

MPMCSA News Fall 2017

Hello Everyone,

Summer in Montana means travel. Our highways are full of tourists and locals out to take in all that this amazing state has to offer. This July these road warriors were greeted at the pump with a 4.5 cent increase on the gasoline tax and 1.5 cents on diesel. Funding for infrastructure improvements was one of the most talked about and hotly debated issues before the 2017 legislature. The MPMCSA worked closely with the Infrastructure Coalition to craft a bill that would address the budget shortfalls for the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and attempt to minimize the impact felt by drivers and our association.

Montana had not seen an increase to the fuel tax in 24 years. Today's more fuel efficient cars generate less revenue, and the state had been nearing budget shortfalls for years. The MDT had put a hold on 30 road projects in just the last year due to lack of funding. Last year Yellowstone and Glacier Parks saw a record number of visitors, most traveling the roadways that are in need of repairs. A fuel tax creates an opportunity to capture some of this influx of money, to cover the additional wear and tear on our roads by travelers.

One of MPMCSA's biggest concerns was ensuring that some of this additional revenue gets back to the local communities, and the new law intends to do just that. One of our ongoing concerns across Montana has been proposals of local option fuel taxes. We maintain our opposition in light of the strain it places on our marketers and C-stores in the affected communities. The hope for the new fuel tax is that the communities will get the funding they need with a tax that is evenly distributed across the state. As with any tax increase, citizens want to see where this additional money is going. The new law also requires the MDT create a website that will be up later this year to allow for transparency in where the money goes.

As much as we may not like to pay additional tax, we at the MPMCSA recognized the need and worked to find a solution that would serve everyone's best interest. This is another shining example of what our association has to offer our members. These are challenging times in our state and our nation, and we are proud to provide the eyes and ears to advocate and protect our industry and members.

Brad Longcake, Executive Director