

LETTERS

'The poor get poorer and slower,
and the rich get their own lanes.'

SAMUEL GOULD, *Los Angeles*

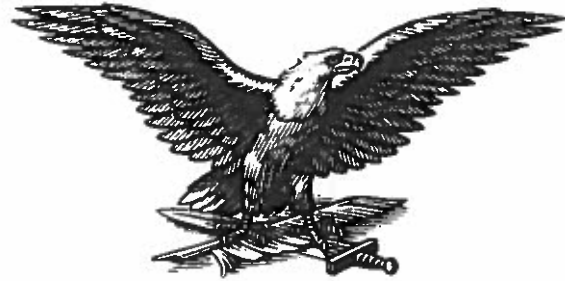
Tied up in traffic

*Re "U.S. offers funds for toll
lanes," April 24*

Transportation economists have understood for almost 50 years that the only systemic solution to congestion is a congestion tolling scheme. I travel if the benefit the trip affords me exceeds the price I must pay for the trip. When I get on the freeway at rush hour, I delay other people, and I foul the air. These costs are real, but I ignore them because I do not pay them. If the costs I impose on others are forced inside my decision to travel in the form of an electronic toll, then I will not take the trip unless the benefits to me exceed the full private and social costs of doing so.

Forcing us to pay the costs we impose on others when we travel on congested facilities increases efficiency and fairness, and provides an ideal source of revenue for maintaining and expanding infrastructure. It is past time for public authorities to take this important step.

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