

The Utah Plan: Is This The Way States Can Sell Tax Hikes For Transportation?

BY ELAINE S. POVICH
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WASHINGTON — In a conservative Republican state, how does a governor raise taxes, issue bonds and ask local taxpayers to pay even more for transportation? According to Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, you do it by building a coalition of business, industry, churches and educational groups united on one goal: moving people around the state.

"You have to set the table and then you have to deliver," Herbert, a Republican, said.

"Setting the table" involved at least two years of forging a coalition of interested parties, all of which rely on transportation, to support raising money to build and rebuild Utah's multifaceted transportation system.

And this year, everyone was called on to "deliver." In March, Herbert signed a bill passed by the GOP-controlled Legislature that raises the existing 24.5 cents per gallon state gas tax by about 5 cents to pay for state infrastructure projects, despite complaints from some quarters that, because the state has a surplus, it shouldn't be raising any taxes. The new tax is structured to rise with inflation.

In addition, voters in 17 of 29 Utah counties will be asked in November to approve a 0.25-cent increase in their counties' sales tax to fund local transportation projects that the state doesn't pay for, such as city street repairs and local interchanges.

Although nearly every state is struggling to maintain and rebuild its transportation system, Utah is one of only seven states where the legislature this year approved an increase in gas taxes to do it, according to Citizens for Tax Justice, a left-leaning research and advocacy group that focuses on policy. Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and Washington were the others.

Sean Slone, director of transportation and infrastructure policy at the Council of State Governments, a nonprofit research group, says Utah's method of selling a tax hike wouldn't necessarily work in all states, but it is a good model for some.

"Part of it is we have good leadership in the (state) House and the Senate," Herbert said in explaining how he accomplished his goal during a question-and-answer session at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., recently.

But that's only part of it. The leadership needed its courage bolstered to vote for an increase in the gas tax, which hadn't been raised in 18 years. To help build that courage, Herbert and his allies fanned out across the state, roping in business and industry.

"We have great Chamber of Commerce members who say, 'For us to be successful in business, we have to have infrastructure that works,'" Herbert said. "We heard loud and clear from the business community that we need to have a transportation infrastructure that gets us from point A to point B with little discomfort and congestion."

"It made it easier politically, for the Legislature to do it with the support of the business community and the Chamber of Commerce, education and others out there who are stakeholders and endorsed a commonsense adjustment in our taxation for transportation."

Herbert also had the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan, which sets out what needs to be fixed or built over the next five years to keep up with growth and prioritizes the requirements for transit, highways, bridges and rural roads in the state. The plan also includes transportation projects in national parks, national forests and Indian reservations. These are important in a state where the federal government owns 70 percent of the land.

"They sort of have a unique process in Utah," Slone said. "They got a lot of different stakeholders to weigh in and produced a document that is guiding their decisions, and their goal to raise these additional funds and commit these dollars to transportation. It was a universal effort, and legislators and other folks really tout this as a founding document."

Utah's transportation program isn't all about repairing what it has.

The state's population is



expected to nearly double by 2050, from 2.9 million to nearly 5 million people, a combination of large, growing Mormon families and an expected influx of new industry and accompanying residents from other states. So accommodating additional traffic from newcomers was important in planning and selling higher taxes in a state that relies on more than 43,000 miles of roads and 5,800 miles

of state-maintained highways.

In addition, the Salt Lake City metro system — which is known as TRAX and transports about 68,100 riders daily — is slated for expansion.

Utah couldn't count on the federal government to solve its transportation needs.

Between 2001 and 2012, federal funds made up 34.6 percent of Utah's transporta-

tion budget — the lowest of any state, according to a study by Transportation for America, an interest group made up of political, business and civic leaders pushing transportation funding.

Congress also has left the federal gas tax, 18.4 cents per gallon, untouched for 21 years, passing stopgap highway funding measures in recent years with no comprehensive plan to keep federal highway funding apace with inflation. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy estimates the federal gas tax has lost nearly 40 percent of its value since the last time it was raised.

In a February report, "Funding Challenges in Highway and Transit," The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew funds Stateline) said that state gas tax revenue to fund transportation also has declined by 15 percent from 2002 to 2012.

This isn't the first time Utah has sought to tackle its transportation needs. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Utah "by almost any measure" has one of the "most successful transportation

organizations in the country," winning praise for how it has helped people move around the state.

As far back as 1997, the state came up with a plan for future transportation funding that did not count on the federal government and its gas-tax-funded Highway Trust Fund. With its eyes on the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah designated 42 highway projects that would not have been completed without more funding and increased the gas tax from 19 cents per gallon to 24.5 cents per gallon, putting the money into a special highway fund. Most of the projects were completed before the Olympic flame was lit.

In 2009, Utah issued \$2.2 billion in bonds to pay for projects, including a \$1.7 billion reconstruction and expansion of Interstate 15, the major north-south artery between Salt Lake City and the Provo-Orem area in Utah County, one of the fastest growing counties in the nation.

Utah also has led in construction innovation.

Consider the Sam White Bridge demolition and reconstruction, which was part of the I-15 project and is considered a model for building bridges quickly so that traffic isn't disrupted for days, weeks or months.

The old two-span bridge was torn down and a new bridge moved into place in less than 24 hours in 2011. The new bridge was constructed on a "bridge farm" on the east side of I-15. Then, hydraulic jacks on wheels, controlled by a joystick, were used to lift the 3.8 million pound bridge, move it across eight freeway lanes, and lower it into place. It was done overnight and the bridge was bolted down and ready for traffic by 7 a.m.

U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch, a 38-year Senate veteran, said that the population in his state is growing rapidly and the state is constricted by federal land, giving rise to innovation.

"Utah is way ahead of most states," the Republican senator said. "We have an electorate that believes we want to have a good state and have things that work."



Office of the State Treasurer Unclaimed Property Division

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|---|---|--|--|
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| Anderson Austin G #1098347 C/O Michael Carda Yankton | Estate Of Marjorie Mejstrik #1107326 807 Dakota St Apt 3 Yankton | Langley Lawrence #1098052 1903 Ross St Yankton | Schremp Alex Lynn #1102263 4404 W 8th St Yankton |
| Andrie Brian #1106780 Po Box 237 Volin | Flow Joann F #1099177 2109 W 11th St Apt 206 Yankton | Langley Samuel A #1100159 1903 Ross St Yankton | Scissons Kristen Renee #1102264 1022 E 12th St Yankton |
| Andrie Cheryl #1106780 Po Box 237 Volin | Fuerst Don #1097528 Rr 1 Box 114c Yankton | Larson Matthew D #1100018 509 Green St Yankton | Sejnoha Mick #1105268 2909 E Hwy 50 Yankton |
| Arens Lucille M #1100251 2015 Green St Apt 155 Yankton | Gale Adam J #1099035 637 Augusta Cir Yankton | Lee Tyler James Sr #1102240 44632 304th St Yankton | Severs Elise #1110161 3904 Sd Hwy 314 Yankton |
| Atokad Bodies Inc #1106460 201 Pine St Yankton | Gant Brandi #1103507 1802 Burleigh St Yankton | Lenhoff Joshua Nicholas #1102242 500 Douglas Ave Yankton | Snoozy Nate #1106704 Po Box 213 Gayville |
| Ayuen Jacob A #1102187 503 W 4th St Yankton | Get Ty #1103544 514 Piccotte St Yankton | Lettau Brandon James #1102243 110 Forrest View Dr Yankton | Sommer Casey #1110208 2200 Douglas 37 Yankton |
| Baumeister Dave #1109331 Po Box 98 Yankton | Grandorff Rodney D #1106829 505 W 4th St Yankton | Lynde Tim #1109881 1007 Green St Yankton | Streitz Brian Richard #1102270 30521 Hwy 81 Yankton |
| Begali Reygan Winston #1102190 402 Pine St 1 Yankton | Grandorff Tina M #1106829 505 W 4th St Yankton | Meier Blaine #1109915 207 Douglas Yankton | Suntrust Mortgage Inc #1106846 641 Augusta Cir Yankton |
| Block Micheal #1106784 807 Broadway Ave Yankton | Grote Alma Herman Estate #1099463 909 Memory Ln Apt 19 Yankton | Merry Augusta P #1099054 Avera Sr James Nursing Hm Yankton | Sweet T S #1110266 2101 Broadway Ave Yankton |
| Boeka Holly #1109363 102 Francis Yankton | Hecht Denise #1096247 805 Dakota St 10 Yankton | Mikkelson Kendra A #1108963 108 Curlie St Yankton | Swenson Amanda J #1100506 808 Picotte St Yankton |
| Boettcher Chad Michael #1108876 200 Stone Dr Yankton | Hochhalter Ray #1100378 901 Burleigh St Yankton | Miller Lori Kay #1102247 2900 Douglas Ave 402 Yankton | Taggart Nicholas Allen #1102271 904 E 13th St Apt 3 Yankton |
| Boorret Rita #1100365 714 Maple 57 Yankton | Hofer Ashley M #1098598 302 Greenview Dr Apt 5 Yankton | Mueller Mary L #1099485 43780 295th Utica | The Road Connection #1110280 700 W 21st St Yankton |
| Brundige Donald #1100519 4306 W 8th St Lot 3 Yankton | Hofer Leola #1096906 706 W 5th St Yankton | Neuharth James L #1097471 1214 1/2 Walnut St Yankton | Tjeerdsma John T #1107193 1402 Summit St Yankton |
| Burrell Ryan #1109402 1313 W 30th St Apt C Yankton | Hovden Jacalyn #1109709 2207 W 31st Yankton | Northern Plains Ins Co #1101609 Po Box 1099 Yankton | Underwood Jessica A #1106846 641 Augusta Cir Yankton |
| Burrell Ryan #1102963 308 Greenveiw Dr Apt 6 Yankton | Huff Louise A #1099043 Po Box 348 Yankton | Olsen Ellyse L #1100596 901 Hillcrest Grand Ave Yankton | Undine Joann #1099255 214 Cedar St Apt 7 Yankton |
| Buzard Donald #1102078 116 Lloyd St Yankton | Jacobs Peyton J #1107334 106 Tootys Ave Yankton | Ordaz Espinoza Raul #1102252 2200 Douglas Ave 23 Yankton | Vanzant W #1100733 Yankton |
| Center The #1110277 900 Whiting Dr Yankton | Janson David #1104000 2702 Mulligan Dr Yankton | Padmos George #1107244 307 Fairway Dr Yankton | Varilek Frank #1099349 2505 Timberland Dr Yankton |
| Christensen Dan J #1100094 44597 Sd Hwy 50 Mission Hill | Jensen Eric A #1098033 30712 Bluff Rd Volin | Pen Bo #1102253 113 Mulligan Dr Yankton | Wellenstein Vince #1105778 1208 Douglas Yankton |
| Cimpl Darlene John #1096837 2503 Burleigh St Yankton | Johnson Gallon #1098035 1205 West St Yankton | Perk Lisa L #1106620 510 1/2 Walnut St Yankton | Wilcox Linda R #1106902 400 Pine St Yankton |
| Cody Andrew Louis #1102200 305 E 26th St Yankton | Kabella Troy Lee #1102231 404 W 5th St Yankton | Persinger Connie J #1107131 Pobox 1000 Yankton | Wilcox Roy #1106902 400 Pine St Yankton |
| Cody Kathrin Elizabeth #1102201 305 E 26th St Yankton | Kaiser Gloria #1106018 2908 Douglas Ave Yankton | Persinger John T #1107131 Pobox 1000 Yankton | Willcockson Eye Asso #1097708 Po Box 819 Yankton |
| Crane Helen M #1106722 701 E 19th St C/O Teresa Yankton | Kalwat Tyla #1109770 101 W 25th St Yankton | Phillips Gordon #1107245 160 Par Ln Yankton | Willfong Katherine #1106028 611 W 4th St Yankton |
| Dawson Eric T #1097227 43225 Sd Hwy 50 Yankton | Kappel Ryan #1104105 1805 Walnut St Yankton | Pick Barb #1106895 610 W 21st St Apt 109 Yankton | Woods Nick Joe #1102284 1502 Sunrise Dr Yankton |
| Doering Jeff #1103232 902west15thstreet Yankton | Kasulka Kerry L #1098301 Po Box 53 Mission Hill | Placek M H #1097706 500 Park Yankton | Wortman Gabe #1106023 708 Douglas Ave Yankton |
| Don D Swift li Do Pc #1097596 2007 Locust St Yankton | Kirschenman Sylvia A #1100370 43418 Kaiser Rd Yankton | Robinson Don J #1100253 1017 Walnut St Apt C6 Yankton | Yankton Ready Mix #1107066 2300 West City Limits Rd Yankton |
| Dooley Patrick Wade #1102203 922 W 3rd St Yankton | Klemp Jennifer #1106602 30572 444th Ave Mission Hill | Sathe Helen C #1099065 2903 Douglas Ave Apt 116 Yankton | Yankton Urological S #1102317 2009 Locust St Yankton |
| Dowd Jonathan #1102204 709 Mulberry St Yankton | Koerner Joye #1106021 613 Locust St Yankton | Schaefer Deb #1097002 1212 Cedar St Yankton | Young Richard Leroy #1102285 816 Maple St Yankton |
| Driver Daryl Paul Jr #1102205 508 Walnut St 2 Yankton | Korus Dan #1109825 303 Spruce St Ave Volin | Schaefer Rebecca Rachel #1102261 1210 Broadway Ave 37 Yankton | Youngkrantz Richard #1100257 308 Greenview Dr Apt 1 Yankton |
| Dunkel Dawn #1097878 30157 445th Ave Volin | Koster Shaun David #1102235 100 Poison Oak Dr Yankton | Schaeffer Lenora #1100254 309 Pine St Yankton | Zimmerman Harold #1100702 30967 446th Ave Yankton |
| Durham Sean #1103278 1605 Pine St Yankton | | Schaeffer Walter #1098304 For The Estate Of Yankton | |

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