

Fuel Taxes

The Alabama Forestry Association acknowledges the need to evaluate Alabama's road and bridge infrastructure issues. Forestry relies on a suitable transportation network and understands the costs associated with an inadequate delivery system. AFA appreciates being included in the discussion regarding the Legislature's consideration of increasing fuel taxes to spur road and bridge construction. However, the Association will continue to oppose new fuel tax revenues until the following systemic changes are included with the proposed fuel tax increase:

1. The Legislature must *assert its constitutional authority* to appropriate fuel tax revenues for Executive Branch spending.
 - a. Separate Transportation Appropriation Bill
 - i. Standing committees should be formed to appropriate funds from the road and bridge fund.
 1. Committee makeup should include a balance between members from rural and urban districts as well as a requirement for geographic diversity.
 - ii. There should be no pre-determined formula for revenue distribution of both current and proposed fuel taxes in order to provide flexibility as priorities change from year to year.
 - iii. There should be a priority of existing bridge repair.
2. The Legislature must be *strategic* in addressing road and bridge planning.
 - a. A 10-year building plan should be published to include state, county and municipal projects.
 - b. No project should be started unless full funding is available for completion.
 - c. Public/Private partnerships should be given priority for all large new projects.
3. The Legislature must be *efficient and fiscally responsible* in allocating funds for road and bridge spending.
 - a. Fuel tax revenues should not be used for bond issues.
 - b. Bureaucracy must be reduced to free up more funds for construction
 - c. Local governments, where appropriate, should have the flexibility and authority to design and construct projects without state oversight and the ensuing added cost.
 - d. Where use of federal funds requires state oversight of local projects, the state should not impose any requirements different from or in addition to federal requirements that would increase overall project costs.
4. The Legislature must be *transparent* in setting forth a plan for road and bridge spending.
 - a. Appropriating legislation should include all projects being funded.
 - b. The Legislature should appropriate all federal funds.
 - c. The Legislature and Executive Branch should encourage the U.S. Congress to;
 - i. Block grant federal highway funds to the state without any regulatory burdens or any other requirements attached.
 - ii. Allow the State to set its own regulations for federal highways and interstates, including weight limits.

