

## [Driving down the gas tax](#) [1]

Written by [Rachel Patterson](#) [2] | Wednesday 14 November 2007



The disaster of the Minneapolis bridge collapse this summer brought the usually mundane topic bridge safety and construction to the front of national discussion. As the National Center for Policy Analysis [reported in October](#) [3], the Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Jim Oberstar (D-Minn), has proposed a 5 cent/gallon increase on gas taxes in order to finance increased federal works projects on bridges. The NCPA rightly points out that if the committee were instead to cut out the \$24 billion in pork projects from the Highway Trust Fund budget, they could easily finance the increased projects Oberstar wants without the tax hike.

Alternatively, freeing up the 30 percent of the highways budget that goes to mass transit projects, rather than actual road works, would surely free up some of the money needed for safety improvements. Currently, only 60 percent of the Highway Trust Fund budget, funded by gas taxes, actually finances the building of bridges and highways. The rest are earmarked for pork or mass transit systems meant to alleviate busy roads.

A gasoline tax to finance the construction of highways makes sense ? it charges consumers for a service they require. A gasoline tax to fund public transit is an abuse of government power in which the authorities use their taxing power to punish actions they disapprove of, in this case driving a car, in order to finance activities they deem more suitable, like taking mass transit. If the government truly wants to fund more highway projects it should reallocate the money it already has, rather than demanding more from people it already overcharges for manipulative policies.

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