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## EDITORIAL

### A bridge to road funds, with strings

As the state scratches for money to keep its roads in decent shape, all suggestions are welcome. That includes an offer by Ambassador Bridge owner Manuel Moroun to provide enough financial details on that operation for the federal government to consider the toll revenues Moroun's bridge collects as part of the state match money required to obtain federal road funding.

That's what good public-private partnerships look like. Unfortunately, this relationship is so acrimonious that it's hard to tell whether anything will come of the offer.

Moroun, who wants to build a wider bridge adjacent to his current one, does not want money from his operation used for match on anything that would hurt his project, especially work related to the Detroit River International Crossing study. That study, of ways to ensure that cross-border traffic is accommodated far into the future, has focused on building a publicly owned bridge farther downriver.

Moroun's request isn't unreasonable, assuming bridge money can be matched with what he might consider innocuous state spending. But everyone in this relationship has gotten so used to questioning each other's motives that honest cooperation may be impossible.

Sadly, the state's roads have become so underfunded -- and some state lawmakers so averse to raising fuel taxes -- that almost any offer is bound to look attractive to many people, even with a multitude of strings attached.

And that's the fundamental problem. A state that cannot figure out how to keep its roads in good repair on an ongoing basis -- with or without the cooperation of private partners -- is particularly susceptible to arguing around the fringes, looking for hidden motives or believing in undiscovered jackpots.

Without a boost in state match money, Michigan will have to forgo billions of transportation dollars available from the federal government. If Moroun and his bridge company intend to be a reliable partner going forward, that will help and would be laudable. But it is not a complete solution, and at this point it's not even money in the bank.

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