

Groups rally in last push efforts for, against proposed gas tax hike

By Ashleigh Holland, State Reporter | Tuesday, March 21st 2017



COLUMBIA, SC (WIS) - Eyes monitoring the chance for a higher gas tax in South Carolina turn to the Senate this week as senators will soon debate bill H. 3516 -- the bill that passed the House by an overwhelming majority of 97 to 18 that would raise the gas tax by 2 cents per gallon over 5 years.

However, senators met in subcommittee to amend the bill and add on 2 cents more for an additional year;

adding to a 12 cents per gallon increase by increments of two pennies over 6 years.

Last Tuesday, the Senate Finance Committee voted this forward to the full Senate floor in a 14 to 8 vote.

On Tuesday morning, groups will meet to make arguments on improving roads and against a higher gas tax.

Chambers of Commerce and business leaders gathered in the State House to review a recent study done by TRIP, a research group that examines road and bridge conditions, congestion, and safety on state roads.

[The TRIP study finds that South Carolinians pay an additional \\$5.4 billion in extra vehicle costs each year](#) because of traffic crashes and congestion-related delays.

"I was especially impressed with the TRIP report talking about rural areas which I serve, with the agribusiness side," Ronnie Summers with the Palmetto Agribusiness Council said. "Again, the rural roads and bridges they're in a very significant state of need for repair and we need to see that happen sooner than later."

The SC Alliance to Fix Our Roads supports the Tuesday morning meeting. The group has long been in support of repairing crumbling roads and has advocated for the gas tax bill as a means of funding fixes.

Later in the day, Americans for Prosperity rallied against the tax hike alongside Sen. Tom Davis (R-Beaufort). The senator has long been in favor of reforming the Department of Transportation instead of raising taxes. The AFP aims to send that message to lawmakers.

The Senate meets at 2 p.m. on Tuesday.