

I make it my practice to attend all of the RITBA monthly meeting when possible. I have been clear that I support tolling the Sakonnet River Bridge and have been subjected to public humiliation and political "threats" as a result of my stand.

I believe that my attendance at these meetings and the public forums have provided me with a suitable education on the related issues about bridge management, maintenance and financing. I would prefer to wait until I see the proposed bill but at this time I will tell you that, based on your information, this does not sound like a solution that I can support.

Here are my reasons:

1. I do not think that merging RITBA within the RIDOT organization is a good management solution.
  - Managing and maintaining large bridges which are over salt water present far more maintenance issues than managing and maintaining road bridges.
  - RIDOT Director Michael Lewis, who sits on the RITBA board, has the same opinion.
  - When the previous Sakonnet River Bridge was under the care of RIDOT, it was not properly maintained. Therefore, it was declared to be obsolete within my own life time.
    - I am old enough to remember it opening.
2. I support tolling both the Newport Pell Bridge and the Sakonnet River Bridge.
  - The tolls collected from the Sakonnet River Bridge and the Newport Pell Bridge will be dedicated to the management and maintenance of our four bridges and the associated approaches.
  - In spite of public statements by the opposition, there is no plan to use these tolls for any other state highway projects.
  - This approach ignores the opportunity to bring in "out of state" revenue by collecting fees from tourists and other "out of state" users.
3. I oppose use of added DMV fees.
  1. This puts the entire burden on those residents of Rhode Island who happen to have vehicles registered in this state.
  2. We already have an issue of people who enjoy living in Rhode Island, either full time or much of the year, registering their vehicles in other states.
4. Many discount programs have been developed by RITBA . These include:
  - discounts for commercial vehicles such as the trucks used by Newport Biodiesel and contractors.

- these discounts resulted, in part, from meeting that I held with local business people and the management of the RITBA.
- the "soccer mom" discounts which limit the charges to one round trip toll for those who need multiple trips per day on either bridge.
- maximum monthly limits per transponder.
- the ability for out of state residents to purchase the Rhode Island based transponders and to get the discounts.
- these discounts will cover both the Newport Pell Bridge and the Sakonnet River Bridge.

5. Protection of District 75 constituents

- This plan leaves the tolls on the Newport Pell Bridge which is the area for which I am responsible.
- The RITBA has already voted to increase the tolls on this bridge to \$1.00 from \$.83 for transponders and from \$4.00 to \$5.00 for non-transponder users. [Voted in January 2012 RITBA meeting].
- I do not believe that my constituents should be the only ones subject to a bridge toll.

6. Protection of these valuable assets.

- I do not believe that these assets should exist without a viable, long term plan to protect them.
- Their maintenance should not compete with the need to maintain all of the other bridges and infrastructure in the State of Rhode Island.
- Those who when before us left the maintenance of the Sakonnet River Bridge to us. We should not 'kick the can' down to our children.

Thank you for this opportunity to clarify my position on this issue. Feel free to call me if you have any other questions.

Rep. Peter Martin

Peter,

I am told the legislation being sponsored by Jay Edwards and Lou DiPalma is going to be introduced today or tomorrow. The outline is that it establishes a RI transportation infrastructure fund and establishes a revenue stream that would raise \$1 billion over 10 years. The only new source of revenue is a 5% surcharge on all DMV fees for the next five years. It prohibits tolls on all but the Pell Bridge and moves the turnpike and bridge authority into DOT as one of its divisions. It allows DOT/ RITBA to use state GO bonds (as opposed to RITBA revenue bonds which have a higher interest rate) to fund any projects needed before the new fund is up and running.

I know you have been opposed in the past to efforts to eliminate the Sakonnet River Bridge toll and wanted to know if this legislation sounds like something you could support.

If not, why?

Joe Baker