
Not Just Toll Roads Anymore: Governments Find New Uses for P3s

State and local officials are striking long-term deals with private companies to upgrade airports, college campuses and prisons.

The biggest news in the world of public-private partnerships (P3s) last year had nothing to do with toll roads — the most visible way governments team up companies. Instead, the most expensive infrastructure deals were projects to build a car-rental facility and a small tram at Los Angeles International Airport.

Other significant P3s struck last year centered around student housing at Purdue University, a courthouse in Maryland and a replacement for a 155-year-old prison in Kansas, according to Inframation, a news and analysis service.

The only highway P3 in the mix last year, in fact, did not involve toll roads. The Michigan transportation department turned to a private consortium to design, build, finance and maintain a 5.5-mile stretch of Interstate 75 just outside of Detroit. As a result of the P3 and other innovations, the improved highway will be ready a decade earlier than previously planned.

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BY DANIEL C. VOCK | APRIL 23, 2019 AT 4:00 AM

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