SC Senator plans effort to block gas tax hike bill from passing

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By Ashleigh Holland, State Reporter

COLUMBIA, SC (WIS) - The Senate will soon debate the bill that proposes raising South Carolina's gas tax by 12 cents-per-gallon over six years to pay for road repairs.

Senator Tom Davis (R- Beaufort) has filibustered in years past against raising the tax, and all but plainly said he would do so again at a rally on Tuesday.

Both sides of the tax debate spoke out on Tuesday. Business leaders and chambers of commerce gathered to urge lawmakers to pass H. 3516, the gas tax hike bill.

"That's the way that you fix the roads where the people actually using the roads actually pay the majority of that effort to fix those roads," South Carolina Chamber of Commerce President Ted Pitts said.

The group cites a recent TRIP report. The national road research group finds most road fatalities in the state happen on rural highways. Business leaders representing agribusiness and farmers spoke to this.

"They utilize the rural roads, and so often, we're hearing stories of these individuals having to travel significant distances out of the way to deliver products because they can't cross a bridge because it's unsafe," Palmetto Agribusiness Council President Ronnie Summers said.

Those opposing the bill aren't convinced. They want reform at the Department of Transportation (SCDOT). The Americans For Prosperity stood with taxpayers and some lawmakers in opposition to the gas tax bill.

"[One]: Make the Department of Transportation a pure cabinet agency, and two: hand off your wallet," Lt. Gov. Kevin Bryant said.

"There's just no confidence in the SCDOT. None," Upstate resident Mark Powell said.

"I will go ahead and educate the Senate once again this year, for as long as it takes, until they realize that until money's being spent properly up here and still their dollars are being spent based on the statewide assessment of needs rather than parochialism, that no new gas taxes will pass," Sen. Davis said.