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Alliance formed to oppose tolls on existing interstates

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RICHMOND, Va. — Businesses and organizations from numerous sectors of the U.S. economy, as well as individual citizens, have launched a national coalition opposing tolls on existing federal interstates.



ATFI is focused on educating the public and policymakers about the negative impact that tolling existing interstates will have on citizens, businesses and the U.S. economy. (The Trucker file photo)

The Alliance for Toll-Free Interstates (ATFI) is a broad-based organization united by the belief that a viable, sustainable solution to America's transportation funding needs must not include putting new tolls on existing interstates.

ATFI is focused on educating the public and policymakers about the negative impact that tolling existing interstates will have on citizens, businesses and the U.S. economy, organization officials said.

ATFI is composed of associations representing restaurants, trucking companies, truckstops and travel plazas as well as the moving and storage industry, vehicle rental industry, motorists and motorcyclists. The alliance also has many companies and individual citizen members who oppose tolls.

Among the more than 100 alliance members are the American Trucking Associations, FedEx, the Moving and Storage Association, NATSO, Old Dominion Freight Line, the Specialized Carriers and Rigging Association, the Truckload Carriers Association and UPS.

Many businesses are concerned that tolls on existing interstates will impact their bottom line, especially establishments that serve customers traveling the interstate, the alliance reported in a news release.

"Since its inception, the federal Interstate Highway System has facilitated unrestricted commerce and travel throughout the country," Jay Perron, ATFI member and vice president of government affairs and public policy for the International Franchise Association. "It is vital to the U.S. supply chain and has revolutionized the way America does business. Tolling existing interstates would reverse this progress, raising costs for travelers, businesses, and consumers, and harming the many businesses and communities located along interstate routes subject to new tolls."

Logistics companies such as Old Dominion Freight Line are also concerned about the increased business cost of tolling existing interstate lanes.

"The creation of the federal highway system opened an avenue of commerce never before seen in the U.S. This concept of unrestricted movement is a pillar of the modern economy," Bill Cranfill, general counsel for Old Dominion Freight Line and member of ATFI, said. "We support increased funding for highways but oppose tolls on current federal interstate capacity. Tolls are an inefficient method of funding, would increase the cost of moving goods, and would decrease efficiency by pushing interstate traffic onto less safe and slower local roads."

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While federal law prohibits tolls on existing interstate highway lanes, a federal pilot program allows three states to place tolls on existing lanes within their borders.

Since the program was created, numerous states have spent millions of dollars seeking Federal Highway Administration approval, the alliance said, adding that because of public opposition, among other reasons, not one state has implemented tolling under the program.

ATFI is calling on Congress to repeal the pilot program.

With Congress debating long-term transportation funding and states looking for additional revenue, the tolling industry is pressuring lawmakers to open existing federal interstate capacity to tolls.

Numerous studies analyzing the impacts of tolling existing interstate lanes have found that tolls create significant traffic diversion onto secondary roads, carry an astronomically high cost to administer and hurt the local and regional economies surrounding the toll facilities, the alliance said.

The Trucker staff can be reached to comment on this article at editor@thetrucker.com.

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