

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman Gary G. Miller
42nd District, California



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Congressman Miller Unveils the Free Way Act

Washington, DC – Recently, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority 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. In response, Congressman Gary Miller, a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, today introduced H.R. 6002, the Free Way Act. The bill would prohibit States and localities from charging carpoolers to access now free carpool lanes built with federal taxpayer money.

“LAMTA’s short-sighted plan to charge for the use of carpool lanes is double-dipping into the pockets of hardworking Americans,” said Congressman Miller. “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.”

In addition to the cost to taxpayers, the proposal also 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, thereby exacerbating the already severe congestion problem in Southern California.

“No one will pay for something if they do not get something in return,” added Congressman Miller. “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 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.”

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FACT SHEET

In exchange for \$213.6 million in federal bus and bus facility funding, LAMTA announced recently that it will convert 85 miles of Interstate HOV lanes by December 2010 at a total cost of \$181.3 million. Specifically, LAMTA has proposed a one-year demonstration pilot project (Phase I) to convert carpool lanes into High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes, which will charge solo or carpool drivers to drive in HOV lanes. Following completion of the demonstration project, the use of HOT lanes would expand to an additional 98 miles of freeway (Phase II).

Locations for Phase 1

- San Gabriel Valley I-10 from Alameda St/Union Station to I-605
- I-210 from I-210/SR 134/I-710 to I-605
- I-110 from 182nd St./Artesia Transit Center to Adams Blvd.
(I-110 conversion to HOT lanes will only occur if financing is available.)

Locations for Phase 2

- San Gabriel Valley I-10 from SR 57 to San Bernardino County Line
- I-210 from I-605 South to San Bernardino County Line
- SR 60 from Brea Canyon along SR 57 to San Bernardino County Line
- SR 60 from I-605 to Brea Canyon (HOV lane under construction)
- I-10 from I-605 to SR 57 - HOT lane costs only (HOV in design)
- San Gabriel Valley I-10 from I-605 to SR 57 - (HOV in design)

What Toll Revenue Will Be Used For

- Bus and Rail Car Purchases
- Bus Division Upgrade
- Transit Station Improvements
- Busway and Track Improvements
- Park and Ride Improvements
- Traffic Management Technology
- Traveler Information Technology
- Fare Technology