

Brown administration paving way for expansion of toll lanes

Allen Young

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Under a bill expected to be introduced this year, local authorities could more easily convert carpool lanes into toll lanes, but also could create new "user fee" stretches along California's highways.

The Brown administration will be sponsoring legislation this year to streamline the process for local transportation agencies to approve toll lanes.



Under the bill, local authorities could more easily convert carpool lanes into toll lanes, but also could create new "user fee" stretches along California's highways. Revenue from the tolls would be managed by local authorities, and could go toward improving adjacent roadways, on ramps and possibly even adding new transit service.

The legislation, expected to be included in the group of bills that make up the 2015-16 [state of California](#) budget, is informed by [recent recommendations](#) from the [California State Transportation Agency](#).

"The governor has opened the door to an important conversation about an ongoing stable source of transportation revenue to deal with our deferred maintenance problem," said State Transportation Secretary [Brian Kelly](#).

The expansion of toll lanes is one of the administration's answers to California's decaying infrastructure. Most of California's highway system was built in the post-World War II era and is nearing the end of its lifecycle, Kelly said. An [infrastructure plan](#) released earlier this month by the administration reports that the state spends approximately \$412 million on highway maintenance each year when over \$1 billion is needed.

The state transportation agency also seeks ways to generate more revenue with fees attached to vehicle miles traveled rather than taxes on gasoline. The transportation agency is now experimenting with various technologies to gauge roadway use using global positioning systems, and weighing the use of those technologies with privacy concerns, said Kelly. A pilot program measuring roadway use will be wrapping up in the next couple years, Kelly said.

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