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## Caltrans Suspends Adopt-A-Highway Program after Lawsuit

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*Los Angeles Times – June 24, 2008*

Caltrans has suspended its popular Adopt-A-Highway program after an anti-illegal immigration group filed a discrimination suit against the state department because it was forced to move its section of highway farther away from a U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint on I-5 in San Diego County.

Pending Adopt-A-Highway permits have been put on hold as of June 17, while state transportation officials review guidelines for the program, which offers groups or individuals a highway sign featuring their name in exchange for litter clean up along a designated stretch of roadway. Existing permits will not be altered as the state Office of Administrative Law looks at the program's rules.

The San Diego Minutemen filed a federal lawsuit against the state agency about four months ago claiming discrimination and violation of free speech because Caltrans moved the group's sign to a less-busy section of California 52 in eastern San Diego County. Caltrans said the previous location south of San Clemente could draw protestors.

Jeff Schwilk, founder of the San Diego Minutemen, said the decision is a result of his group's unsuccessful attempt to adopt a different part of I-5 last month. Schwilk says Caltrans allowed Jobing.com to adopt the section of interstate 4 to 6 miles south of the checkpoint even though

the minutemen applied for the spot before them.

The majority of San Diego and Imperial counties' state roads are adopted, according to Caltrans spokesman Edward Cartagena. Some groups, which usually adopt a 2-mile stretch of roadway in one direction in exchange for free labor twice a month, are on the waiting list for years to adopt sections of popular metropolitan sections. Caltrans estimates over 120,000 people have helped clear litter on state roadways.



*One thing you learn in state government is that simple things can be hard. Even administering the Adopt-A-Highway program can be complicated depending on what the group is, what they want to put on their sign and where they want to adopt. While I was the Executive Director at UDOT we had a section of highway in southern Utah that was adopted by a vegetarian café. Local hunters took some pleasure in using that Adopt-A-Highway sign for target practice and we went through quite a few signs in the process. TW*

## 35W Bridge Replacement Ahead of Schedule

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*The Washington Times – June 20, 2008*

**MINNEAPOLIS** – Crews are working around the clock on the new Interstate 35W bridge, as the companies replacing it work toward up to \$27 million in additional incentives for an early completion. The two halves of the new span over the Mississippi River are separated only by a 200-foot gap that is shrinking by the day, and the new bridge is on schedule to open as early as September- three months ahead of schedule.

“Things are getting done in days and weeks that normally take months and years,” said Kevin Gutknecht, spokesman for the Minnesota Department of Transportation. “But the bottom line is there’s 141,000 cars a day that have to go someplace else right now, and that’s hard on everyone.”

The main contractors- a team of Flatiron Constructors and Manson Construction – had 600 workers on site at the height of construction a few weeks ago, and now have about 450. Even with the accelerated pace, Mr. Gutknecht said safety has not been compromised. A team of MnDOT inspectors is on site, as well as several layers of quality control including inspection of plans and of each stage of work before it begins, he said.

The builders could earn incentives in addition to their \$234 million contract, with an additional \$7 million for finishing by the final deadline of Dec. 24 and an extra \$2 million for every 10-day period prior to the final deadline, up to 100 days. If the bridge is ready for traffic by Sept. 15, the contractors will earn the full \$27 million bonus, which Flatiron/Manson assistant project manager Bob Edwards says is an achievable goal.



*In the spirit of sharing conflicts of interest, I provide the partnering facilitation services on this project and have consulted with them on their contracting activities. That said, Jon Chiglo (MnDOT) and Peter Sanderson (Flatiron) are doing an amazing job in moving ahead on this project. If you get a chance to hear them speak or talk to them personally you start to understand how teamwork and highly qualified*

*people throughout their organizations have come together to do what no one thought possible six months ago. Check out their website for the latest on the project. It's worth your time. TW*

## **Technology Can Reduce CO2 by 15%, Report says**

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*Bloomberg – June 20, 2008*

Technology can help reduce carbon dioxide emissions and save over \$1 trillion worldwide by cutting electricity and fuel use, according to the nonprofit, London-based Climate Group, which advises governments and businesses on ways to lessen their effect on the climate. Telecommunications and computers can be used to direct the load on power grids, improve how buildings are lit, warmed and cooled and direct freight trucks to shorter routes, the group said in a report this week.

"A lot of these technologies exist already; it's a question of scale and training and capability," said Molly Webb, leader of the Climate Group's technology program. "It needs joined-up policy thinking. This opportunity is about communications as well as buildings, environmental rules and climate-change targets."

Computers and communications devices such as telephones have the potential to cut emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, the primary gas blamed for man-made global warming by 7.8 billion metric tons annually by 2020, the report said. That is 15 percent of projected emissions under business-as-usual development, it said. The cutbacks would also help reach the 50 percent reduction in global emissions by 2050, recommended by United Nations scientists to avoid some of the worst effects of global warming.

By 2020, the total annual savings of \$1.015 trillion include spending \$871 billion less on fuel and energy, and \$143 billion generated assuming a cost of carbon of \$31 a ton. The biggest savings found by researchers – 2.03 billion tons – could be achieved by improving management of electricity grids worldwide. Traffic monitoring, global positioning systems devices and computer-aided design of transportation networks could cut an additional 1.51 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, the report said.

## **McCain Proposes Incentives to Promote Fuel Efficiency**

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*Bloomberg – June 23, 2008*

Presidential candidate John McCain has proposed "a swift conversion of American vehicles away from oil," saying he would stimulate a market for vehicles that emit minimal or no carbon dioxide by giving consumers a \$5,000 tax credit to buy them. The republican senator has also proposed a \$300 million reward for the development of a battery with sufficient power and capacity to "leapfrog" the ones currently fueling plug-in hybrids and electric cars.

In a town hall meeting at Fresno State College in California, McCain said his new proposals would replace the existing "hodgepodge" of government incentives for purchasing fuel efficient vehicles, calling them "the handiwork of lobbyists, with all the inconsistency and irrationality that that

involves.”

In his “Clean Car Challenge,” motorists would not only receive a \$5,000 tax credit for buyers to encourage the development of zero-emissions cars, but less clean vehicles would be offered credits on a scale giving higher credits for lower emissions. “Those tax credits will be available for everybody, not just those who can afford an accountant,” he said.

Zero-emissions cars are being developed. Honda said last week that it plans to lease 200 FCX Clarity hydrogen fuel cell vehicles over the next three years, with a goal of mass production within ten years. Last week, General Motors said it will start building a test fleet next year of over 100 Chevrolet Volts, the electric car that uses a wall outlet to recharge.

## **Lawmakers OK Gas Tax Increase, Tolls to Fund Roads**

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*The Virginian-Pilot – June 25, 2008*

*RICHMOND* – Several bills supporting transportation funding advanced in the Virginia legislature this week. A subcommittee approved two Senate transportation-funding bills on Tuesday that would require raising the gas tax, and a House committee approved using tolls to help fund major projects in Hampton Roads. Meanwhile, a measure that would pump revenue from offshore drilling into transportation needs was essentially killed by the General Assembly in the second day of their special session.

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine called on legislators to begin a special session on Monday, focused on transportation funding. He hopes to use a series of new taxes to raise \$1.1 billion annually for roads. Two Senate bills with momentum – SB6009 and SB6010 – are built around increasing the state’s 17.5-cent gas tax, which has not been raised since 1986. They would provide revenue for state road maintenance and regional work in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads.

SB6009, proposed by Senate Majority Leader Richard Saslaw, D-Fairfax, calls for a penny-per-gallon tax increase for each of the next six years. He said it would cost a driver who drives 10,000 miles a year in a car that gets 20 miles per gallon an extra \$5 a year in taxes.

The House Transportation Committee approved a bill which would permit the Commonwealth Transportation Board charge tolls and rush hour surcharges on four Hampton Roads projects. The bill, which the governor opposes, would need federal approval if it were to become law.

## **New York Mayor calls for Higher Gas Tax**

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*The New York Post – June 21, 2008*

*BOCA RATON, Fla.* – New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s message this week to raise the gas tax to curb consumption received a cool reception from the public, already fuming over the rising gas prices. The mayor’s stance follows a similar logic to that used when he recently raised the tax on cigarettes \$1 per pack, correctly stating that the higher tax would curb consumption. However, critics questioned this logic, saying that while this may be the right strategy for nonessential

items such as tobacco, is this really the type of policy that should be instituted for a commodity as essential as gasoline?

In a speech this week in Florida, the Bloomberg criticized recent presidential candidates gas tax proposals. "I think he [McCain] and Hillary Clinton couldn't both have been more wrong when they wanted to reduce the gasoline tax during the summer," said the mayor. "They should be raising the tax and encouraging people to reduce consumption. The anti-tax people don't like that. But using capitalism to encourage the right behavior is exactly the [right] direction of going. Tax policy is the way government uses capitalism."

## **L.A. Mayor Supports Tax Hike for Transportation**

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*Los Angeles Times* – June 25, 2008

The mayor of Los Angeles said for the first time in public this week that he supports a half-cent sales tax hike in Los Angeles County, which is currently at 8.25%. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said the tax initiative is the key to building a proposed subway system to the beach, estimated to cost \$5 million to \$7 million.

The mayor spoke with reporters about the tax initiative as he rode the subway to North Hollywood for a Metropolitan Transportation Agency press conference on new rapid bus routes. Villaraigosa said he hopes to get the tax initiative on the November ballots.

Such an increase would raise an estimated \$30 billion to \$40 billion over the next three decades. This would not cover all of the \$60 billion in projects the MTA would like to build in the county, but it would give L.A. spending freedom it doesn't have and make it less reliant on the state and federal government for funding.

Some of Mayor Villaraigosa's appointees to the MTA board have also recently voiced their support of the tax hike. The mayor's support is a crucial component to the campaign, as the representative for the largest city in the county; he's likely the best-known politician in the region.

## **Toll Efforts for I-70 Fail, Once Again**

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*Land Line Magazine* – June 25, 2008

A bill to eliminate some of the barriers prohibiting toll roads and bridges from being built in Missouri has died in the Missouri General Assembly. The initiative by Sen. Matt Bartle, R-Lee's Summit, would have given the state's Highways and Transportation Commission the ability to fund, build and operate toll roads and bridges, specifically on I-70 between St. Louis and Kansas City. The failure marks the fourth year in a row that legislation to introduce tolls to the state has been rejected.

The bill – SB793 – would have required all drivers to pay \$5 to drive the length of I-70 in the state, and was contingent upon approval of a Missouri Constitutional amendment. To that end,

Bartle also proposed a joint resolution to amend the Constitution to give the Highway Commission the authority necessary. Both efforts remained in the Senate Transportation Committee at the end of the regular session, killing them for the year.

## **Fla. Turnpike Studies Express Lanes for I-75**

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*Bradenton Herald – June 24, 2008*

*SARASOTA, Flor.* – Officials at the Florida Turnpike are studying the possibility of building express lanes in the highway's medians, and then charging drivers who use the lanes to avoid congestion in the toll-free lanes, a state official told a local transportation board Monday. The study is looking at tolls between 5 and 20 cents per mile or \$1.50 to \$6 to travel the 30-mile length of the highway from Manatee County to Sarasota County, said Carleen Flynn, the Turnpike's communication program manager.

Before a decision is made, turnpike officials still must do a financial analysis, most likely later this summer, Flynn told the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization. The MPO, which sets transportation priorities for the two counties, requested the study because similar ones were being performed in nearby counties. Officials are also considering possible toll lanes on I-75 in Pasco and Hillsborough counties, while a separate study endorsed six toll and four toll free lanes in Lee and Collier counties.

Turnpike officials are considering three combinations of toll and toll-free lanes for I-75. The first two options would keep the six existing lanes toll-free and add two or four toll lanes. The third would have six toll lanes and four toll-free. The MPO's long-term plans says a 10-lane highway will be necessary in Manatee and through most of Sarasota by 2030, which officials say is financially not possible.

Flynn's presentation to the MPO reported that a daily average of 169,000 vehicles would use I-75's Manatee stretch daily in 2030 if it were 10 lanes wide and toll-free. With a 5-cent toll, the number would drop by 10,000, and by almost 24,000 with a 15-cent-per-mile toll.

## **DART Unveils New Light Rail Cars for Dallas System**

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*Pegasus News Wire – June 24, 2008*

The next generation of light rail vehicles rolled into Dallas this week as DART introduced the larger-capacity super light rail vehicle (SLRV). On Monday, customers rode in the first car during the morning rush hour on the Blue Line between Downtown Garland and Ledbetter stations.

The modified cars are longer, with greater passenger capacity – seating approximately 100 passengers instead of 75 on the current cars. The capacity of the vehicles can nearly be doubled with standing passengers.

The cars have a new center section that adds seating capacity for 25 more passengers and enhances access with level boarding, to assist those with disabilities, strollers or bicycles without

the need for a mechanical lift. The inserts are also less expensive than full-sized vehicles. The new cars will be put in service as they are completed, with a full conversion planned for 2010.

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