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A Vehicle Miles Tax Is Needed to Maintain CT Roads: Cameron on Transportation

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This late in the General Assembly's calendar, the Legislature seems as dysfunctional as ever. Rome is burning and our leaders are just fiddling around.

Darienite have passed and been signed into law compared to an average 275 in recent years. Lawmakers debate such crucial issues as bear hunting, playground surfacing and dairy cows, while our roads and rail repairs remain unfunded.
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While it looks like long-debated reinstatement of tolls may happen this session, another potential funding mechanism has been killed before it was even studied, let alone debated. I speak of the "mileage tax" or VMT — vehicle miles tax.

What could be fairer to all Connecticut motorists than to ask them to pay for the miles they drive? Unlike tolls, this user-fee could not be avoided. The more you drive, the more you'd pay. But take mass transit and you'd drive less and pay less.

We already pay a VMT of sorts every time we fill up at the pump. But the gasoline tax hits high mpg vehicles (think Prius and Tesla) less than low mpg cars and trucks. Is that fair?

The VMT idea is already being tested in progressive states like Oregon and has been [endorsed by the](#) U.S. Government Accountability Office. It was also recommended by the governor's Transportation Finance Panel. But the VMT idea is DOA in Connecticut.

The state Senate recently [voted unanimously](#) to prohibit even the study of a VMT. The state Department of Transportation was even prohibited from attending a conference on that idea without permission of lawmakers.

The regressive Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, D-Norwalk and Darien, proudly proclaimed the bill would guarantee "the study that we know is never going to happen, never happens once and for all."

Before even understanding how a VMT might work, how much money it could raise and how easy it would be to implement, our prejudiced state senators have killed the concept in a unanimous gesture of stupidity.

Of course, a VMT was unpopular because it had never been explained, let alone studied. So shame as well on our governor and DOT commissioner for floating such a concept without explanation.

Critics said it would be "big brother" tracking where we drive, though our cellphones and E-ZPass devices do that now without their complaints. We even submit to odometer checks every time we get an emissions inspection. Privacy is a myth.

Nobody likes a tax they have to pay. Tax the other guy — the trucker, the out-of-state driver, the real estate transferer — but don't tax me! Make them pay for my roads.

Hypocrisy, prejudice, ignorance and denial are feeding inaction in Hartford. We won't get tolls without the long-promised "lock box" for transportation funds and we won't get even that without a referendum on a constitutional amendment before 2018.

Meanwhile, our roads deteriorate. According to the national transportation research group [TRIP](#), 57 percent of Connecticut roads are in "poor condition," which costs state motorists [\\$2.2 billion annually in extra vehicle repairs](#) and operating costs.

Do our lawmakers think we are chumps, willing to pay for front-end alignments and bent wheel rims while they are unwilling to even study a VMT?

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