



Tolling: Many Hurdles

Wisconsin faces short-term and long-term challenges when it comes to funding transportation infrastructure. All options should be on the table.

But, it is important to understand tolling is not a viable option in the near term.

Top Ten Tolling Truths

1. Tolling of existing Interstate lanes is generally prohibited by the federal government.

While there has been talk of repealing the federal prohibition for over a decade, the changes to tolling authority have primarily related to new lanes.

2. No state has ever reconstructed an Interstate facility using the existing Interstate System Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Pilot Program.

Established 20 years ago, the Interstate System Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Pilot Program, allows up to three existing Interstate facilities (highway, bridge, or tunnel) to be tolled to fund needed reconstruction or rehabilitation on Interstate corridors that could not otherwise be adequately maintained or improved without the collection of tolls.

In October 2017, the Federal Highway Administration solicited applications for the program after none of the previously awarded states were moving forward. Applications were due to the FHWA by February 20, 2018. Only one state, Utah, submitted an application, which was subsequently withdrawn.



3. Implementing tolls in Wisconsin would take years.

Wisconsin would need to select a project or corridor, pursue federal authorization, enact state legislation to enable tolling and complete additional advanced study, design, engineering and deployment activities. This is estimated to take at least 4 years.

4. Federal authorization would likely limit the use of tolling revenue to the corridor from which it was collected.

This means tolling would not directly benefit the rest of the system. If Wisconsin, however, were able to toll a large portion of the Interstate system, it could free up some transportation revenue to be used elsewhere.



5. Tolling requires large capital investment.

Up-front infrastructure investment includes overhead gantries, in-pavement sensors for axle counts, cameras and back office equipment.

6. The cost to administer a tolling program is significant.

A study conducted for the state estimates that around 25 cents of every dollar collected in tolls would be spent on building and operating the toll collection system, including the physical tolling infrastructure and back-office functions of accounting, billing and enforcement. As a comparison, the cost to collect existing gas taxes is less than 1%.

7. Diversion to avoid paying Interstate tolls could lead to more traffic and wear and tear on less safe local roads.

The same study estimates diversion to local roads could be in excess of 30% on some routes.

8. Tolling may be outdated before it can be fully implemented.

Many experts believe that a "vehicle miles traveled" fee based on GPS technology will ultimately replace the fuel tax. This type of system could track mileage on the entire road network and render a transponder-based Interstate tolling system obsolete.

9. No, Wisconsin really can't just put up a gantry at the border heading into the state.

Tolls that disproportionately affect out of state travelers, such as unreasonably high tolls at borders which adversely impact Interstate commuters or commercial carriers, could be subject to legal challenge as a violation of the Commerce Clause.

10. Governor Walker vetoed the tolling study in the 2017-19 budget.

The proposed study would have included the following:

- (a) an analysis to support the completion of a federal tolling application process;
- (b) a tolling concepts of operations plan that outlines the policies, procedures, and operations needed to govern roadway tolling;
- (c) a traffic and revenue analysis, including the revenue needed to support toll revenue-supported debt; and
- (d) an evaluation, or reevaluation of federal environmental requirements, including the required documentation.

Wisconsin can't wait to begin addressing its transportation funding crisis. Talk of tolling as a short-term solution is another diversion Wisconsin can't afford.

