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## Gas tax bill moves on to State Senate

By: [Taylor Winkel](#)



MISSOULA, Mont. - A bill to raise Montana gas taxes by 8 cents made its way over to the State Senate Wednesday.

State Rep. Frank Garner (R-Kalispell) sponsored House Bill 473. Garner says it could be an answer to the state's issue with funding infrastructure.

The National Transportation Research Group TRIP estimates Montana's poor roadways cost drivers \$800 million every year.

"I've nearly blown out a tire on these roads about every day," Dottie Rumbaugh, a Missoula resident, told NBC

Montana.

At 27 cents a gallon right now Montana ranks 16th in the nation for state gas taxes according to the Energy Information Agency. If you tack on another 8 cents and other states don't change their gas tax Montana could shoot up to third place.

"That wouldn't be ideal, but at the same time it's like a supply and demand thing; I have to get where I'm going," Rumbaugh said.

"I can appreciate those that drive more might have a little more trouble with that," Missoula resident Craig Crawford explained to NBC Montana as he filled up his SUV.

Garner says Montanans who drive on average 15,000 miles a year will pay about \$5 more at the pump every month if the tax goes through.

AAA reports the average annual cost for vehicle repairs due to poor roads is about \$380.

"To try and keep the roads safe and drivable it's probably not a bad idea to have some more gas tax, if that's the only source of revenue they can come up with," said Crawford.

Montana is the fourth largest state in the U.S. behind Alaska, Texas and California, but when it comes to population Montana sits at 44th place with a little more than 1 million residents, which makes figuring out the finances behind infrastructure difficult for lawmakers.

If the gas tax goes through, the state could see upwards of \$280 million from the extra revenue collected at the pumps.

This is how it would work: Garner says the 8-cent tax increase will bring in about \$60 million a year and go into three separate pots of money. The first pot will get \$2.5 million of the gas tax revenue, which would fund Montana Highway Patrol. About \$23 million will go directly to a pot for cities and counties. For every \$1 a city or county puts up they can pull \$20 from the money collected by the gas tax, up to a certain amount, depending on their size. In the third pot would be the remaining \$35 million from the gas tax. For every \$1 the third pot sees the federal government will match it with \$7, up to \$220 million.

Lawmakers estimate 25 to 40 percent of the tax to be paid by those traveling to Montana from out-of-state.