

Should a new Lewis and Clark Bridge use tolls in financing plan?

By Noni Andersen

There's little disagreement about whether the Lewis and Clark Bridge should be replaced. At the time the 65-year-old bridge was built, it was designed to handle 17,500 trips daily; now, 25,000 trips daily keep traffic bumper-to-bumper much of the time.

The two-lane bridge isn't just old and crowded, there is concern about its deteriorating condition.

Where there is a lot of disagreement, however, is whether a new bridge should be built using tolls to help pay the possible \$100 million replacement cost.

Replacing the bridge started with an initiative approved by the Washington Legislature to attract private capital investment in public works

projects. When private capital proved to be inadequate, tolls were considered.

The only specific proposal came from Atkinson Construction Co., for a four-lane, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly bridge, about 450 feet from the present bridge.

They are looking at a combined \$28 million set aside by the states to build a new deck on the old bridge, plus \$12 million from the two states' transportation budgets, the sale of 30-year revenue bonds and vehicle tolls. Any reallocation of funds would have to be approved by the legislatures.

Many Rainier residents work in Longview and are, understandably, opposed to a toll bridge. Trucking companies fear they will be hit hard by higher tolls, which they say would be unfair since

they also pay high road taxes.

Others say that a wider bridge is needed to meet the future needs of the area and that a toll is reasonable be-

cause those who use the bridge most should pay more than the rest of the taxpayers, who use it rarely or not at all.

The survey below is for readers of The INDEPENDENT

to express their opinions and ideas. Please fill it out and mail it to:

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Lewis & Clark Bridge Survey

1. A blend of public and private financing is good for public works projects.

Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Don't know ☐

2. A toll is a logical way to help pay for bridge construction.

Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Don't know ☐

3. If a toll is charged, how much should it be?

Circle 1:

\$.50	\$1.00	\$1.25
\$1.50	\$2.00	\$2.50

4. Since trucks cause more wear and tear, should they pay a higher toll than cars?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

5. If you have specific ideas you would like to suggest, please put them on a separate piece of paper and mail them with this survey to:

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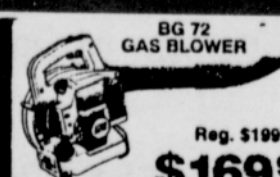
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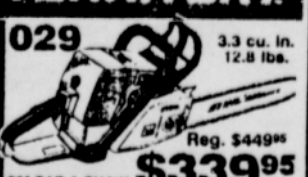
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