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With CT Tolls No Longer on the Table, Only Worse Funding Options Remain: Cameron on Transportation

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Connecticut's Senate Democrats are gutless weasels. There, I said it.

They have put a stake through the heart of Gov. Ned Lamont's CT2030 transportation plan, not because they didn't understand its reasoned approach and necessity, but because they cannot support its funding through tolls. They are more interested in their re-elections than their constituents' future.

Never mind that, in a closed door caucus, they excoriated their governor in a 20-minute emotional attack that

went on without a calming word by their leader, Sen. Martin Looney. They have just rolled over and admitted that NoTollsCT leader Patrick Sasser's promise of "Support tolls, lose at the polls" has anointed him to lead the state's political agenda.

Rejecting tolls, how would the Senate Democrats pay for our transportation rebuild? Looney lived up to his name by suggesting marijuana legalization and its taxation. Never mind that the federal government would laugh at suggestions that taxing an illegal drug would pay for their loans to fix roads and bridges.

Why not take half of 1% from the state sales tax and dedicate it to transportation? That would bring in \$350 million a year and leave an equivalent hole in the General Fund with no way to get filled.

Or how about sports betting? Isn't that just another tax, this time on the ignorance of those who bet? Where is Sasser's opposition to those taxes? If he claims that tolls are taxes, aren't taxes taxes?

Sin taxes should not pay for our transportation. The users of that transportation should pay. Metro-North riders already pay the highest commuter rail fares in the U.S. and those of us who drive already pay gasoline taxes.

Why does everybody want someone else to pay for the service that we use?

Meanwhile, we can kiss goodbye \$125 million a year in free money — the tolls that would have been paid by out-of-state drivers cruising through Connecticut. Should we expect their pot purchases en-route to the casinos to come anywhere near to that lost revenue? Hardly.

The Democrats are out of ideas, so now the minority Republicans get to step in. Sure, they say, let's take \$1.5 billion from the state's "rainy day fund" and use that. The economy may be firing on all cylinders today, but what happens when the next recession hits? What do we do when it rains? Punt?

And Senate Republican leader Len Fasano, never one to trust the Department of Transportation, would also recreate the Transportation Strategy Board to oversee its projects. As a check and balance or with oversight? With a staff and consulting budget, further bloating the bureaucracy?

The Legislature already oversees the DOT's planning and budget, and the Transportation Committee regularly quizzes its commissioner on his priorities and projects. Do we really need another layer in decision-making, slowing up projects already decades late in getting underway?

Does the date June 28, 1983, mean anything to our lawmakers? Do they remember that as the date of the collapse of the Mianus River Bridge on Interstate 95 in Greenwich, costing three lives? Do they need another such "accident" to underscore the significance of their duties to fund transportation?

Or do they just care more about getting re-elected?

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