

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS



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Tolls, PPVs Vital, But Only Part of Transportation Solution

Revenue from tolls and public-private ventures may account for 50 percent of new expressways built in the United States over the next 10 years, AASHTO Executive Director John Horsley said today. While it is “vital to meeting national needs” at best it will account for only 10 percent of needed investment, he said.

Speaking at the 19th Annual American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) Conference on Public-Private Ventures in Transportation in Washington, D.C., Horsley cited many of the successful tolling and public-private venture projects built across the country. However, he said that a “backlash” has set in, and that future projects will face increasing scrutiny by political leaders to ensure protection of the public. He discussed the importance of public-private partnerships in meeting the nation’s future transportation needs.

Horsley noted that the role of tolls and PPVs was addressed at a summit during which AASHTO and other national transportation organizations crafted a broad-based vision for the future of the nation’s surface transportation system. The highest priority the conference agreed upon was the need to increase funding for the core highway and transit programs and to ensure the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund. The second was to generate net new funding sources outside the Highway Trust Fund to make bold new strategic national investments in highways of national significance, transit new starts and intercity passenger rail. It also asserted that all levels—federal, state and local governments and the private sector—must help fund the quantum increase in investment needed.

Horsley noted that ARTBA’s initiative called Critical Commerce Corridors is an attractive option with great potential to increase funding in a way that complements the Highway Trust Fund and helps meet national freight needs.

On Wednesday, Horsley said that AASHTO believes “Every state should be given all options possible in the areas of tolling and public ventures so those states can determine for themselves what is in the best interests of their citizens.”

In evaluating new toll and PPV projects, efforts will be needed, he said, to hold down initial tolls to the lowest rate possible and better safeguard the public against uncontrolled future increases.

Horsley also noted that, while public-private venture financing of highways improvements is vital, it should not be “oversold” or excessively promoted to the detriment of keeping the Highway Trust Fund solvent.

A copy of Horsley’s presentation is available on the homepage of the AASHTO website at www.transportation.org. Further information about the ARTBA conference can be found on the ARTBA website at www.artba.org.