



Frequently Asked Questions: The Truth Behind Initiative 1125

Who is really behind I-1125?

I-1125 is the latest scheme to halt transportation projects and cause gridlock from initiative kingpin Tim Eyman. Eyman is primarily funded by a single wealthy donor, and paid nearly 1 million dollars to paid signature gatherers to get this latest "initiative of the people" on the ballot.

What does I-1125 really do?

Like with many of Eyman's initiatives, the devil is in the details. Masquerading as an initiative about tolls, I-1125 is really an attempt to halt or stall major transportation mobility projects around the state. I-1125 seeks to ban the use of variable tolling and limit where and when tolls could be used. I-1125 doesn't prevent tolling, it merely hands the ability to toll over to the state legislature. Currently, an independent, non-partisan commission of experts sets toll rates in the state. No other state in the country allows politicians to set and control toll rates. The idea of a legislator from Seattle setting toll rates in Eastern Washington or having a politician in Walla Walla determining important transportation policies in the Puget Sound area makes no sense.

What projects are at stake?

Among those in danger are the Evergreen Point floating bridge replacement across Lake Washington, Clark County's Columbia River Crossing and Seattle's Alaskan Way Viaduct. And some already planned mobility projects, like the improvements slated for SR 167 and 509 may face a funding crisis if I-1125 is approved. The threat doesn't just stop there--it also means that hundreds of smaller projects, including many in rural areas, would be affected as well--creating a backlog of projects we can't afford and miring our communities in gridlock.

Who opposes I-1125?

The health of our communities and the health of our economy relies on good transportation policy that keeps people moving. I-1125 threatens to create gridlock around the state, damaging our quality of life and our economy. That's why experts in transportation planning across the state and a nearly unprecedented coalition of businesses, labor and community leaders have come together to oppose Initiative 1125 under the banner of Keep Washington Rolling.

How much will I-1125 cost?

I-1125 could cost taxpayers billions of dollars. The State Treasurer cautions that the initiative would blow a \$500 million hole in the financing for the 520 Evergreen Point floating bridge project alone--meaning the state would revert to using gas taxes to pay back those bonds. And any future bonding would also be threatened, the Treasurer cautioned, explaining that no other state allows the legislature to set toll prices because independent bond houses often won't bond--or bonds would cost an additional \$18 million for every \$100 million--when the financing is at the whim of politicians.

The Office of Financial Management also found that I-1125 would blow a hole in transportation funding in Washington, including sacrificing half or more of \$123 million in federal grant funding that is currently slated to be spent in Washington on transportation projects and job creation.

How will I-1125 affect low-income families?

Proponents of I-1125 want you to believe that transportation policies that keep our roads moving, like variable tolling are bad for low income families. The reality is that if I-1125 passes it will have a devastating effect on low income families because it will cost taxpayers more around the state. Without the ability to bond major projects against tolling revenue, the state will be forced to turn to the gas-tax and other sources of revenue, meaning taxpayers around the state will pay more for projects that they may never use. Tolls are fairer. Tolls are a user fee -- people only pay for what they use. That's fairer than raising taxes on everyone—or diverting limited resources— to fund critical projects.

Don't fewer projects mean fewer jobs?

Yes. By halting or stalling major projects, we will lose thousand of living wage construction jobs that many families rely on. And it isn't just construction jobs that we need to worry about--countless more jobs will disappear or never be created if businesses move away from our state or don't invest here because they can't move goods and employees around our region.

What do experts say?

Transportation planning experts around the state are lining up to oppose I-1125. Every State Transportation Secretary for the past 17 years is opposed to I-1125. And the State Treasurer recently noted just how dangerous I-1125 is, cautioning that politicizing our tolling system would make our system unstable and discourage investment in Washington. The analysis found that the uncertainty created by allowing politicians to set toll rates will cost Washington State billions in bond financing for important projects while increasing financing costs for taxpayers by hundreds of millions. Washington can't afford to lose billions of dollars in funding right now or see our transportation bonds downgraded.

What would I-1125 mean for voter approved projects like light rail on I-90?

According to Eyman, if I-1125 passes it would kill the voter-approved plan to build light rail across Lake Washington on the I-90 floating bridge. That alone would create gridlock and cost our economy hundreds of jobs and billions in lost wages, all while putting the future economic vitality of the region at risk. We can't afford I-1125.