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Advocates of 4-laning U.S. 30 back gas-tax hike

City Manager Gerald Clausen attends 30 session in Marshalltown

By JAMES HEGGEN
Daily Times Herald

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MARSHALLTOWN — The cost of maintaining and improving roads in the state is rising and so is anti-tax sentiment, observed advocates of four-laning U.S. Highway 30.

The U.S. Highway 30 Coalition — which includes an active contingent from Carroll County and elsewhere in western Iowa — met Friday morning at the Marshalltown Chamber of Commerce and discussed a governor’s advisory panel plan for an 8 cent to 10-cent state gas tax increase.

The gas-tax increase is a priority for the U.S. Highway 30 Coalition, which wants to see state transportation funding increased so four-laning projects on the federal route are accelerated.

Currently Iowans pay 22 cents a gallon that goes to the state. The rate has not been increased since 1989.

Coalition members gave reports regarding the different public input meetings they had attended of the Governor’s Transportation 2020 Citizens Advisory Commission that recommended the gas-tax increase and new-vehicle-registration fees to raise an estimated \$280 million annually for road and bridge work.

City Manager Gerald Clausen said he attended the Storm Lake input meeting, and for the most part, the feedback was favorable to an increase, or at least recognized the need for a new revenue stream.

“I would say there was a lot of support for it,” Clausen said.

Pam Wood, Toledo mayor, said most of the people at an input session she attended were in favor of a gas tax because of their belief that roads in Iowa are in need of repair.

“We have no options anymore,” she said, noting that a gas tax hike is the only practical way to raise money for road work

Dave Rose, an Iowa Department of Transportation commissioner, also said the department, which has made numerous cuts, is expecting a decrease in the amount of federal aid.

Tom Determann, a member of the Clinton Regional Development Corporation, said the majority of residents at public-input sessions were in favor of the gas-tax increase “as long as it goes into the road.”

However, Highway 30 advocates raised concern about the prevailing anti-tax sentiment in the state and the need to get the word out about why a gas-tax is needed.

Edith Pfeffer of Clinton, president of the coalition, raised specific concerns about the Tea Party’s movement to fight the proposal.

“I have very serious concerns about this,” she said.

Certain Tea Party elements have publicly recognized the need for funding for the Department of Transportation but think the state should go about it without increasing taxes. Tea Party activists are in the process of pressing legislators to pledge to vote against the tax increase.

“This appears to be a political hot potato,” Clausen said.

Pfeffer also talked about what she said was unfair media coverage of the issue in the Quad Cities.

“I think the media right now is out to find the naysayer,” she said.



Gerald Clausen

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Determann said it is important for people to realize the tax has not been raised since 1989. Members also discussed giving numbers of the cost of the increase in comparison to the cost of car repairs caused by poor roads.

The coalition decided to draft a press release outlining the reasons for the need in the increase, distribute it to its members and local newspapers.

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