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Commentary by Joseph M. Giglio, Ph.D.

The basic theme of Tom Bamonte’s article is that tollways and transit systems are natural partners who have been putting off their inevitable marriage far too long by pretending (like a celebrity heiress and her butler) that “they live in totally different worlds.” But that 1930s Powell/Lombard movie plot has long since lost whatever credibility it may have had for the world we live in today.

Transit systems may be niche players in the transportation market. But their particular niche happens to be heavily concentrated in high-demand commuting periods whose travel volumes would swamp roadways to the point of total gridlock if transit systems didn’t exist. At the same time, today’s less-than-rational underpricing of tollway services makes them the only practical latent source of new funds needed to assure that tomorrow’s transportation facilities can meet the demands of a growing economy. Especially in major metropolitan regions that generate most of the nation’s Gross Domestic Product.

Bamonte speculates about the intriguing benefits possible from consummating a “marriage made in Heaven” between tollways and transit systems. Such as integrating the management of what are the two most important mobility arms for so many metropolitan regions. So that, for example, each traveler has a single payment account for use on both tollways and transit. With discounts for transit use during commuting periods to lure some travelers from automobiles to buses and trains. Thereby creating what amounts to new roadway lane space without the need for costly and disruptive new construction – and not so incidentally, helping to address equity issues among different income groups.



The fresh ideas in Bamonte’s article demonstrate why same old thinking isn’t a constructive option in the coming debate over the next congressional reauthorization of Federal transportation programs.

He further suggests the possibility of phasing in special tollway lanes as high-efficiency “transitways” where new technology takes over driving responsibilities from motorists in suitably equipped automobiles. Letting us finally retire our grandparents’ low-efficiency concept of delegating roadway operations to individual motorists. Which inevitably means the least competent drivers among

them and has proved to be a recipe for wasting all-too-scarce lane space.

The fresh ideas in Bamonte’s article demonstrate why same old thinking isn’t a constructive option in the coming debate over the next congressional reauthorization of Federal transportation programs. Not if we hope to meet the transportation challenges that lie ahead.

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Commentary by Steve Heminger

Thomas Bamonte is right on the money in his assertion that tollways and transit systems alike will benefit from greater operational integration. Though Mr. Bamonte’s vision of drivers willingly paying to cede control of their cars to a central network may be a (toll) bridge too far, his case for extending highway tolling, for corridors that combine tollways and transit, and for the consolidation of electronic back offices and the creation of single transportation accounts for customers, is both well reasoned and well argued. And the idea of establishing a free market for “transportation credits” earned by riding public transit certainly holds appeal for the climate-change generation.

Out on the left coast of America, the integration of tollways and public transit in the San Francisco Bay Area dates all the way back to the 1960s, when construction of BART’s transbay tube was financed in part with toll money from the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. The link between tolls and transit was made stronger in the 1970s when the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District began using bridge toll money to operate a fleet of buses and ferries linking San Francisco to Marin and Sonoma counties, and the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill 664, which dedicated a portion of toll revenues from three Bay Area bridges to various transit agencies as a match for federal funds to replace buses and improve capital facilities.

Today, tolls from the Golden Gate Bridge and the region’s seven state-owned bridges generate more than \$160 million each year in capital and operating support for rail, bus and ferry operators. These funds not only give transit riders a choice of modes for getting from one shore to another, but are essential to preserving and improving mobility for all travelers in the transbay corridors.

Our next step is to move beyond just financial support for transit operators to develop an extensive network of high-occupancy/toll (HOT) lanes for use by the Bay Area's growing fleet of express buses. The HOT lanes will inject a pricing element into highway use by giving solo drivers the option of paying for the opportunity to bypass congestion. Carpools and buses will continue to travel free of charge.

to finance buildout of the network, construct HOT lane connectors at major interchanges, and expand regional express bus services. All tolls will be paid electronically, with solo drivers' rates varying to keep supply and demand in balance. To maintain the HOT lanes' time advantage, tolls during peak commute periods will be high enough that just the right number of solo drivers buy in. In times of lighter traffic, a much

Long-range plans call for a complete HOT lane network to be in place by 2030, with toll revenues used to construct HOT lane connectors at major interchanges, and expand regional express bus services.

The Bay Area's first HOT lane is slated to open in 2009 along Interstate 680, connecting eastern Alameda County with the Silicon Valley. Long-range plans call for a complete HOT lane network to be in place by 2030, with existing carpool lanes converted to HOT lanes and toll revenues used

lower toll will be charged because solo drivers using the HOT lane will enjoy a more modest travel time advantage.

Thanks to Thomas Bamonte for making the connection between tolls and transit. Let's hope — to borrow a phrase from Casablanca — that this is the start of a beautiful friendship.

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Commentary by William W. Millar

Thomas Bamonte presents a number of innovative concepts in his article “The Coming Convergence of Tollways and Public Transit Systems.”

He notes that transit systems can carry a large volume of people in a relatively small right of way, has a smaller environmental footprint than highway systems, and provides a social-equity balance that can enhance the acceptance of road pricing.

The article makes other favorable policy observations including that road pricing can help reduce the perceived price advantages of the automobile and can help generate funding for corridor transit improvements. However, his final vision of toll roads linking single occupant vehicles in an integrated train-like operation lacks the balanced multi-modal outlook for a vibrant and sustainable vision for our future.

The concept of integrated transportation accounts wherein transit agencies and tollways are increasingly relying on single electronic transportation accounts is an idea whose time has come. Such thinking represents a triumph over traditional modal barriers that have impeded the realization of an integrated transportation network. The idea of giving credits to people who use public transportation during congested periods is a good one and would help assure the most efficient use of the transportation system.

Indeed, the combination of public transit and value pricing provides a synergy that can improve the operating performance of the corridor. In addition to providing more travel options, integration of transit will improve corridor performance at the “peak of the peak,” when transit services are designed

around the country, systems that now offer travelers choices that were not available previously. Very often, voters are choosing to tax themselves to make these travel choices available. Social, environmental, and demographic trends indicate that transit will play a still-greater role in our transportation future.

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to carry their heaviest loads. Improved corridor transit makes a win-win.

Certainly, I differ with Mr. Bamonte on his mistake filled presentation of transportation history and his incorrect notion that public transportation is in a relative state of decline. In 2006, the number of trips taken on public transit was 10.1 billion. This is the highest ridership in 49 years. Transit ridership growth of 30% since 1995 is outpacing both the growth of our population (12%) and the growth in the use of the nation’s highways (24%) since then.

Each weekday, Americans use public transportation 34 million times. This ridership growth is being fueled in part by new systems sprouting up

Consideration of transit and toll-roads together as part of an integrated corridor mobility strategy is the way to go. No single mode can do the job on its own; we must capitalize on the strengths of each. Toll facilities and transit have worked hand in hand for many years. New York City, San Francisco, and Philadelphia recognized long ago that the performance of toll bridges in heavily traveled corridors depends on some of the trip volume being picked up by transit programs operating in the same corridors. The same notions are being applied today in San Diego, Minneapolis, and Northern Virginia. This is the way to grow together for the benefit of the nation.

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Commentary by Mark Muriello

As electronic toll collection technologies have spawned the age of open road tolling and congestion pricing, new tolling programs are increasingly building relationships with transit operations. The traditional link of tolling and transit has been a financial relationship — tolls have provided a subsidy for deficit transit operations. However, as urban regions struggle to balance the need for new transportation capacity with the challenges of traffic congestion, sprawling development patterns, air quality standards, and limited funding, there is more of an imperative for integrated systems approaches to transportation service and investment planning.

The challenge facing transportation officials – from Departments of Transportation, to roadway and transit operators, to Metropolitan Planning Organizations – is increasingly to plan and act beyond their jurisdictions toward flexible mobility solutions. Economic regions are not defined by jurisdictional or geographical boundaries. The transportation challenges of the future will inevitably be different from those that we are facing today. In order to prosper and grow, economic regions will require transportation resources that can respond to new needs and opportunities, as well as the institutions that can provide a regional perspective, resources for investment, and multi-modal capabilities.

From a financial standpoint, transportation operators and government at all levels are struggling with a growing transportation financing crisis and an acute need to expand the funding base for transportation operations and investment. Tolling and road pricing have emerged as one element in the tool kit that does offer new revenue opportunities, as well as a means to devise new traffic demand management options that can help address the effects of worsening traffic congestion. While the attraction

of revenue generating transportation projects is clearly a part of the rising popularity and interest in many road-pricing projects, a growing number of cities and regions are harnessing these approaches to provide flexible solutions to local needs by integrating these solutions in a manner that addresses the performance of transportation **systems**. Integrated programs of tolling and

that serve broader regions by providing transportation choices, service for more customers, improved traffic flow and reduced net operating costs.

Mobility needs and funding challenges need to be addressed creatively and proactively. New technologies and electronic payment systems provide many opportunities to ensure multi-modal solutions are

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transit are beginning to emerge as best practice in addressing the performance of transportation systems.

The experience with roadway congestion charging in London and Stockholm has provided demonstrated results of how central city road charging can be joined with transit operations and investment to offer transportation efficiencies as a platform for sustainable economic growth and improved quality of life. In the U.S., projects such as San Diego's I-15 FasTrak program and Houston's I-10 QuickRide program have demonstrated that joining tolling with transit services can result in high performance transportation corridors

core to addressing transportation system performance. The confluence of these needs and solutions suggest that the notion of blending new revenue generation, demand management, and infrastructure efficiency in projects that address transportation system performance will become more commonplace.

So with the present needs and proven technologies and business models, why must we wait for the future for more widespread integration of tolling and transit? What is needed from the toll industry to ensure that transportation system performance is addressed in an integrated manner

today? In short, it will require vision and leadership, new partnerships and a market orientation in planning.

Progress toward more effective transportation systems rests on creating a framework for improved service and connectivity among the organizations that share collective stewardship of transportation assets to better meet mobility needs of people, businesses, and communities. Transportation services should be a resource, not a problem, in addressing regional and local needs. This will require new partnerships to ensure that investments and operational spending contribute toward mobile and economically competitive regions. A systems and regional orientation to transportation planning, by definition, must reflect integration across modes, particularly highway and transit.

An integrated approach entails leadership to identify shared transportation objectives, and then to coordinate and leverage all available resources in an effort to fulfill those objectives. What we have learned in the Northeast, and in the New York



Metropolitan area in particular, is that building new transportation capacity alone, or maximizing the operational efficiency of each mode independently, is neither efficient, nor practical in meeting today's pressing transportation challenges. Transportation policy at all levels of government, and the operating practices we employ at the local levels, must continue to evolve away from the notion that each agency or jurisdiction should do what it can within its jurisdiction and array of modal assets. As an industry, we must move toward the concept of collective responsibility for meeting regional mobility goals. And there is no time like the present to start.

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