



READER FEEDBACK

McCain's gas tax hiatus a non-starter

To the editor: The road to solving our state's transportation finance woes is like the Boston Marathon: Expect to be in for a long haul. Sen. John McCain's proposal to suspend the federal gas tax over the summer would only worsen our national transportation finance woes and place a significant road block in our own efforts to close the commonwealth's \$15 billion to \$19 billion transportation funding gap. A gas tax hiatus would be a setback to the progress our elected leaders have achieved with reforms to close the gap and demonstrate our ability to responsibly manage new revenue that will inevitably be needed to tackle the problem with any serious results.

Most analysts say the benefit of a national gas tax hiatus to consumers would be miniscule — as little as \$38 over the summer — yet it could result in the federal government losing up to \$10 billion at a time when our national transportation system is seriously underfunded. The national gas tax collected is directed to the Highway Trust Fund and used to support state transportation capital needs. The President's Budget Office estimates that this fund could dry up as early as 2010. A gas tax hiatus gets us there sooner, and would cost Massachusetts more than \$123 million in federal funds, according to the American Road and Transportation Builders Association.

A federal gas tax hiatus basically amounts to deferred maintenance, and fixing our roads and bridges is not going to get any cheaper over time. This plan sends the wrong message about our responsibility to our infrastructure. We can't afford to embrace a shortsighted that leaves us trailing behind.

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