



To whom the TOLL goes

SICK OF congestion and irked by the lack of new roads? States with too much traffic and obsolete highways are turning to investor-owned tollways. Many are, or will be, owned and maintained by foreign companies or partnerships between states and U.S. or foreign investors.

States traditionally finance highways from gasoline taxes. But despite more cars and higher gas prices, revenue has decreased as fuel economy has improved over the years. States have plenty of money from various sources now, but they've been unable or reluctant to spend surpluses on asphalt. Private toll roads are the practical solution. Utah just became

DRIVING | Overseas owners smooth your ride—for a price.

the 23rd state to allow them.

Some privately run highways have been on the map for years. Macquarie Infrastructure Group, of Australia, bought all or part of the long-established Chicago Skyway and Indiana Toll Road, as well as the newer Dulles Greenway in Virginia. New and future projects will open long-distance routes and bypass urban bottlenecks. Macquarie has an 80%-plus interest in the South Bay Expressway, which will open in 2007 and run from eastern San Diego to the Mexican border. The proposed TransTexas Corridor, a 600-mile highway running north-south and parallel to I-35, would be built primarily by private companies over the next 20 to 50 years.

To attract and satisfy customers, road owners promise a pleasant, more efficient motoring experience, with new pavement, tolls that vary with the time of day, and flexible or reversible lanes for rush hour. If true, that might be worth the price. — **JOAN GOLDWASSER**



COURTESY DULLES GREENWAY

● New private roads promise snarl-free commuting for paying drivers.