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## **Pataki Proposes Allowing Private Companies to Lease Roads and Bridges**

By **MICHAEL COOPER**

**A**LBANY, Jan. 25 - Gov. George E. Pataki just might have a bridge he wants to lease you.

Buried in one of the bills accompanying the governor's budget proposal last week is a plan to give the state's Transportation Department, the Thruway Authority and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority the power to lease toll roads, bridges and even its subway lines to private companies and let them collect the tolls or fares.

Democratic lawmakers criticized the proposal here Tuesday at a joint legislative hearing on the governor's transportation proposals, which have already come under fire from transit advocates and elected officials who say they would not provide the M.T.A. with enough money either for essential maintenance or long-term projects.

State Transportation Commissioner Joseph H. Boardman said after the hearing that the state was weighing "a privatization model or a partnership" for some toll roads and bridges, and added that the Tappan Zee Bridge could be a candidate for such a deal.

The governor's memorandum in support of the bill says that 21 other states have allowed some kind of transportation partnerships, and cited the Chicago Skyway, a toll road that was leased to a private developer for \$1.8 billion, and the Las Vegas Monorail, which was built with private bonds, as examples. The acting governor of New Jersey, Richard J. Codey, is also exploring the possibility of leasing toll roads.

Governor Pataki's proposal was criticized by Assemblyman Richard L. Brodsky, a Westchester Democrat. "Private toll roads went out 100 years ago," he said in an interview. "Do we really want to have Donald Trump build the Second Avenue subway, and charge tolls for it?"

Katherine N. Lapp, the executive director of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, said that the proposal had not yet been presented to the authority's board, but that she was personally "not necessarily enamored of the idea" of letting a private developer build the Second Avenue Subway and levy higher fares.

The governor's memorandum in support of the bill states that "the imposition of any fares, tolls or other charges is limited to transportation facilities that currently impose user fees, are newly constructed or increase capacity."

Mr. Boardman, the transportation commissioner, said that he did not know if that would allow a private entity to expand a non-toll road and begin charging tolls on it.