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Branstad commission calls for up to 10 cent hike in gas tax

by O. KAY HENDERSON on OCTOBER 12, 2011
in LEGISLATURE, POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

A commission appointed by the governor is recommending an increase in the state's gas tax of between eight- and 10-cents per gallon.



gas pump labels

A ten-cent hike in the gas tax would raise an additional \$230 million. Recently-retired Iowa Department of Transportation director Nancy Richardson says the money is badly needed to make critical repairs to Iowa's roads and bridges.

Richardson, who led the 16-member citizen advisory committee, says they received overwhelmingly positive comments about the plan during seven public meetings across the state.

"It was interesting being somebody who's been in this game a long time to have 85 percent of the people say you need more money and then having the vast majority of them, over two-thirds say fuel tax," Richardson says. "So fuel tax was overwhelming method that the citizens suggested and support."

Committee member Jim Kersten, a former state senator from Fort Dodge, says the public hearings turned up just one complaint. The rest of those who turned out support the gas tax hike.

"We had lowans that are involved in economic development, local government, business come out and say, 'You know what? We are willing to pay a user fee so we can improve our roads and get our good transported across the country,'" Kersten says.

The commission will also recommend a small increase on the tax lowans pay when purchasing a new or used vehicle. That would raise an additional \$50 million dollars for road repairs. The group will vote on these proposals a second time later this month before releasing a full report in November.

"No one likes to raise our taxes, you know, I don't at all," Kersten says. "But when it comes to basic infrastructure investment, we have not raised this tax since 1989 and our road system shows it, so I'm hoping through the educational process, with the report that comes out, hopefully we can get some support built and get this approved."

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Kersten, a former aide to Governor Terry Branstad, is president of "Golden Dome Strategies," a political consulting firm. The founder of the Iowa Tea Party, meanwhile, [has created a Facebook page opposing a gas tax hike](#).

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