middle and lower income people will have to decide each time whether they can afford to ride these lanes to work or school. For them, it may be a tradeoff between paying the toll so they are not late or being able to afford to buy lunch that day. For people who have to drive this freeway every day, these tolls could literally amount to hundreds of dollars every month.

The Reason Foundation's Annual Highway Report shows California ranks 45th out of the 50 states in highway conditions and cost effectiveness. We are one of the biggest spenders on state owned roads at over \$500,000 annually per mile. Despite this spending, we are one of just six states that collectively have half the nation's worst pot holed urban Interstate pavement and one of five states containing half of the nation's worst rural Interstate pavement. It's time to roll up our sleeves and find solutions to excessively high freeway costs. Regulatory reform is one obvious answer, as is ending the process of diverting over a billion dollars annually out of transportation programs and into assorted Sacramento politician's favorite social programs.

Taxes are high enough now, without resorting to indirect taxes like tolls on freeways. The cap and trade bill passed last month is going to raise taxes on Californians for gasoline by 63 cents per gallon in the next decade, on top of the 12 cent per gallon gas tax for transportation projects approved by the Legislature as Senate Bill 1 in June of this year. During my six years in the State Legislature and four years on City Council before that, I fought against toll lanes as yet another form of excessive taxation and have continued this battle for the past two and a half years as your county Supervisor.

Enough is enough! With all the money taxpayers put into our freeway system, tolls are simply adding insult to injury for lower and middle income drivers.

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