

Recently, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LAMTA) announced a plan to start charging for access to 183 miles of now free carpool lanes in exchange for \$213.6 million in federal funding to buy more buses and build more park-and-ride lots.

LAMTA's short-sighted plan to charge for the use of carpool lanes is double-dipping into the pockets of hardworking Americans. We have already paid for these roads through federal, state, and local taxes. Why should we pay again?

Under their proposal, our free-ways would be turned into fee-ways. That is simply unacceptable.

To put the brakes on this misguided proposal, I recently introduced H.R. 6002, the Free Way Act. This commonsense bill would prohibit States and localities from charging carpoolers to access now free carpool lanes built with federal taxpayer money.

I am proud to report that my bill is supported by a bipartisan group of my Southern California colleagues.

In addition to the cost to taxpayers, LAMTA's proposal suffers from a number of other serious flaws. Despite the urgent need to improve our existing infrastructure, not one cent of the revenues generated from these toll lanes would go back into adding capacity to our region's aging and over-crowded roads.

Making matters worse, the proposal actually threatens to increase freeway congestion.

According to LAMTA, existing carpool lanes are already nearing capacity. By converting once free lanes to toll lanes, LAMTA will only push carpoolers into regular lanes or onto surface streets, thereby exacerbating the already severe congestion problem in Southern California.

The reality is that no one will pay for something if they do not get something in return. Traditionally toll road users pay for speed. LAMTA has said that drivers in the toll lanes will travel at least 45 to 50 MPH. How high will they have to set the toll price and how many carpoolers will they have to shove out of the way to achieve this goal?

This proposal makes no sense at all. It will only increase prices and congestion for Southern California commuters. That is why I have introduced the Free Way Act – to put an end to this foolish plan and put the free back in freeway.

GARY G. MILLER
Member of Congress