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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SAFETY CONCERNS PROMPT RETURN TO TWO-WAY TOLLS**

*Governor Restores Hampton Tolls for Winter Months*

**HAMPTON** – Governor Craig Benson announced today the Hampton Toll Booths would be restored to a two-way toll system for the winter months. The one-way toll collection system is being returned to its original state due to safety concerns regarding snow and ice build-up.

Governor Benson said, "I'm very very pleased with the results of the One-Way Toll Experiment. The traffic problems during the past ten weeks were seriously reduced in both directions. I look forward to opening the tolls permanently."

Due to concerns about winter maintenance and associated traffic flow at the Hampton Toll Plaza, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) recommended a return to two-way tolling for the winter months. Traffic volumes on I-95 are lower during the winter, leaving traffic build-ups less severe.

NHDOT crews will begin the transition back to two-way tolling on Saturday, November 1, 2003, at midnight. This will include new signage and pavement markings. Passenger cars will then pay \$1.00 each way on I-95. The speed limit approaching the Hampton Toll will continue to be 35 MPH. If weather conditions prevent crews from performing the transitional work, November 3<sup>rd</sup> is the fall back date.

"There's no question the experiment worked effectively from both an operational and safety perspective," said NHDOT Commissioner Carol Murray. "The southbound backups that seasonally occur at the Hampton Toll were eliminated and no accidents occurred at the toll plaza during this period."

"This winter I expect to put forth a permanent plan for one-way tolls," Governor Benson stated. "Once approved, we will remove the southbound toll structures."

Permanent one-way tolling will go a long way in solving I-95's traffic problems. It will lead to an increase in visitors to the state, reduction in wear and tear to the road, and decreased auto-emissions into the environment.

Governor Benson and the NHDOT continue to look for ways to improve traffic conditions in addition to one-way tolling. Work continues on the planned implementation of E-Z Pass electronic tolling for the New Hampshire Turnpike System. The current schedule calls for E-Z Pass to be operational at the Hampton Toll by the fall of 2004.

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