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Think Gridlock on the Roads Is Awful? Wait'll You Consider Political Gridlock: Cameron on Transportation

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Five words I never thought I'd write: "I feel sorry for Dannel Malloy."

Sure, we've had our differences. And yeah, the governor does have the personality of a porcupine and the disposition of a bully, sometimes. But the man is not evil and he doesn't deserve what's happening to him now. Nor do we.

Our governor is a lame duck. Because he's announced he's not running for re-election, he has the political clout of a used teabag. And even though he's our state's leader for another 11 months, nobody cares about him or his ideas any longer.

Legislative leaders declared him “irrelevant” during the budget negotiations, ignoring his ideas and then handing him a billion-dollar problem. Sure, they met for weeks and hammered out a compromise budget, but it wasn’t balanced unless the governor specified over \$1 billion in cuts.

Lawmakers didn’t have the guts to order the cuts themselves. They made Malloy do it so he would take the blame, not them. So when the governor cut municipal aid, social services and education, our lawmakers feigned shock and anger.

More importantly, whatever happened to the governor’s (and our) transportation dreams? What became of [“Let’s Go CT”](#), his 30-year, \$100 billion “plan” to rebuild our roads and rails? It’s pretty derailed, like his political clout.

Sure, legislators scraped together [a few million](#) to “ramp up” the grand plan. And about \$5 million to do more studies on widening I-95 and improving rail service. But our state’s Special Transportation Fund (STF) is going to run out of money within a year or so if we don’t find new funding sources. No money in the STF means no new projects, no road repairs and, probably, cuts in mass transit.

None of the new funding ideas for transportation are popular, which is why lawmakers (facing re-election) couldn’t pull the trigger on tolls or taxes, knowing there would be no appetite for any added costs to transportation among skeptical voters ... unless there was a “lock box.”

Even then-candidate Malloy broke his own promise to not use the STF like a petty cash box to balance the budget. Which is why he pushed hard to safeguard those funds from future governors: with a lock box we would know that our tolls and taxes could only be spent on transportation.

[Tolls could bring in \\$62 billion over 25 years](#), 20 to 30 percent of that revenue coming from out-of-state residents. Imagine what that money would do for our roads and mass transit.

Yes, lawmakers did vote to move the lock box idea to a 2018 referendum. But the Democrats’ lock box is no more than a sieve to Republicans who think it can be “picked with a bobby pin.”

Without a lock box, nobody will support new revenue. And without money, the STF will be bone dry in a few years and Malloy’s transportation dreams will be dead.

Somewhere in Hartford, maybe at the State Library, I imagine there’s a special room where plans like “Let’s Go CT” go to die. I envision that room as stacked ceiling to floor with scores of multi-million-dollar consultant studies on how to fix our transportation crisis. A few have been read. Fewer still acted upon. Almost none have been funded.

So yes, I feel sorry for Dannel Malloy. But mostly I feel sorry for us.

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