

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor's Weekly Radio Message Addresses the Need for a Stable Source of Funding for Transportation Improvements and Open Space

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week the Governor discusses her plan to build a better transportation system and to keep urban sprawl from clogging New Jersey's roads and complicating its citizen's lives. The Governor has proposed a seven-cent increase in the gas tax to provide a stable source of funding to repair the state's structurally deficient bridges, broken railroad tracks and dangerous intersections. The new funding would also provide money to save open space from being developed. Governor Whitman wants to put this decision in the voter's hands. "The citizens of New Jersey deserve better, safer roads and more open space," the Governor said. She urges all New Jerseyans to contact their legislator and ask them to put this important issue on the ballot in November.

Attached is the text of the message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend.

Governor's Weekly Radio Message Stable Source of Funding for Open Space and Transportation Improvements June 5, 1998

Did you know that one out of every three bridges you drive over every day is structurally deficient?

Did you know that two out of five New Jersey Transit buses on the road today are long overdue for retirement and should be replaced immediately?

Did you know that the fund our state uses to fix dangerous intersections and broken railroad tracks is running out - without enough money to make scores of desperately needed improvements?

Did you know that, at the same time, we lose another 10,000 or more acres of open space and farmland to development every year, creating an even greater strain on our roads and causing even longer traffic jams?

New Jersey deserves a better transportation system. And we need to keep sprawl from clogging our roads and complicating our lives.

I have a plan for doing that. I have proposed that we ask New Jersey voters this November to approve a seven-cent increase in the gas tax to provide stable funding for transportation needs and open space preservation.

I want the Legislature to put the question on the ballot. I want to give you the chance to vote "Yes" for better and safer roads, bridges, and railroads. I want to give you the opportunity, as you've done every time in the past, to vote "Yes" for the Transportation Trust Fund and "Yes" for saving critically needed open space.

I mentioned earlier that our bridges are structurally deficient. With a stable funding source, we'll be able to help your town fix that crumbling bridge. With a stable funding source, we'll also be able to repair the highway pavement near you that is at best a nuisance and at worst a nightmare. And we will be able to redesign horrible intersections that endanger drivers, passengers, and pedestrians.

Let me be blunt. Without new funding, we will fall further behind. More bridges will weaken. More roads will crumble. We won't be able to upgrade mass transit or contain sprawl, making traffic jams worse and accidents more frequent.

I know it's not easy to approve a tax increase. I, for one, enjoy cutting taxes. But this is an urgent need, given the condition of our bridges and roads and rapidly dwindling open space.

I should also point out that the gas tax is one that many out-of-state drivers share in paying - and that's only fair, since they contribute to the wear and tear of roads in this corridor state.

We have to fix what's broken in the Garden State. We have to keep New Jersey a safe, convenient, and attractive place in which to live, work, and raise a family. But it's only right that you should have a say in shaping our future.

That's why I ask you to help me put this decision in your hands.

I urge you to contact your legislators and urge them to put this important issue on the November ballot. This issue is too important for the Legislature and the Governor to decide alone. You should have the final word.

Let's let you, the voters, decide whether raising the gas tax makes sense for New Jersey. Let's let you, the voters, determine whether we should make these investments in safety, repair, and preservation.

Again, I urge you to get in touch with your representatives in the Assembly and the Senate. Tell them you want this proposal on the ballot in November.