

[Steve Hymon](#):

Road Sage

San Gabriel Valley members of Congress move to slow congestion pricing freeway plan

A Republican lawmaker has introduced legislation to stop proposed toll lanes on the 10 and 210 freeways in the San Gabriel Valley. Rep. Hilda Solis, an El Monte Democrat, supports the measure.

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While Southern California transit officials push to speed traffic by installing toll lanes on the 10 and 210 freeways, the member of Congress who represents the San Gabriel Valley is telling them to just slow down a little.

The plan is to convert the carpool lane on both freeways to toll lanes that will also feature express bus service.

But Rep. Hilda Solis (D-El Monte) doesn't like it, at least not yet.

And she's not alone. One of her colleagues -- Rep. Gary Miller (R-Diamond Bar) -- has introduced a bill to stop the program, which he views as a form of double taxation.

"I think it's going to push people off the freeway, and they will find a way to get around the freeway, and it's just going to create more congestion," Solis said. "Those kinds of things have to be talked about."

Solis also expressed support for Miller's bill, saying that it is not a threat but a "signal" to the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the California Department of Transportation that she wants some details on how the lanes would be managed and which people would benefit and, in particular, how it would affect low-income constituents.

It's hard to say if the Miller bill will get any traction.

But it's interesting that Solis -- whose district includes parts of the 10 and 210 freeways -- is not throwing her arms around congestion pricing, which has been embraced by many politicians, including Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

There's an interesting rub here. Pols to the west aren't happy that Solis and other San Gabriel Valley politicians are on one hand asking the MTA to fund an extension of the Gold Line light rail from Pasadena to Azusa, while on the other hand possibly blocking congestion pricing.

Why? As part of the congestion pricing deal, the U.S. Department of Transportation is offering more than \$200 million for new buses and improvements to Metrolink in the San Gabriel Valley.

"It wouldn't make sense for us to fund the Gold Line at the same time that [some members of Congress] are trying to take money away from congestion pricing," said Richard Katz, an MTA board member appointed by Villaraigosa.

"That doesn't make sense to me. If you're going to oppose this chance to get \$213 million, why should we support \$80 million over there" for the Gold Line?

One day recently there were no lines at a gas station on Alameda Street in downtown L.A., near Union Station, that often has some of the most expensive gas around town.

There was one motorist -- William George -- topping off the tank of his Acura to the tune of \$40 before heading back to the San Fernando Valley.

In case you're having a hard time imagining this picture, the station was selling premium for \$5.17 a gallon. Regular was a bargain at \$4.77!

George said he was unaware that gas was selling for about 30 cents a gallon cheaper around the corner at a station on Hill Street and said he was tolerating the gas prices reasonably well, but in perhaps the understatement of the day said, "I know things are a lot different than they used to be."