



TOP 50 TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS IN ALABAMA

GAS, FUEL TAXES CALLED THE CURE

MARTY RONEY
MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER

The Top 50 transportation projects in Alabama would cost \$4.6 billion to address.

The “deteriorated and congested conditions,” threaten Alabama’s economic growth and development, according to a report released Thursday by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation research organization.

And the majority of revenue to pay the bills would come from proposed gasoline and fuel tax increases, said Rep. Mac McCutcheon, R-Huntsville, who chairs the Legislature’s Joint Transportation Committee.

“The time is now, we don’t have the option of doing nothing,” he said.

“The committee has looked at transportation needs across the state in five regional meetings.

“We have to make sure the people of Alabama know the need is there. Now is the time, let’s step up and address this issue.”

McCutcheon declined to give a range of proposed fuel and gas tax increases, saying work still needs to be done to come up with “fair” amounts. Currently the state levies a gas tax and two excise taxes on gasoline, which add up to 16 cents a gallon, according to “A Legislator’s Guide to Alabama Taxes” published by the state. The amount is set to go up to 18 cents on Oct. 1, due to the gasoline inspection fee moving over.

The gasoline tax last went up in 1955 to seven cents a gallon. A four-cent per gallon excise tax went into effect in 1980 and the other five-cent per gallon excise tax was created in 1992.

Of the Top 20 projects on the TRIP list, two in the River Region. Coming in at No.9 is the widening of Highway 14 from the end of its four lane section in Millbrook to Highway 143 in Elmore. The report sets the cost at \$3.69 million. At No. 12 is a “freeway” bypass around Montgomery, coming in at a cost of \$91.16 million.

For Paula Varner, of Millbrook, it all comes down to economics. She was fueling her Hyundai Elantra at the Entec Station in Millbrook on Thursday afternoon.

“No, no, no, no,” she said when asked is she supported raising gas and fuel taxes. “Gas prices have just gotten down to where they’re not killing the folks who work for a living, and now they want to raise taxes.

“Politicians always have their hands out.”

Melvin Little has a different view.

“I use the roads, I don’t mind helping to pay for needed road work,” said the Prattville resident, who drives a Ford F-250 pickup. “But any increase, I want it to go to actually working on the road, not jobs for bureaucrats in some office or buying trucks or equipment for the state highway department.”

FRONT PAGE

HUBBARD PROSECUTORS: COLEMAN AN INFORMANT METRO, 4A



USA TODAY AMAZING NEW DISCOVERY SHOWS EINSTEIN WAS RIGHT, AGAIN. PAGE 1B

2-bin recycling may be coming

City works to take over recycling center that closed last fall, looks at new company to take over the process. **BRAD HARPER** MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER. **Video with Mayor Todd Strange on what the city plans to do after taking over a \$23M recycling center.** www.montgomeryadvertiser.com

City wants conversion to charter schools

Other steps also sought as fix for failing schools. **BRAD HARPER** MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER. **Area leaders pushed Thursday for a switch to charter schools, a leader has for years to attempt it in Elmore and other changes aimed at turning a failing lot.** **Strongly in the state of the city in 2016.** **Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange said he would like to see that public education organization suggest a switch to charter schools.** **The Legislature requires Wednesday that the number of local schools falling in the Alabama's accountability Act standards study dropped this year.** **Strange said converting to charter schools could help improve the picture.** **Charter schools are public schools run by private entities that set their own rules and design programs for their students. They're subject to contracts with strict goals and requirements.** **Bill signed by Gov. Robert Bentley last year allows for an unlimited number of schools to be converted to charter schools, as authorized by local voters. The law also allows for the creation of new charter schools, and the schools cannot have any special-ed students.** **See Schools, Page 5A**



GAS, FUEL TAXES CALLED THE CURE

D.C.-based research group says addressing deteriorated, congested conditions would cost \$4.6 billion **MARTY RONEY** MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER. **The 50 transportation projects in Alabama would cost \$4.6 billion to address.** **The “deteriorated and congested conditions” threaten Alabama’s economic growth and development, according to a report released Thursday by TRIP in Washington, D.C.-based national transportation research organization.** **And the majority of revenue to pay the bills would come from proposed increases in gasoline and fuel taxes, said Rep. Mac McCutcheon, R-Huntsville, who chairs the Legislature’s Joint Transportation Committee.** **“The time is now, we don’t have the option of doing nothing,” he said.** **“The committee has looked at transportation needs across the state in five regional meetings.** **Now is the time, let’s step up and address this issue.”** **McCutcheon declined to give a range of proposed fuel and gas tax increases, saying work still needs to be done to come up with “fair” amounts.** **Currently the state levies a gas tax and two excise taxes on gasoline, which add up to 16 cents a gallon, according to “A Legislator’s Guide to Alabama Taxes” published by the state.** **The amount is set to go up to 18 cents on Oct. 1, due to the gasoline inspection fee moving over.** **See Roads, Page 13A**

Any increase in taxes should be considered an investment, officials say.

“We cannot ignore the fact that economic development and infrastructure are one in the same,” said William Canary, president and CEO of the Business Council of Alabama. “The TRIP report highlights the infrastructure needs that our Legislature must address. From our highways and bridges to our ports and waterways as well as our rail and intermodal facilities, these networks are Alabama’s arteries for commerce.”