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Friday, January 28, 2005

Editorial: Whoa there, governor

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Gov Pataki's heart may still be in New York, but his political bankroll is in Virginia and his head - well, who can tell where his head is at these days?

He surely wasn't using it when he proposed leasing New York bridges, highways and other transportation facilities and allowing private operators to impose tolls or fees on them

Sure, things are tough in New York, where government spends -- and often wastes -- so much money that it's hard to keep finding new taxpayer veins to tap. But how on earth can I seriously consider forcing the people who had to pay for all those bridges and highways to start paying tolls to use them?

The state already collects tolls on its Thruway and any number of bridges to help defray costs. But now Pataki wants to allow privateers to run those toll booths -- and possibly erect others. How exactly does that help the state?

According to The Associated Press, "state Transportation Commissioner Joseph Boardman it could make sense for the state to privatize some transportation assets, especially new facilities the state doesn't have the money to build without private involvement."

Oh. And why doesn't the state have money for public works? Isn't that one of government's primary functions?

Perhaps the public works budget has been raided a few times over the years, eh? Maybe to fund commercials starring Gov. Pataki -- or to hire some new deputy commissioners?

Privatizing the transportation system isn't the cure for what ails New York. It's a pathway to greater folly.

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