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# VMT fee urged by California, Oregon and Washington state transportation heads

Posted Mon, 2009-02-23 21:40

**ROAD USE CHARGE | VMT FEE**

Chairs of the transportation commissions of California, Oregon and Washington have cosigned letters to US legislators urging that federal law encourage states to develop alternative roads funding such as vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fees.

"We ask Congress to confirm the feasibility of a VMT-based fee system by mandating the federal government to fully explore a transition from the gas tax to a funding system tied more directly to road use and impact on the road system," they write.



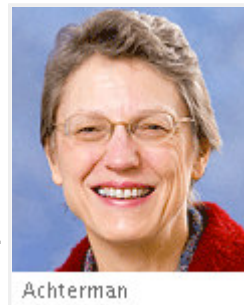
"To this end Congress should set an aggressive timetable to complete development of a new VMT-based fee system through well funded research and development efforts to identify the best option for system design and technology."

The three authors are John Chalker, chair, California Transportation Commission, Gail Achterman, chair Oregon Transportation Commission, and Dan O'Neal, chair Washington State Transportation Commission. They are the top policy makers on transportation in the three states, and collaborate as the West Coast Transportation Commission.

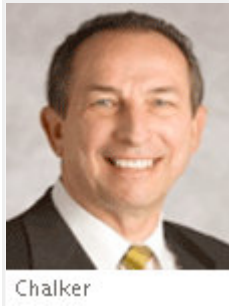
A road use charge or vehicle-mile fee is expected to be the centerpiece of recommendations of a bipartisan transportation finance commission due to release their report this Thursday.

US secretary of transportation Ray LaHood said last week he favors such VMT fees as a substitute for the gasoline tax which is yielding insufficient to fund roads. However the day after LaHood spoke in favor of the road use charge Robert Gibbs, White House press secretary said that a VMT "is not and will not be the policy of the Obama administration."

Obama has made no statement himself on the matter and it was rather surprising that his spokesman would attack the VMT concept so vehemently when he campaigned on the theme of new ideas, change and smart government.



<http://www.tollroadsnews.com/node/4017>



Chalker

The three western state government officials in their letter to US legislators note that fluctuating fuel prices and reduced fuel consumption make fuel taxes an unreliable and unsuitable funding source. Their letter outlines the results of the Oregon pilot program in which nearly 300 vehicles driven by volunteer citizens were equipped with GPS based units and charged for miles travelled.

"This test demonstrated the mileage fee raises substantial revenue in a way that is relatively simple to pay, collect and administer - without revenue erosion for fuel efficiency."

A similar project in the Puget Sound area but deducting fees from prepaid accounts showed that such a fee "directly impacts travel decisions and reduces congestion, while raising transportation revenue" the letter says.

They say a key conclusion from these two studies is that a VMT fee serves to advance several priorities simultaneously: reducing congestion, reducing exhaust emissions, increasing use of alternate modes, and identifying a sustainable, longterm funding methodology.



The three states envisage a multi-state effort in the I-5 corridor to take the concept further towards implementation.

A copy of the letter is available here:

<http://www.tollroadsnews.com/sites/default/files/WestOnVMT.pdf>

TOLLROADSnews 2009-02-23

Attachment	Size
<a href="#">WestOnVMT.pdf</a>	103.02 KB

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