

CAPITOL RESEARCH

● ● ● TRANSPORTATION POLICY

TOLLING & THE ANTI-TOLL BACKLASH

Tolling plays a significant role in America's transportation system.

- Thirty-four states and Puerto Rico have at least one tolled highway, bridge or tunnel.¹
- In 2013, there were more than 5,880 miles of U.S. toll roads.² That was up from 4,918 miles in 2008.³
- There are 5.7 billion trips made per year on tolled roads and crossings in the United States.⁴

Tolls are helping states close transportation funding gaps, support capital project investment and improve mobility.

- Tolls generated \$13 billion of revenue in 2013, up from \$10 billion in 2008.⁵
- A 2011 toll industry survey reported \$14 billion in capital investment over three years by the top 40 U.S. toll facilities operators.⁶
- Congested roads cost Americans \$121 billion in wasted time and fuel in 2011.⁷ Some states have used congestion pricing and managed lanes to bring transportation supply and demand into balance and reduce congestion. Drivers can choose to bypass congestion by using priced lanes.⁸

A number of factors make it likely that tolling will continue to grow in the United States.

- Congress has not raised taxes and has struggled for years to come up with the kinds of revenues analysts say are needed to invest in the nation's infrastructure. States have turned to raising their own revenues through gas tax increases, ballot initiatives and tolling to support new road capacity and improvements.⁹
- The Obama administration, in its GROW AMERICA Act, has proposed giving states greater flexibility to apply for authority to toll existing interstates in order to make improvements or manage congestion.¹⁰



Several states are considering tolls as a viable financing option; others are planning additional toll projects.

- Virginia transportation officials have proposed converting high-occupancy vehicle lanes to tolled express lanes on a portion of Interstate 66 outside Washington, D.C., to improve mobility and support multimodal improvements along the corridor. Express lanes are already in place on I-495 and I-95 in the region.¹¹
- A coalition of business, labor and environmental groups has recommended tolls for New York City's East River bridges, which they say would help raise \$1.5 billion in revenue for mass transit, road and bridge infrastructure.¹²
- Interstate 70 in Missouri is severely congested and state transportation officials predict traffic will be stop-and-go in the next 15 years. Three scenarios have been identified to rebuild the interstate, but even the cheapest option is unaffordable

given current revenues. The Federal Highway Administration has given approval to the Missouri Department of Transportation to rebuild the corridor as a toll road. That approval will expire, however, if no action is taken. Tolling still would have to go before Missouri voters, who have defeated previous efforts.¹³ Gov. Jay Nixon has expressed his support for tolling I-70.¹⁴

- Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo suggested recently that the poor condition of many of her state's roads and bridges and the uncertainty about future federal highway funding make it necessary for Rhode Island to consider new tolls as potential solutions for transportation funding.¹⁵
- Florida and Georgia are planning to widen and extend toll roads.¹⁶

Some states have seen pushback against the proliferation of tolls.

- Connecticut Republicans in 2015 blocked Democrats' efforts to lift a ban on tolls that has been in place since the 1980s.¹⁷
- State lawmakers in northern Kentucky opposed to tolls helped kill legislation in 2014 and 2015 to authorize public-private partnerships in the state. Public-private partnerships could have helped build a new Ohio River bridge to reduce traffic on the functionally obsolete Brent Spence Bridge, which carries twice as many vehicles than it was designed to handle.¹⁸

Texas has been the epicenter of the toll backlash.

- Since 2007, Texas and its tolling authorities have sold nearly \$27 billion in bonds for toll facilities, 62

percent more than the second-biggest borrower, California.¹⁹

- State lawmakers in 2015 filed more than a dozen bills aimed at either slowing new toll road projects or dismantling the state's tolling system entirely.²⁰
- In the 2014 gubernatorial election, Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick campaigned for increased highway investment, but with no new toll roads.²¹
- The backlash is taking place even as the Texas Department of Transportation faces a multibillion-dollar shortfall and as many Texas cities are experiencing increased congestion due to extreme population growth.²²
- Anti-toll activists argue that toll rates in the state are too high and that many toll roads end up being ill-conceived projects that can't pay for themselves.²³ Others see tolls as a form of "double taxation" on top of the amount drivers already pay in gas taxes.²⁴
- Toll advocates warn that the anti-toll movement threatens both toll concessions as part of public-private partnerships and government toll agencies. They also contend that a shift away from tolling as a user fee will make it more difficult to make a transition from per-gallon taxes to per-mile charges, which analysts say will be necessary as vehicle fuel efficiency improves and other factors continue to erode gas tax revenues in the years ahead.²⁵



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²⁵ Poole.

STATES WITH TOLL ROADS & PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

State	Toll Roads or Crossings ¹	Public-Private Partnerships ²
Alabama	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Alaska	Yes	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
Arizona	No	Broad Enabling Legislation
Arkansas	No	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
California	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Colorado	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Connecticut	No	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
Delaware	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
District of Columbia	No	Broad Enabling Legislation
Florida	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Georgia	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Hawaii	No	No Legislation
Idaho	No	No Legislation
Illinois	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Indiana	Yes	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
Iowa	Yes	No Legislation
Kansas	Yes	No Legislation
Kentucky	No	No Legislation
Louisiana	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Maine	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Maryland	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Massachusetts	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Michigan	Yes	No Legislation
Minnesota	Yes	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
Mississippi	No	Broad Enabling Legislation
Missouri	Yes	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
Montana	No	No Legislation
Nebraska	No	No Legislation
Nevada	No	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
New Hampshire	Yes	No Legislation
New Jersey	Yes	No Legislation
New Mexico	No	No Legislation
New York	Yes	No Legislation
North Carolina	Yes	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
North Dakota	No	Broad Enabling Legislation
Ohio	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Oklahoma	Yes	No Legislation
Oregon	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Pennsylvania	Yes	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
Puerto Rico	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Rhode Island	Yes	No Legislation
South Carolina	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
South Dakota	No	No Legislation
Tennessee	No	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
Texas	Yes	Limited or Project-Specific Legislation
Utah	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Vermont	Yes	No Legislation
Virginia	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Washington	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
West Virginia	Yes	Broad Enabling Legislation
Wisconsin	No	Broad Enabling Legislation
Wyoming	No	No Legislation

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² National Conference of State Legislatures, Federal Highway Administration.