As President and an officer of IBTTA over the last 12 months, it has been my privilege to visit four continents to meet with leaders and colleagues in this worldwide community we call tolling. Last October, we held our Annual Meeting in Vienna, Austria, celebrated 75 years of IBTTA history, and looked to the future of our industry. In March of this year, we held a major conference to strengthen our ties with South America. With more than 300 delegates from 19 countries, IBTTA’s Toll Road Summit of the Americas in Argentina was a huge international success. There is a clear hunger for more opportunities to share information and experiences.

Attending the ASECAP meeting in Morocco was a great opportunity to connect with toll industry colleagues from 20 European nations. In different languages, the questions are the same.

September gave me with the opportunity to preside over IBTTA’s 76th Annual Meeting and Exhibition in Baltimore where nearly 900 delegates from six continents engaged in spirited discussions about the worldwide credit crisis, interoperability, sustainable mobility, leveraging assets, and the politics of tolling.

Reflecting on the past 12 months and the theme of this issue of Tollways, it has become apparent that asset management is a critical success factor for our industry. For me, the most important assets are the relationships forged with the people in this industry: smart, hard-working, caring people who design, build and maintain our bridges, tunnels and turnpikes; who collect the money to support our facilities; who provide customer service to the drivers on our roads; and who develop the policies and products to expand mobility options. Working together, we will find the solutions to long-range transportation needs. We’re all in the business of asset management. And relationships are the most important asset of all.

Susan A. Buse
The U.S. Federal Highway Administration defines asset management as “a strategic approach to allocating resources – dollars, people, and data – for the preservation, operation, and management of...transportation infrastructure. By strategically allocating resources, agencies can maximize the return on their investment, improve system performance, and increase customer satisfaction.”

Maximizing return on investment is a very powerful concept – especially in the wake of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act (or bailout) that the U.S. Congress passed and the president signed into law in early October. At this writing, the financial markets are still reeling from the worldwide credit crunch and we don’t know how or when our global economic system will recover. This is all the more reason to focus on protecting and preserving the assets we have and not allowing them to deteriorate. That’s what this issue of Tollways is all about.

Some of our members operate toll bridges that have been around for more than 50 years. Other well-known structures like the Brooklyn Bridge have supported traffic for more than 150 years. Bridge, highway, and tunnel maintenance might not appear to be as exciting or innovative as subprime mortgages and credit default swaps. But we can all sleep soundly at night knowing that our members’ well-maintained bridges will still be standing in the morning and continue to support mobility and commerce around the world more effectively than those complex financial instruments.

Asset management, while seemingly mundane, is the foundation of a sound transportation system. Its importance is both broader and deeper than the anchor blocks of the Brooklyn Bridge. Ed Regan, Rick Geddes, and Nigel Lewis talk about asset management from the perspective of public policy and the ways we fund and finance our transportation system. Maurizio Rotondo and Paolo Berti write about the safety aspects of asset management. Butch Eley, Hal Worrall, and Daniel Faust help us see how asset management represents a unique mindset that places the customer first. Jean-Pierre Pascouau and Bernard Fer look at asset management from the standpoint of cross-border cooperation. Finally, Paul Kovacs and Sharif Abou-Sabh explore the role that technology and asset management play in improving transportation system efficiency and customer service.

We hope you enjoy this collection of articles organized around the theme of asset management...as you think about the permanence of other investments in our world.

Patrick D. Jones
Tollways strives to be a principal agenda-setting publication for the transportation profession, providing a serious source of original thinking to advance the performance of organizations engaged in tolling and other direct user-fee financed transportation services and their leaders. Tollways is published by the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association and distributed three times per year (winter, spring and autumn) to its member company representatives. IBTTA also distributes copies of each issue to members of Congress and other key policy makers at the federal, state and local levels of government.

Correction Notice

In the Winter 2007 issue of Tollways, the article titled High-Occupancy Toll-Lane Innovations: I-394 MnPASS was incorrectly credited to John Doan. The author credit should be attributed to Kenneth Buckeye, Value Pricing Program Manager at the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Mr. Buckeye can be reached at 612-388-1672 or kenneth.buckeye@dot.state.mn.us.

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Table of Contents

3 National Transportation Policy Commission Sees Major Role for Tolling and Pricing
Edward J. Regan

19 The Future of Surface Transportation Funding in America
Rick Geddes

27 DBFO Payment Mechanisms in the United Kingdom
Nigel C. Lewis

39 Ensuring the Safety of Italy’s Tolled Motorways
Maurizio Rotondo

53 Safe Keeping: One Concessionaire’s Success in Protecting Italy’s Motorway Users
Paolo Berti

63 Cross-Border Interoperability: The Alliance of ASF and Bidegi in France and Spain
Jean-Pierre Pascouau and Bernard Fer

73 Asset Management: The Proper Balance of Capital and Maintenance
Butch Eley and Hal Worrall, P.E.

85 Tolling and State DOTs: Embracing a New Business Model
Daniel Faust

93 The Implementation of Open Road Tolling on the Illinois Tollway
Paul Kovacs, P.E., and Sharif Abou-Sabh, P.E.