

# 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

Gov. Mitch Daniels' proposed toll road through Johnson county has not been researched fully and appears to be little more than a way to finance an extension of Interstate 69.

## OUR POINT

No one has enough information to know if a toll road would benefit the community. Halt the governor's proposal now.



## Governor, we deserve better on toll road issue

The Daily Journal

Gov. Mitch Daniels:

Johnson County, especially the Franklin area, is getting the shaft from you. And now it looks like the state legislature, too.

Just four months ago, you proposed entering a contract with a private company to build and maintain a toll road around part of Indianapolis. In Johnson County, the road would be built near Franklin.

Now, with lightning speed, the General Assembly is closer to giving you what you want: the authority to hire a private firm to build the Indiana Commerce Connector, as you call it.

What you are asking legislators and others to support defies good business sense, good public policy sense and just plain common sense.

You have few details. You have no studies. You don't even know if there is a need for such a road. Nothing. No one has even done a cursory examination of the economic, traffic, social or environmental impact of the 75-mile long road from Pendleton to Mooresville.

You mentioned jobs would be created. No proof again. You said traffic congestion would dissipate. Again, no specifics.

Then you mentioned Interstate 69 and got closer to the truth.

Let's just call this toll road proposal what it is: A way to help pay for I-69.

So far, your proposal has little to do with what is best for our community. With so little information and so little time, we can't even begin to make that determination. Imagine a business asking a loan officer to approve a \$1.5 billion long-term deal with no supporting studies or evidence it would even work or be profitable. A banker would rightly laugh them out of the office.

Governor, we have to give you credit. The way you have gone about this is politically masterful.

You didn't let this project stand on its own merits in the state legislature, which would have been the right thing to do.

You tied it to paying for I-69. That means the support of southern Indiana legislators is almost guaranteed.

Then you hooked it up with the long-asked-for Iliana Expressway in northern Indiana. That means the support of northern Indiana legislators is almost guaranteed.

You've even got some local public officials to spin this for you. Some jumped on the bandwagon even before they talked to their constituents or reviewed any studies. Their comments that the proposal is "just a concept" or "just calls for studies" are wrong.

Make no mistake, Senate Bill 1 gives the governor authority to hire a private company to build and maintain the toll road. You will do your studies. You will get your requests for proposals. But no other legislative approval would be necessary. The political machinations may be clever, but they short-circuit good judgment.

Governor, it's not necessarily the privatization efforts we oppose. You can talk to private companies about your toll road idea without legislative approval at this point. You've done it before. What is the rush to give you this authority if the toll road is just an idea worth exploring?

Moreover, we are not the stereotypical not-in-my-back yard crowd some have portrayed us to be. Residents, for a good price, have sold lots of land for public and private projects. We've made sacrifices for the greater good.

And we're not naive to the ways of economic development either.

We've got an interstate. We've got vacant industrial land.

We've got a plan that targets areas for growth.

We also know that we need more than roads to make our community attractive to high-tech and other companies. Often, executives want a good quality of life, including great recreation facilities, good schools, low crime rates and livable neighborhoods.

They might not want to live a stone's throw from a toll road. We have to think about that and the quality of life for existing residents too. A good cross-section of our community is not just saying no to say no.

Even our most basic and initial questions are legitimate: What types of jobs would the road bring? How would it relieve congestion? What about non-compete clauses tied to the county building and improving roads?

The toll road will be paid for without tax money, but who will pay for county roads that dead end at the toll road or other expenses that the city or county may incur because of the road? Who pays for roads and sewers, for more emergency workers and the training they will need to handle accidents and hazardous material spills?

Here's more: Who will pay to fix the drainage problems that often come with new roads; how would it change the environment; what are the tax implications; would the state forcibly take land; what would it mean to our ability to attract high technology businesses; what would this mean to our community?

Governor, this isn't like the Honda plant you helped bring to Decatur County. The mayor in Greensburg can easily agree to spend thousands of dollars on roads and sewers because he is guaranteed a return for his community: thousands of good-paying jobs, jobs with good benefits, jobs families can live on.

You are not giving us even half a guarantee that the road will bring anything more than lower-paying warehouse jobs. Frankly, we have plenty of those.

We're saying halt because we need more than a hope and a prayer and a few minor details to sign off on a road that could forever change our community.

You want us to say yes to mostly rural land becoming paved over with multiple lanes of asphalt. You want us to say yes to big semitrailers whizzing through, heading to destinations elsewhere. You want us to say yes to the fast-food restaurants, truck stops and convenience stores usually associated with superhighways.

No. Our community is just too important to us to blindly and quickly say yes.

Our community just might need to do some soul-searching. Do we want to become a place where vehicles pass through? Do we want to become covered with the usual offerings of convenience stores and warehouses? Can and should we aspire to be something more?

Governor, you are making us the sacrificial lamb for I-69. You are throwing us under the bus, or your RV. You are making us the dumping ground in the middle of a project in the north and one largely for the south.

Governor, listen to us. You have said you won't move forward with the toll road if the communities near it say no. Until we know more, we say no.

This is our community, and we deserve better.

**What you are asking legislators and others to support defies good business sense, good public policy sense and just plain common sense.**

**You didn't let this project stand on its own merits, which would have been the right thing to do.**

**You want us to say yes to big semitrailers whizzing through, heading to destinations elsewhere. No. Our community is just too important to us to blindly and quickly say yes.**



YOUR

## VIEWS & COMMENTARY

### Community support after sons' deaths appreciated

To the editor:

There are no words great enough to express our thanks and gratitude to all who have been involved in helping us deal with the devastating loss of our boys, Jake and Travis Findley.

We have been deeply touched by all the prayers, cards and loving support the community has provided.

We would like to thank all of the emergency personnel, the various hospital staffs, our family and friends, the community, Forest Lawn Funeral Home, Mount Pleasant Christian Church (staff and church family) and all other pastors from nearby churches.

To the emergency personnel and hospital staffs, thank you for doing everything in your power to save our boys. To everyone else, thank you for your prayers, love and support during this tragic time.

We would like to thank the teachers and staff at Sugar Grove Elementary School and Center Grove Middle School Central.

Each school made it possible for the students to receive counseling, and they took some very special time to remember the great memories they all had of Jake and Travis.

We received so many cards and letters from each school from their friends and students who didn't even know the boys that said many deep-felt emotions that we will always keep dear to our hearts. Thank you again for making a tough time for the kids a time to remember the good times.

Thank you to the Daily Journal and the TV media for the way they presented the character and qualities of these two boys and gave the community a sense of just how special they have been to so many people and our family.

We hope that the Daily Journal and the TV media along with this community and surrounding communities can continue to keep the problem of hazardous railroad crossings very visible in the news so something can be done.

It is high time to do whatever it takes to upgrade these dangerous crossings before one more life is lost.

We have set up a special fund for Jake and Travis.

It is called "The Jake and Travis Findley Special Fund Account," and donations or contributions can be sent to any Regions Bank in the Greenwood and Indianapolis area.

The account was set up at the Regions branch located at Smith Valley Road in Greenwood. We are hoping to raise money to do something about these dangerous railroad crossings in our county and state. It may be a long shot, but it is at least a start.

Everyone has made this heart-wrenching loss somewhat easier to bear. Your prayers, love and support will continue to comfort us. God bless each and every one of you.

In loving memory of Jake and Travis Findley.

Chuck and Becky Findley  
Greenwood



WRITE A

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

### WHERE TO SEND THE LETTER

Mail  
Letters to the editor  
The Daily Journal  
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E-mail  
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### Trail board member fought to improve community

To the editor:

This is in response to Allen Watts' letter (Daily Journal, Feb. 13).

I have known Don Cummings for almost two years. I first met Cummings at a Greenwood Trails Advisory Board meeting. I was immediately impressed with Cummings' commitment to trails and his professionalism. He had been chairman of the advisory board since its inception in 2003.

During my two years serving as a member of the Greenwood Trails Advisory Board, Cummings has made a huge impact to the community by raising awareness of trails.

He has been a driving force of the advisory board to accomplish goals such as setting the city's top three priorities for the trail system, setting up a nonprofit fund for fund raising of monies for trails construction, establishing working relationships with various city departments and boards, and enhancing the city's ability to seek grants, just to name a few.

In 2005, public interest in trails really boomed with the first paved trail in Greenwood along Smith Valley Road. Naturally, people wanted to know more about the trails that were being planned, when they would be built, etc. Cummings and park department employees were interviewed.

The same year, the city was awarded a \$1 million federal grant to help to build Tracy Trail. Cummings helped work on this grant application. Another part of the Greenwood trail system plans a bridge over U.S. 31. Again, he contacted landowners to help with this process, collaborating with the Indiana Department of Transportation and the parks department.

Cummings also gives credit to the proper sources: Refer to his letter to the editor, printed June 10, 2005. He praised "the mayor and council for instituting a recreational impact fee to help pay for future parks and trails."

He has proved to be an effective community volunteer. And, in recognition of this, in 2005, he received the mayor of Greenwood's Citizen of the Year for his work on trails.

Cummings has also collaborated with other trail groups on his own time. He attended workshops to help with the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Regional Pedestrian Plan that connects Greenwood's trail system to others.

And he volunteered to be a part of the Indiana Trails Plan Summit on May 31. Cummings continues to

volunteer by serving on the Greenwood Trails Advocacy Board.

The Don Cummings that Watts described in his letter to the editor is not the Don Cummings I know.

Anita Knowles  
Greenwood

### Tobacco tax increase would improve Hoosiers' health

To the editor:

Increasing Indiana's tobacco tax will significantly improve the health of Hoosiers and reduce the overall cost of health care in Indiana.

That is why the Indiana Cancer Consortium supports a \$1 increase in the Indiana tobacco tax. The cancer consortium is a statewide association of health-related public and private organizations committed to making a difference in the cancer burden in Indiana. The consortium supports the Hoosiers for a Healthier Indiana initiative, including allocating all additional revenues for health.

Fifteen years of research and other states' experience indicate that, in and of itself, increasing the cost of cigarettes decreases smoking rates, particularly among youth. Studies show that most smokers want to quit smoking, and a tobacco tax helps people reach that goal.

Indiana's current cigarette tax of 55.5 cents per pack is the lowest in the Midwest: Michigan's cigarette tax is \$2; Ohio's tax is \$1.25; and Chicago has \$3.66 in combined state, county and city taxes. Indiana also has the second-highest smoking rate in the country: 27.3 percent of adults and 21.9 percent of youth are smokers.

Smoking impacts health-care costs. In addition to private insurance costs, smoking costs the Indiana Medicaid program \$487 million in tax money each year.

Now is the time to increase the tax on tobacco products. It is the right thing to do because it will improve the overall health and quality of life of all Hoosiers, and it also is reasonable fiscal policy.

We urge you to support a tobacco tax increase.

Victoria Champion,  
DNS, RN, Walther Cancer Institute, Indiana Cancer Consortium co-chair

Stephen D. Tharp,  
MD, Indiana State Medical Association, Indiana Cancer Consortium co-chair

Stephen D. Williams,  
MD, IU Cancer Center, Indiana Cancer Consortium steering committee chair

## Something fishy is afoot on gout Web sites

I'm through with you, Mr. Internet. After all I have done for you — installing you, surfing you, clicking you — it's over.

No more Googling or Yahooing for me. I'm getting out my 1987 World Book Encyclopedia. It's still a great read. Even Volume XYZ.

What has brought on my wrath? Gout. It used to be called the disease of kings, but now they just call it gout, which in my opinion has resulted in a slight loss of its luster.

Benjamin Franklin and Isaac Newton had gout, an inflammation of the joints, usually the big toe. So did Henry VIII and Karl Marx.

Gout is really an equal opportunity agonizer. But in the old days, it usually meant you were a man of some influence and that you had your hand in everything. But not your big toe. It was your toe that got you in trouble. If you have no idea what I am talking about, you are very lucky.

I Googled gout. There are 17 million sites that contain the word gout. This may seem like a huge number, but Pamela Anderson has 79 million Web sites that mention her. I've only clicked on 3 million of them, and because I'm 60 years old I had better pick up the pace if I want to get to all of them.

To be totally accurate, there are 20 million locations on the Internet where



Dick Wolfsie

you can see actual photos of Pamela Anderson, which is really 40 million sites, if you know what I mean. Sorry if that's a bit subtle for you, but I had to get this paragraph past the newspaper censors.

Yes, having gout in your right toe is very painful, but put it in your search engine and it can be downright depressing. Here's what I read on the first site that was listed:

"Many still believe that gout is caused by laziness. Many think that gout develops following several years of excessive alcohol consumption combined with an ongoing lack of physical activity and a diet completely lacking in purine-neutralising foods."

Well, they have some nerve calling me a lazy lush. And the very idea that my diet lacks in purine-neutralising foods. Like I know what that means. And what makes them so smart? They even misspelled neutralizing.

Some Web sites listed foods you

should avoid. Many said not to eat cauliflower or nuts, but several noted that cauliflower was just fine. And nuts were cool, as long as they were never hot. In other words, no roasted nuts.

Oh, and no salmon. At my doctor's suggestion, I've been inhaling salmon for two years for my heart.

Of course, some Web sites say salmon is good for gout.

Sound fishy? I checked several other Web sites and found more contradictory advice, but I didn't want to jump to any conclusions because I still had 6,699,000 Web sites to check before I could put my feet up and relax. Which is a good idea when you have gout.

Truth is, whatever you want to find or not find on the Internet, it's there. Gout combined with hair loss (1.6 million sites); Gout/depression (3.2 million sites); Gout/impotence (861,000 sites); Gout/acne (1.7 million sites).

Hey, it's just my toe. Lighten up. This whole thing has become a pain in the you know what. There were even 134,000 sites for that, by the way.

OK, let's Google Gout/Dick Wolfsie. Only two hits. I'm feeling better already.

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