

AP: Indiana must pay waived toll road fees

The Associated Press

MUNSTER, Ind. — Indiana will reimburse the private operator of the Indiana Toll Road for the state's decision to temporarily waive fees along the tollway to alleviate congestion during floods that closed northwestern Indiana freeways for days.

Jane Jankowski, a spokeswoman for Gov. Mitch Daniels, said Friday that the state will reimburse Macquarie-Cintra — a Spanish and Australian consortium — for its lost revenue. She said she doesn't know how much it will cost the state to make good on the lost tolls.

The state's decision upsets Margie Stewart, an Indiana Toll Road employee and Teamsters Union representative.

"Why should the taxpayers pay for this? The company is making plenty of money. It was a disaster here. They could have helped," Stewart said Friday.

Jankowski said the funds will come from the \$3.8 billion the state received from the foreign consortium for the 75-year lease agreement to operate and profit from the toll road.

The private operator, called the Indiana Toll Road Concession Co., and the Indiana Department of Transportation announced Tuesday that tolls would be temporarily suspended on Interstate 90 on a 25-mile section from Portage west to the Indiana-Illinois border after Interstate 80/94 was closed by flooding. A portion of Interstate 65 was also closed.

The closures caused large traffic jams from traffic that had to be detoured. State Rep. Dan Stevenson, D-Highland, called on Daniels to suspend tolls to ease traffic. Tolls went back into effect Thursday, the same day the freeways reopened.

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