

Cutting Gas Use in Mass. -- State and Local Policy Options

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(1) Vary the Auto Sales Tax Based on Fuel Efficiency: House Bill 1969, Rep. James Marzilli

"... the excise imposed upon the sale of any new passenger automobile, van, or light truck in the Commonwealth shall be at a rate between zero and ten percent of the gross receipts of the vendor for each such automobile, van, or light truck. "

Vehicles will be rated both on variation within vehicle size class and between size classes, with the most efficient getting a 0% rate and the least efficient getting a 10% rate; but "no vehicle whose fuel efficiency is below the national fleet average... shall be taxed at a rate less than five percent."

(2) Exempt low-pollution vehicles from sales taxes, or give tax incentives for them:

Mass. House Bill 1221, Legislative Session 2003-04, Relative To Sales Tax Exemptions For Clean Cars

Section 6 of Chapter 64H of the General Laws as appearing in the 2000 Official Edition is hereby amended by adding after paragraph (tt) the following paragraph:- (uu) Sales of motor vehicles certified as zero emission vehicles or super ultra low-emission vehicles by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

(3) Require that government agencies purchase fuel-efficient and low-pollution vehicles

(a) State government - "An Act to Encourage the Use of Environmentally Responsible Vehicles,"

Senator Cheryl Jacques and Rep. Matt Patrick

Requires all vehicles purchased by the state government to be "environmentally responsible," defined as ULEV (Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle), SULEV, or ZEV vehicles, and must use either alternative fuels or get at least 45 mpg from gasoline or diesel fuels.

Such vehicles may use high-occupancy vehicle lanes, and are exempted from sales tax on the first \$10,000 of their value.

(b) municipal government - require purchase of fuel-efficient vehicles - passed by Arlington and Amherst, Mass. in 2002; other versions passed in more than a dozen other cities and towns in the U.S.

Arlington Article 19/Fuel Efficient Vehicles: "When the town purchases motor vehicles for its municipal operations, each vehicle purchased must be the most fuel efficient model available that will fulfill the intended municipal function; provided that the vehicle also meets other normal procurement criteria including price and reliability...."

(4) Buy hybrid cars - Boston, Brookline, Newton, and Arlington have all purchased hybrid vehicles for their municipal fleets. These cars are available on the state government's master procurement list, so that state agencies and municipalities can buy them without going through a bidding process.

(5) Raise the state's gasoline excise tax

No current proposals.

(6) Vary auto insurance costs based on miles driven and relative safety of vehicle

(a) miles driven - proposals worked on by Conservation Law Foundation and others.

(b) safety risks to occupants of other vehicles - bill in Mass. sponsored by Rep. James Marzilli

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