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Secretary LaHood Requests “New Ideas” on Tolling

(WASHINGTON—March 8) At a time when states are starved for revenues to adequately maintain existing highways, US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood told delegates at a meeting of the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association that he is open to new tolling options. He also challenged the industry to “propose some new ideas” on tolling that do not involve “tolling the existing interstates without some improvement.”

Introducing LaHood, IBTTA executive director and CEO Patrick Jones praised the Secretary for his unwavering commitment to safety. “Your efforts to eradicate texting while driving have raised consciousness of the importance of driver behavior. You have given safety a human face and voice: yours. You have also given voice to thousands of men, women and children who no longer have a voice in this life because of the careless behavior of someone behind the wheel.” Jones also asked the secretary to consider easing restrictions on tolling existing interstate capacity. “Tolling and pricing may be the only option we have to rebuild a system that is in serious danger of collapse,” Jones said.

Secretary LaHood inspired a round of laughter when he said he had returned to IBTTA for the second year in a row because “I wanted to hear another lecture about tolling the interstates.”

The Secretary was clear that he supports the use of tolls on new road capacity and not on roads that have already been built. He also indicated that he is open to new tolling options that introduce improvements to the interstate highways. The Secretary cited examples of linkages with other modes on projects that the U.S. Department of transportation has supported, such as combined highway and transit solutions. “In a time of crisis, we would be interested in hearing some new ideas about tolling,” LaHood said. “Propose some new ideas and we’ll take a look at them.”

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US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood made his remarks before the Legislative Conference of IBTTA, March 8, in Washington, DC. The International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association is the worldwide association for the owners and operators of toll facilities and the business that provide products and services to the industry. IBTTA’s mission is to advance toll financed transportation. More information: www.ibtta.org.