

## Branstad won't ask lawmakers for a gas tax hike in 2012

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Gov. Terry Branstad has bowed to the wishes of the anti-tax Iowa Tea Party, saying he's dropping plans for a gas tax increase in the 2012 session of the Iowa Legislature.

A citizens panel appointed by the Republican governor had recommended an 8-to-10 cent increase in Iowa's gasoline and diesel fuel taxes, as well as an increase in fees paid when vehicles are purchased. The goal was to find ways to eliminate a \$215 million annual shortfall in revenue to maintain Iowa's aging 114,000-mile road system, which has been hurt because gas taxes haven't been raised since 1989 while construction costs have soared.

But Branstad told listeners on WHO-AM radio Tuesday night he won't support a fuel tax increase during the upcoming session. Instead, he will ask Iowa Department of Transportation Director Paul Trombino to look for nearly \$50 million in cost-savings over the next year, which would be the equivalent of about two cents of fuel tax revenue.

Branstad spoke in response to a question from Iowa Tea Party Chairman Ryan Rhodes, who had asked the governor to take the gas tax proposal off the table for one year to permit a discussion on finding other ways to pay for road repairs.

Tim Albrecht, the governor's spokesman, today confirmed the governor's agreement to rule out a gas tax increase in 2012.

"These are trying economic times for many Iowans. Before we ask for an increase in the fuel user fee, we must find ways to more effectively utilize current revenue in the Road Use Tax Fund," Albrecht said.

Tea Party Chairman Rhodes, in an interview, said he commended Branstad.

"This is an impressive victory for Iowa taxpayers," Rhodes said