

If California's gas tax is repealed, what would happen?

[Meghan McCarty Carino](#) | November 21, 2017

Thanksgiving travelers are paying more in state fuel taxes this month as they fill up to hit the road, but voters could be asked next year if they want to scrap the increase.

A 12-cent per gallon [tax hike took effect](#) on Nov. 1 along with a 20-cent tax hike for diesel fuel and new vehicle registration fees, all to fund billions of dollars in road repairs and other transportation projects.

One of two proposed initiatives to repeal the new fuel tax and vehicle fees has been cleared to move forward. Organizers must now collect signatures of 585,407 registered voters to put the measure on next year's ballot.

Backers say that goal should be achievable given recent polling on the issue.

The University of California, Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies released a poll in June that found 58 percent of voters oppose the new taxes and fees, even in communities like Los Angeles County, which enacted its own transportation sales tax last November called [Measure M](#) with 71 percent voter approval.

Poll director Mark DiCamillo said many voters see Sacramento as wasteful and they worry they won't see direct benefits from the revenues in their own backyard.

"The further away you get from your own community, the harder it is to get people to support a tax increase," DiCamillo said. He said that local taxes, like Measure M, consistently garner more support than state-level tax increases.

Californians will pay an additional \$10 a month in new tax and fee increases, the state has estimated. Although offset somewhat by the season's cheaper winter blend, that advantage will go away next year with the pricier summer fuel.

Drivers in the state already pay among the highest gas prices in the country but could pay even more over the next few days: AAA predicts drivers nationwide will see the highest Thanksgiving gas prices since 2014.

Rising gas prices could strengthen momentum for a repeal of the tax and fees, according to Mark Baldessare, president of the Public Policy Institute of California, which surveyed voters about the gas tax last year and found similar levels of opposition.

"If we were to see a spike over the next months, people are going to complain a lot more about this tax," he said.

Those behind the effort to roll back the higher tax and fees have until May 21 to collect the needed signatures to place their measure on the November 2018 ballot.

If they succeed and voters approve the repeal, the fate of hundreds of transportation projects would be uncertain.

Caltrans has published a [map](#) highlighting local projects that are earmarked to be funded by the gas tax. Some are already under construction.

The revenues fund about 300 projects in Los Angeles County, including repaving large sections of the 10 and 605 freeways and the Pacific Coast Highway. Other projects include building bikeways, better crosswalks and local street repairs.