



Sanders: \$1T infrastructure bill would be cheaper than Iraq War

By Keith Laing - 02/09/15 05:33 PM EST



Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) said Monday that his bill to spend \$1 trillion over the next five years to boost the nation's transportation infrastructure would cost less than what the U.S. government spent on the Iraq War.

"It has been estimated that the costs of the Bush/Cheney Iraq War, a war we should never have waged, will total \$3 trillion by the time the last veteran receives needed care," he said during a speech at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

"A \$1 trillion investment in infrastructure could support 13 million decent-paying jobs and make our country more efficient, productive and safer," Sanders continued.

The **measure**, which has been dubbed the "Rebuild America Act," comes as lawmakers have been discussing a funding source for paying for infrastructure improvements.

The current transportation funding bill, which includes \$11 billion worth of projects, is scheduled to expire on May 31.

There is little consensus on a permanent funding source than could supplement the revenue collected by 18.4 cent-per-gallon federal gas tax, which has been used to fill the Transportation Department's Highway Trust Fund since the 1950s.

The gas tax, which predates the highway system by about 20 years, hasn't been increased since 1993. It has struggled since to keep pace with infrastructure expenses as cars have become more fuel-efficient.

The tax at the pump brings in about \$34 billion per year. The federal government typically spends about \$50 billion per year on road and transit projects.

Transportation advocates have argued that **raising** the tax would be the easiest way to close the gap. However, most lawmakers have been reluctant to ask drivers to pay more at the pump to improve the country's infrastructure.

Sanders said passing a new transportation funding bill would be a way for lawmakers to boost the U.S. economy, in addition to fixing the nation's damaged roads and bridges.

"We need a major federal jobs program to put millions of Americans back to work," he said. "The fastest way to do that is to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, our roads, bridges, water systems, wastewater plants, airports, railroads and schools.

Sanders has not weighed in on raising the gas tax but said Monday that a suggestion from some lawmakers and the Obama administration to use revenue from taxing overseas corporate profits could be viable.

"In terms of other infrastructure, for example, we are losing about \$100 billion every single year because corporations and wealthy people are stashing their money in the Cayman Islands and elsewhere," he said. "Real tax reform can generate a significant sum of money which should be used for infrastructure and education."

TAGS: Bernie Sanders, Gas Tax, Highway bill, Highway Trust Fund, MAP-21 Reauthorization, Rebuild America Act

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