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Cedar Rapids Drivers Don't Appreciate Committee's Gas Tax Hike Proposal

October 13, 2011, 5:10 pm

By Dave Franzman/SourceMedia Group News

CEDAR RAPIDS- A governor-appointed committee recommended the first increase in state gasoline since 1989 on Wednesday. But that proposal got an expected "thumbs down" from Cedar Rapids drivers just a day later.

Iowa currently collects 22 cents from every gallon of gas sold in the state. That's one of the lower tax rates among Midwestern states. Of the states that border Iowa, only Missouri is lower at 17 cents a gallon. The proposal issued by the Governor's Transportation 2020 Citizens Advisory Committee on Wednesday would boost that another eight to ten cents a gallon.

Gas prices in Cedar Rapids jumped 10 to 13 cents a gallon overnight. So it was probably not the best time for supporters of an increase to ask if drivers would mind the state tacking on more to pay for road repair.

One driver, Allyn Hansen, said "I don't think they (drivers) will swallow it at all. Gas prices were just starting to come down before now." Another driver who didn't want to give her name remarked "gas is high enough the way it is with the economy the way it is. It's hard to pay for your bills."

Members of the Citizens Committee expected comments like that in reaction of the proposal. But Allan Thoms of Cedar Rapids, one of the heads of the committee, said members looking at the constantly increasing prices of road construction and concluded there was no other option.

"All of that has gone in to drive the expenses up," Thoms said adding "revenues are staying pretty flat and we can't sustain that any longer—the cities, counties and the state all feel that impact."

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Thoms said the gas tax in Iowa is really a “user fee” with those who use the roads paying for the upkeep with every gallon.

The recommendations also include upping the vehicle registration fee on sales from five to six percent. Altogether, the committees ideas could generate up to an additional \$280-million dollars a year for the state road use fund.

It's up to the governor and state lawmakers to decide whether or not to pass such an increase. And state politicians are not ready to commit to anything so controversial this early in the process.



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