



WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE

November 15, 2006

Governor Christine Gregoire
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Dear Governor Gregoire,

We are writing to request that funding for toll discounts on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge be included in your draft budget for the 2007-2009 biennium. As you know, the legislature provided approximately \$1.3 million for these discounts in the current biennium and budgeted for an additional \$8.7 million in upcoming biennium. With the opening of the new bridge being pushed back until July 2007 (after the current fiscal year expires) these funds will need to be re-appropriated.

People in our districts will soon be the only drivers in the State of Washington who will pay a toll to use a concrete and steel road -- the new Tacoma Narrows Bridge. Many of our constituents must commute over the bridge daily to get to their jobs in Tacoma or South King County. Our constituents must also travel over the bridge frequently to access essential services like health care and post-secondary education. While we have been fascinated to watch the construction process, and to see this beautiful new structure rise from the water into the air, our constituents dread the July opening of the new span when tolls commence. At \$3 a trip, hardworking families will be paying \$800 or even \$1,600 a year to commute to and from work. That is no small change for wage earners.

It is one thing to pay tolls for a completed project. It is another thing to pay tolls on a work-in-progress. That is why we worked for the last two years to provide funding to buy-down tolls for the first year the new bridge is open. During that period, the new bridge will be open; however, the existing bridge will be undergoing a refurbishment and at limited capacity (and, for a period of time, will be entirely closed). Over the past few years as we've spoken with constituents on their doorsteps and in Olympia, the fact that Narrows Bridge commuters will spend nearly a year facing a full \$3 toll without seeing the full benefit of the project has been a consistent cause for concern.

As you craft your budget for the upcoming biennium, our request is that you include \$10 million to buy-down the tolls for the period while the new bridge is open and the existing bridge is being retrofitted. More specifically, we ask that you include direction to the Transportation Commission in your budget proposal (as was included in last year's House budget) to encourage a toll discount for electronic toll users during this period. This will have the added benefit of encouraging use of the electronic tolling system (reducing congestion and costs of toll collection).

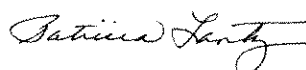
We understand this is not a simple request, knowing full well that the transportation budget is suffering from unexpectedly large inflationary and other project cost increases, and that balancing the budget is a major challenge. But this \$10 million is critically important to our constituents who do not want to pay a full toll without seeing full benefit.

Thank you for all your assistance and effort on this issue. Your work on behalf of the constituents of the 26th, 27th, 28th, 35th, and 23rd districts and many more Washingtonians is greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if you have any further questions or comments.

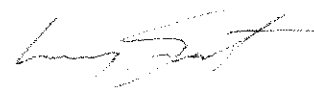
Sincerely,



Derek Kilmer
Senator-Elect
26th District



Patricia Lantz
State Representative
26th District



Larry Seaquist
Representative-Elect
26th District



Phil Rockefeller
State Senator
23rd District



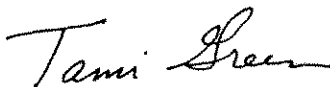
Sherry Appleton
State Representative
23rd District



Christine Rolfes ^{cc 11/20}
Representative-Elect
23rd District



Dennis Flannigan
State Representative
27th District



Tami Green
State Representative
28th District




William Eickmeyer
State Representative
35th District



Kathy Haigh
State Representative
35th District



Jeannie Darnielle
State Representative
27th District



Tim Sheldon
State Senator
35th District

CC: House Speaker Frank Chopp
Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown
Senate Transportation Chair Mary Margaret-Haugen