

Please Support SB 810

A Bill for Everyone Who Believes We Must Do Something to Address the Declining Revenues from the Gas Tax Resulting from More Efficient Vehicles

Legislators may have different opinions as to the wisdom of establishing vehicle miles traveled tax (VMT) today on select high-mileage vehicles in Oregon, but there's one thing almost everyone agrees on: The revenues required to keep up our roads and highway are declining because more fuel-efficient vehicles use less gas, and this is only going to get worse as vehicles become more efficient.

We cannot allow debates over the particulars or timing of an Oregon VMT to keep us from doing something to address this gathering challenge. Senate Bill 810 is that something we can do now, today, and its passage will allow Oregon to lead the nation on this in a special way.

SB 810 facilitates Oregon's participation in a voluntary, multi-state VMT pilot program organized through the National Conference of State Legislatures and possibly funded by the federal government. It will allow up to 5,000 Oregon vehicles to participate. As incoming president of NCSL, Senator Bruce Starr has been working with a Democratic Chair of the Minnesota Senate Transportation Committee to make this happen. Earlier this year he enlisted the support of national and global auto manufacturers for this effort. Later this summer there will be a national summit on the project at the NCSL convention in Atlanta. U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer recently introduced legislation to provide federal funding for this multi-state pilot project.

Senate Bill 810 will help these two Oregonians, a Republican and a Democrat, lead the way.

There is much to recommend a voluntary pilot project that might include up to 20 states.

- The pilot project will include urban and rural states from the East, West, North and South and examine different VMT systems.
- It will not be restricted to one kind of vehicle. Gas-guzzlers and fuel-sippers, hybrids and plug-in electric vehicles will be eligible to participate.
- SB 810 will result in studies with adequate scope and scale. We'll learn things about motorists and the VMT that wouldn't be possible in narrower studies.
- We'll see what works in urban-suburban areas and what works in rural areas.
- We'll learn about motorists' concerns about the VMT and what may be required to convince them we should move away from the gas tax.

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From the desk of Vicki Berger