

Letter to the Editor
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TOLL AUTHORITY TAKES A STEP BACKWARDS

Elmhurst - The Toll Authority has again illustrated why reform and legislative oversight is overdue. Chairman Philip stated that the Toll Authority would not wait for Blagojevich to name new toll board members in the spring, nor will the agency wait for the Illinois Auditor General to complete its comprehensive management audit of the Toll Authority prior to raising tolls.

What is the rush? What additional information has been made public to rationalize an 87% toll increase that will fund only part of a 5.5 billion dollar plan? Last spring the plan details were posted on one sheet of paper and all 12 mandatory public hearings were held simultaneously. Will the toll increase be dedicated to fixing the current crumbling system, or is this a convenient way to fund the controversial North- South Tollway and I-53 north extensions? Is an 87% increase necessary? Where are the detailed plans stating how much will be spent on which construction projects? The Toll Authority stated they would exercise due diligence and investigate congestion value pricing, why won't the Toll Authority wait for the study results?

What is the detriment in waiting until the Auditor General completes the management audit? Wouldn't waiting until the Toll Authority implements recommendations by the Auditor General help to improve financial efficiency and responsibility, something the Toll Authority desperately needs? And why did the Toll Authority spend motorist money to pay Dain Rauscher to study 16 different funding alternatives, only to have it be largely disregarded by Arthur Philip?

Details remain sparse. Implementing a toll raise prior to completion of the management audit and implementation of the recommendations is irresponsible. For an agency that has stated that it is willing to take the steps to gain public understanding, this latest move is a step backward.