

Tri-county meeting held to discuss Proposed 3¢ per gallon gasoline tax

A tri-county meeting of Dale, Henry, and Houston counties was held Thursday night in the Headland High Auditorium to discuss a proposed 3¢ per gallon gasoline tax.

Less than 100, including county officials attended.

The 3¢ per gallon proposed gas tax will be used for a proposed \$1.2 billion bond issue commonly known as ATRIP2 that is expected to be introduced in this session of the Alabama Legislature.

Henry County Commission Chairman David Money was moderator for the meeting.

Judge Money said the meeting was three fold: briefly establish or re-establish the need for improvements to our county roads and streets; discuss a plan to provide funding for those improvements in a way that's both fair and affordable, and give an opportunity for those present to ask questions.

According to Judge Money, Henry County has about 520 miles of paved roads.

About one third are considered federal routes and they are in pretty good shape. Another third are in fair shape.

However, Judge Money said there are 156 miles of roads that require immediate attention or they will be lost.

According to Judge Money, the ATRIP program a few years back was good for Henry County, but money could only be spent on federal routes.

The proposed ATRIP2 has no restrictions on what roads can be worked on and those that need it the most can receive attention.

Under the current formula, Henry County would receive about \$10.4 million dollars. Of that amount, 80% would go to the county and 20% to the cities based on population.

A breakdown shows Henry County would receive about \$7.6 million, Headland \$1.2 million, Abbeville \$713,000, Newville \$143,000 and Haleburg \$27,000.

The gas tax will go away once the bond is paid off.

Funds cannot be used for salaries or equipment, only for construction of roads and bridges.

The cost, based on 14,000 miles per year average, 20 miles per gallon average will cost \$21.00 per year or 6¢ a day.

Based on the same averages, a driver of 25,000 miles per year will cost \$37.50 per year or 10¢ per day.

Several speakers said the road work is needed for economic development and to cut down on accidents.

Amanda Henderson of the Haleburg Senior Citizens Center said her concerns are for the safety of participants coming to the facility.

Abbeville Council member and school bus driver Rena Cosby said she drives on bad roads on her route daily. She noted this is an investment in our future.

Headland Mayor Ray Marler said the city has \$360,000 in proposed paving projects on the books now, but only receives \$50,000 a year from the current tax.

Abbeville Mayor Billy Helms said during his campaign street condition was something he heard the most about and planned to do something about when he got in office.

However, he found out no money is available for refinancing.

He noted only one street had been resurfaced in many years.

There were those against the tax.

Some spoke of the sunset provision of tax and quality of asphalt currently being used that is not holding up.

State Representative Dexter Grimsley, the only member of the Wiregrass legislative delegation said he would support the measure.

Presentations about Dale County and Houston County were made by their officials.