

*Darienite*

*News for Darien*

<https://darienite.com>

---

## **The Biggest Problem With Tolls in CT Is That There's No Support for Them: Cameron on Transportation**

**Author :** David Gurliacci

**Categories :** [Opinion](#), [Transportation](#)

**Tagged as :** [Cameron on Tolls](#), [Cameron on Tolls 2020](#), [Cameron on Transportation](#), [Cameron on Transportation 2020](#), [Jim Cameron's Transportation Column](#), [Jim Cameron's Transportation Column 2020](#)

**Date :** February 27, 2020

Maybe the [NoTollsCT](#) folks (and the [recent Hearst editorial](#)) are right: The current toll proposal should be scrapped.

Mind you, I'm still pro-tolls and have been for years, but the governor's latest plan is so insipid and compromised as to be a waste of time.

It raises too little money, doesn't toll millions of out-of-state cars, and most importantly it seems that most people don't want it. Nor do they trust it will be limited to trucks.

I once described NoTollsCT founder [Patrick Sasser](#) as a “bully” because he threatened to oust any legislator that voted for tolls. Remember “Vote for Tolls, Lose at the Polls”?

I was wrong. Sasser is mostly an activist and advocate, and he has done an amazing job organizing opposition to tolling on a shoestring budget of about \$10,000 in small donations. Compare that to the [million dollars](#) spent in tolls lobbying by the construction industry to little result.

Did you see the Jan. 31 public hearing held at the capital on the governor’s latest tolls bill? The Transportation Committee heard almost 10 hours of testimony, most of it in opposition to the plan. I watched it all [thanks to CT-N](#).

In his testimony, Sasser cited his group’s 40 anti-toll rallies, 110,000 petition signatures and 29 towns (representing 1 million residents) that passed resolutions against tolls, and asked lawmakers “what more will it take” to stop tolls.

Sasser isn’t a political professional, just a Stamford firefighter with a side job in construction. But what he has built is amazing. Some say he should run for the Legislature.

I’m jealous of what he’s done and wish someone — anyone — had similarly galvanized those who support tolls. In December, when [a handful of pro-tolls folks](#) showed up at the state Capitol, a Senate Democrat staffer greeted them with, “Where have you been?” Nice.

I fundamentally disagree with Sasser that there’s enough waste in state DOT spending to finance repairs of all that’s wrong with our roads and rails. And it’s disingenuous of him to tap into the “no more taxes on anything” sentiment abroad in the land.

For weeks we’ve been promised that a tolls vote was imminent in the Legislature, and for weeks that vote has been postponed. Why? Not because of alleged “scheduling issues” but because the governor clearly doesn’t have the votes he needs to pass his plan.

Remember in May when naive Ned took the media with him into a House Democratic caucus seeking lawmakers’ support on tolls? Lamont admitted to his party members that he’d put them “[into a pickle](#)” but promised if they’d support him on tolls he’d help them raise money for their reelection fights.

Now he’s delivering on that promise, [adding an extra \\$300 million](#) to the state’s bonding package to entice needed votes. So much for his “debt diet.” At least lawmakers who vote yes on tolls can tell constituents they “brought home the bacon.”

To many, that’s just good old politics, but it’s unbecoming of a governor who promised us better. The end does not justify the means.

It’s time to scrap the governor’s anemic tolling bill and find an effective way to raise the money we need for

***Darienite***

***News for Darien***

***<https://darienite.com>***

---

transportation, like raising the gas or sales tax. Let's see how popular that will be.

  

---

*Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the [Commuter Action Group](#), sits on the [Merritt Parkway Conservancy](#) board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column, republished with permission of Hearst CT Media, are only his own. You can reach him at [CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com](mailto:CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com).*