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## Va. governor wants to ditch gas tax, boost sales tax for roads

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By Mike Hashimoto / Editorial Writer  
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No two states are precisely the same in their types and levels of taxation, but leading *The Washington Post's* print edition this morning is a story that should be relevant to us here in Texas.

Virginia is having issues very similar to Texas in its ability to raise anything close to [enough from its gasoline tax to pay for road construction](#). [Gov. Robert McDonnell's plan is to eliminate the 17.5-cent gas tax \(except for diesel\) and make other things:](#)

*The overall plan, which would raise an estimated \$3.1 billion over five years, also would raise the state's sales tax on alternative-fuel cars. McDonnell's proposal calls for a increase in the state's sales tax revenue from legislation pending in Congress.*

*As he enters his last year in office, McDonnell is aiming to solve a problem that has plagued the nation's largest and most congested transportation systems — one that will run out of money by 2017.*

*The term-limited Republican ran for office promising not to raise taxes, but he said Tuesday that new revenue must be part of the solution. His plan also calls for devoting a greater share of existing state money to transportation.*

Obviously, this will be a tough sell in a GOP-dominated House of Delegates, of which every member is up for re-election this year. Accordingly, Democrats are expected to oppose any money-shifting that could short their favored state services, including public education.

Texas has a slightly higher motor fuel tax, 20 cents per gallon. Like Texas, Virginia municipalities charge varying property taxes. Unlike Texas, Virginia has a state income tax; of its four rates, the top end is 5.75 percent for anyone making more than \$17,000, or a solid majority of those employed.

Love McDonnell's idea or hate it? You have to give him points for novelty. Virginia would be the first state, according to *The Post*, to ditch its gas tax entirely. Even with the sales tax increase, Virginia's sales tax would be lower than Texas' 8.25 percent (state share: 6.25 percent). Obviously, a small sales tax increase generates far more revenue than a gas tax, but there is that matter of the state income tax.

Is it better to try something, anything, than keep patching things together with a taxing system we know will fall short of need? It's a fair question. [Your local editorial board has been banging on our Legislature for years](#) with the need to increase the gas tax and/or index it to inflation for road construction and maintenance.

Proposals in Austin this session nibble around the edges, but there's no chance a Republican-dominated Legislature would pass anything that smelled of a tax increase (thankfully, some would say).

Virginia's legislature opens today, and transportation funding is expected to be a dominant issue. This one is worth watching, if only to see where it goes.

**UPDATE:** Over at our [Transportation blog](#), ed board colleague [Rodger Jones \(someone who actually knows and understands Texas' transportation funding issues\)](#) offers his take on McDonnell's idea.

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**Edward Holman** · Top Commenter · Texas Tech University

The UK duty rate for the road fuels unleaded petrol, diesel, biodiesel and bioethanol is \$3.51 per U.S. gallon. Value Added Tax at 20% is also charged on the price of the fuel and on the duty. An additional vehicle excise duty, depending on a vehicle's CO2 production per kilometer, which depends directly on fuel consumption, is also levied.

Induces aflutter to the Leftist heart, doesn't it?

The UK must have the best roads on the planet.

Of course, then Californians would have to take out a loan to escape to Texas.

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**Tom Desmond** · Top Commenter · Works at Raytheon

So just out of curiosity...are they going to charge sales tax on gasoline sales in Virginia?

If so, a price of \$3/gallon would generate 17.4 cents of sales tax per gallon, which would pretty much replace the fule tax they are eliminating.

If not, why should gasoline be completely tax free when so many other products are hit by sales tax?

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**Peter Kurilecz** · Top Commenter · Richmond, Virginia

with cars getting ever better mileage (better engines, hybrids, whatever), better mass transit etc the amount of fuel tax being collected has been on a decline over the past few years. by increasing the sales tax to to 5.8 % from 5% everybody then pays into the transportation budget here is the story from the Richmond paper <http://bit.ly/UWFZzY>

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