

PRESS RELEASE

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**Statement by CSG Executive Director Stewart Schwartz
on Gas Prices and Suspension of the Gas Tax**

**Needed – Better, lasting solutions including more sustainable community designs
to end our oil dependency**

Putin's unprovoked war and criminal invasion of the independent, democratic nation of Ukraine has spiked world gas prices. Many Americans agree that big oil companies are now also price gouging and profiteering from the situation. So, the problem with politicians' proposals to suspend gas taxes begins with the fact that the oil companies will likely claim most of those uncollected funds because prices reset to the world market price.¹

In addition, suspending the gas tax will mean big cuts in funding for road maintenance, and rail and bus transit, at the expense of all Americans. Less road maintenance means more potholes and more frequent, costly repairs for our cars. It means we'll fall behind in replacing our crumbling bridges.

Less funding for transit will mean service cuts and possibly higher fares, both of which will particularly impact lower-income Americans, while leading to more people choosing driving and adding to traffic. And, if state governments try to shift their general funds to replace the gas tax revenues, it will too often come at the expense of other community needs like education, health care, and public safety.

Our dependence on oil is a risk to family budgets and to our national security. As a Navy veteran of the Cold War and as a conservationist and smart growth advocate, I urge our elected officials to provide real and lasting solutions to reduce our oil dependency:

- 1) Invest in our cities, towns, and walkable, mixed-use, transit-accessible communities, instead of sprawling development where people have no choice but to drive.
- 2) Invest in clean energy and the charging stations we need for electric vehicles – from buses and intercity rail to electric bikes and scooters to cars and trucks.
- 3) Focus our transportation dollars on rail and bus transit, fast and convenient bike networks, and safer local street networks for all users.
- 4) Invest in affordable housing close to jobs and transit, rather than highways that fuel more sprawl and increase the amount we drive.

¹ More targeted ways to address the impact of the spike on family budgets could be stipends paid to lower-income households and credits on business taxes for small businesses with high transportation costs.

Let's make the smart investments that will make America and every family more resilient. The term "resilience" has become an important planning and social concept, and relates to the capacity for our communities and each family to handle economic and environmental crises. Because of the way we have designed our communities to be overly dependent on cars and driving, and because of how we have separated homes from job centers, stores, schools, and services, we have placed our society, economy, and families at risk from spikes in gas prices.

Even with a successful and necessary rapid transition to electric vehicles, American communities will need to ensure that they are not overly reliant on large expensive personal vehicles, which regardless of the technology depend on limited raw materials controlled largely by other countries who may not be our friends. The region's residents – especially in car-dependent suburbs – want more options in how they get around and where they live.

To summarize, the combination of walkable, transit-accessible neighborhoods and communities, and electric vehicles tied to renewable energy, is essential to ending our oil dependency, for our national security, for economic security for American families, and for fighting climate change. The gas price spike calls for real, lasting solutions and the commitment of each of us to create more sustainable communities.

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