

I-93 Tolls Issues and Impacts

Town of Salem, Board of Selectmen - January 2010

Addressing the issues, ideas, and concerns for residents and businesses.



Opposed to Tolls

As the Board of Selectmen, we are obligated in our duties to be active advocates for the well being of the Salem community and now that advocacy requires that we adamantly oppose the unwanted and perhaps, unforeseen proposal to erect toll booths in the north bound and south bound lanes of Route 93 in proximity to the State line .

Impacts and Issues

We feel that the impacts and the issues are clear and at a minimum they include:

- ◆ The establishment of tolls will create traffic diversion and an increased volume of traffic through Salem, placing a burden on our primary and secondary roads with additional upkeep. This additional road maintenance will be financially unsustainable by the town.
- ◆ Tolls at the State line will negate the tax free advantage of Salem, New Hampshire.
- ◆ The added congestion of traffic at toll booth locations will defeat the initial purpose of widening Route 93; which was to ease congestion and ease negative environmental impact between exits 1, 2 and 3.
- ◆ Traffic studies show that too much traffic in a retail area can have a significant negative impact on retail establishments. It is anticipated that the tolls will cause a negative impact to existing retail locations in Salem.
- ◆ Public safety will be compromised as Salem's Fire and Police Departments anticipate that there will be an increase in accidents due to toll facilities and traffic diversion.
- ◆ There is a clear pattern in other examples of Stateline toll placement that locates tolls away from the Stateline community which is typically a retail hub. Hampton and Merrimack are above Seabrook and Nashua respectively and not at the Stateline.
- ◆ The requirement for Public Comment on a proposal of toll booths that substantially changes the original Route 93 expansion proposal has not been met.
- ◆ No information has been presented to this Board that indicates that the State of New Hampshire or the Department of Transportation has investigated and/or rejected alternative revenue sources to pay for the Route 93 expansion. It is our position that all other sources of revenue must be

exhausted first, otherwise the DOT's proposal for tolls appears to be an arbitrary decision without regard to the locality that will experience the most impact under such a decision.

Reasonable Request

At a minimum the Board of Selectmen reasonably request that the State New Hampshire DOT provide the following:

- A Detailed proposal that includes the road design of Interstate Route 93 with the location of the tolls as proposed compared with a proposal for an alternative toll location located north of exit 3.
- A Time line for the Federal Funding Application Process and transparent disclosure of the DOT's efforts to apply.
- A traffic impact study of Salem that includes the impact that the tolls will have on the seasonal traffic that Canobie Lake Park generates, the impact on the Town's ITS Project, the impact on the local primary and secondary road system, and the safety impact of toll booth placement
- An economic and environmental study that studies the impact that the tolls will have on *the retail businesses, *the commercial businesses who use Route 93 multiple times daily, *and the residents as they grapple with increased traffic and increased costs to daily travel.
- Evidence of other revenue sources the DOT is considering and rejecting before this project is implemented with the associated impacts of each source on the host community.

Taxation Without Representation

The expedited need to obtain approval for a pilot project and funding for the tolls should not obviate the responsibility of the DOT and the State to mitigate the detrimental effects such a project would have on a single community. In any project the Town has planned and constructed we are required to run through reviews where we impact State transportation assets. We would ask for similar consideration.

A Pattern of Due Diligence

The Salem Board of Selectmen is made up of residents who have lived in Salem for at least 35+ years and at most, their entire life. Throughout all of our collective adult lives we have also served on the town's land use, planning, conservation,

recreation, economic development and budget committees and boards. We participated in major projects that had the potential to create enormous impact on our community such as the Mall at Rockingham Park, and most recently, the Lowe's Project. We worked with developers, reviewed traffic impact studies and cooperated to find solutions. Our past experience proves that careful planning for such projects must be undertaken to avoid disastrous results. The DOT proposal to erect toll booths on Route 93 lacks any evidence that the community is being actively engaged in the planning of a project that will have far more reaching effects on Salem than the previously mentioned projects! Therefore, we are respectfully requesting that the DOT begin to work with the Board of Selectmen by providing the Board with evidence that the toll project has been effectively studied and meets adequate traffic, economic impact and safety standards.

Diversion is Easy in Salem

With two exits off I-93 and connecting roadways less than an 1/8th of a mile from exit two traffic will divert around the tolls. The Town of Salem is often faced with the unfortunate circumstance of traffic diversion due to accidents on I-93. We respond without question to aid the motorists and State of New Hampshire. We understand that the I-93 project will reduce the occurrence of accidents. However, with the incorporation of tolls we will face more diverted traffic as a regular occurrence. The aerial photo on the inside of this brochure clearly shows the proximity of the highway. We are in a new age, GPS devices, blogs, online maps, all provide avenues for the motorists to understand how to get around tolls. Already comments like the below postings to the Union Leader regarding toll diversion are providing alternate route.

"If we put a toll booth at the Salem NH border, then the main artery in town will become Rte 213 (Loop Conn) to rte 28N, or to Howe St (Methuen MA) instead of Rockingham Blvd (exit 1 I-93). The Salem/Methuen/Haverhill (Rte 97) border is so porous, that getting around the toll Isn't even going to require "effort" on our part, it's THAT easy. People will just access Salem via 213 & 495."

Scotto, Salem NH - Union Leader—January 11, 2010 posting to article Salem officials vow border toll fight—Derrick Perkins

*Northbound 93 toll bypass
Exit 47 to Westbound Pelham St
to Northbound Cross St
to Northbound S Policy St
to Westbound Pelham Rd
to Exit 2 Northbound 93 Onramp*

Nice quiet residential streets. Can hit 45 or 50 with no problem
Jeff Derry - Union Leader—January 11, 2010 posting to article I-93 Plan takes on Salem officials —Derrick Perkins

Revenue Opportunities

One of those tests for the toll booth project must be alternate sources of revenue. We would ask the State consider alternate revenue sources that could be generated along what is some of the most valuable property in the State, the highway system. Here are a few examples of possible revenue ideas below:

- Sponsored WiFi at Rest areas and other stops for travelers. Communications companies would pay a fee to DOT for the right to provide WiFi.
- Expand key rest area locations for small conference rooms to rent space for intermediate meetings with business travelers. (combine with WiFi idea above)
- Establish partnerships with companies such as Zip Car for drop off and pickup locations
- Lease space in rest areas to resorts for computer kiosks directed to registration at northern resorts.
- Lease space in rest areas to retailers for a kiosk for catalog ordering at rest areas so travelers can locate stores, order, and up their purchases at major retail and outlet centers along the corridors. Limit the computer access to the participating stores for a fee.
- Lease space at rest areas for ATM's.
- Lease space at rest areas for photo development kiosks.
- Lease space to restaurants or other facilities at sites where development opportunities exist such as liquor stores with large sites.
- Lease space at DOT properties on the corridor for the construction of cell towers.
- Use above cell towers as sites for DOT communications devices saving the costs of construction new independent poles.
- Conduct earlier land use planning to specifically involve local communities to leverage private and impact fee funds for enhanced improvements to stimulate development.
- Conduct earlier local community partnering to leverage grants and tie in local projects with the State projects.
- Create appropriate signage for large retail centers at appropriate locations on the corridor and lease signage space to retailers.
- Create partnerships with communications companies to provide fiber connectivity to the State for the rights to be on the highway corridor. This would save the State funds on fiber construction.
- Begin to plan for providing plug in stations for a fee for electric vehicles.

Conclusions

There are three basic issues: Traffic Diversion, Economy, Other Revenue. Each of these issues has multiple concerns and impacts. The State cannot assume in any way that they have addressed any of the above. Yet the issue moves forward without any analysis to make an informed decision.

I-93 and Route 28

Proximity for Traffic Diversion - Town of Salem NH

Toll Impacts - Salem Board of Selectmen

