



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Thruway Authority Should Advance Electronic Toll Efforts

SENATOR MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER September 20, 2017

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Senator Ranzenhofer's column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on September 20th. Last month, I joined Federal, State and local leaders to call on the New York State Thruway Authority to remove the Williamsville toll barrier and replace it with a high-speed open road, cashless tolling system.

Like many Western New Yorkers, I drive through the Williamsville toll plaza many times over the course of a workweek. Waiting in line early in the morning or at the end of the day, it feels like we're in another decade or even a different century. Several states are ahead of New York with this technology, and our state is behind where we ought to be for cashless tolls.

The high costs associated with maintaining New York's outdated toll collection system is unsustainable. Simply put, New Yorkers are paying too much for an outdated, inefficient system. The Thruway Authority spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually to maintain an outdated toll collection system, while many other states have converted to a better, more efficient electronic tolling system.

I have been pushing for high-speed electronic tolling for years now. In fact, over the past four years, I have written five letters to the Thruway Authority and Governor Andrew Cuomo, pushing for cashless tolling across the entire Thruway corridor.

Over the summer, Governor Cuomo unveiled plans to implement cashless tolling at the Grand Island bridges by March of 2018. It is expected to be the Thruway Authority's second all cashless tolling location when implemented.

It's time for the Thruway Authority to make the Williamsville toll barrier the state's third all cashless tolling location. A total of \$750,000 has been budgeted already, by the Thruway Authority, to "Rehabilitate Buffalo Division Toll Booths" in 2018. This funding should be dedicated to transitioning the plaza to an electronic system. The long-term savings from such a move would far outweigh the short-term costs.

Electronic tolling is a cost effective and more convenient way to travel our highways, making it easier and safer for Western New York drivers and their passengers. Cashless tolling will

virtually eliminate traffic congestion and drastically reduce pollution.

Recently, the New York State Department of Health embarked on a study to identify and determine health effects, for both toll workers and local communities, of air quality at toll plazas. In 2013, the report recommended increasing the automation of toll collection.

Converting the Williamsville plaza from an outdated toll collection system to a state-of-the-art high-speed cashless electronic tolling will improve traffic for motorists, help to better protect the environment and reduce pollution for drivers and local communities.

I encourage Western New York residents, professional drivers, and commuters to join me in my efforts to call on the Thruway Authority to implement cashless tolling at the Williamsville plaza.