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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

December 4, 2012

wolf.house.gov

The Honorable Mark C. Christie
Chairman
State Corporation Commission
PO Box 1197
Richmond VA 23218

Dear Judge Christie:

As you are well aware, I have written the State Corporation Commission (SCC) numerous times regarding the punitive and unfair tolls on the Dulles Greenway, which I have described as “highway robbery”. These tolls represent a moral and practical problem. The state guaranteeing a private company the ability to profit off a captive group of residents is the moral problem; the choice between tolls and other gridlocked roads is the practical problem. The Toll Road Investors Partnership’s (TRIP II) application for yet another toll increase underscores the fact that the tolls are unbearable and will continue to get worse.

It is my understanding that a 2008 amendment to the law governing the Greenway requires the SCC to approve a toll increase application that is equal to the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus one percent. In addition, the amendment states that the SCC cannot conduct a traffic diversion study unless the toll increase application is greater than CPI plus one percent. It is perplexing that state law guarantees a profit for a private company at the expense of Loudoun residents, who are getting ripped off by TRIP II.

In its 2007 decision approving a toll increase application, the SCC stated, “The Commonwealth made a series of policy decisions that leave us little choice but to make the decision we make in this case.” Since the 2008 amendment forces the SCC to approve this toll increase application and prevent it from conducting a traffic and revenue study, I urge it to offer constructive solutions that would protect Loudoun residents from these punitive tolls. I find it hard to believe the SCC has taken no position on a state law that provides it no flexibility whatsoever in protecting Virginia consumers. The Commission’s 2007 decision stated that the commissions’ hands were tied; I believe you and the rest of the commissioners have a duty to propose a legislative solution to this problem. If the SCC does nothing, it will be part of the problem and never part of a permanent solution.

While I understand that the federal government has no role in setting Greenway tolls, I feel I have a moral obligation to address this blatant injustice. Those who live in Loudoun County and work in Fairfax or points east face a terrible decision. Their first option is to pay the outrageous tolls, which TRIP II wants to increase to \$4.96. Residents of Ashburn and

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Brambleton are forced to pay this toll to go only one mile. At these rates, Loudoun residents could be forced to pay as much as \$200 per month just in tolls. After paying the Greenway toll, these residents next have to pay to use the Dulles Toll Road (DTR) and then possibly the I-495 Express Lanes. When put together, these residents will wind up paying more in tolls each month than they do for the cars they drive.

The only other option for Loudoun residents is to take Routes 7, 50 and 28, as well as many other neighborhood roads. As any of these commuters will tell you, these are simply not viable alternatives. If you were to go to the ramp from the DTR to northbound Route 28 at evening rush hour, you would see the traffic backed up onto the mainline. Route 7 is also filled past capacity as drivers wait to get through the gridlock. If the Greenway provided a viable alternative, the congestion on these routes would ease, providing better ways for Loudoun residents to get home to their families. Finally, the tolls for multi-axel vehicles are orders of magnitude higher than cars. These large vehicles avoid the Greenway by going through residential streets that were designed for families, not commercial trucks. Would you want a tractor trailer passing through your neighborhood on a daily basis?

If state law leaves the SCC no way to reject the latest toll increase application, I urge the Commission to explicitly tell the General Assembly the negative consequences of the legislation it approved in 1988 and again in 2008. If tolls on the Greenway are allowed to continue to increase, Loudoun County residents will forever be condemned to make the choice between prohibitive transportation costs or the prospect of enduring never-ending gridlock on alternate routes. While you may not reside in Loudoun County, the residents there can attest to the fact that this is the grim choice they are forced to make on a daily basis.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

FRW:cw

P.S. The failure of Virginia to address Greenway tolls will have terrible and long-lasting consequences for Loudoun County, including a depression of housing values and sales.

**THIS IS IMPUTING TO THE
PEOPLE OF LOUDOUN COUNTY,
THANK YOU**