

ASSEMBLY BILL 1591: TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Assemblymember Jim Frazier

THE PROBLEM IN BRIEF:

California's transportation infrastructure is extremely underfunded, which has led to significant deferred maintenance and a lost opportunity on economic growth. The current resources are not sufficient to cover the most basic and crucial maintenance and repair of our core transportation infrastructure: state highways, local streets, roads, and bridges. Without increased funding today, the deferred maintenance will soon be too much for our state to catch up.

BACKGROUND:

2015 was supposed to be the year to fix transportation funding in the Capitol. The Governor declared a \$6 billion a year need for basic maintenance and repairs to state highways alone and challenged the Legislature to deliver a funding plan to meet that need. A special session was called, hearings were held, and proposals and counter-proposals were floated. Nonetheless, the call for more transportation funding went unanswered.

THE BILL:

AB 1591 answers the call for a long-term sustainable funding solution for transportation focused on relieving congestion, maintaining highways, and improving trade corridors. This bill provides nearly \$8 billion a year in additional transportation funding. It also provides clear direction as to how those funds will be used.

AB 1591 takes a broad portfolio approach to investing in our state's transportation infrastructure by:

- Increasing the excise tax on gasoline by 22.5 cents per gallon and indexing it against the Consumer Price Index every three years thereafter. Almost half of this amount (9.5 cents) will restore funding lost from declining tax revenues in just the last two years due to rate adjustments by the Board of Equalization.

Revenue raised from the gas tax increase (over \$3.3 billion annually) will be split 50/50 between the state and local transportation authorities for highway maintenance and rehabilitation, after setting a nominal portion aside to encourage state-local partnerships.

- Increasing the diesel fuel tax by 30 cents a gallon and indexing it, too. Revenue raised (\$840 million annually) will be directed right to where trucks need it most—the state's trade corridors.
- Increasing the vehicle registration fee by \$38 annually (just over 10 cents a day) and directing those funds (\$1.254 billion) to road maintenance and rehabilitation.

- Imposing an electric vehicle surcharge of \$165. Consideration will be given to delaying this fee until the second year of ownership and thereafter. Delaying this fee to the second year of ownership allows financial incentives offered at the purchase of such zero-emission vehicles to remain in full effect while ensuring they do their part to help pay for the system they travel on. The \$16 million raised will be directed to road maintenance and rehabilitation.
- Requiring repayment of outstanding transportation loans. Now that the General Fund is stable, it's time to pay these loans (\$879 million) back. Repayments will be sent directly to cities and counties to boost their road improvement efforts.
- Allocating cap and trade revenue auctions, as follows:
 - 20% (approximately \$400 million annually) for major freight corridors. Communities near our major freight corridors have borne the brunt of the nation's goods movement system. Improving congestion in these corridors will inherently improve air quality.
 - 10% (\$200 million) more for intercity rail and transit, for a total of 20% of the auction proceeds.
- Restoring the truck weight fees. Again, the General Fund is now stable. It's time for transportation dollars to go back to transportation. This restores \$1 billion to the State Highway Account where it belongs.

AB 1591 also includes greater oversight responsibilities for the California Transportation Commission over the state's roadway operation and rehabilitation efforts and imposes maintenance of effort requirements on cities and counties.

Finally, AB 1591 supports local communities and regional planning efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It provides the critical funding needed to implement sustainable communities' strategies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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