

newsday.com/news/local/wire/newyork/ny-bc-ny--statebudget-trans0213feb13,0,7480449.story

## Newsday.com

### Lawmakers blast Spitzer's \$15 charge on auto insurance

By MICHAEL GORMLEY

Associated Press Writer

5:26 PM EST, February 13, 2008

ALBANY, N.Y.

A proposal to charge New Yorkers a \$15 fee on their auto insurance faced a road block Wednesday in the state Legislature.

Gov. Eliot Spitzer's proposal would help pay for bridge maintenance and repairs that lawmakers agree are overdue. But Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Thomas Libous and Assemblyman Richard Brodsky told Spitzer's transportation commissioner at a budget hearing that the fee is unfair and unnecessary.

Libous, a Broome County Republican, questioned charging the fee while the administration raids what is supposed to be a fund dedicated for bridge repair. The state has for years diverted as much as \$750 million annually from the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund for maintenance and repair, using the money instead to cover unrelated budget costs such as for snow and ice removal.

"We have a real problem with that," Libous said.

Brodsky, a Westchester Democrat, argues the fee doesn't distinguish between owners of luxury and economy cars and is another hit for middle class families in a budget that claims no tax increases.

"Hummers pay the same as Chevrolets," Brodsky said. "It's just another fee attacking the middle class and poor people instead of asking everyone to share the burden."

State Transportation Commissioner Astrid Glynn defends the fee as essential to maintain the state's aging network of bridges, many of which are 50 years or older. Much of the fee would go toward a \$140 million fund to fix and maintain bridges this year, she said.

"The new program is intended to improve bridge safety and longevity by funding preventive and corrective maintenance on both state and locally owned bridges so that bridges in reasonably good shape remain so," she said.

Libous released data last year that showed 2,206 of the state's 7,604 bridges were rated deficient last



year, a consistent number over the last three years. He also said more than 1,000 of the bridges were built between 1910 and 1936.

Copyright 2008 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.