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Tuesday's Our View: Repairing Iowa's crumbling infrastructure

OurPosition: Branstad at least half right on user fees

Published: Tuesday, November 1, 2011 11:06 AM CDT

Responding to a question after a taping of "Iowa Press" last week, Gov. Terry Branstad declined to endorse a proposed increase in the state's gas tax, indicating instead that user fees also should apply to vehicles less reliant on gasoline.

To his credit, the governor recognized the gradual transformation to more fuel-efficient vehicles and to vehicles powered by fuel sources other than traditional fossil fuels – along with the need for those vehicles to pay their fair share of road costs.

"Vehicles are changing dramatically. We're going to more fuel-efficient vehicles. We're going to hybrid vehicles, electric vehicles. We are seeing trucks now that are going to natural gas," Branstad said. "We need to come up with a mechanism to try to deal with those changes. I don't think that there's any particular panacea to how we address it."

In a comment that should have come as no surprise in these tough economic times, he said he opposed borrowing money to raise the \$215 million a year that the Iowa Department of Transportation says the state needs to meet critical roadway needs. Unfortunately, Branstad stopped short providing specifics about the amount of the proposed new fee that he advocates to help meet those needs.

Referring to the \$215 million annual shortfall – a number that is certain to grow if not addressed – he said the work needs to be done "on a pay-as-you-go basis, and it needs to be paid for by the users," adding, "I think we need to look at all kinds of different approaches ... and we need to come up with an equitable system for the future. It may be something that has to be phased in over time, but I think we need to respect and recognize that the whole transportation scene is changing."

The governor's Transportation 2020 Citizen Advisory Commission, an 18-member panel assigned by Branstad to assist the Iowa DOT in reviewing the funding for Iowa's roads and bridges, this week proposed increasing the state's gas tax by 8 to 10 cents a gallon. Iowa charges a tax of 21 cents a gallon on gasoline, 22.5 cents on diesel and 19 cents on ethanol-blended gasoline.

The Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, a statewide rural advocacy group, applauded the recommendation. The lobbying group noted that rural roads make up nearly 90,000 miles of the state's 114,000-mile road system.

"We believe that an increase in the fuel tax is the fairest way to fund those repairs, because it charges people who actually use the roads whether they live in Iowa or are from out of state," said Farm Bureau President Craig Lang.

But Branstad wasn't as quick to lend his support.

"I don't know that I'm going to endorse it," Branstad said of the proposal, which goes before the Iowa DOT on Nov. 8 and then to the Legislature by the end of the year.

While it makes sense to incorporate non-traditional user fees in helping fund Iowa's infrastructure needs, an increase in the state's gas tax will also be required. Delaying the inevitable will only compound the state's needs – and the costs to users.

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Reader Comments

The following are comments from the readers. In no way do they represent the view of southwestiowanews.com.

19576464 wrote on Nov 2, 2011 2:11 PM:

" If you drive a car ,truck or ride a buss take a cab even ride a bicycle you are using the roads and interstate system. With the advancement of different fuel supplies and types I can see a wheel tax coming down from the pike. "

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Evidence8 wrote on Nov 3, 2011 9:18 PM:

" Give this one a listen, if you think this a bad deal, . . . we ain't seen nothin' yet -- this guy has some really scary stuff, that makes a lot of sense,

and he has backed it up with quite a track record of knowing the facts, and where the markets and economies are headed:

<http://www.stansberryresearch.com/pro/1108PSINEWVD/LPSIMB08/PR>

If you watched the whole thing, tell me how we are going to pay for any of this government out of control crap that has been going on for the past twenty-five or fifty years? "

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FuriousPace wrote on Nov 6, 2011 7:40 PM:

" Evidence8, I try to view your posts as being from a somewhat rational conservative, but when you post links to videos made by crooks, I have to assume that you are not that rational. I watched the video with a critical eye and there are so many holes in his story, but I could see how someone less stable could be influenced. What references does Stansberry provide for his so called successful predictions in the past? Why doesn't Stansberry suggest spending cuts? Why doesn't Stansberry provide an example of what currency the world would move to after the dollar? How about the Euro since it is so stable, funny, or how about the Yuan, which is artificially kept low by the Chinese government?

One of the biggest lies he tells is that the government just prints money to pay its bills. It is true that the government prints money, but only after selling US treasuries. There is a debt tied to printing the money, the government isn't just making new money out of thin air. There are so many more issues but I don't have the time to explain them all. All I can tell you is that Stansberry is a fraud that knows little about finance and I feel bad for you if you gave him money. "

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Evidence8 wrote on Nov 7, 2011 11:56 AM:

" So, IN YOUR OPINION, Mr. Stansberry has never been correct on any of his predictions -- hmmm . . . -- That means my bank accounts are lying to me. Thanks! I'll run out and try to make a withdrawal, right away!

As I said, you need to watch the WHOLE THING, before you get an understanding that what this man is saying is of certain value, and is likely to come to fruition, in the very near future. Pooh-Pooh it all you want.

Only you, and people like you -- who refuse to pay attention, will suffer the consequences, once the blocks begin to tumble. Either argue the facts he presents, or bow out -- offering your opinion that he's a "crook" has little value, unless you can offer proof that he's done something to make him a "crook." I could say that "you have so much body odor that a person can't stand to be around you," but unless it were true, or I could offer some credibility with someone else's statement, backed up with factual data, it will always just remain something you can legitimately call "just his opinion."

Thanks for playing, and I'm so sorry to have scarred you so deeply! "

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CloneZone wrote on Nov 8, 2011 11:50 AM:

" Aside from the fact that the man was convicted of securities fraud, here are some examples of where the man is flat out wrong:

<http://investmentwatchblog.com/debunking-myths-of-us-collapse/> "

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FuriousPace wrote on Nov 8, 2011 4:39 PM:

" August 10, 2007, Baltimore U.S. District Judge Marvin Garbis comes to the following conclusion,

"Stansberry's conduct undoubtedly involved deliberate fraud, making statements [about a stock] that he knew to be false; Pirate acted in reckless disregard for regulations when it published Stansberry's unbelievable claims without a shred of confirmation," Garbis wrote in a 49-page ruling issued last week.

"The violation plainly involved the risk of substantial loss to those who bought the Special Report and relied upon Stansberry's false statements in their stock purchase decisions."

According to the ruling, Stansberry sent a mass e-mail in 2002 offering to sell the Special Report, which claimed to have inside information about USEC dealings. The solicitation said investors could double their money if they bought and sold when told.

The information turned out to be wrong, and in April 2003, the SEC filed a lawsuit charging the defendants with securities fraud.

According to last week's ruling, Pirate must pay \$801,600 in restitution, along with interest of \$248,496, while Stansberry has to pay \$200,400 in restitution and \$62,124 in interest. Each party has also been assessed a penalty payment of \$120,000.

Like I said Evidence 8, quit posting links to videos made by crooks. "

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