

## Leadership taking a toll

*Letter to the editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 01.25.24*

On January 31, the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO) board will vote to consider tolls to help pay to replace the aging Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. Attendance is encouraged, but pack a lunch for the trip, since the bridge will be closed eastbound for repairs, revealing how vital it is to the life of our region.

The NCDOT is responsible for maintaining our roadways with taxpayer funds. However, using a broken infrastructure prioritization scale, NCDOT suggests a bridge replacement project cannot be “prioritized” without a toll. Unacceptable.

Working in social services, I see daily the literal toll the increasing cost of everything takes on households. Many working commuters live paycheck to paycheck. Adding a toll just to get to work is absurd. Elected leaders should be finding ways to make life better, not more expensive.

WMPO leaders from Brunswick County including Mayors Brenda Boseman (Leland) and Euliss Willis (Navassa) have signaled strong toll opposition and Mayor Mike Allen of Belville has said, “it seems the state wants our bridge to be tolled and I have a problem with that,” which shows this is a nonpartisan issue. Alarming, the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners including Frank Williams, a WMPO board member, have not publicly joined this call, and Mr. Williams even recently stated, “I would rather have a toll bridge than no bridge.”

Residents should contact Mr. Williams to tell him they are against tolls. There will be a rally in Wilmington (Jan. 29, 4 p.m., DramTree Park). The WMPO meeting is Jan 31, 3 p.m. (320 Chestnut St.). Tell our local leaders we do not accept a toll tax as the only way to pay for vital infrastructure that has already been paid for.

The county commissioners’ history of not advocating for residents on critical issues is why I am running for the Commissioner District 5 seat this fall.

Jonathan Damico  
Leland