# No Driving Behavior Changes

A gas tax increase only costs 4 dollars more a month for the average driver

Reinhardt, 2011

(William G. Reinhardt, Editor, Public Works Financing Before the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships, October 5, 2011,http://www.ncppp.org/resources/papers/Reinhardt\_111005.pdf )

One good argument for a gas tax increase goes like this: the federal gas tax runs about $19 per month for the average driver. A 10 cent per gallon increase equals about $4 per month. So, the question gas tax supporters ask is: “will America let its most important public investments crumble rather than pay $4 per month?” Apparently yes. The last federal gas tax increase was in 1993 and that was a nickel. That nickel is worth about 2 cents today.

**That number is a drop in the bucket in comparison to current annual cost of gasoline on households...less than .015%**

[TUTTLE](http://moneyland.time.com/author/bradtuttle/) **2011**

(2011 Is Priciest Year Ever for Gasoline: $3.53 Per Gallon, Over $4K Spent Per Household<http://moneyland.time.com/2011/12/20/2011-is-priciest-year-ever-for-gasoline-3-53-per-gallon-over-4k-spent-per-household/>)

[Consumer Reports](http://news.consumerreports.org/cars/2011/12/average-gas-prices-december-19-2011.html) states that gas prices have dropped 6¢, on average, in the last week alone, and as much as 10¢ a gallon in the Rocky Mountain states. Slightly over a month ago, the [average gallon of regular cost $3.41](http://moneyland.time.com/2011/11/15/gas-prices-sit-at-all-time-high-prices-for-this-time-of-year/). But guess what? Even though gasoline has gotten cheaper, it’s not cheap. That $3.41-per-gallon average in mid-November represented the [highest-ever price for gas for that time of year](http://moneyland.time.com/2011/11/15/gas-prices-sit-at-all-time-high-prices-for-this-time-of-year/). As the year comes to a close, the [Associated Press reports](http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/breaking/chi-gas-takes-its-biggest-bite-out-of-family-budget-in-30-years-20111219%2C0%2C4691738.story)that **the typical U.S. household will have spent $4,155 filling up at the pump in 2011**. That’s an all-time high. It’s also 8.4% of the median household income—the highest percentage coughed up for gasoline since 1981, when oil prices had soared due to complications in the Middle East

**Plan only costs households nine dollars per month—not enough to impact driving behavior**

**National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Commission 2009**

(“Paying our way: A New Framework for Transportation Finance”, <http://financecommission.dot.gov/Documents/NSTIF_Commission_Final_Report_Mar09FNL.pdf> )

**The impact on individual households of the** recommended **gas tax increase is that on average they would pay approximately $9 per month more in federal gas taxes** (individual households now pay on average $17 per month). By comparison, the average household pays about $300 per month to operate and maintain its cars (and about $800 per month to own and operate them).

# No Driving Behavior Changes

**Studies by economists and behavior experts prove that even a 33% increase in prices wouldn’t make a dent in pollution or miles driven.**

**Sipes and Mendelsohn 2001** (Kristin and Robert, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, “The effectiveness of gasoline taxation to manage air pollution”, Ecological Economics 36 (2001) 299–309)

Surveys in California and Connecticut suggest that households have similar responses to gasoline taxation. The results suggest that higher gasoline prices would encourage people to drive fewer miles and to purchase cars that are more fuel-efﬁcient. Both of these responses are in a desirable direction and may encourage policy makers to consider environmental gas taxes. However, the results from several demand models for Los Angeles and Connecticut consistently demonstrate that gasoline demand is price inelastic over both the short and long run. That is, people will make only relatively small changes in their behavior in response to higher prices. These survey results are further supported by actual behavior. Studies of panel and cross-sectional data sets from the literature reveal low price elasticities in actual driving behavior. This study, however, reports price elasticity results that are slightly lower than the bulk of the empirical literature. The income elasticities in this study are conspicuously lower than the estimates from other studies. This discrepancy may be a ﬂaw of hypothetical survey methods. People may ﬁnd it difﬁcult to imagine the hypothetical situation and how they would actually respond to it. They tend to underestimate how they will adapt. Several people verbalized this dilemma saying they could not imagine how they could survive if gasoline prices increased. It would be interesting to see how these people have actually reacted to the gasoline price increases that have occurred since the survey was completed. Our results indicate that if an environmental surcharge is added to gasoline taxes, then the additional tax will decrease gasoline consumption only slightly and, therefore, will have little effect on air pollution. For example, the price elasticity estimates suggest that a 33% increase in gasoline prices (a $0.50 per gallon tax) would decrease gasoline consumption by only 13–23%. Given the political opposition that followed from the modest $0.05 gasoline tax proposed by the Clinton administration in the early 1990s, it is not apparent that it would be worth pursuing such an unpopular environmental tax for such a small improvement in the environment.

# Oil Dependence—OPEC Circumvention

**Increase in gas tax has no affect on OPEC, they just adjust the supply**

Ferguson, 7 (Jake Ferguson, PhD Economics. Should the United States Increase The Federal Gasoline Tax, Northern Iowa University. 2007)

Even though OPEC has price setting power, Mankiw believes the price of oil would fall in world markets and the burden of the tax would be shared by U. S. consumers and foreign suppliers [Mankiw, 2006b, A12]. One source warns that the OPEC countries could adjust their prices downward to maintain demand in the face of an increased U. S. gasoline tax [Corcoran, 2006a, 1]. If the price of oil falls, the price of gasoline also falls, which would return the quantity demanded of gasoline to near its original level.

# Oil Dependence—State Circumvention

**States will offset the plan by reducing their gas taxes**

**National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Commission 2009**

(“Paying our way: A New Framework for Transportation Finance”, <http://financecommission.dot.gov/Documents/NSTIF_Commission_Final_Report_Mar09FNL.pdf> )

These increases in federal revenues are critical to immediately bolster the Highway Trust Fund and enable investments to at least slow system degradation. Further, efforts by state and local governments to maintain and increase non-federal revenues for surface transportation—whether through targeted tolling and pricing, fuel taxes, or other strategies—will enable an even higher level of overall investment, thereby supporting even more critical investments. All levels of government have important roles to play in ensuring a strong surface transportation system. The Commission recognizes that some **states may view increases in federal fuel taxes and funding as an opportunity to reduce state fuel taxes and spending or to avoid future state-level increases**. The Commission encourages Congress and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to consider ways to address this “maintenance of effort” issue when formulating new programs and managing the intergovernmental funding partnership balance. Continuing to require a non-federal match will help address this concern.

# Oil Dependence—Rebound Effect

**Better fuel economy just spurs people to drive more—undermines the gains of the plan**

 [MORRIS](http://www.freakonomics.com/author/ericmorris/) **2009** (Eric, Clemson University Professor of City and Regional Planning, The Rebound Effect of Higher M.P.G. <http://www.freakonomics.com/2009/02/03/the-rebound-effect-of-higher-MPG/> )

A couple of perceptive commenters (good call, Richard Sprague) identified the reason why all of this will take place. It is known to economists as **the “rebound effect,”** and it applies to all forms of energy efficiency, not just fuel economy. The **theory is pretty simple**. **A car that gets better mileage needs less gas, needing less gas makes driving cheaper, and when something gets cheaper the demand for it rises. Better fuel economy will cause us to travel more than we otherwise would have**, with all the good and bad this implies. The question, of course, is how big the rebound effect truly is. In 2000, Lorna A. Greening of the International Resources Group, David L. Greene of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and Carmen Difiglio of the International Energy Agency reviewed 22 studies on this issue. The research suggested that miles driven would increase by 10 to 30 percent of the percent increase in fuel economy

# AT: Oil Shocks

**No impact to oil shocks – flexible economy, more experienced, and better policy**

Balke, Brown, and Yucel 8 (Nathan S. Balke SMU and Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Stephen P. A. Brown Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Mine K. Yücel, “An International Perspective on Oil Price Shocks and U.S. Economic Activity”, September)

 https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/skarimi2/www/MEEA/Paper%20by%20Balke%20%26%20Brown%20%26%20Yucel.pdf>

The effect of oil price shocks on U.S. economic activity seems to have changed since the mid-1990s. A variety of explanations have been offered for the seeming change—including better luck, the reduced energy intensity of the U.S. economy, a more flexible economy, more experience with oil price shocks and better monetary policy. These explanations point to a weakening of the relationship between oil prices shocks and economic activity rather than the fundamentally different response that may be evident since the mid-1990s. Using a dynamic stochastic general equilibrium model of world economic activity, we employ Bayesian methods to assess how economic activity responds to oil price shocks arising from supply shocks and demand shocks originating in the United States or elsewhere in the world. We find that both oil supply and oil demand shocks have contributed significantly to oil price fluctuations and that U.S. output fluctuations are derived largely from domestic shocks.

**Oil shocks increase US GDP – increases efficiency and productivity**

RFF 10 (Resources for the Future, improves environmental and natural resource policymaking worldwide through objective social science research of the highest caliber, “Oil Price Shocks and The US Economy”, July 28)

< http://www.rff.org/News/Features/Pages/How-Oil-Price-Shocks-Influence-Americas-Economy.aspx>

New RFF analysis finds global influences, such as oil price shocks, may be secondary to domestic influences when it comes to understanding the causes of U.S. economic fluctuation. Economists have examined the relationship between oil price shocks and U.S. economic activity since the 1970s and early 1980s—when oil prices rose sharply and the United States plunged into recession. The early research quantified the relationship between oil prices and U.S. economic activity and examined the avenues through which oil price shocks might affect U.S. economic activity. More than two decades later, however, the relationship between oil prices and the U.S. economy seemed to have changed dramatically. Throughout much of the 2000s both oil prices and U.S. economic activity rose strongly until the recession hit in early 2008. Some researchers have attributed the differences to such factors as increased global financial integration, greater flexibility of the U.S. economy (including labor and financial markets), the reduced energy intensity of the U.S. economy, increased experience with energy price shocks, better monetary policy, and good luck—that is, smaller and less frequent shocks. Other researchers assert that the relationship between oil price shocks and U.S. economic activity is much smaller than previously thought, and that other factors must have shaped U.S. economic activity. In [Oil Price Shocks and U.S. Economic Activity: An International Perspective](http://www.rff.org/Publications/Pages/PublicationDetails.aspx?PublicationID=21245), Nathan S. Balke, Stephen P.A. Brown, and Mine K. Yücel analyze these differing views. They develop a world economic model that captures the influence of oil supply shocks and other economic shocks. Their estimation of the model identifies the various sources of world oil price movements and economic fluctuation and the consequent effects on U.S. economic activity. Their findings? World oil price shocks in the 1970s and early 1980s reflected different combinations of shifts in oil supply and demand than the early 2000s, which accordingly meant differing effects on oil markets and U.S. economic activity. In addition, they confirm that domestic shocks—such as those to productivity and investment—dominate the movements in U.S. economic activity. U.S. GDP fell sharply after the oil price increases in the 1970s and early 1980s, primarily because domestic productivity shocks reduced output. Oil supply shocks only mildly reinforced that economic weakness. In the 2000s, however, U.S. GDP continued to rise as oil prices rose because changes in U.S. investment efficiency, total factor productivity, and preferences completely overwhelmed the extremely mild drag contributed by oil supply shocks.

# Warming—Plan Can’t Solve

**Increasing the gas tax only offsets half the yearly increase in CO2 for every 10 cents.**

**National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Commission 2009**

(“Paying our way: A New Framework for Transportation Finance”, <http://financecommission.dot.gov/Documents/NSTIF_Commission_Final_Report_Mar09FNL.pdf> )

Our most credible estimates imply that a 10 cent tax increase would decrease U.S. carbon emissions from the transportation sector by about 1.5% and decrease total U.S. carbon emissions by about 0.5%. To put this estimate in context, total U.S. carbon dioxide emissions increased by 1.1% annually between 1990 and 2007, so a 10 cent gasoline tax increase would approximately oﬀset half a year of growth in total U.S. emissions. 4 This estimate captures only the short-run response resulting from reduced discretionary driving and reduced driving speeds, for example. The long-run response is likely to be considerably larger as drivers substitute toward more fuel-eﬃcient vehicles.

**Plan can’t solve enough emissions to make a dent—overseas polluters**

**National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Commission 2009**

(“Paying our way: A New Framework for Transportation Finance”, <http://financecommission.dot.gov/Documents/NSTIF_Commission_Final_Report_Mar09FNL.pdf> )

Carbon emissions are a global problem. In order to put these results into perspective, the third and fourth rows of Table 10 report the implied change in OECD and world emissions. These percentage changes are calculated by multiplying the percentage eﬀect in the United States (shown in row 2) by 0.45 and 0.21, respectively, the fraction of OECD and world emissions represented by the United States. 27 A 10 cent gasoline tax in the United States reduces OECD and world emissions by considerably less than 1%. This reﬂects the facts that vehicles in the United States represent a small and decreasing fraction of total OECD and global carbon dioxide emissions. Carbon dioxide emissions in the United States are growing less quickly than emissions in other countries, most notably China, India and Brazil. By 2030, according to predictions from the U.S. Department of Energy, the United States will represent only 16.1% of total world carbon dioxide emissions.

# Warming—Plan Can’t Solve

**95% chance gas tax reduces emissions an inconsequential amount**

 **Davis ’09** (Lucas W. Davis, “Estimating the Effect of a Gasoline Tax on Carbon Emissions,” University of Michigan
September 2009, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~lkilian/gasoline27.pdf>)

Estimating the effect of raising gas taxes on gasoline consumption, while interesting for other purposes, is only a first step in computing the effect of such a policy on carbon emissions. The percentage change in total carbon dioxide emissions in the U.S. is calculated by multiplying the gasoline consumption effect by 0.338, the fraction of carbon dioxide emissions in the United States derived from the transportation sector:25 Here -1.43% is the change in gasoline consumption from a 10 cent gasoline tax increase based on the estimate from Table 6. A 10 cent gasoline tax increase reduces carbon emissions in the United States by 0.48% (see row 2 of Table 10).26 Although not negligible, this is small when compared to, for example, recent annual increases in carbon emissions. Sampling variation implies that the true effect could be much smaller. The effect could also be much larger, though it is unlikely to exceed a few percentage points. For example, one can rule out carbon emission decreases in excess of 1.0% with 95% confidence.

Can’t make a serious dent in emissions—the percentages just don’t work out

Reynolds ‘6 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and was formerly Director of Economic Research at the Hudson Institute. Orginially in the Washinton post in ‘6 “Gas Tax Trial Balloon” CATO Institute. Accessed on 6/26/12. <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/gas-tax-trial-balloon>)

A 2004 Congressional Budget Office paper concluded that if CAFE standards were raised 3.8 miles per gallon, it would take 15 years for gasoline consumption to fall just 10 percent, and the economic cost would be high. Raising the gas tax 46 cents would also cut fuel use by 10 percent, but do so much more promptly. Mr. Mankiw's other arguments are expressed in high-sounding terms as a case of "Pigovian taxes," named for economist Alfred Pigou. A Pigovian tax assumes politicians and their economists have the knowledge and motivation to discern when people are buying too much of something because the buyers fail to take account of the "social costs" their purchase imposes on others. Assuming such wisdom exists, the government can supposedly use selective sales taxes to modify consumer behavior. Yet the CBO noted a 2002 National Research Council estimate of the Pigovian "external costs" of consuming gasoline amounted to just 26 cents a gallon -- less than the average federal-state tax of 41 cents. The real motive behind high taxes on liquor, tobacco and gasoline is more plausibly related to "Ramsey taxes," named for philosopher Frank Ramsey. Pigou might have argued we should tax wine to discourage excess drinking. Ramsey would argue we should tax wine precisely because the demand for it is relatively unresponsive (inelastic) to a higher price. Because taxing wine, tobacco or gasoline does not affect consumption strongly, such taxes are "efficient" in yielding the most revenue with the least distortion of resource uses (unless they result in black markets). Governments like to claim they raise these "sin taxes" to discourage drinking, smoking and driving -- as if driving to work is a sin. In reality, governments like these taxes because their effect on consumption is weak. And the real reason the federal government has not pushed this tax much higher is that doing so would pre-empt and reduce an important source of state revenue. Mr. Mankiw wants to raise the gas tax twice as much as the CBO estimated, which might cut gasoline consumption 20 percent from where it would otherwise be a decade from now. But that would be only a 5 percent cut from current consumption. That couldn't make a noticeable difference in global warming because U.S. passenger vehicles account for only 20 percent of carbon dioxide emissions. Even a 20 percent cut in 20 percent is only 4 percent, and the United States is only part of the globe.

# Warming—SQ fuel Efficiency Solves

**Fuel efficient cars will make gas taxes moot and solves for the warming adv.**

Henson 2012

Real Time Traffic Expert. “As drivers use less gas, Florida considers gas-tax replacements.” Baynews 9. 6/20/12. Accessed on 6/26/12. Web. <http://www.baynews9.com/content/news/baynews9/news/article.html/content/news/articles/bn9/2012/6/19/florida_may_be_looki.html>

As the public buys more fuel-efficient vehicles and markets for electric and hybrid cars continue to grow, a pair of trends seem to bode well for the environment along with drivers' wallets. Despite the growth, the state of Florida is concerned about the impact of these trends on its shrinking Transportation Trust Fund, which gets its money from the tax paid-per-gallon of gas purchased by drivers. The money from that fund is then used to pay for highway infrastructure improvements. "The increase in the number of fuel-efficient vehicles has just exploded," said Mark Reichert, the assistant executive director of the Florida Transportation Commission. "Even though people are starting to drive more, they're trading in their vehicles that got say, 15 to 20 miles to the gallon, for vehicles that get anywhere from 20 to 50 miles per gallon now." The less gas pumped, the less money flowing to the Transportation Trust Fund. The State needs to make a change; a change that is fair to everyone.

# Highways—AT: Wear and Tear

**Diesel trucks cause most road degradation—gasoline taxes don’t affect them**

**Parry 2002** (Ian W.H. RFF Fellow, “Is Gasoline Undertaxed in the United States?” *Resources* Issue 148, Summer)

Another consequence of motor vehicle driving is the wear and tear on the road network that must be repaired at taxpayers’ expense. However most of the damage is caused by heavy trucks rather than autos: road damage increases exponentially with a vehicle’s axle weight so that a truck weighing 10 times as much as a car does one thousand times the damage. This problem really calls for a tax on diesel fuel rather than gasoline or, better still, a tax on truck mileage adjusted for axle weight

# K Card

**The gas tax has become a cornerstone of the American political economy—it spawned the sprawl monster and is so opaque that it shuts out democratic decision-making about transportation policy**

Wells ‘12
(Christopher W. Environmental historian, PhD U Wisconsin-Madison, Fueling the Boom: Gasoline Taxes, Invisibility, and the Growth of the American Highway Infrastructure, 1919–1956 Journal of American History 2012 99: 72-81. Accessed on 6/26/12. <http://jah.oxfordjournals.org/content/99/1/72.full>)

The implications of these interrelated developments for the history of oil in the United States have been profound. The linkage of federal gas-tax revenues to interstate construction cemented a version of the self-fueling system that was on an even grander scale than the one highway planners first conceived of during the Great Depression, which coupled the nation’s expanding automotive infrastructure to its expanding gasoline consumption. As a result, the principle of dedicating ever-growing gas-tax revenue to highways became a cornerstone of the American political economy for the next half century. Even after opponents finally “busted” the Highway Trust Fund, securing some of its revenue for other purposes such as public transit, the revenues reallocated have been small enough to have the effect of reinforcing, rather than challenging, the dominance of highways in American transportation policy.[20](http://jah.oxfordjournals.org/content/99/1/72.full#fn-20) Equally important, and central to how the self-fueling system operates, has been the concept of invisibility. It has played a role in the form of invisible taxes, duties paid by gas wholesalers and therefore never seen by consumers. Invisibility has also helped the self-fueling system in the political world: the legal linkage of gasoline taxes to road budgets has shielded car- and highway-centered transportation policy from the regular discussion and debate that typifies the allocation of general funds. And finally, from an environmental standpoint, the repercussions (aside from smog) of burning gasoline in staggering quantities have been difficult to see, despite the ubiquity of gasoline-burning vehicles in the United States. Even the ecological effects of fundamentally reconfiguring the landscape to make travel by automobile easier have tended to recede into the background, since car-dependent environments have become the norm, dominating the places where most Americans live their lives. Visible or not, however, in the United States oil has been and remains pervasive: fueling vehicles, spurring economic growth and, not least, underwriting the massive costs of building and maintaining America’s vast automotive infrastructure.

# Backstopping Link

**Oil producers would deliberately tank the price of oil to out-compete alternative energies**

NY Times 05 ( New York Times, Leading Newspaper. Gas Taxes: Lesser Evil, Greater Good; New York Times. October 24)

Fortunately, those drawbacks can be overcome. A bolstered gas tax would raise huge amounts of revenue, roughly $1 billion for every penny of additional tax. Some of that money would have to be used to provide offsetting tax breaks to low-income households, such as an increase in the earned income tax credit. Another offset that lawmakers could consider would be to use some of the revenue to buy back S.U.V.'s. The buyback notion is a variation on the "scrappage" idea from earlier crises, when it was proposed that the government buy up old clunkers so that their owners could more quickly upgrade to less-polluting cars. Eventually, the gas tax would pinch consumers less, as revenues from it are used to finance long-term structural changes to reduce oil dependency, including mass transit and research into alternative fuels and technologies. There is also a good possibility that, over time, higher gas taxes would not hurt consumers as much as is generally feared. Oil exporters dread gas taxes because the higher gas prices go, the greater the incentive for companies and governments to invest in alternatives. For that reason, economists assume that raising the gas tax - say, by a dollar or so - would not necessarily raise the price at the pump by the same amount. Rather, a tax increase could induce exporters to allow the price of oil itself to fall, in order to keep the price at the pump below the level at which oil alternatives begin to look attractive.

**Reducing our dependence on oil increases warming – oil producers flood the market**

Gerlagh 11 – PhD in economics, Tilburg University

Reyer Gerlagh, June 2011, “Too Much Oil”, http://cesifo.oxfordjournals.org/content/57/1/79.full

Economists have noted an unexpected interaction between the two problems. When with good intentions policy makers set up green policies to develop energy sources that may substitute for oil in the long run, they may enhance climate change problems, rather than mitigate them (Sinn 2008). The argument is intuitive. Oil suppliers, when anticipating the development of an alternative competitive energy source, will bring forward the sales of their resource, and thus increase current emissions, to protect their revenues (Hoel 2008; Strand 2007). This phenomenon is called the green paradox.2,3

# States CP—Solves Revenue Shortfalls

States should do the plan – they are going bankrupt and raising the state gas tax is the only way to solve

ITEP 12

ITEP “State Gasoline Taxes: Built to Fail, But Fixable” Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy May 2012 http://itepnet.org/pdf/pb44stategastax.pdf

The decline of the gas tax is costing states significant revenue. If every state had reformed its gas tax to grow alongside construction costs the last time lawmakers raised the tax, the states as a whole would be bringing in more than $10 billion in additional gas tax revenue every year. A few states like Maryland, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Virginia would each be brining in more than $500 million in additional annual revenue. Th ese revenue losses have been a major factor in the worsening condition of the nation’s infrastructure. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), a quarter of America’s bridges are structurally defi cient or obsolete, one-third of the nation’s major roads are in poor or mediocre condition, almost half of all major urban highways are congested, and nearly half of all Americans lack access to bus or rail transit. As a result of these defi ciencies, the ASCE estimates that Americans waste the monetary equivalent of $32 billion in travel time delays each year, and another $97 billion on vehicle operating costs. It should come as litt le surprise that even business leaders—a group hardly enamored with taxes—oft en come down on the side of raising state gas taxes in order to fund a more effi cient transportation system. But it’s not just the transportation network that suff ers when gas taxes are allowed to stagnate. Recently, a number of states have enacted long-term raids on their general funds, where a certain percentage of tax revenue usually reserved for education, human services, and other public priorities is siphoned off to make up for lagging gas tax revenues. Some lawmakers have pointed out the problems with this approach, but far too many view a general fund Band-Aid as an easy way to delay politically diffi cult, but long-overdue reforms to the gas tax.

Recommendations for Reform Despite the dismal condition of so many state gas taxes, there are a few straightforward reforms that states can use to fi x these broken, but vital, revenue sources: • Rising fuel-effi ciency and construction costs have signifi cantly reduced the purchasing power of state gas taxes. Th e fi rst and most obvious step that states should take to off set these declines is to increase their gas tax rates. • An increase in state gas taxes, however necessary, will be of litt le help in the long-term unless steps are taken to ensure that the tax can withstand future increases in fuel-effi ciency and construction costs. Restructuring state gas tax rates so that they grow over time can help alleviate this problem. Restructuring can come in a variety of forms, including linking state gas tax rates to construction cost infl ation, the general infl ation rate, or gas prices. • Like most taxes on consumption, state gas taxes are inevitably regressive—impacting low-income families far more heavily than any other group. Th e impact of gas taxes on families struggling to make ends meet is oft en cited in opposition to state gas taxes, but lawmakers can provide meaningful relief to these families via targeted low-income tax credits, without having to starve states’ transportation revenue streams.

# \*\*\*Politics\*\*\*

# Unpopular—Public

**Gas tax is extremely unpopular; elections**

Kimberlin, 12 [March 18, 2012, Joanne Kimberlin, The Virginian-Pilot, from the FHA, “Tolls turmoil raises questions about Va. gas tax” (http://hamptonroads.com/2012/03/tolls-turmoil-raises-questions-about-va-gas-tax)]

"Imagine if you hadn't had a pay raise in 25 years," said Tamara Rollison, a spokeswoman at VDOT. "You've got dwindling dollars to take care of ever-increasing needs." Tax hikes are rarely popular, but the gasoline tax is particularly untouchable, especially when pump prices are climbing on their own. Elections can flip at the cost of a fill-up, an expense that's not only unavoidable, but impossible to ignore. Giant signs flash the going rate outside every gas station. It all makes us hyper-aware, said Carl Davis, a senior analyst at the nonprofit, nonpartisan Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

**No political will to raise the gas tax; politicians are burned at the stake for it**

Feigenbaum, 12 [May 25, 2012, Baruch Feigenbaum, Reason Foundation, Transportation Policy Analyst, (http://reason.org/news/printer/ata-wrong-on-bingaman-amendment)]

Transportation revenue is declining while transportation needs are increasing. The main federal transportation funding resource is the gas tax. The federal gas tax has not been increased since 1992. As a result of inflation and more fuel-efficient vehicles, the gas tax raises less than half the actual revenue it raised in 1992. Currently there is no political will to raise the gas tax. Congress is against it; President Obama is against it. (One of the President’s advisors falsely attacked Governor Romney for raising the gas tax in Massachusetts. Romney increased the environmental clean up fund by two cents not the actual gas tax. And the actual out of pocket increase to drivers was 9% not 400% as Obama’s surrogates complain.) Even if we increased the gas tax 15 cents and indexed it to inflation, (which has a zero percent chance of happening) it would still be only a temporary solution because of increasing fuel efficiency. As the federal government is either unwilling or unable to act, States should be allowed to use any and all resources to improve and maintain their highway networks.

# Unpopular—Public

Unpopular; the economy is too insecure

Lowy, 12 [Joan Lowy, February 2012, Associated Press “Transportation boosted to top of political agenda” (http://www.alaskajournal.com/Alaska-Journal-of-Commerce/AJOC-February-19-2012/Transportation-boosted-to-top-of-political-agenda/)]

Without an infusion of cash from somewhere, the Transportation Department could be forced to slow down reimbursements to states for highway construction and other transportation projects. That, in turn, could lead to thousands of lost jobs. Lawmakers could resolve much of their money woes by increasing the 18.4 cent-a-gallon gas tax and the 24.4 cent-a-gallon diesel tax, but that’s politically unpalatable in an economy where unemployment remains high and many Americans feel financially insecure. Indecision about how to shore up the Highway Trust Fund has long stymied efforts to pass a transportation plan. The last long-term plan expired in 2009. Congress has kept programs going through a series of eight short-term extensions. The current extension expires March 31

**A higher gas tax has no chance of being passed; massively unpopular**

Walsh, 11 [Brian Walsh, August 16, 2011, TIME Online, “Why Dropping the Gas Tax Would Be a Disaster, (http://ecocentric.blogs.time.com/2011/08/16/why-dropping-the-gas-tax-would-be-a-disaster/#ixzz1z20GieNe)]

If anything, we could even use a higher gas tax, both to encourage drivers to purchase more fuel-efficient cars, and to raise funds for mass transit. General Motors CEO Dan Akerson has suggested raising the tax by as much as $1 a gallon, which would still leave Americans paying far less than most other countries—in Britain, the tax is more than $4 a gallon. Policymakers may want to consider shifting from a straight gas tax to a per-mile levee, something already underway in the Netherlands. That strikes me as fair—the more you use the roads, the more you pay for their upkeep, although there are legitimate privacy concerns about how the government would track mileage.Of course, in the current political climate there’s virtually no chance of anything like that even being discussed, let alone passed. And Americans have very different transportation habits than Europeans—longer commutes mean gas taxes, even at a low rate, can take a big bite from household budgets at a time when so many are struggling to get by. But repealing the federal gas tax really would be a disaster, costing the government an estimated $100 million a day at the very moment when we’re so worried about public debt. Even many mainstream conservative organizations like the Heritage Foundation and the Reason Foundation seem to recognize that this is a bad idea. Let’s hope Congress this September remains temporarily sane enough to realize that.

# Unpopular—Women &GOP

**Plan unpopular. Two reasons: women and republicans.**

Callow and Austin ‘11

Michael: Ph.D., department of business & management; Nathan: Ph.D., department of business & management. “National Transportation Center Research Report” Morgan State University. October ’11. Accssed on 6/26/12. <http://ntl.bts.gov/lib/43000/43000/43003/TheMediating_Callow_1112.pdf>

A three-step regression analysis was run on the gas tax variable, starting with demographic and road-usage variables, followed by dissatisfaction variables, and finally priority variables. In step 1, education, gender, political affiliation, and hours travelled on the road per day were all significantly related to respondents’ attitudes towards gas tax increases (Table 6). Education level was positively related to more favorable opinions towards gas tax increases. Being a Republican and travelling more hours on the road had a negative impact on respondents’ evaluation of any increase in the gas tax. A univariate analysis of gender differences revealed that women were less supportive than men of any gas tax increase (µmen = 3.86, µwomen = 3.11; t= 15.82, p < .001). In step 2, dissatisfaction with pollution was positively related to gas tax initiatives. The pollution variable did not mediate the relationship between the demographic and usage variables and the dependent variable, since all variables remained statistically significant. No additional variables were entered in step 3.

# Unpopular—Democrats

**No support for gas taxes from dems—they know the public will crucify them**

#### Tankersley ’10 *(Staff Writer for LA Times> “Senators consider gasoline tax as part of climate bill”*[*http://articles.latimes.com/2010/apr/14/nation/la-na-gas-tax14-2010apr14*](http://articles.latimes.com/2010/apr/14/nation/la-na-gas-tax14-2010apr14)*)*

The Senate bill's sponsors appear to want the revenue raised from the tax to fund a variety of programs that would lower industrial emissions, including helping manufacturers reduce energy use or boosting wind and solar power installations by electric utilities. But the tax has encountered stiff behind-the-scenes resistance from some Democrats, who fear the political specter of increasing gasoline prices as the national average cost of gasoline is expected to crest $3 a gallon this summer. And no other Republicans have publicly announced support for the framework legislation that Graham and the others are circulating on Capitol Hill. Attracting significant Republican support for a bill featuring a tax increase would run counter to historical political trends and to the anti-tax outrage percolating among the "tea party" activists in the GOP base. Sources say the resistance extends to some Obama administration officials.

# Unpopular—Norquist Link

**A. Norquist wants to scrap the gas tax**

Mataconis ’11 Staff Writer for Outside The Belt, “Grover Norquist: ‘No Problem with Extending Gas Tax”, August 17, 2011 (<http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/grover-norquist-no-problem-with-extending-gas-tax/>)

Anti-tax activist Grover Norquist says it’s fine with him if Congress extends the soon-to-expire gasoline tax for now — a statement that may allow room for lawmakers to defuse a brewing confrontation on what is normally a humdrum decision. Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, told Bloomberg that lawmakers who vote to extend the tax without making any changes wouldn’t be violating the no-tax-hike pledge that many members of Congress have signed at his group’s behest. The pledge — signed by virtually every Republican in Congress, plus many lawmakers at the state level — has made Norquist an influential player in fiscal issues including this summer’s debt limit showdown and Pennsylvania’s debate over an impact fee on natural gas drilling. Most of the 18.4 cent per gallon gasoline tax is set to expire Sept. 30, imperiling the funding source for the federal Highway Trust Fund. While extending the tax is normally routine, some conservative groups have eyed the issue as an opportunity for yet another fiscal battle — on the heels of this year’s spring budget impasse, near-default on the U.S. debt and temporary shutdown of the Federal Aviation Administration. But Norquist told Bloomberg that he would rather push for a broader overhaul of transportation funding and that eliminating the gas tax entirely would take two to five years. In the short term, he said he would push for legislation to let states opt out of the highway fund.

**B. Norquist key to the agenda--has political sway with almost all congressional republicans**

CBS News 11“The Pledge: Grover Norquist’s Hold on the GOP” November 20, 2011 (<http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-57327816/the-pledge-grover-norquists-hold-on-the-gop/>)

The Joint Congressional Committee on Deficit Reduction has just three days to reach a deal eliminating at least $1.2 trillion from the nation's debt using some combination of cutting spending and raising taxes. The person at the heart of those negotiations - and some would say the person responsible for the deadlock - is neither a member of Congress nor the holder of any public office. He is a lobbyist and a conservative activist named Grover Norquist who, over the years, has gotten virtually every Republican congressman and senator to sign an oath called "The Pledge." It's a promise that they will never, under any circumstances, vote to raise taxes on anyone. And so far Grover Norquist has held them to it, controlling 279 votes, including the speaker of the House, the Senate minority leader and all six Republican members of the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction. Steve Kroft: A lot of people think you're the most powerful man in Washington. Grover Norquist: The tax issue is the most powerful issue in American politics going back to the Tea Party. People say, 'Oh, Grover Norquist has power.' No. Grover Norquist and Americans for Tax Reform focus on the tax issue. The tax issue is a powerful issue. Grover Norquist is trying to be modest. Since creating Americans for Tax Reform at Ronald Reagan's behest back in 1985, Norquist has been responsible, more than anyone else, for rewriting the dogma of the Republican Party. Norquist: The Republicans won't raise your taxes. We haven't had a Republican vote for an income tax increase since 1990. Kroft: And this was your doing? Norquist: I helped. Yeah. It began with the simple idea of getting Republicans all over the country to sign an oath called the "Taxpayer Protection Pledge," promising their constituents that they would never, ever vote for anything that would make their taxes go up. [Norquist: This is Speaker Gingrich's tax pledge back in 1998...] And once they sign the pledge, Grover Norquist never forgets. The more signatures he's collected, the more his influence has grown.

# Unpopular—Small Business Lobby

**Raising the gas tax angers small business advocacy groups**

Spors, 2012 (“Can a Gas Tax Fuel Clean Energy Innovation?”, Small Business Trends, http://smallbiztrends.com/2012/05/gas-tax-fuel-clean-energy-innovation.html)

That said, many small business advocacy groups, including the National Federal of Independent Business, are adamantly against raising taxes that directly hit small businesses, including the gas tax. A March survey by the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council found that 72% of small business respondents said higher gas prices were already affecting their business. And stories abound in local media of businesses being pinched by surging gas prices.

# Popular—Public

**Studies show Americans would support a gas tax increase for highways.**

Mineta Transportation Intitute June ’12 (“What do Americans Think About Federal Tax Options to Support Public Transit, Highways, and Local Streets and Roads? Result from Year 3 of a National Survey”. June 2012. <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/PDFs/research/1128-american-survey-federal-taxes-public-transit-highways-streets-roads.pdf>)

The survey results show that a majority of Americans would support higher taxes for transportation—under certain conditions (see Figure 1). A gas tax increase of 10¢ per gallon to improve road maintenance was supported by 58 percent of respondents, whereas support levels dropped to 20 percent if the revenues were to be used more generally to maintain and improve the transportation system. The only other variant on a gas tax that received at least 50 percent support in 2012 was a 10¢ per-gallon increase with the revenues dedicated to reducing accidents and improving safety. Support for another five tax options was still above 40 percent (a healthy showing of support given that taxes generally tend to be unpopular). For tax options where the revenues were to be spent for undefined transportation purposes, support levels varied considerably by what kind of tax would be imposed, with a sales tax (49 percent approval) much more popular than either a gas tax increase (20 percent) or a new mileage tax (21 percent).

**Americans support a federal gas tax to reduce foreign dependence on oil**

[West,](http://environment.about.com/od/environmentallawpolicy/a/gasolinetax.htm) . Larry West, a professional writer and editor who has written many articles about environmental issues for leading newspapers, magazines and online publications. Americans Would Support Higher Gas Tax to Reduce Global Warming, Enviroment About. No Date

**Americans are generally opposed to raising the federal tax on gasoline,** but a majority would support a gasoline tax increase if they knew the money would be used to reduce global warming or to lessen United States dependence on foreign oil, according to a [New York Times/CBS News poll](http://environment.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ&zTi=1&sdn=environment&cdn=newsissues&tm=15&gps=13_65_1600_805&f=20&su=p284.13.342.ip_p504.6.342.ip_&tt=2&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http%3A//www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/national/20060228_poll_results.pdf) **conducted in late February 2006.** Fifty-five percent of those polled said they would support an increase in the federal gasoline tax if it would reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil. Fifty-nine percent said they would support a tax increase if it would result in less gasoline consumption and less global warming. **(The nationwide telephone poll surveyed 1,018 adults; the margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points.)**

# Popular—CoC

**Plan is popular with the CoC—governing members and internal business lobbies concur**

Mitchell ‘9 Josh, Staff Writer for the Wall Street Journal, “Chamber of Commerce Pushes Increase in Gas Tax”, July 15, 2009 ([**http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124769092956347439.html**](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124769092956347439.html))

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce said Wednesday that it will attempt to do what a string of economists and urban planners couldn't: persuade lawmakers to raise the federal gasoline tax to pay for better roads. The new push by the powerful business lobby, which includes a six-figure ad campaign, comes as Congress has begun debating how to pay for repairs to the nation's highways, bridges and mass-transit systems. Boosting the 18.4-cent federal tax on a gallon of gasoline by roughly 10 cents a gallon would cover the growing funding gap while creating jobs and improving mobility, Chamber officials said Wednesday. "Just damn do it," Chamber President Thomas Donohue said Wednesday at a news briefing, at which he called on Congress not to delay action on a new highway bill as the Obama administration has proposed. Wednesday, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee backed a plan to put off debate on new highway funding for 18 months, extending current funding levels until then. A boost in highway spending could also be a boon for Chamber members like Caterpillar Inc., the heavy-equipment maker that has joined the lobbying campaign. About 100 business executives affiliated with the Chamber fanned out on Capitol Hill Wednesday to meet with lawmakers. The executives ranged from small retailers from North Myrtle Beach, S.C., to Office Depot Inc. ODP 0.00% Chief Executive Steve Odland. While the Chamber has previously called for a gas-tax increase, the group is ramping up lobbying because now is an opportune time to make such a move, with gas prices well below last summer's peak of $4 a gallon, Mr. Donohue said.

# Popular—COC Key to Agenda

**The Chamber of Commerce is the biggest and most powerful lobbying group in the nation, especially in regards to Republicans**

The Economist ’12 Independent Economic Think Tank, “The Chamber Of Commerce Has Been Transformed Into One Of The Most Powerful Political Forces In Washington” April 23, 2012 ([**http://articles.businessinsider.com/2012-04-23/politics/31385442\_1\_political-spending-chamber-labour**](http://articles.businessinsider.com/2012-04-23/politics/31385442_1_political-spending-chamber-labour))

AMERICA’S first chamber of commerce was founded in Charleston in 1773, but it was not until April 22nd 1912 that business found a national voice. At the urging of President William Howard Taft, the Chamber of Commerce of the USA was established by a gathering of 700 delegates from 44 states, representing 324 voluntary organizations, in a Washington hotel. Taft turned the meeting over to his commerce secretary, Charles Nagel, suggesting he keep it brief "in order that the inventive genius and the power of original thought in this representative body… may not be restricted." For much of the Chamber’s first 85 years it sought to settle disputes by consensus, much like its small-town namesakes.That began to change in 1997 when the wiry Thomas Donohue (pictured) was appointed chief executive after a stint reinvigorating America’s trucking association. The organization he inherited was cash-strapped and lacked punch. His goal, he wrote at the time, "is simple--to build the biggest gorilla in this town--the most aggressive and vigorous business advocate our nation has ever seen." He has succeeded on many measures. Today the Chamber is by far the most muscular business lobby group in Washington. From its historic headquarters opposite the White House it wields huge political influence, spending heavily to sway congressional contests. In doing so it has become more controversial and, say critics, more pro-Republican. This has done its coffers no harm: in 2010 it took in $189m in contributions and grants, roughly five times its pre-Donohue inflows. Today’s Chamber is not shy about staking out strong (some would say extreme) positions on hot-button issues: it has led the running on supporting tort and entitlement reform and greater domestic energy production, and in opposing "excessive" regulation, government-run health care and cap-and-trade schemes. Its leaders seem to love locking horns with the left, not least the Labour unions that spend hundreds of millions promoting their views in each election cycle. "Our adversaries will never leave the field, so neither can we," says Bruce Josten, the Chamber’s chief lobbyist. Labour groups have been so spooked by its surging testosterone that they have set up US Chamber Watch, an outfit dedicated to undermining it. The Chamber’s spending on lobbying has jumped under Mr Donohue (see chart 1), though it fell sharply last year as an unprecedented lobbying blitz on health and financial reform subsided. It is expected to rebound after November’s elections. The Chamber uses both its team of in-house lobbyists and outsiders. Last year it paid a team led by Michael Mukasey, a former United States attorney-general, $180,000 to call for amendments to declaw the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Its electioneering activities are equally impressive. Its political spending exceeded that of all other groups bar the two parties in the 2010 mid-terms, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, a campaign-finance watchdog. Much of the money goes on "issue advocacy" ads, which do not explicitly back or attack candidates but discuss their stance on business issues. Business associations naturally lean right. But critics say the Chamber has become more brazenly pro-Republican under Mr Donohue.. Its ranks of lobbyists, strategists and flacks bristle with former Republican congressional attack dogs Its people are said to meet periodically with Republican-supporting groups to share intelligence, such as polling data, and to co-ordinate ad spending. It has ties to Karl Rove’s American Crossroads political action committee, whose president is the Chamber’s former chief lawyer.

# Popular—GOP

**Republicans back user fee options such as plan for funding transportation—seen as an attractive alternative to deficit spending**

Sledge, 12 [Matt Sledge, Huffington Post, Brown University, contributor to FreeVote, 1/4/12, “GOP Candidates' Transportation Infrastructure Talk Praises Tolls But Ignores Jobs” (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/04/gop-candidates-transportation-infrastructure-jobs\_n\_1184314.html)]

Republicans**,** by contrast**,** view transportation as either a local issue or **"**a sector that ought tostand on its own feet, in other words pay for itself**,** in other words through tolls or other fees," Orski said. If there is one thing that GOP candidates Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich seem to agree on, it's those "user fees." If a road's worth building, **the argument goes,** people will be willing to pay for it themselves through tolls**.** That argument mirrors one advanced by the Department of Transportation during the Bush administration, which, according to the Washington Post, operated under the guiding principle that "unleashing the private sector and introducing market forces could lead to innovation and more choices for the public." The result was "a legacy of new toll roads across the country." In a 2008 speech outlining his infrastructure "principles," unearthed by Streetsblog, former House Speaker Gingrich **(R-Ga.)** said the country should "when possible shift to user fees rather than tax increases. The fact is **all the** polling indicates if you want to help with suburban congestion, suburbanites are very prepared to have a user fee to get them places faster, they understand the time value of money." A President Romney, it seems, would also look at roads as a business proposition. Speaking to a voter at a New Hampshire town hall, former Massachusetts Gov. Romney said that he would "prioritize those things which are most important to you and infrastructure and having good roads and bridges and rail lines and so forth and air traffic lines are essential for a strong economy," according to the blog Transportation Nation

# Popular—Bipartisan

**Support for increased gas taxes spans the ideological spectrum**

Palmer and Penner ‘11

(John L:  [Center for Policy Research](http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/cpr.aspx) “Committees Tackle the Deficit”. Urban Institute. February 01,2011. Accessed on 6/26/12. <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?id=412298&RSSFeed=Urban.xml>)

Numerous committees have formed to suggest ways of restoring fiscal stability. Some come from the political right or left, but the most interesting include members who span the ideological spectrum. The most important is the president's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform (NCFRR 2010). The president appointed six members drawn from both political parties, and Democratic and Republican congressional leaders each appointed six elected members—three from the House and three from the Senate. The commission's rules stated that Congress had to consider its recommendations if at least 14 commission members supported them. That ensured that at least two elected members from each party had to be on board before the Congress would be forced to act. Few budget watchers thought the commission had any chance of success, especially after congressional leaders appointed some members from the extremes of their parties. But commission members and their staffs worked diligently in a collegial fashion. They finally recommended radical revenue-raising tax reform, a 15-cent increase in the gas tax, comprehensive Social Security reform, options to restrain growth in federal spending on health care, and severe caps on defense and nondefense discretionary spending. Only 11 members ultimately voted for the commission report, but the fact that it got more than majority support was a notable achievement. Moreover, support spanned the ideological spectrum from Senator Tom Coburn (R, OK), one of the most conservative members of the Senate, to Senator Richard Durbin (D, IL), a solid liberal. Although the Republican Party has adamantly opposed tax increases, three Republican senators voted for a plan that contained significant new revenues. The commission claimed that by 2020, roughly 70 percent of its deficit reduction would come from slowing noninterest spending growth and 30 percent from revenue increases. In the long run, the commission held spending to 21 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), a severe limit given the costs of an aging population and ever more expensive health care.

# Popular—Old Evidence Doesn’t Apply

**Budget Deficits make gas taxes less politically dangerous—the conventional thinking no longer applies**

**Austin and Dinan 2005** (David and Terry, CBO Microeconomic Studies Division, Clearing the air: The costs and consequences of higher CAFE standards and increased gasoline taxes, Journal of Environmental Economics and Management, 50:3, November)

Next, we consider whether those gasoline savings could be achieved at a lower cost by an alternative policy—a tax on gasoline consumption. Table 4 compares the present discounted value (PDV) of total costs for a 3.8-mpg increase in CAFE standards (with trading) and for a gasoline tax increase designed to save the same amount of gasoline over a 14-year period (41.7 billion gallons) when gallons saved (and policy costs) are discounted at 12%, the rate at which new-car buyers discount gasoline savings in our CAFE model. Using our baseline assumption for VMT elasticity (0.2), we estimate that a 30 cents/gallon gasoline tax would save the same present discounted quantity of gasoline at a cost that is 71% lower than the comparable CAFE policy. Thirty cents per gallon would represent a 73% increase over the existing tax on gasoline in the US, which averages 41 cents including a federal tax of 18.4 cents and varying levels of state and local taxes. Like higher CAFE standards, gasoline tax increases have been politically unpopular. However, policy makers may become more supportive of higher gasoline taxes as pressure to reduce the federal budget deﬁcit increases.

# Public Backlash Inevitable

**Americans already thought the plan happened and no backlash**

Fried, 10 [Ben Fried, July 7, 2010, “Yes, You Can Move the Needle on Public Support for a Gas Tax Hike”, (http://streetsblog.net/2010/07/07/yes-you-can-move-the-needle-on-public-support-for-a-gas-tax-hike/)]

But the big takeaway from the Mineta survey is that a national gas tax hike gains support if you make a strong case for how the revenue will be spent. Should some national political figure come along and deliver a compelling public message that we need to raise the gas tax to invest in cleaner, more efficient transportation, move us away from oil addiction, and keep our existing infrastructure from falling apart, who knows, maybe you could break the 50 percent threshold. Of course, seeing as how most Americans mistakenly already think the gas tax goes up regularly, and gas prices have fluctuated within a 24-cent range in just the last three months, you could also reach the conclusion espoused in this classic Infrastructurist post: Just raise the g-dd-mned gas tax already.

# No Link—Obama Won’t Push

**Normal means is Obama not spending political capital on the plan**

**Willen 2009**

Mark, Economist and Political Advisor, “Time to raise gas taxes? You Betcha!” (<http://m.kiplinger.com/article.php?url=%2Fcolumns%2Fwashington%2Farchives%2Ftime_to_raise_gas_taxes_you_be.html>)

The aim of a gas tax isn't just to bring in revenue, though we sure need that. It's also to influence driving habits. As Howard Gleckman points out in his taxvox blog, when gas hit $4 a gallon, it got drivers' attention. They cut back sharply, taking fewer trips and relying more on public transit when they could. They also stopped buying gas guzzlers and tried to dump those they had, although few could find buyers for them. Now that gas is cheap again, the trend has reversed, and we're headed back to the driving levels of a year ago. Tom Friedman, who favors a much bigger gas tax, reports that in December, more Americans bought trucks and SUVs than automobiles. I know a lot of people think the government has no business trying to shape driving habits. But let's face it. That's exactly the business the government is in -- and it's about to get far more deeply into it as it bails out U.S. automakers. It just makes no sense to force Detroit to make small, fuel efficient and hybrid cars if no one wants to buy them. That's throwing taxpayer money down the drain. And investing heavily in research into alternative energy, as President-elect Obama plans to do, makes no sense if we're not going to try to curb gasoline consumption. And yes, there's also the not-so-small fact that our national security is closely tied to our reliance on foreign sources of oil. The 10-cent increase proposed by the federal panel, the National Commission on Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing, is a really tiny step. But it's a start in the right direction. If history is a guide, it will be ignored. Obama is not likely to waste political capital on an unpopular proposal that will likely run into stiff Republican opposition. But what's political capital good for if it's not going to be used to make coherent policy. If we're not serious about using less oil, then we ought to drill everywhere we can for it. If we are serious, let's put together an energy policy that is consistent and makes some overall sense.

# Elections: Plan hurts Obama

**High gas prices are terrible for the incumbent**

Reader, 12 [Stephen Reader, 2/27/12, Transportation Nation, WordPress/CalPress, “Will High Gas Prices Hurt Obama’s Reelection Chances?” (http://transportationnation.org/2012/02/27/will-high-gas-prices-hurt-obamas-reelection-changes/)]

We’re not sure where the former Speaker is getting his numbers. The Daily Fuel Gauge Report from AAA shows the highest recorded average as $4.114/gallon, which was in the summer of 2008.The currentnationalaverage isalmost 50 cents less at$3.64/gallon**.** Still**,** such a high number is not good news for Obama. Whether or notrising gasprices are the President’s fault, incumbent partiestend tofarepoorlyin electionswhen consumers feel like they’re paying an arm and a legat the pump. But that doesn’t mean incumbent parties fare poorly because of high gas prices, per se. Over at the New York Times’ FiveThirtyEight blog, Nate Silver has found that **“**higher gas prices mean a poorer performance for the incumbent party,”but the argument that there’s a direct cause-effect relationship between the two was “fairly weak statistically.” Higher gas prices are important to the extent thatthey affectthings like G.D.P.,inflation and unemployment. But there isn’t evidence that they matter above and beyond that…if the economy is growing at 4 or 5 percent in 2012, unemployment has declined significantly, and inflation remains tame, gas prices are unlikely to have much effect on Mr. Obama’s prospects. Silver wrote these words about a year ago. Today, we know that the economy isn’t growing as much as 4 or 5 percent (at least not yet); while unemployment may be declining, most Americans probably wouldn’t call the changes “significant.” But Obama can take some comfort inthe fact that at leastthe picture doesn’t seem to be getting worse.The economy is still growing: Nate Silver points out that in 1980, when Jimmy Carter lost re-election, gas was at an inflation-adjusted $3.37/gallon and GDP was shrinking at a rate of 3.7 percent. In 2008, when John McCain failed to keep Republican control of the White House and gas was $3.81/gallon, GDP was shrinking at a rate of 2.3 percent.

Every time gas spikes the incumbent has lost—plan tanks Obama in November

Scherer 2012 (Rob, Staff writer for CS Monitor “High gas prices: How big a problem for Obama?” February 21st, 2012 (<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Elections/President/2012/0221/High-gas-prices-How-big-a-problem-for-Obama>)

When it comes to gas prices, President Obama is probably watching them rise with just as much consternation as people who are tanking up every day. The reason: The higher the price, the more unpopular a president, studies have found. In fact, the last five times gas prices have spiked, the incumbent party has lost the presidential election. RECOMMENDED: Keystone XL pipeline – 6 questions answered “If the rising price of gasoline persists, as some analysts think it will, it is bound to affect [Mr. Obama’s] popularity,” says Larry Sabato, a political scientist at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. The five elections where gas prices may have had an impact were in 1976, when Gerald Ford lost to Jimmy Carter; in 1980, when Mr. Carter lost to Ronald Reagan; in 1992, when George H.W. Bush lost to Bill Clinton; in 2000, when Al Gore lost to George W. Bush; and in 2008, when John McCain lost to Obama. On Tuesday, the national average price of gasoline was $3.57 a gallon, according to AAA’s Daily Fuel Gauge Report. That’s up 6 cents from a week ago and 19 cents from a month ago. Also on Tuesday, the price of oil in the United States rose by about $2.50 a barrel, to some $106 a barrel. Oil markets have become increasingly nervous about the possibility of an Israeli attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities. For every sustained rise of $1 in the price of a barrel of crude oil, the price of gas rises 2.4 cents a gallon at the pump. For Obama, the risk of rising gasoline prices is even more immediate than Election Day. If the costs continue to rise, they could adversely affect the economy. “The way it works is when we hit $4 a gallon, it starts to have an impact on consumer behavior. It’s like a psychological trigger, an inflection point,” says Dennis Jacobe, chief economist at Gallup in Washington. “If the price goes past $4 a gallon, that will slow the economy.” A slowing economy could be a big detriment for Obama, Mr. Sabato says. “The economic recovery is fragile enough,” he says. “There has been nothing but bad times in his administration. A slowdown reduces the incentive to reelect him.”