

## **\$5.4 BILLION “TRANSPORTATION BILL” TAXES THE POOR AND PUNISHES RURAL COLORADO FAMILIES**

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Last week, the current Colorado Governor eagerly signed new transportation “sustainability” legislation into law. Transportation is the second largest household expense for families, seniors, young couples, the poor and disadvantaged. The Governor’s action represents a significant tax increase on already thin budgets. New “fees” created in the bill (SB21-260) will have a severe negative impact on the quality of life and finances of all Coloradans. It is especially punishing for those who struggle to make ends meet every month. Increased transportation costs punish families living in rural areas and the law shows, once again, how little the Governor cares about large portions of Colorado.

Beginning in 2022, Colorado residents will pay additional “fees” when they purchase gas. These “fees” will never go away and will climb with inflation each year. The adoption and implementation of this complicated regulatory scheme is just a clever plot to side-step TABOR, the Taxpayers Bill of Rights. TABOR requires that Coloradans get to vote on tax increases that affect them. When government deliberately takes more of our money without our consent it is a tax, not a “fee” for services.

While the title of the bill “Sustainability of the Transportation System” sounds good, its core focus is on climate change and will force Coloradans to abandon our gas-powered cars and increase the use of electric vehicles. The Governor just authorized a new “road usage” fee, a new

“bridge and tunnel” fee, a new 27 cent “retail delivery” fee, and a new 30 cent “passenger ride” fee.

Under this fee scheme, if you are buying gas for your lawn mower, weed eater, farm tractor, backhoe, or gas generator you will be required to pay a “road usage” fee. It does not matter that this equipment does not have an impact on the road system. The fee will increase every year for the next seven years and is in addition to the increased cost you will be paying at the pump.

It is amazing how policymakers lack compassion when it comes to the struggle of Colorado families. This is yet another example of how out of touch the Governor, many legislators, and bureaucrats are with everyday Coloradans. This law is designed to penalize individuals for owning gas-powered cars and make it more expensive to get groceries, pick up kids from school, visit friends or just go to work and earn a paycheck.

Today the average family spends approximately \$2,400 a year on gas for their car. With the added “road usage fee” a household that owns two vehicles will see their total cost for putting gas in their car increase to \$3,240 a year. As prices rise, this bill will make gas up to 40% more expensive; soon close to \$4.50 per gallon! This is an increase of \$50-\$70 per month and many Coloradans cannot afford this huge increase. This is neither compassionate or fair and will disproportionately punish the poor, and rural Colorado families.

The proper role of government is to ask the consent of the people when it comes to taking more money for special projects from the people. This law sidesteps that consent through complicated “Enterprises” that this law creates to circumvent the voters’ approved enterprise guidelines. Four new Government Enterprises will do nothing to enhance our transportation system and do not focus on planning, funding, development, construction, or maintenance of our crumbling infrastructure.

This “fee scheme” will make life more challenging for hard-working Colorado men and women. This law is unfair to us and hurts our friends and neighbors. It shows how out of touch the Governor is with everyday Coloradans. He should have vetoed the bill.

I would have.