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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 328

Offered January 12, 2011

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Requesting the Virginia Transportation Research Council to study the desirability and feasibility of replacing the state motor fuel tax with alternatives including a mileage-based fee predicated on vehicle-miles traveled in Virginia. Report.

Patron—Miller, J.C.

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, an efficient transportation system is vital to the future of Virginia's economy and the quality of life of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the revenues currently available for highway maintenance and construction are inadequate to operate and maintain existing transportation infrastructure and also provide funds for improvements that would reduce congestion, improve service, and enhance safety; and

WHEREAS, the state motor fuel tax each year generates less revenue as motor vehicles become more fuel-efficient and alternative sources of fuel are identified, making the motor fuel tax an inadequate means of addressing Virginia's long-term transportation needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Transportation Research Council be requested to study the desirability and feasibility of replacing the state motor fuel tax with alternatives including a mileage-based fee predicated on vehicle-miles traveled in Virginia.

In conducting its study, the Virginia Transportation Research Council shall evaluate the desirability and feasibility of (i) replacing the state motor fuel tax with an alternative, including a fee based on mileage traveled in Virginia and collected at a fueling station and (ii) using this same system to impose and collect congestion charges. The Virginia Transportation Research Council, further, shall determine (a) whether, using existing technology, a fee based on vehicle-miles traveled in the Commonwealth can be implemented to replace the state motor fuel tax as Virginia's principal revenue source for funding highway operation, maintenance, and construction; (b) the commercial viability of a vehicle-miles-traveled fee, i.e., how easily it can be imposed and collected at the pump, compared with the way in which the state motor fuel tax is now imposed and collected; (c) the ease with which a vehicle-miles-traveled fee might be phased in, while unequipped vehicles continue to be powered by fuels subject to the present method of imposition and collection of the state motor fuel tax; (d) the ability to integrate a vehicle-miles-traveled-based fee with the service station point-of-sale system and the current system of motor fuel tax imposition and collection; (e) the ability of the vehicle-miles-traveled fee concept to support some form of congestion pricing, as well as imposition and collection of fees on a regional basis and other zone-based congestion-management strategies; (f) the amounts and kinds of data required to be kept in order to audit and challenge billings without compromising the privacy rights of motorists in the Commonwealth; (g) the extent of the burden required to be borne by distributors and filling stations as a direct result of a conversion to a vehicle-miles-traveled-based fee; (h) how much more likely it might be that motorists will attempt to evade their obligations under a vehicle-miles-traveled-based fee approach; and (i) the costs associated with implementing a change to a vehicle-miles-traveled-based fee, as well as the costs of operating such a system, compared with current operating costs for imposing and collecting the present state motor fuel tax.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Virginia Transportation Research Council by the Virginia Department of Transportation. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Virginia Transportation Research Council in collecting the information, upon request.

The Virginia Transportation Research Council shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2011, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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