A SAFER ROAD TO TOMORROW

October 2009 Newsletter

SAFETEA-LU Expiring and The Search for Funding

On September 30, the current SAFETEA-LU authorization expired. SAFETEA-LU provides money for the Highway Trust Fund, which is essentially at a zero balance right now. In order to keep the trust fund solvent, new revenue is needed. Establishing a Reauthorization effort has been more difficult than in the past because of how low the Highway Trust Fund has fallen. In recent months, transfers from the General Fund have been necessary to keep the fund afloat.

As of now two options are on the table, extend the current authorization for another 18 months into March 2011, or push ahead with an aggressive Reauthorization. Backed by the Obama Administration and the U.S. Senate, if an extension passed it would keep state funding levels the same for the next 18 months. Additional transfers from the General Fund would be needed as well. In the House, Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, James Oberstar, has been adamant about the need for a full reauthorization. However, in September, Chairman Oberstar proposed a three month extension in order to allow more time for negotiations over his reauthorization bill.

The Highway Trust Fund has fallen so low because the revenue streams flowing into the fund have not been adjusted in 15 years. During the same time, demands on highways and public transit have grown dramatically. The last reauthorization included annual investment levels well above incoming trust fund revenues. This led the trust fund's existing cash balance to be structurally liquidated. The next authorization must find new sources of revenue, or rely on existing ones. Below is a list of possible revenue sources, and their potential 6-year revenue.

• 10 cents per gallon motor fuels tax increase	$111 billion
• $5 per barrel tax on oil	$195 billion
• Index current motor fuels tax	$16.2 billion
• New freight user fee	$60 billion
• Bonding/Infrastructure bank	$50 billion
• Tolling (not federal revenue)	$15 billion
• Credit assistance (TIFIA Program)	$12 billion
• Double Heavy Vehicle Use Tax	$6 billion
• Eliminate motor fuel tax exemptions	$9 billion

New Hampshire received $146,151,389 in 2009 from the federal Highway Trust Fund. Our state is projected to receive only $69,434,591 in 2010 if no extension or new reauthroization is approved, a difference of $76,683,405. TRIP, a national transportation research group, has stated in its evaluation of New Hampshire that, "without a substantial boost in federal highway funding, New Hampshire will be unable to complete numerous projects to improve the condition and expand the capacity of roads, highways, and public transit. This will hamper the state's ability to improve mobility and enhance economic development opportunities in the state."

A SAFER ROAD TO TOMORROW
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Safer Road Partners

Associated General Contractors of NH
The Associated General Contractors is a non-profit trade organization of general contractors, subcontractors, and industry professionals dedicated to improving industry standards.

NH Good Roads Association
NH Good Roads Association is a non-profit trade organization established to encourage the development of a safe, efficient and environmentally sound highway transportation system.

Safety and Health Council of Northern New England
The Council's mission is to educate and promote safety & health policies, practices and procedures that prevent and mitigate human economic losses arising from unintended causes.

NH Association of Chiefs of Police
The Association secures a closer relationship among commanding officers all over the state, to encourage a cooperative relationship among all police officials.

NH Lodging & Restaurant Association
The Association is a non-partisan organization to promote, protect and educate the food service and lodging industries and to ensure positive business growth for our members.

Business & Industry Association
The Association is NH's leading business trade association. It advocates for business interests with state and federal legislators and regulators.

The Grades Are In

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) has launched a new website called Report Card for America's Infrastructure. This website highlights problem areas each state, and the nation as a whole faces regarding infrastructure.

The website gives America a "D" for an overall infrastructure grade. It is no secret that the United State's needs to fix its infrastructure. Many parts are falling into great disrepair, and there continues to be insufficient funds to fix the problems. The website aims to increase infrastructure awareness among the public. The website offers individual report cards for each state. According to New Hampshire's report card, the state's top three infrastructure concerns are, 1) Roads, 2) Bridges, and 3) Schools.

ASCE offers 5 solutions, which they term ambitious, to raise infrastructure grades. They are:

- Increase federal leadership in infrastructure
- Promote sustainability and resilience
- Develop federal, regional and state infrastructure plans
- Address life-cycle costs and ongoing maintenance
- Increase and improve infrastructure investment from all stakeholders

To read more about New Hampshire's report card or ASCE's solutions, visit www.infrastructurereportcard.org.

NH Becomes Focus of License Renewal Study

New Hampshire has one of the strictest license renewal programs in the United States for senior drivers. This has put the state in the center of a national study. The study will explore how states with stricter renewal laws crash rates compare with states that have few, or no, renewal laws. The findings will be used to develop "best practices" to reduce the amount of senior-related crashes.

The study, conducted by transportation safety research organization Dunlap and Associates, is for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Researchers from the Connecticut based firm will be travelling to New Hampshire in the near future to speak with senior drivers. New Hampshire is one of only two states that require mandatory road testing for senior drivers. The law requires that persons over the age of 75 prove their ability to adequately operate a vehicle. This usually means taking a road test. Illinois is the second, and it requires testing at age 75 as well. New Hampshire was chosen as the test state because its road test laws have been in place for decades.

Some lawmakers have argued that the road test law is unnecessary and discriminatory. They say that the age 75 was arbitrarily chosen, and that seniors only have a failure rate of 9.5%. The low percentage gives evidence to some that the road testing is unnecessary. Some feel that testing should be based on the functional and medical fitness of a driver, not their physical age. However, Richard Blomberg of Dunlap and Associates argues that it is necessary because it takes unfit drivers off the road. Without the testing, there would be no way to determine who is fit to drive a vehicle. The full study results should be available in about a year.

Buckle Up for Safety

Commercials with the slogan, "Click it or Ticket" resonate throughout the nation. New Hampshire is the only state in the country that does not have a seatbelt law. In New Hampshire belt usage is at 69% for all drivers and passengers in the state. Other states in the nation have employed primary or secondary seat belt laws to protect their citizens.

The United States began its campaign for seat belt usage sixteen years ago. In 2008, seat belt usage climbed to an all time high of 83%. This is 10% higher than the last study conducted seven years earlier. Seat belts have helped save 91,000 lives since 2002. thirty states have primary seat belt laws that allow police officers to stop motorists solely for nonuse of a safety belt.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has said that the "Click it or Ticket" campaign has raised seat belt usage quicker than any other campaign. The program began in 1993 in North Carolina as part of a 5-year public-private partnership. It was the first statewide belt use program in the nation, and it raised seat belt usage from 65% to 80% in its first year. By 2002, the program went national with 18 states employing the program. Just a year later, 43 states were participating.

Report Shows Deficient Roadways Cause More Accidents Than Alcohol

The Transportation Construction Coalition (TCC), in conjunction with the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), has released a report which shows the connection between inadequate roads and accidents. It states that more than half of all highway fatalities can be linked to the poor road conditions. This number is greater than the number of fatalities caused by drunk-driving, speeding, and not wearing safety belts. Each year, about 22,000 people die at a cost of $217 billion because of the deficient roads. The $217 billion can be translated into a taxpayer cost of $12 billion. The cost of the accidents is more than three times the amount of money the federal government is currently investing in roadway improvements.

In addition to highlighting the needs for infrastructure repair, the report also details several solutions. While several of the suggestions seem simple, the report also notes that significant road improvements are needed in most areas. This includes widening shoulders, replacing or widening narrow bridges, and clearing more space adjacent to roadways.

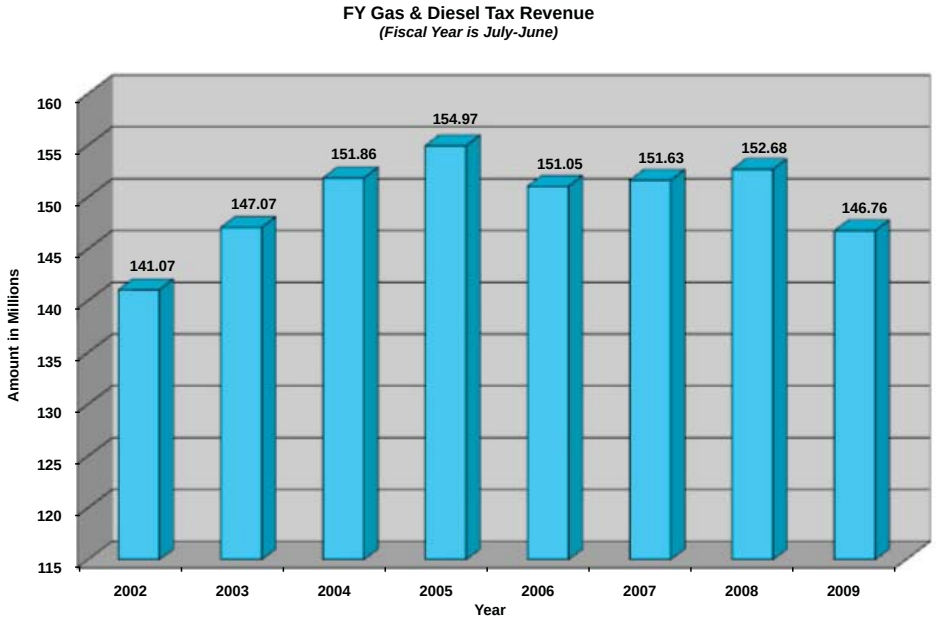
If you are interested in reading the full report, you can visit the Safer Road's website at www.saferoadsnh.com, and under "Other Media" located in the "Publications" page you will find the report.

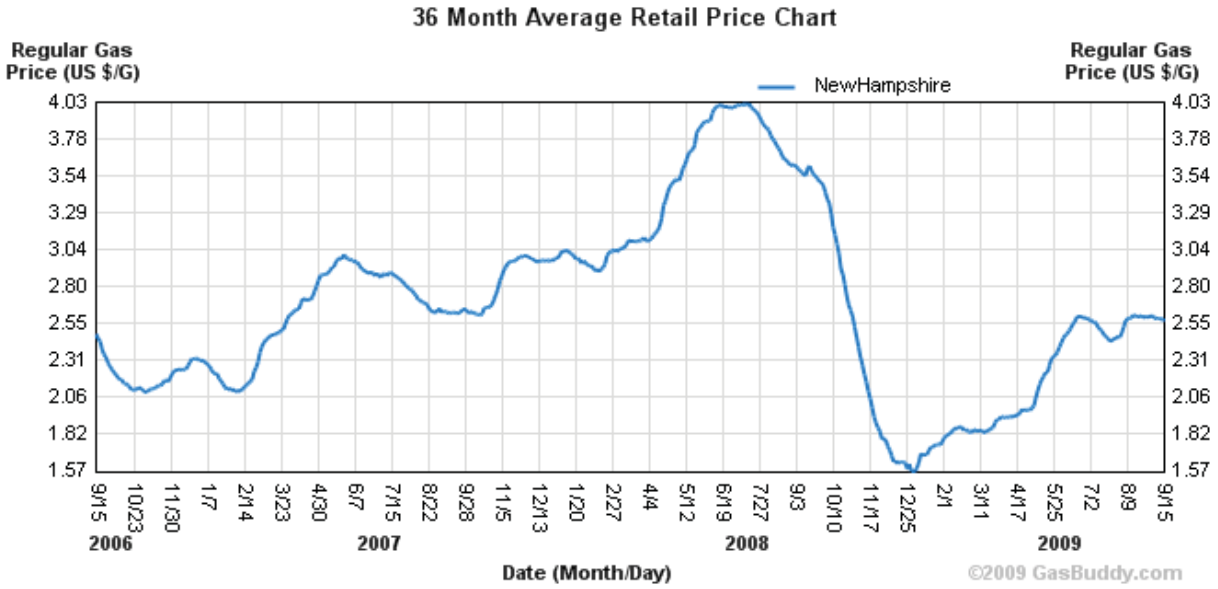
Making the Connection

The Relationship Between Gas Prices and Highway Fund Revenue from the Gas Tax

In 2008, New Hampshire, along with the rest of the world, experienced gas prices at a height never seen before. However, highway fund revenue earned from fuel consumption has continued to decline. The price of fuel is determined mainly by supply and demand, and Highway Fund revenue earned increases or decreases with how many gallons consumers buy each year. The charts below show the highway fund revenue earned (in New Hampshire) from the gas tax over the last seven years, and the gas prices NH saw over the past three years.

Looking at the charts, the price chart shows how high fuel prices climbed in 2008, and then fell dramatically at the start of 2009. If there were a close relationship between fuel prices and the gas tax, then when prices dropped, revenue should have risen, or stayed level with previous years in fiscal year 2009. It would have indicated that people were buying more fuel because of the lower prices. However, the opposite occurred, as prices dropped, revenue continued to decline. Comparing 2006 with 2009, the gas prices are relatively the same, however highway fund revenue earned is about $5 million less in 2009 than in 2006. This trend may be less about the price of fuel, but attributed to more fuel efficient cars, and the possibility that consumers are driving less. If the trend continues, revenue for 2010 may continue to decrease, leaving New Hampshire with even less money to fund infrastructure repairs.





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Do You Know the Rules of the Road?

The nation's drivers are becoming increasingly less knowledgeable about the rules of the road. GMAC Insurance has revealed the results from their 2009 National Drivers Test. The results show that roughly 41 million licensed American drivers would not pass a written drivers test if they were asked to take it today. This year's score is lower than last year's, which signifies that basic knowledge of the rules of the road is also decreasing.

Idaho and Wisconsin house the most knowledgeable drivers. New Hampshire, however, is included in the test's top 20 worst drivers. Ranking in at number 19, New Hampshire's results are as follows:

- 2009 Average Test Score: 75.9%
- 2008 Average Test Score: 77.9%
- 2007 Average Test Score: 76.1%

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