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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT



PennDOT begins process to start tolling 9 bridges



In as soon as 2½ years, Pennsylvania motorists could be paying tolls to use nine bridges across the state, including the Interstate 79 bridge over Route 50 in Bridgeville. The Department of Transportation Thursday released plans to add tolls on traffic crossing nine interstate bridges as part of the agency's strategy to close a funding gap driven by increased fuel efficiency, increased use of electric vehicles and reduced travel during the pandemic.

The project would entail a new public-private partnership in which private firms will design and replace aging bridges and agree to maintain them for up to 30 years. The state will charge tolls — likely from \$1 to \$2 — to pay for the work. The Department of Transportation estimates that the move to add tolls would provide the \$2.2 billion in

funding needed to replace the bridges, freeing up those dollars to be spent on other roads and bridges.

Trucking companies are not happy with this plan. The head of the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association told a Senate committee last month that adding tolls on the interstate bridges would “destroy” the trucking industry in the state. Trucking companies can charge their customers a fee for the cost of fuel but typically can't pass along the cost of tolls, he said.

PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian said that the move is needed to address the state's road and bridge funding shortfall, which was exacerbated by the fact that people were driving less last year.

The bridges PennDOT has targeted for tolling are:

- I-78 Lenhartsville Bridge Replacement Project (Berks County);
- I-79 Widening, Bridges and Bridgeville Interchange Reconfiguration (Allegheny County);
- I-80 Canoe Creek Bridges (Clarion County);
- I-80 Nescopeck Creek Bridges (Luzerne County);
- I-80 North Fork Bridges Project (Jefferson County);
- I-80 Over Lehigh River Bridge Project (Luzerne and Carbon counties);
- I-81 Susquehanna Project (Susquehanna County);
- I-83 South Bridge Project (Dauphin County); and
- I-95 Girard Point Bridge Improvement Project (Philadelphia County).