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Obama administration floats draft plan to tax cars by the mile

By Pete Kasperowicz - 05/05/11 07:45 AM ET

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The Obama administration has floated a transportation authorization bill that would require the study and implementation of a plan to tax automobile drivers based on how many miles they drive.

The plan is a part of the administration's Transportation Opportunities Act, an **undated draft** of which was obtained this week by *Transportation Weekly*.

The White House, however, said the bill is only an early draft that was not formally circulated within the administration.

"This is not an administration proposal," White House spokeswoman Jennifer Psaki said. "This is not a bill supported by the administration. This was an early working draft proposal that was never formally circulated within the administration, does not taken into account the advice of the president's senior advisers, economic team or Cabinet officials, and does not represent the views of the president."

News of the draft follows a March Congressional Budget Office report that supported the idea of taxing drivers based on miles driven.

Among other things, CBO suggested that a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) tax could be tracked by installing electronic equipment on each car to determine how many miles were driven; payment could take place electronically at filling stations.

The CBO report was requested by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-N.D.), who has proposed taxing cars by the mile as a way to increase federal highway revenues.

The proposal seems to follow up on that idea in section 2218 of the draft bill. That section would create, within the Federal Highway Administration, a Surface Transportation Revenue Alternatives Office. It would be tasked with creating a "study framework that defines the functionality of a mileage-based

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user fee system and other systems."

The department seemed to be aware of the need to prepare the public for what would likely be a controversial change to the way highway funds are collected. For example, the office is called on to serve a public-relations function, as the draft says it should "increase public awareness regarding the need for an alternative funding source for surface transportation programs and provide information on possible approaches."

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The draft bill says the "study framework" for the project and a public awareness communications plan should be established within two years of creating the office, and that field tests should begin within four years.

The office would be required to consider four factors in field trials: the capability of states to enforce payment, the reliability of technology, administrative costs and "user acceptance." The draft does not specify where field trials should begin.

The new office would be funded a total of \$300 million through fiscal 2017 for the project.

This story was updated at 10:17 a.m.

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Comments (3366)

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Uh, forgive me if I'm wrong, but doesn't the federal gas tax already hit those that drive more the hardest? Didn't Obama promise that no American families making less than \$250,000 a year would not see their taxes increased by one dime? This ridiculous idea will hurt the poorest the hardest—but then again, this administration couldn't care less.

Evidently we are not paying enough at the pump in their eyes, guess we'd be easier to control if we can't afford to drive and had to stay home. Guess they want us to go back to the stone age and use of horses and oxen that will crap all over the streets, releasing more methane into the atmosphere worsening "global warming."

Good luck getting them to put any device in my car that will keep track of my driving. Ain't gonna happen.

BY **THIS GUY IS NUTS** on 05/05/2011 at 07:57

this is the most ridiculous thing ever. why punish people who have to commute to a job so far away or any job for that matter not to mention if they have a elderly mother or father that need to go to doctor's appointments or even the grocery store or even just to drive to check on them to see how they are doing and if they are okay. a lot of working people are living paycheck to paycheck now and are constantly cutting back to make ends meet because of the ever increasing cost of gas, food, utilities, and medical care.

BY **FIFTYPLUS** on 05/05/2011 at 08:34

We pay enough taxes. Another attempt of having government in too much of my business. Once again government overreaching by taxing because they spend to much...

BY **BAILEDOUT** on 05/05/2011 at 08:37

Those who could least afford these taxes in the hinterland would be most heavily punished. There was never a better time to take the bureaucrats in Washington out of their bubbles. Time to get out there and find out how this country actually operates.

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