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- Speaker 1: And I'm going to move that on. Third and final consideration in order to talk about the amendments. Then I'll go over the bill.
- Speaker 2: That's a proper motion. Properly seconded. Amendment amendments. Mr. Clerk
- Speaker 3: Amendment number one, Senate Transportation Safety Committee Amendment.
- Speaker 2: Chairman Massey, you're recognized on amendment one.
- Speaker 1: Move to withdraw
- Speaker 2: Without objection. Withdrawn. [00:00:30] Further amendments. Mr. Clerk amendment
- Speaker 3: Number two, Senate Finance ways and means Committee amendment.
- Speaker 2: Chairman Watson, you're recognized on amendment two.
- Speaker 4: Thank you Mr. Speaker members. I'm going to move adoption of finance amendment number one, which is amendment number two to the bill. I'll give a brief explanation, then I'll yield to the sponsor who has worked so tirelessly on this legislation. Just a couple of technical corrections that the bill makes and then I'll yield back to the sponsor. Corrects [00:01:00] a drafting mistake and the number of years that the electric vehicle fee holds at \$200 before increasing to 274 corrects a drafting mistake to start indexing the hybrid fee in the same year that the indexing for the electric vehicle fee commences a technical edit in section 12 relative to the responsibility for the final design. If the progressive design build project is delivered. With those technical explanations, I yield to the sponsor for a complete explanation of the legislation.
- Speaker 2: Further explanation. [00:01:30] Chairman Massey.
- Speaker 1: Thank you Mr. Speaker. When it comes to transportation and mobility in Tennessee, we are at a critical juncture. We are fortunate to live in a state with so much going for us, which is a direct result of our sound economic policies, high quality of life and ranking as one of the lowest tax states in the country. While this yields economic opportunity, it also presents challenges in our ability to move people goods and services more seamlessly [00:02:00] across our state. This proposal modernize modernizes Tennessee's transportation infrastructure and addresses traffic congestion, prolonged project delivery timelines and deteriorating revenue stream. This will do so without raising taxes, without issuing road debt, and without spending a disproportionate amount of funds in our urban areas. At the detriment of our rural communities, Tennessee's growth is far outpacing [00:02:30] road funding with independent congestion studies identifying a 26 billion backlog of congestion related needs.
- Speaker 1: To address this backlog, TDOT only has about 500 million annually to invest new construction funds based on current revenue streams. At this rate, it would take 52 years just to address these projects and these students that were here tonight would be

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senior citizens at that point in time, [00:03:00] this legislation authorizes TDOT to partner with the private sector to design, build, finance, operate and maintain new and additional lanes on existing interstates called Choice Lanes. Public-private partnerships allow the state to leverage private sector dollars to deliver large scale urban congestion mitigation proj projects, which frees up our state dollars to invest in rural or suburban communities. [00:03:30] Under a P three agreement, a private firm may enter into a lease agreement with tdot, but note Tennessee will always own the road. P three s allow for accelerated project delivery, shared risk, provide access to additional capital without any obligations to the state.

Speaker 1: Choice lanes allow drivers to make a choice to use the existing free lanes or as one of my fellow senator said, a volunteer [00:04:00] lane or pay a user fee to enter the new additional lanes for a guaranteed minimum speed. This is different from a traditional tow road where all drivers must pay a user fee to use the tow road. Many people that have been to Florida have driven on the Sunshine Parkway. It is similar to TSA precheck or a Disney fast pass where you can decide if you want to do it or not. Fees are never charged on the general [00:04:30] purpose lanes and the number of these free lanes are never reduced. Choice lanes provide additional capacity in heavily congested corridors benefiting those who use the choice lanes as well as those who decide to remain in the general purpose lanes. In the free general purpose Lanes data has shown in other states their traffic is reduced by about 30% and oftentimes the drivers go about 20 miles per hour.

Speaker 1: Faster [00:05:00] law enforcement, emergency vehicles and transit drive free in these lanes which has been proven to save time and money and lives, this legislation will expand TDOT's existing alternative delivery tools, which includes design, build and construction manager. General contractor is some of the alternative models which has been proven to save both time and money. This legislation creates parody [00:05:30] between what the drivers of the combustible engine vehicles and their EV and hybrid counterparts pay in gas taxes by increasing the registration fee for EVs to \$200 for the first \$200 for the first three years following passage and then \$274 by 2026. For hybrid vehicles, a hundred dollars fee will be set immediately. Passage in 2027 [00:06:00] indexing will be added to the electric vehicle fee as well as the hybrid fee to ensure that inflation is enco is accounted for, but it also kind of caps those from going either too high.

Speaker 1: The bill also provides that the revenues from these fees are shared with county and city governments in the same manner as the gas tax, which they are not doing now. This bill establishes the Transportation Modernization Fund to be fund funded by a proposed investment [00:06:30] of 3.3 billion, which will fund critical infrastructure projects in rural and urban areas of Tennessee. The 3.3 billion will be allocated evenly among TDOT's four regions, which that's 750 million each with also a 300 million investment in the State Aid highway program which flows to counties for local transportation projects. Currently we have been putting 21 million [00:07:00] annually, at least for the last 10 years in this program and this will continue In addition to the 300 million, this will be putting the equivalent of 15 years investment in one lump sum. The breakdown by county has been distributed on a yellow sheet on your desk so you can look at how

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much your counties are going to be getting. This has been endorsed by 13 chambers across the state, the County Mayor's Association, the Road builders, the public transit, the [00:07:30] highway superintendents, the county commissioners, the engineering companies, and the transportation planning organizations. I believe we need to make sure our state is responsive to the growing demands for additional transportation options brought on by our Rapid growth and Senate bill 2 73 helps to do that. The infusion of these funds will invest in our roads for future generations.

Speaker 2: Senator Watson's move finance amendment number two, seconded by Senator Massey. [00:08:00] Discussion, all in favor of the amendment, say aye. Aye. All opposed, nay. You adopt amendment number two on the bill as amended discussion. Senator Ma? I'm sorry. Senator Rose.

Speaker 5: Thank you Mr. Speaker with sponsor yield.

Speaker 2: Sponsor yields.

Speaker 5: Let me say, first of all, I appreciate you bringing [00:08:30] this bill. I'm going to support this legislation. Much needed but you heard our concern or the concern in bill review and I want to share that just for the record. It's my understanding that no China funds will be used on this project. And let me just add to that. We know that today, chairman, she and Putin are meeting, I don't think they have our best interest and I'd like to make sure they are not funding this in any [00:09:00] way.

Speaker 2: Senator Massey to respond.

Speaker 1: Thank you Mr. Speaker. And the way the bill reads is any sanction list, produ, any country, anybody listed on the sanction list and that's any of their list we cannot do business with. China is on the military sanction list of the Office of Foreign Asset Control. That means they are on a list of the sanction list so [00:09:30] we cannot do business with them. I confirm that

Speaker 2: Senator Rose to continue.

Speaker 5: Thank you. Thank you for that answer. So the China military is on the list but it would not keep a private entity from investing. Question

Speaker 2: Senator Massey to respond.

Speaker 1: Thank you Mr. Speaker. The sanction list that it says is that they cannot do business with, we cannot sell [00:10:00] military or space equipment to China and these other countries for that military list, but they are on the sanction list and it also says entities are investors in these organizations. So it is very clear, but I will make it clear that we have consulted our attorneys, we have other legislation going through that uses the same language and we wanted to make sure it was broader that it included any possibility of China being invested [00:10:30] in our roads.

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Speaker 2: Thank you Senator Rose. Further discussion, Senator. Nicely.

Speaker 6: Thank you Mr. Speaker. What Senator Rose was talking about. I have another bill that tried to limit ownership in Tennessee and to not allow any country who's on the sanctions list to be able to buy property in Tennessee. Well this is the US Department of Treasury financial [00:11:00] sanctions and so I was reading as 38 countries around the world that are on our sanction list, but China's not one of 'em. It says the Chinese military companies sanctions. So a company in China who's not a military, of course they're all military at the end of the day, but a company that's not technically a military company would not have be a sanctioned against this. I have this here. It's from the US Department of the Treasury. [00:11:30] Now someone tried to say that there's different sanctions list. If there is, maybe I need a different sanction list, but this is the only one that I've got and it's from the US Department, treasury Financial Sanctions, active Sanctions Programs. China's not on there. The only things on there is Chinese military companies. So I may be a concern. Maybe nobody's worried about it. I'm worried it, but maybe nobody else says. Thank you.

Speaker 2: Thank you Senator. Nicely. [00:12:00] Senator Taylor.

Speaker 7: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I wanted to rise in support of this bill and I just wanted to say a few things to get on the record. Mr. Speaker 26 billion backlog and we have prided ourselves in this state. You all have prided yourselves in this state that we don't go into debt for our roads, [00:12:30] but we can no longer keep up. As we heard the chairman of the transportation committee say that it would take 26 billion at a minimum and anywhere from 30 to 50 years to complete the backlog. So we have no choice. We have to do something different than what we're currently doing. And so the way I look at it, we can do one or two things. We could either go into debt, which this [00:13:00] state has decided we're not going to do to keep from getting ourselves in a situation where some other states are absolutely under crushing debt and we don't want to do that.

Speaker 7: So I think it's appropriate that we go into a hybrid pay as you go if you will, Mr. Speaker, and that is that we partner with a private company that will allow us to continue this way of building roads and paying [00:13:30] as we go without incurring debt. And debt really should be the last thing that we want to get into when it comes to building the roads. I think it's important too, Mr. Speaker to point out that all this authority already exists in all the states that are contiguous to Tennessee. And I think it's important that we know that it are just granting the authority to do this. There will be additional votes that'll come before this body as it relates to specific [00:14:00] road projects that if we have concerns about who the private vendor is, then we'll be able to raise those objections and vote accordingly.

Speaker 7: What we're doing today will only authorize the public-private partnership. I wanted to speak briefly Mr. Speaker on the difference between a toll road and a choice lane. A toll road is where you want to get from point A [00:14:30] to point B, but the only way to get there is through a road that you have to pay to drive on. That's not what this is. As a matter of fact, this bill repeals section 20, which is the authorization for toll roads in Tennessee, we're actually repealing that. And so what this bill will do is authorize choice

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and choice lanes is not getting from point A to point B. Anytime you choose to go on a choice lane, there will always be [00:15:00] a corresponding general purpose lane so no one has to pay a toll that doesn't want to pay one or no one WA has to pay a fee I should say that doesn't want to pay one. They can always continue to drive on the general purpose lane.

Speaker 7: Mr. Speaker, in closing, just let me say this and that is that this bill will allow TDOT to do a comprehensive assessment review and a [00:15:30] plan on how to deal with our aging road and bridges. We all know in Memphis we had a serious situation with the bridge going across the Mississippi River. And by the way, I will say the only reason Tennessee could get that bridge remedied as quickly as it did as we had the cash to do it. That's because we don't go into debt to build our roads and we were in a position where we could pay cash to get that bridge fixed. And I think it's important that we move forward [00:16:00] with this because if we don't, we can all expect to have to look at a 93 cent increase on the gas tax to fund the roads that are going to be funded with this bill. And I don't think any of us wants a 93 cent tax increase on the gas tax. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Speaker 2: Thank you Senator Taylor. I have Senator Yeager and then Senator Crowe and then Senator nicely, Senator Yeager and Senator Berry.

Speaker 8: [00:16:30] Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I stand here in support of the bill. It is good for Tennessee and it's particularly good I think for rural Tennessee. And I say that Mr. Speaker, because I represent a rural district. I've heard me say often I've got nine of the finest counties in East Tennessee in the Upper Cumberland. One thing that we all have in common is that they're rural and the roads are very important to rural counties. [00:17:00] I get out and my see my constituents a lot over my political career and I can tell you from my experience, Mr. Speaker, that there's just a few things that rural Tennessee expects from their government. They want good schools, they want to get their children or their grandchildren or good education. They want to see the sheriff's car out their neighborhood every now and then. They want good [00:17:30] roads and that's what this bill does for rural Tennessee.

Speaker 8: It will help rural Tennessee with the road programs that are so vital to the economy of that rural, the rural regions of this state. This bill, Mr. Speaker, will appropriate 300 million to the state aid program, which is a significant component in your county road program. [00:18:00] And what's really good about it is that while now we only the county's only because the legislation we passed a few years ago only have to pay a 2% match and this bill will allow those counties to even make that match with inkind service. We've made it to make it easy as we can to get that money into these rural counties so we can fix these roads and build some new roads to the schools industrial parks [00:18:30] to serve our growing county. And I might add two Mr. Speaker that this bill says is a fee on electric vehicles, EVs, I think we call 'em.

Speaker 8: And that money will be divided with the local highway departments and municipal street departments on the same basis that the gas tax is. And I don't know about all of you, but in many of my counties the only money that the County Highway department

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gets is through the gas tax. And so this is a real [00:19:00] important shot in the arm to your local highway departments for their operating funds. As I said Mr. Speaker, I support the bill. That's just few of the reasons, but I believe in good roads because our kids are on those roads. In school buses when you get sick, you want an ambulance there as soon as it can get there, you expect the sheriff to come if you have an emergency, we want, we don't ever want these vital services interrupted because [00:19:30] they couldn't get there. The road was so bad. I hope all of you will vote for this bill. I appreciate the governor and the commissioner of transportation for their vision and let's go out and build some roads.

Speaker 9: Thank you Chairman Yeager. Chairman Crowe, you're recognized. Thank you Mr. Speaker. I've never been one to be in favor of toll roads. I don't like them. I know whenever I drive to Hilton Head or Florida, [00:20:00] some other state that has tolls, I look over at the lady and give her my dollar or two and say, we don't do this in Tennessee but I'm in favor of this bill because it's not a toll road. This gives people a choice to decide to take a different route. And by gosh anybody that's come to Nashville in the last few years or Knoxville or Memphis realizes we need to make some changes to provide for better traffic control. And [00:20:30] as Senator Taylor said, this will provide dollars that we would've not gotten otherwise to our rural counties. And that's one reason that I'm going to vote for this bill. I am voting for it though as Senator Rose said with the caveat that it is the intent of this Senate that we are passing this legislation in a way that we do not want to do business with China [00:21:00] or subsidiaries of China or those doing business for China with regard to this legislation. But I'm proud the governors and Butch Eely have found a way to help us out in our very rural cities and in our very urban cities as well. So I will be voting for the bill.

Speaker 2: Thank you Chairman Crow, Senator, nicely. You're recognized.

Speaker 6: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I don't I, once again, I don't [00:21:30] cha plan on changing anybody's vote, but we've always, I've been on transportation a long time, we've always had a backlog. It takes 12 years to build a road. You don't need all 25,000,000,001 year. We've got the some of the best roads in the nation. The Democrats start us on a pay as you go. We could build these roads if you have to have a choice lane, let's build it herself. Let TDOT run it and put the profit instead of going in some foreigner's pocket, put it back over [00:22:00] into the roads and build more roads. TDOT's, plenty smart enough to run a choice lane, excuse me, but you got to pay a told to get on the choice lanes I'm told. But anyway, I'm not too smart. But I like to think I may be wise, I was one of the few members on the house floor that stood up and railed against 10 Vesco.

Speaker 6: Oh the private sector is going to create jobs. We're going to do this, we're going to do that. And I told at the time, I said, I want my grandchildren to know [00:22:30] that I did not vote for 10 Vesco. Well what happened at Inve to Invesco the last time we, we'll never get our money back. The jobs cost us about 1.8 million per job. It's just a total fiasco. We're trying now to claw back some of a bunny but nobody listened to Frank. But now let me tell you why. When the private sector's dealing with the public sector, why it never works and everybody says, some of our leadership says, oh the private sector, why [00:23:00] are you against the private sector doing this, blah blah blah. Well let me

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tell you, in the private sector, which I'm all for, I love the private sector, but you've got people on both sides of the table who have money invested.

Speaker 6: They have skin in the game, they sharpen my pencils real sharp and they're equal players. But when the private sector's dealing with the public sector, the private sector's sharp, they've got the best lawyers, they've got the best financial advisor, they've got the sharpest pencils [00:23:30] and they're, they're worried about it. Cause their livelihood depends on that decision they make across the table on our side. You got state employees, they're going to go home that night, bless their heart, they're hard workers but they don't have any in the game. Their pencils aren't as sharp and they're easily duped and taken advantage of. Now everybody says, well no foreign country's going to own these roads. They'll own a 50 year contract and they'll be a non-compete. So if that choice [00:24:00] lane doesn't take care of the problem, we can't build another so-called free lane that's only paid for the tax dollars.

Speaker 6: I like the way they say free lanes with us with our high gas taxes. We can't build a light rail to take part of the load off. We can't build a regular rail, we can't put buses on the curb because there's a non-compete. So I mean again, I'm not opposed to putting money in committee. I suggested put we've got, [00:24:30] I hear everything from 4, 5, 6, maybe 9 billion surplus. Put it in the roads, let us build them, let Americans build 'em, let TDA run it and go on with it. But getting tangled up with these foreign countries that never works out the way you plant it. And I know I have a change of vote and I may be the only one voting against it, but I am not going to vote for toll roads. Thank you.

Speaker 2: Thank you senator. Nicely Chairman Berry.

Speaker 10: Thank you Mr. [00:25:00] Speaker. And I think this bill and probably third grade retention are the ones I've heard the most about this year. And I'm not on the transportation committee or the finance committee, so this is my first opportunity to speak in relation to it. Now I was here when we passed the gas tax, the Improve Act or actually I think the Senate named it something very interesting like a tax cut, something creative y'all came up with. I was in the house but we cannot rely on that to pay for our roads. Riverside Drive is in my [00:25:30] district in Memphis, so is Lamar where we have a huge intermodal center and the congestion, the traffic, one bridge going out, it is getting to the point of ridiculousness. Now I have driven on toll roads in Florida that are amazing but you know have to pay for in which I think is an undue burden on the citizenry.

Speaker 10: I have driven on convenience roads in Georgia and loved it and I have driven on express lanes in Missouri and loved it. I've also [00:26:00] taken light rail in Missouri and it was amazing and in Atlanta and it was amazing. I know that this legislation does not contemplate or talk about that, but I think it's a good step forward if we're going to get a hold on the traffic that we have in East Middle and West Tennessee. That's why I'm supporting it. It's not, I know there are a lot of things that we've kind of talked about that aren't included just because it gives the ability for TDOT to be able to move forward. [00:26:30] It does not necessarily specify the vendor or the amount of minority

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participation or anything like that. All of which are important issues for me. And I know some of my colleagues.

Speaker 10: So I am happy that I've had great conversations, the sponsor with the commissioner of transportation and certain assurances about making sure that everybody in Tennessee that wants an opportunity to build these new roads has an opportunity to apply through the RFP process and that we're going to make sure [00:27:00] that everything that they, pretty much the big things that they're doing has to come back to the general assembly in some capacity. So I am in support of this legislation for that reason. And I'll tell you, I am also in support of us having future discussions about light rail and about being able to connect one part of our state to the other because I've taken those trains in China and it is amazing how it can connect one part of an area to another. So I stand in support of your legislation Madam Sponsor and I think that [00:27:30] this is a good step forward. Obviously we cannot keep having discussions about roads. We have to be innovative. We have to think forward especially with all of the federal transportation dollars we're getting. But I think this is a good first step. Thank you.

Speaker 2: Thank you Chairman Berry. I have Senator Oliver, Senator Campbell, Senator Lowe and Senator Swan, Senator Oliver

Speaker 11: First. Thank you Mr. Speaker sponsor. You

Speaker 2: Sponsor yields? [00:28:00] Yes.

Speaker 11: Well I want to thank chairman Matt Chairwoman Massey for bringing this bill and having a conversation with me about it. And I will be honest on the fence about the legislation. There's a lot of moving parts in this bill and I do agree we need to find innovative solutions to dealing with our roads and infrastructure and traffic and Middle Tennessee and other places. I'm also in [00:28:30] agreement that rural areas should get their fair share of funding. I'm in agreement that we need to put more dollars toward this. What I'm struggling with is because I particularly have Interstate 24 in my district going towards Murfreesboro and that's one of the most congested pieces of interstate in the entire state. And the reason why it's so congested down there is of the density and there's one of the last places [00:29:00] in Davidson County that you can buy a home for a reasonable price or get any piece of housing in the city.

Speaker 11: And so I fear that this is one extra line item in my constituent's household budget that they will have to pay for just to get to work. And so I'm a, I'm in fearful of the affordability that cost burden for people who are trying to pay their taxes and do the right thing. But now our burden [00:29:30] with having to deal with traffic when I think that our state should be paying for infrastructure with tax dollars that everyone can benefit from. So that's one of my concerns. My second concern is around light rail. I know this is an innovative way to get to that point and I'm not saying I'm not advocating for light rail in this bill, but I would love to see us not have to have conversations 10 years down the road [00:30:00] around light rail when we could use these choice lanes to have the option of turning them into a light rail lane down the future.

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Speaker 11: So I would've loved to see the discretion in this bill to turn these choice lanes if the legislature decides down the road long term that we want to do that we have that flexibility in this legislation to do so. So I'm not necessarily advocating for light rail, but I would love to for us to think smarter [00:30:30] about how we can close the gap of timeline to build our roads to do that more efficiently. So thank you Mr. Speaker and I am still on the fence about this legislation if the sponsor wants to speak to anything I said

Speaker 1: Senator Massey, you Thank you Mr. Speaker and I'll try to digest where all we went in those questions. I do understand the average daily traffic counts and the congestion [00:31:00] that you're experiencing. We're experiencing it in my county actually. When you do the look at the average for the past three years and the average daily traffic counts the top 10 in the state in average, 'em, Knox County actually has a thousand more cars a day on the roads than Davidson County does. It's hard to believe, but these are the facts. So the data we have basically we aren't deciding exactly [00:31:30] where things are going right now. We are on right now. TDOT cannot even talk to a public-private partnership because they don't have the authority to. There's 34 states in the country that have the authority to have discussions with public-private partnerships. We're going to be giving them that authority so they can begin the conversation.

Speaker 1: It will be they TDOT will start looking at exactly kind of the different possible locations and I'm sure the one you mentioned [00:32:00] would definitely be on the table to be looked at and then they would start having discussions with the private partner. And there is nothing that says that there couldn't be possibly two roads done in Davidson County. I mean it's going to be where there is the traffic, where there's the biggest congestion where we need the most relief. And so that will be up to the [00:32:30] TDOT and the vendors. We have legislative input in that we actually will have a point in authority to the modernization board. TDOT will make the recommendation to the modernization board, they will approve it. There will be public meetings so your constituents can go out and participate in the public meetings. And then annually when TDOT brings their budget before us, we will approve the what goes [00:33:00] in their budget.

Speaker 1: So we will have another shot at it to look at how it's developing as far as modifying contracts and things and modifying laws. We have the ability to modify laws, but we would have to look at that we are, we're waiting for the light rail, the study to come back from taser and we'll be proceeding on that. This is not going to answer [00:33:30] everything, but it's given us more tools in the tool belt to do a big infusion of capital to make a big dent in our roads in a very quick way compared to our normal half a mil, half a billion a year that we can address into the road project. So we will continue and also once we speed up with the alternative build model, which kind of does some sections [00:34:00] concurrently as opposed to one step at a time, also there would be some other federal grants that we would have available to us so we could even maybe draw down other road money. So it is a whole picture but we will have input and we will continue to advocate for the best roads we can in Tennessee regarding the cost involved, it's every individual that is driving that road will look [00:34:30] at their personal cost benefit ratio.

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Speaker 1: I know in Texas there's people there working hourly jobs that if they get stuck on an interstate and it takes over an hour to get there and they can get to work in 15 minutes, the time is money for them. We are, and actually Tennesseans are losing an estimated 800 million a year in lost productivity and that's [00:35:00] all economic development, all economic levels. So I think it does help everybody, but if somebody feels like they've got time to get to work and they don't need to get into the choice lane, then we're moving traffic out of that regular lane and so they're going faster. So they're going to benefit also even if they choose not to go in the and choose not to pay to go in the choice line. I hope I've hit on most of everything [00:35:30] you asked.

Speaker 2: Thank you Senator. Senator Campbell is next and then Senator Lowe and Senator Senator Swan and then Senator Yarborough. Senator Campbell.

Speaker 12: Thank you Mr. Speaker. So I have struggled with this bill and I can't tell you how much respect I have for the good cheer lady from Knox County who did such an amazing job working on this and presenting it and to our commissioner but who did an incredible job as well. [00:36:00] Where I struggle with this is in the privatization component of it, we have a AAA bond rating. We talk consistently about how fiscally responsible we are, good business people understand that there's a time to actually take advantage of that leverage. And this would be one of those times if this is a lucrative option for a private entity, then it's certainly a lucrative option for the state of Tennessee. [00:36:30] And so I cannot see a reason why we would defer this to a private entity, you know can't pave your way into transportation and you can't pave your way out of congestion.

Speaker 12: And this inevitably is a paving bill, it's paving. There is not transit in this bill. I understand that we are allowing buses in these choice lanes, but that is not a meaningful move towards actual transit or transportation for this [00:37:00] state. And I'll just note that opportunity costs are always incurred when you make these decisions no matter what you would decide there would be some opportunity costs. But in this case I see that the opportunity costs are that we are not investing in transit, we're not investing in meaningfully getting cars off the roads. And I also worry that Nashville will be left out of the transportation Modern Modernization Board [00:37:30] because this seems to be consistently something that is happening with Nashville right now. And so I stand in defense of my city when I say that I'm concerned about how Nashville FARs in this. We are going to have these choice lanes I think in our city, but I'm not sure that we'll actually be able to benefit from them because the entry point for them will be more out in the rural areas and we will still of course bear the [00:38:00] burden of having the construction done in our city.

Speaker 12: And then I'll also say to my good friend from Strawberry Plains Point, which I agree with this part of it that we can't necessarily trust that if we enter into agreements with private parties for these sorts of things, that the interest of Tennessee taxpayers will be realized because government services [00:38:30] do not comport well to for-profit entities. And we see this with things like 10 and core civic. And so I will be voting against this with absolute respect for all the effort that our good cheer lady has put into it. And I'll also say my struggle with it is that I don't think that the perfect should be the enemy of the good and you have to start somewhere. And that is where I struggled with this. So

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I do understand that [00:39:00] and because of that it was difficult and I want us to thank them for their hard work on it. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Speaker 2: Thank you Senator Campbell. Senator Lowe.

Speaker 13: Thank you Mr. Speaker. There's been a lot of discussion about potential transportation models. I did sign on as a co-sponsor to this and I want to give an opportunity to express why. And a lot of it's got to do with the sentiments echoed by my colleagues already. But we have a 26 billion backlog [00:39:30] of our current system. I would argue that we're in debt, that we're in debt to future generations. We can look at the modern ledger and we can look at our debtors, we can look at our creditors and we can use that as an evaluation of debt or we can look at this like leaving a house with the roof and disrepair the electrical not working to our next to kin and telling them they have to live in it. So I can appreciate the innovative nature that's been expressed [00:40:00] today, but I'm more than that.

Speaker 13: Appreciate the bravery of an opportunity to actually consider what's really taking place in our society. Down in my district we have sprawl because we have a housing crisis and I have families who are having to live an hour, an hour and a 15 minutes away in a rural area just to find a two three bedroom home to commute, to work and they're commuting during those peak hours. They're commuting when that congestion is [00:40:30] there and I can't help but as a parent look at the overlay of the backlog of projects in my district and look and identify the very roads. I will not let my young drivers travel. So I say this is a 26 billion backlog that is today. It's things we needed today in our current transportation system today and we're trying to address it. So I want to commend the chairwoman and all those who put [00:41:00] their thoughts into this because I look at this from a physical responsibility angle. We are physically obligated to our next generation. We talk a lot about kicking the can and this is one of those situations where we've done it for a few years and though it's fair to say that we pay as we go, I do not think it's very genuine to say that we do it debt free. Thank you Mr. Chairman and Mr.

Speaker 2: Speaker. Thank you. Senator Lowe. Senator Swan [00:41:30] and then Senator Yarborough Swan.

Speaker 14: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I never thought I'd say this, but I want to take a breath on building roads for a while. This state is a beautiful place. We keep adding these big roads and we have a program with every governor sometimes too. And here we are again coming back to well build more roads to encourage development [00:42:00] not, I lived in the world of development and I appreciate it and I thought it was the right thing to do and I wouldn't stand up here against this today. It wasn't into my belief that people come to Tennessee for what we've got and isn't pretty roads that they come to see. It's pretty landscapes. It's it's a beautiful place to live and it's good people. Growth isn't everything. And we get caught up in that I think in this process of saying the other guy when [00:42:30] he was governor did this. And so by gosh, we're going to outdo him with this. And I think that's not what we need to be doing. And I'm just speaking for

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myself. I certainly hold nothing against anybody that disagrees with me, but I can't vote for this.

Speaker 2: Thank you. Senator Swan. Senator Yarborough.

Speaker 15: Thank you Ms. Speaker. If the sponsor would yield

Speaker 2: Sponsor yields.

Speaker 15: Thank you Ms. Speaker. My question is really about how this legislation [00:43:00] will work in tandem with legislation that we passed several years ago, I think was sponsored by Senator Senator Keran here, which allows P three public private partnerships in the development of transit. And I guess my question is will after this, does this supplement that and allow there to be joint projects that are instituted that will incorporate elements of transit and [00:43:30] road infrastructure in a project?

Speaker 2: Senator Massey. Chairman Massey to respond.

Speaker 1: Thank you Mr. Speaker. And the bill does allow public-private partnerships so they would be able to have those discussions and then bring them to the legislature if they see fit.

Speaker 2: Senator Yarborough.

Speaker 15: Thank you Ms. Speaker. And I appreciate that clarification because I think that is a desperately critical element [00:44:00] to this. And I also want to say that how much I do appreciate the fact that when the Commissioner of Transportation was in the finance committee last week, that it sort of publicly committed to embedding transit components into the bill. And I do know that at the very least my transit agency and the Transit Association has come out in support of this and I really do appreciate [00:44:30] that. I'm going to vote for the bill today. But I do want to say one thing. I mean I think this is a step forward, but I think we could be a much bigger step forward. I think we knew when we were passing the Improve Act in 2016 that it was not going to be enough. We started with a set of projects and a set amount of increase that we were willing to do and we cut the increase but we didn't cut the set of projects.

Speaker 15: And I don't think [00:45:00] that we're getting everything done that we need to today. And at some point we're going to have to find a little bit more ambition in some of our transportation planning. Mr. Speaker, I think if you look outside in across Mel Tennessee, like we've got to do something that's a much more transformative thing I'm going to vote for this day because I do think it's a step forward and I think we've got to give the tools [00:45:30] to the Department of Transportation and to this state to start moving forward, to start really having a regional transportation plan. And I think that that is mission critical for the state. But I think that we got to recognize that this, we haven't reached the finish line here because a lot of the good things that come out of this bill are still to be determined. And so I think this legislative body, this legislature, this administration [00:46:00] are going to have to, if you'll pardon the pun, keep the

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foot on the accelerator to make sure that we're actually keeping infrastructure construction up with the demands of these, the communities that are facing growth like we are here in Middle Tennessee. Thank you Ms. Speaker.

Speaker 2: Thank you. Senator Yarborough. Senator Wally,

Speaker 16: Ms. Speaker, thank you. I really have enjoyed the debate and it kind of heartened me back, Mr. Speaker to a funny experience I had as a young house [00:46:30] member across the hall several years ago and senator from Strawberry Plains might have been in the room then, but I was sitting behind a representative from Dixon County who was standing and railing against then Governor Mccr on some issue. And Ms. Speaker, all of a sudden out of the back, many of your member Victor, one of the sergeants at arms came up, came up as he was finishing and tapped him on the shoulder and summoned him down to the first floor. And he was gone [00:47:00] for a while and about 10 minutes later he came back looking sheepish and he said, said Governor MCC recorder invited me over to sit across from him and he pushed a little dump truck in front of him and he said, you know what this is?

Speaker 16: And he said, yes sir, governor, that's that's what we use in a road building. He said, you're never going to see another one of those in your district [00:47:30] and Ms Speaker, we don't do business like that anymore. But I'll tell you this, that preached to him and to all of us because that kind of importance of roads in our rural districts can't be underestimated. I probably get more calls about roads than any other issue we have and it's very hard to tell folks living in these rural areas. I grew up down on the Mississippi State line and we used to kind of [00:48:00] joke of course like often we do with Mississippi, well at least our roads are better than theirs. Not anymore. Not anymore. If you go down and drive on Highway 72 across North Mississippi, you're going to take it every time going west to east across that part of the state. Miss speaker, our rural areas and I know our urban areas are in dire need of improvements and our department of transportation does a great job with what we give [00:48:30] them.

Speaker 16: But miss speaker, you can't make bricks without straw as the Israelites found out in Egypt, you can't do it. And to look in the eyes of our rural citizens and say, well at least we don't go in debt for our roads. That doesn't help when your teeth are rattling, driving down some of our highways and you're hydroplaning in the ruts in some of our state highways, we can [00:49:00] do it, we can fix that. And I know Commissioner Eley is working tirelessly with a great group of TDOT folks to do it. Mr. Speaker I signed on today as a co-sponsor of this bill. I believe it. My folks aren't talking about or concerned about choice lanes. There's not that much interstate driving down that way, but they are concerned about their roads and state roads and the potholes and the ruts and the roads and we can do something about that right now with this. So Mr. [00:49:30] Speaker, if there's no objection, I'd like to call for the question on this bill.

Speaker 2: Is there Objection? I see none. Senator Massey to close. Senator Massey. Chairman

Speaker 1: Massey. Thank you Mr. Speaker and thank you members. This has been great conversation. As you've said, this will benefit each of our 95 counties. Everybody will

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have some benefit from it if we don't do it. Congestion is projected [00:50:00] to increase daily commute times by 60% and it can take up to an hour between our cities and with that I feel like this will be a transformational change. It won't do as much as Senator Yarborough would like and I'm sure many of us would like to do but I think we, it's in unconscionable for us to do nothing and I feel like this bill makes a big effort in addressing our road needs. And [00:50:30] with that I renew my motion.

Speaker 2: Senator Massey renews our motion on Senate bill 2 73. We'll be voting on Senate bill 2 73 on third and final consideration. Those members in favor of Senate bill 2 73 will vote. Aye when the bill rings those opposed will vote no. Let every member casts their vote when the bell rings. Has every member voted? Does any member wish to change their vote? Mr. Clerk take the vote.

Speaker 3: [00:51:00] Ayes 26 5 Nays

Speaker 2: Senate bill 2 73 Having received constitutional majority, I declare it passed without objection. Motion to reconsider is here by table. Next Bill, Mr.