

Proposal: Let Mississippi voters decide on gas tax increase

Associated Press

The Mississippi House will consider a bill that could lead to an increase in gasoline and diesel fuel taxes to pay for improvements to state highways and local roads.

The House Ways and Means Committee on Friday, February 19, passed House Bill 1364, sending it to the full House for more debate sometime between Monday, February 22, and Wednesday, February 24.

Mississippi has had the

same motor fuel tax of 18.4 cents a gallon since 1987, and transportation officials have long said the tax fails to generate enough money to cover the costs of highway construction and repairs.

The bill proposes a statewide election on whether to increase the gasoline tax by 10 cents a gallon and the diesel fuel tax by 14 cents a gallon. The referendum would be June 8, the same day as city elections in many parts

of the state.

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Trey Lamar, a Republican from Senatobia, is the sponsor of House Bill 1364. He said the state would issue \$2.5 billion in bonds to pay for highways and roads, and the fuel tax would pay off that debt.

The original version of the bill would have increased the motor fuel taxes soon after the election, if voters approve. At Lamar's suggestion Friday, the commit-

Mississippi Senate sends 'MFLEX' Transparent Tax Incentive to House

Press Release

In an effort to make the state more competitive and increase transparency, the Mississippi Senate unanimously passed legislation creating the Mississippi Flexible Tax Incentive (MFLEX) program.

Senate Bill 2822, authored by Economic & Workforce Development Committee Chairman David Parker, consolidates several current incentives aimed at spurring economic development into one simplified option. MFLEX allows a credit against any state tax liability. The amount of the credit is calculated by considering the business's investment in

equipment and infrastructure, the number of full-time jobs created, and wages and benefits paid out to employees.

To participate in MFLEX, a business must create at least 10 full-time jobs and make a capital investment of \$2.5 million.

"The current incentives process is cumbersome and lacks the accountability which this program offers," Lt. Governor Delbert Hosemann said. "When we make a deal, we have to be able to go back to taxpayers and show them it was successful. MFLEX makes Mississippi competitive in the region."

"One of MFLEX's best

features is it is performance-based, not promise-based," Parker agreed. "If a business does not perform at the level they promise, their credit is recalculated. We are thankful to local economic developers across the state who lent us their expertise in helping craft legislation which will grow the economy in our communities."

Businesses qualifying for MFLEX must report publicly the amount of investment, jobs created, average wage of employees, benefits provided, and other information.

"This program is a part of the overhaul of economic development in Mississippi which began with the creation of the Office of Workforce Development, continued with devoting more dollars to education, and now addresses the attraction and expansion of Mississip-

tee changed the timeline to phase in half of the increase soon after the election and half on Jan. 1.

"This is to ease a little burden on our truckers," Lamar said of the phase-in. "I've got nothing but positive feedback from truckers in this state."

He said some truckers already have contracts to purchase fuel the next several months, and phasing in the tax increase would be easier for them.

The bill specifies that \$300 million would go to cities and counties for local road and bridge construction or repairs.

pi businesses," Hosemann added.

Senate Bill 2967, which Parker also authored and the Senate passed, seeks to end several tax incentives which are not used or lose taxpayer dollars. The legislation also increases a tax credit to employers who provide child-care for employees.

"Our goal is to end incentives which have had a negative or no impact in terms of economic development. We will also be considering incentives specifically aimed at small businesses and high-wage, technology-centered jobs," Hosemann said.

To view Senate Bill 2822, visit <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2021/pdf/history/SB/SB2822.xml>.

To view Senate Bill 2967, visit <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2021/pdf/history/SB/SB2967.xml>.

County.

- A \$2.4 million contract was awarded to APAC-Mississippi for a 5-mile mill and overlay project on SR 15 from the Pontotoc County line to north of Central Avenue in Union County.

- A \$20.9 million contract was awarded to Lehman-Roberts Company, of Memphis, TN, for a 12-mile mill and overlay project on Interstate 55 from the Carroll County line to south of Carroll County in Montgomery County.

- A \$125,601 contract was awarded to Talbot Brothers Construction Company, Inc., & Talbot Brothers Grading Company, Inc., a joint venture, of Nesbit, for safety rail improvements on Chucky Mullins Drive over U.S. Highway 278 in Lafayette County.

Highway work zones present new traffic patterns and configurations that may be unfamiliar to some motorists. For information about how to navigate highway work zones safely, visit GoMDOT.com/drivesmartms.

For more information about these or other MDOT maintenance and construction projects, visit MDOTtraffic.com, download the free MDOT Traffic mobile app or like and follow @MississippiDOT on Facebook and Twitter.



Prices are seen on a gas pump, Tuesday, March 31, 2020, in Brandon, Miss. Earlier in the week, U.S. gasoline prices had dropped to their lowest levels in four years, and they are almost sure to go lower as oil prices plunge. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

City of Durant
Poll Workers Workshop
February 15, 2021 and February 22, 2021 at the Durant Senior Center located at 460 N. W. Depot Street.

Citizens of Durant that are interested in being a poll worker for the upcoming Primary Election April 6, 2021 are required to attend one of the workshops listed above.

For information, please call the City of Durant City Clerk's office at 662-653-3314.

Transportation commission awards contracts throughout state

Press Release

The Mississippi Transportation Commission at its February 9 meeting awarded contracts for maintenance projects throughout Mississippi.

The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) will oversee the ten projects, which will maintain and enhance transportation infrastructure across the state.

"These projects will make our highways safer and make Mississippi a better place to live and work," said Melinda McGrath, P.E., MDOT Executive Director. "All of our projects, whether pavement overlays or bridge replacements, help ensure the businesses and people of Mississippi have efficient and reliable infrastructure for travel and transport of goods and services."

Commissioner Tom King, Chair, Mississippi Transportation Commission, said, "These projects will help MDOT continue to provide safe and reliable transportation to Mississippi's traveling public. A robust transportation network is vital for economic development."

The awarded contracts for

the Southern Transportation District were:

- A \$5.3 million contract was awarded to Warren Paving Inc., of Hattiesburg, for a 9.4-mile overlay project on U.S. Highway 84 from the Jones County line east in Wayne County.

- A \$7.5 million contract was awarded to Dunn Roadbuilders, LLC, of Laurel, for a 20-mile mill and overlay project on State Route 15 from State Route 18 to the Newton County line in Jasper County.

"Our number one priority at MDOT is to keep the state of Mississippi safe," said Commissioner Willie Simmons, Central Transportation District. "These projects are a major investment into Mississippi's transportation infrastructure and the safety of the traveling public."

The awarded contracts for the Central Transportation District were:

- A \$3.1 million contract was awarded to Key, LLC, of Madison, for a bridge rail replacement on U.S. Highway 49 north to the Interstate 20 west flyover in Rankin County.

- A \$4.2 million contract was awarded to APAC - Mis-

issippi, Inc., of Richland, for a 12.2-mile mill and overlay project on U.S. 49 east from State Route 12 at Tchula to the Leflore County line and on State Route 818 from U.S. 49 east to the railroad tracks in Holmes County.

- A \$1.3 million contract was awarded to W. G. Yates & Sons Construction Company, of Jackson, for a bridge replacement on State Route 19 in Neshoba County.

- A \$514,745 contract was awarded to Gibson & Associates, Inc., of Balch Springs, Texas, for a bridge repair project on Siwell Road over Interstate 55 in Hinds County.

"Safety is always MDOT's top priority," said Commissioner John Caldwell, Northern Transportation District. "These projects will significantly increase safety and mobility throughout north Mississippi."

The awarded contracts for the Northern Transportation District were:

- A \$7 million contract was awarded to WG Construction Company, of Ripley, for a 9-mile mill and overlay project on U.S. Highway 45 from Euclatubba Road to the Prentiss County line in Lee

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The Gwin/Alexander Family of Willie "Shaun" Alexander - Class of 1998 - would like to thank each and everyone for their numerous acts of kindness shown during the passing of our loved one on January, 31 2021. May God continue to bless all of you.

With Love,
Thelma Wilks Gwin