

## Local 17 Recommends: Vote "No" on Initiative 1125— a Threat to Transportation Infrastructure



**O**n behalf of the thousands of Local 17 members who work in state, city and county transportation agencies in Washington, we recommend a “No” vote on Initiative 1125.

Some believe that voting for the initiative will eliminate the use of tolls on state roads in Washington. However, it will not.

### The initiative will:

- Halt or stall major transportation projects.
- Impact the employment of hundreds of workers in the transportation industry.
- Make the legislature responsible for toll rates and not an independent panel.
- Ban toll options such as variable tolling that provides a cut in tolls during light traffic.
- Bar collected tolls from being used on other transportation projects.

The initiative threatens major projects currently in various phases of design and construction such as the Evergreen Point bridge, the Columbia River crossing, and other mobility projects on state routes 167 and 509.

It doesn't stop there. Numerous smaller projects are in jeopardy. If tolling funds dedicated to those larger projects are eliminated or reduced by this initiative, the funds dedicated to many other smaller projects may need to be diverted to the larger projects already in construction. The State Treasurer estimates this initiative will blow a \$500 million hole in the SR520 bridge replacement plan alone!

The initiative does not ban tolling. Instead it places tolling decisions in the hands of the Legislature. Currently an independent, non-



partisan committee determines toll rates. If left to the legislature, these decisions become a political football with legislators from one part of Washington voting on toll rates for roads in other unaffected areas of Washington. No other state in the nation sets tolls that way and for good reason: independent bond houses will not loan capital in this situation or will charge much higher rates.

Other aspects of the initiative pose significant danger to future transportation funding.

As the state struggles with diminishing resources, the manner in which the state funds construction and maintenance of our transportation infrastructure needs to be revamped. We can no longer afford to be so dependent on the gas tax.

Innovative and multiple alternative funding sources must be developed and applied to meet the specific needs that confront the state now and into the future.

One of many alternative funding sources being considered by transportation experts is tolling. Yet this initiative will ban variable-rate tolling.

Variable or “hot lane” tolling is being planned for major congestion relief and safety projects. Variable tolling allows the toll to be decreased during light traffic situations. Variable “user fees” allow for a fairer method of supplementing transportation funding.

Lastly, one of the fastest growing problems in this state is maintaining the infrastructure we have already constructed. The gas tax increases of 2003 and 2005 provided over \$15 billion of new projects in this state – but none of those funds go towards maintaining those structures.

This initiative mandates that tolls on a structure shall be removed once the construction costs are paid. Continuing a toll after the project has been paid off can provide for the necessary road maintenance into the future.

Initiative 1125 significantly diminishes funding options and handcuffs the state in making improvements to our transportation infrastructure.

Please vote NO on Initiative 1125.

