



Gas tax increases are not a panacea...

Posted by [Prof. Goose](#) on October 30, 2005 - 1:11pm

Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

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In our discussions of raising gas taxes for green purposes (demand destruction and R&D&I for other energy sources, namely, but there are other potential green policy outputs that have been discussed), people initially love the idea.

However, the usual (and thusly validated below in a reader's question about a WA gas tax initiative) retort is that government will just use the increased revenues for purposes counter to the green agenda.

Reader Derek D. writes to the TOD mailbox:

I was wondering if you would consider a post to discuss the pros and cons of a gas tax initiative on the Washington state ballot, to be decided this coming Election Day.

Initiative 912 is a citizen initiative that would repeal a 9.5 cent gas tax approved by the state Legislature. The tax is to be introduced in phases, with 3 cents having been collected since July 1; the remainder of the increase is to be phased in through 2008.

At first glance this would be a no-brainer: of course, gasoline should be more expensive. However, the catch is that all the money raised funds transportation projects. As we all know in America, this means roads. The money would primarily be used to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct (an elevated 3-lane freeway right on the Seattle waterfront, that has always been an eyesore but is now a disaster requiring only the next moderate earthquake), the State Route 520 floating bridge (a four-lane freeway floating on Lake Washington that connects Seattle and Bellevue/Redmond that is hopelessly jammed with traffic and also on its last legs), and, right by my house, the perpetually snarled and unsafe interchange where one four-lane freeway (State Route 167) meets another four-lane freeway (I-405). Some of the money going to the reconstruction of I-405 is for "bus rapid transit", which attempts to mimic light rail along most of the freeway's length, and there are bits here and there also devoted to buses and light rail. But as you would expect, these are a tiny percentage of the total monies.

My initial inclination is to vote for the initiative and repeal the gas tax, as even though it raises the cost of gas, just about all the money goes to fund roads. But would raising the price of gas 9.5 cents be enough to compensate? I'd like to see what other readers have to say.



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