

OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER
founding editor, 1963

AT ISSUE

Many questions about a proposed toll road through Johnson County have not been answered.

OUR POINT

The governor's office needs to listen to more residents, but the residents themselves need to discuss their vision for the county's future.

More answers needed about tollway proposal

The Daily Journal

When members of Gov. Mitch Daniels' staff visited Franklin this week for what they called a listening session about a proposed toll road, they got an earful.

About 400 people attended the session at Franklin College. Most were opposed to the idea.

Only one spoke in favor, although there were other supporters in the audience.

The governor has proposed contracting with a private company to build a toll road that would be a bypass around the east and south sides of Indianapolis. It would run from Interstate 69 near Pendleton to Interstate 70 west of Mooresville.

It would cut across Johnson County, most likely between State Roads 44 and 252.

By the evening's end, though, many questions went unanswered; and many in the audience left with a belief that the session was little more than lip service, that the governor would proceed with his plan no matter what they said.

This kind of suspicion can undermine confidence in the project and even in the Daniels administration.

The remedy is to listen to people more and to offer answers to as many of their questions as possible.

At the same time, it is important for Johnson County residents themselves to talk about the future of the county. This discussion would give political leaders a clearer idea of what people think and desire.

To that end, then, we propose the governor's office and the Indiana Department of Transportation return to Franklin to conduct another public hearing on the toll road proposal.

Also, given the number of critics who spoke at the last meeting, it would be helpful if the state staff members brought experts who could speak about the positive aspects of the project. They also might be able to answer some of the questions that come up.

Finally, the governor himself should attend to show his sincerity in listening to public reaction.

Strong opposition appears to center in Johnson and Morgan counties. So that's where Daniels needs to do his selling job.

In turn, the Johnson County Council and the county commissioners need to have a public discussion of the project and also broader ideas about the vision of the county's future.

Not everyone will agree on this, but the discussion would give council members and commissioners a clearer idea of where people stand and what they want.

Franklin City Council member Steve Houglund has said he gets the impression the project is a done deal. He said, "I think that if (the state) is truly interested in receiving input, they should be putting out a lot more information."

We agree. The only way the state can truly sell the project is to be up front with information.

And the county needs to be clear where the government and its people stand, as well.

Focus: Deficit

To tame budget, reform entitlement programs

Scrrips Howard News Service

It could have been a heartfelt conversion or sheer effrontery, but whatever the reason, there was President Bush making a balanced budget a priority in his State of the Union address.

"First, we must balance the federal budget," said the president who inherited a \$236 billion surplus when he took office and promptly proceeded to rack up record deficits. "We can do so without raising taxes," said the president whose tax cuts contributed to those deficits.

"What we need to do is spending discipline in Washington, D.C.," said the spendingest president since Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society.

To hear Bush tell it, we're halfway there already. "The deficit has been cut in half three years ahead of the president's 2009 goal," boasted a White House briefing paper that accompanied his address.

Actually, no. The 2004 deficit was \$412 billion, and the 2006 deficit was \$248 billion. By our pre-No Child Left Behind math, that's \$42 billion short of half. According to the latest Congressional Budget Office forecasts, the president may hit his target in the current fiscal year, when the projected deficit is \$209 billion, but then the red ink will rise steadily and, in 2012, by which time the president promises a budget in balance, the deficit will be \$367 billion.

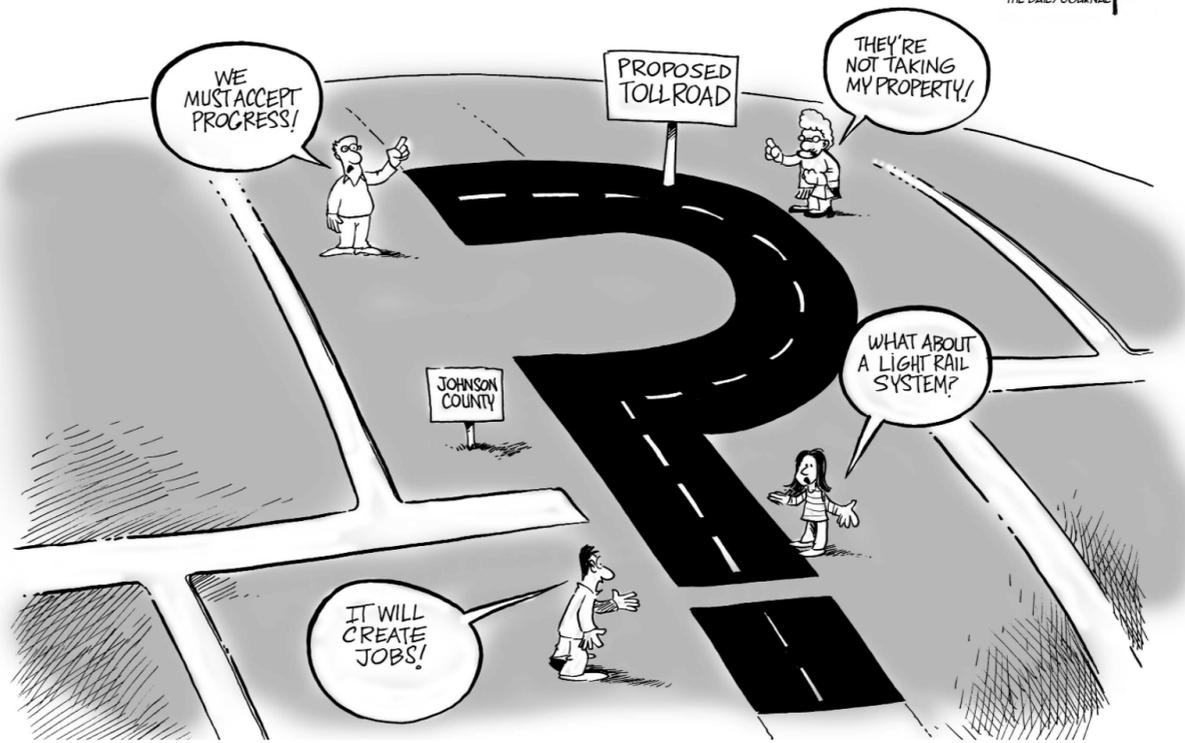
The CBO does show how the budget could be in balance, but in ways that are politically impossible and economically improbable.

It assumes that all of Bush's tax cuts will expire; that the Alternative Minimum Tax will be adjusted annually as it usually is; that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will get no more expensive; and that congressionally approved domestic spending will grow no more than 1.9 percent a year (under Bush, federal spending has increased an average of 7.3 percent per year).

But as killjoys like the Heritage Foundation like to point out, this is basically meaningless without reform of the major off-budget entitlements, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. The big three are expected to grow \$367 billion by 2012.

The Toll Road: Many Opinions, No Answers

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THE DAILY JOURNAL



YOUR

VIEWES & COMMENTARY

Job-growth argument for toll road unconvincing

To the editor:

Dear Sens. Richard Bray, Greg Walker and Brent Waltz and Reps. Ralph Foley and Milo Smith:

This correspondence is intended to give you some idea of the sentiment in Johnson County with regard to the Indiana Commerce Connector.

As one who has been actively involved with Republican politics in this county for more than 30 years, I can tell you that Johnson County Republicans are a pretty docile and loyal group. Rarely do they have negative comments about what is being done in the Statehouse.

That is not the case, however, with the governor's proposal to build the Indiana Commerce Connector. I have heard only two people speak favorably about it, one of them being Mayor Brenda Jones-Mathews of Franklin. That was some time ago, and I do not know her current position.

The argument that the project will bring jobs to the area through new industry or service personnel is not convincing. Consider the fact that Franklin, strategically located near Interstate 65, has one of the best industrial parks in the area.

Yet the city has failed to attract major industries in significant numbers. Greenwood is similarly situated with a similar lack of success. Moreover, development of jobs in the service industry (truck stops, etc.) is not likely to develop either.

The very nature of a toll road compels those using it to stay on it. One does not get off the road unless absolutely necessary because an additional toll is required when the trip is resumed. Hence, few new jobs will be brought to the area by the road.

An additional argument which I have heard is that the road would spur development. First of all, it is presumptuous on the part of the governor or anyone else to conclude that more development is needed.

Johnson County is experiencing rapid development without the road.

The development that we are experiencing now is taxing the resources of the cities and the county.

While industry is welcome for its jobs and contribution to the county coffers, subdivisions do not produce the same benefit. Subdivisions tax local resources by requiring more public services, especially schools.

An argument which I have

WRITE A

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Daily Journal invites readers to submit letters, opinion columns and e-mail comments for the opinion page.

GUIDELINES

- Letters published must contain the writer's name and city or town.
- Letters sent to the Daily Journal must be signed and must include a daytime telephone number for verification to be considered for publication.
- Letters should be kept as brief as possible.
- Make sure the e-mail letter includes the writer's name, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address for verification.

• Opinion columns for the community forum section of the editorial page also will be considered for publication. The article should be kept to a reasonable length and should include the writer's name, address and telephone number for verification.

• Because of space and legal considerations, the Daily Journal reserves the right to edit any letters or articles and to limit comments.

WHERE TO SEND THE LETTER

Mail Letters to the editor The Daily Journal P.O. Box 699 Franklin, IN 46131	E-mail letters@thejournalnet.com	Fax 736-2766
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heard in opposition to the Commerce Connector concerns the property that would be removed from the tax rolls.

It is not unusual for a property of only a few acres to pay \$2,400 in real estate taxes per year. Consider that over the term of a 75-year lease (like the northern toll road), the loss of revenue to the county would be \$180,000.

That is with only one small tract of land taken. Multiply that by the number of properties taken across the county, and the number becomes astronomical. Johnson, Morgan and, I am sure, the other counties affected by this project have been struggling for years, and the state has been impotent to help.

It makes no sense to impose upon local government another burden so that the governor can build Interstate 69 as a toll-free road.

I have been told by more than one person who should be in a position to know that the Indiana Toll Road lease contains a very favorable non-compete clause for the vendor. If this is true, the state could be in serious trouble in the northern counties in the not-too-distant future.

Let me explain. Non-compete clauses do exactly what they say. They prevent competition by one party to the contract. Therefore, the state would be precluded from doing anything that would take business, i.e. tolls, from the road.

There is little doubt that technology over the term of that lease is going to develop to the point that we will have better ways to move goods, and

especially people, from point to point. Perhaps it will be improved rail transportation or maybe a monorail constructed in interstate medians.

I do not know what it will be, but it is coming; and it will be here within a matter of only a few years. Nowhere in the state would such a system be of more benefit than in the northern east-west corridor.

However, with a non-compete clause in place, the state will be prohibited from implementing the technology because it will take business from the toll road. This prospect does not bode well for the northern counties of Indiana.

I have heard it said by several strong supporters of our governor in the last election that should the election be held tomorrow he would not be re-elected.

That is how strong the sentiment is in this area against the Indiana Commerce Connector as well as the privatization of the lottery.

There are good and compelling reasons for you to vote against those projects, and I would urge you to do so.

John P. Wilson
Trafalgar

Proposed road's benefits depends on perspective

To the editor:

In response to Mr. Ed Woods' letter to the editor (Daily Journal, Jan. 24), he states that those who oppose the Indiana Commerce Connector and the Interstate 69 extension are

against progress. I would have to say that depends on your definition of progress.

I moved here because I liked the way it was when I bought my house. If I want to live next to a Wal-Mart, I'll move there. If I want to live next to a gas pipeline or an interstate, I'll move there. I don't want the powers that be taking people's property by eminent domain.

Why does I-69 have to be new terrain? We were supposed to upgrade the existing route through Terre Haute and save \$1 billion. That seemed like a no-brainer to me.

He says that what's here now is not working concerning the schools and local government. It was fine before the current building boom came around and caused a need for more and bigger schools and services. Maybe those responsible for the need should foot the bill.

If I want to see progress, I'll take a drive north and look around and then come back home to Johnson County, where I like it the way it is. Maybe Mr. Woods should move to where the progress he wants so badly already exists.

James E. Ward
Greenwood

Public should have a say in lease of Hoosier Lottery

To the editor:

I think the legislature needs to go back and read what it promised when the Indiana lottery was being proposed and what proposition was used to get the people to back it up.

It was written and publicized and promoted by the Indiana legislature and the governor that the money would go to education. This was to be where most of the money would go. I, as well as others who remember this, have complained for years that the money is not being used as promised.

If the promises had been kept, we would have the best educational system in the state from preschool through college. The lottery could have paid college tuition, books, all-day kindergarten, preschool and tutoring for at-risk children.

It belongs to us, the people. The state doesn't have a right to lease it. If it is to be leased, we must all have a say, not just the governor lobbying and making promises that most likely will change as he so chooses.

Oh, and by the way, we don't need more gambling. Gamblers Anonymous is busy enough.

Katherine Fox Carr
Indianapolis

Goodbye 50s, welcome to the sexagenarian decade

Several years ago, when I had my 55th birthday, I tried to deny that this represented a turning point in my life.

As I reported then, AARP slipped my membership kit under my front door at the stroke of midnight.

I hadn't thought much about getting old until I bent over to pick up the brochure from the floor and couldn't get my spine to straighten back up. It made a weird, almost obscene noise as I journeyed to an upright position.

These AARP folks know how to make their point. They even print the brochure in tiny type. Research shows that the farther you have to hold the paper from your eyes to read it, the more likely you are to join their organization.

I will turn 60 next month. I will get a smattering of birthday cards and a few gifts. But they will be far different than the ones I received when I was younger.



Dick Wolfsie

I remember at my 30th birthday party someone gave me a wooden cane with a horn on it. Yes, that was very funny at the time. Ha ha. Try that now, and I'll turn that cane into a scarf around your neck.

I went into the gift store the other day and looked for cards specifically for people of my vintage. I have several friends who will soon be turning 60, as well. But there aren't any cards for sexagenarians. Vegetarians, Rotarians, even your veterinarian, they all have cards.

By the way, a sexagenarian is someone in their 60s. I wish it

meant what you thought it meant, but it doesn't.

So why are there no cards for 60th birthdays? Because 60 does not mean you are about to pass a milestone. A kidney stone maybe, but that's about it.

Don't get me wrong. I am happy to be 60. The closest the writers at Hallmark have come to recognizing this landmark age are cards that say "Happy Birthday, Grandpa." I'd be overjoyed to get a card like that someday. Like maybe when I have a grandchild.

And while I'm griping like a grumpy old man, here's another thing that bugs me: No one has officially decided when seniority begins. They raise the bar or they lower the bar all the time, and quite frankly I'm in no position to grab onto moving bars.

Sometimes I get a discount because I'm older than 50, sometimes 55. Sixty works at

most places. Sixty-five? You're a shoe-in. But you never know. And then it just annoys the heck out of me when no one asks me for ID to prove it.

Please don't give me that malarkey "You are only as old as you feel." If that were true, MCL's early-bird special would apply at any age, as long as you'll eat dinner at 3:15 in the afternoon.

To our loyal customers: Please jot down how young you feel, and we will adjust the dinner price accordingly.

Feel like 50? \$7.95
Feel like 60? \$6.95
Feel like 70? \$5.95
Eat like a teenager: \$24.95
As for me, I feel like a kid again. For \$2.95, that gets me chicken fingers.

Television personality Dick Wolfsie writes this weekly humor column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.