



## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF MONO

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July 8, 2009

The Honorable Dave Cox, District 1  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 2068  
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Tom Berryhill, District 25  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 3141  
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Opposition to Taking of County & City Gas Tax

The Mono County Board of Supervisors strongly objects to the Budget Conference Committee's proposal to "take" \$986 million of the local share of the gasoline excise tax (also known as the Highway User Tax Account, or HUTA) in FY 2009-10 and \$745 million in FY 2010-11 from counties and cities for transportation-related bond debt service. It is our understanding that the proposal will take the local share of transportation revenues with no intention of repayment in the future.

We strongly urge your "no" vote on any budget proposals that would divert this critical funding source from local public works agencies. Elimination of the local share of HUTA will have a devastating effect on the condition of local roads and the economy.

Mono County encompasses 3,100 square miles and the Mono County Department of Public Works maintains 684 miles of roadway and 21 bridges in its County Road System. In addition, the mechanics in Public Works' Road Division maintain a fleet of 153 passenger cars and light-duty trucks assigned to the Sheriff's Department, paramedics, motor pool, and Public Works, and 58 heavy duty trucks and off-road equipment in the Road Division.

With that in mind, the Mono County Board of Supervisors asks you to consider the following before casting your vote:

- Should the proposed HUTA taking be approved, Public Works' Road Division would have to lay off 20 of its 25 full-time employees. That essentially means that Public Works would be left with one maintenance worker in each of its four road districts and one mechanic to maintain the roads and fleet cited above. This equates to 171 miles of road responsibility per maintenance worker. In winter, which can often be

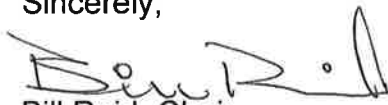
severe in our High Sierra climate, four full-time and four seasonal snowplow operators would be responsible to keep 204 miles of County-maintained roads clear of snow and ice and safe for the traveling public.

- The annual HUTA funding is Public Works' single largest source of revenue for road maintenance and operations support. In this year of severe budget constraints in all areas of county government, there is no spare funding available to offset the loss of HUTA funding.
- The layoffs and reduction in materials and supplies that will result from the HUTA taking, even if for just two years, will be a setback to road maintenance in Mono County for years to come. Elimination of routine and preventive maintenance will have a compound effect and speed the deterioration of County-maintained roads and bridges, which will then drive long-term expenses higher to bring County roads back up to current conditions.
- Materials, supplies, and contract services include road striping and replacement of damaged guardrails, traffic control signs, and snow poles. Allowing these issues to remain unattended will compromise the safety of Mono County roads and leave the County exposed to potential litigation resulting from preventable accidents.
- The layoffs and reduction in material and supply purchases will have a ripple effect throughout the local and state economies. Unemployment will put additional financial and administrative burdens on already-stressed local and state services. The reduction in material and supply purchases and contracted services will impact vendors and contractors throughout the region and state, adding to dismal economic conditions and furthering unemployment. These impacts will divert funding from productive, on-the-ground uses.
- The long-term deterioration of local road conditions will have an indirect negative impact on the tourism-based local economy. Mono County will no longer be able to provide safe, reliable, and comfortable access to the natural wonders of the region, which will discourage visitors from returning to the area.

The preceding arguments make it clear that the proposed HUTA taking is short-sighted and will result in long-term detrimental effects. As recognized by the recent federal passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the investment in our public infrastructure can provide a meaningful stimulus to the overall economy.

Again, we urge your "no" vote on any budget proposal that includes a diversion of the local share of HUTA funding.

Sincerely,



Bill Reid, Chair

Mono County Board of Supervisors

Cc: Honorable Darrell Steinberg, Senate President pro Tempore  
Honorable Karen Bass, Assembly Speaker  
Dave Wilbrecht, CAO  
Evan Nikirk, Public Works Director