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Let's See Some Statesmanship on CT Transportation Policy and Financing: Cameron on Transportation

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How's your commute going? Traffic getting worse? Trains still running late? As we all get back to work after the summer, commuters' frustration level is rising as it seems nothing is being done to fix transportation.

Lawmakers in Hartford couldn't be persuaded to meet to debate tolling this summer, knowing full well the votes weren't there, so they just kicked back. But it seems that some on the governor's staff were busy this summer trying to "reboot" his transportation plans. It's to be billed as "[CT 2030](#)".

May I be so bold as to offer a few suggestions to the Governor's team?

BE HONEST WITH US: Admit that Governor Lamont created this transportation crisis by reneging on a legislative plan to put \$170 million in auto taxes into the Special Transportation Fund. By law, that didn't violate the STF Lock Box rule but it sure did so in spirit. Lamont should admit that was a mistake.

We also need a full accounting of CDOT spending and waste. And an explanation of why CT [does so poorly](#) on national rankings when it comes to the cost of maintaining our roads. Scandals like the [CT Port Authority & Lottery](#) don't instill a lot of confidence for taxpayers.

PRIORITIZE: Rather than beating the dead horse of tolls, let's do an accounting of what needs to be fixed. When Governor Malloy rolled out his \$100 billion, 30-year "Let's Go CT" scheme he refused to prioritize. "We need to do it all, now," he would say. So naïve.

Surely the CDOT has a list of what needs fixing first. Let's see it.

SAFETY FIRST: Whether roads or rails, safety must be the top priority. Who can argue with the need to replace a rusting bridge, corroding catenary or enforcing speed limits? Safety isn't shiny or sexy. It just saves lives, even if it's often invisible to commuters.

Stop dangling unachievable goals like "[30-30-30](#)" or one lawmaker's fascination with [Hyperloop](#) in front of us to distract us. Just focus on state of good repair. Get the trains running on time, the interstate truck inspection stations open, the speed limits enforced and prevent the bridges from collapsing.

THEN WE CAN TALK ABOUT MONEY: Once we all understand what needs to be done, with a list of priorities based on urgency and safety, then we can discuss funding. Tolls are just one option. If you're not a fan, fine ... but you're not going to like the alternatives: sales / income / gas taxes, fees, fare hikes or service cuts. There's no "free lunch", folks. Decades of delayed repairs will require billions of dollars and we're all going to pay.

STOP THE "NO TOLLS" BULLIES: The anti-toll forces, both grassroots and lawmakers, have seemingly pounded a stake through the heart of user-fee options to pay for transportation. They're tapped into the rich vein of Nutmeggers' cynicism and distrust of Hartford. But now they're going a step further, [threatening anyone](#) running for public office with an organized campaign of opposition if they support tolling... "Vote for tolls. Lose at the polls."

I can see promising a State lawmaker a hard time if they vote for tolls, but implying similar threats in local municipal races seems unfair. Why should a First Selectman or Board of Reps candidate, who doesn't even have a vote on tolling, be held to these bullies' litmus test for loyalty?