

American Driving Reaches Eighth Month of Steady Decline

by NAMIC

New data released Aug. 13 by the U.S. Department of Transportation show that since last November Americans have driven 53.2 billion miles less than they did over the same period a year earlier – topping the 1970s’ total decline of 49.3 billion miles.

“We can’t afford to continue pinning our transportation network’s future to the gas tax,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters. “Advances in higher fuel efficiency vehicles and alternative fuels are making the gas tax an even less sustainable support for funding roads, bridges, and transit systems.”

Americans drove 4.7 percent less, or 12.2 billion fewer miles, in June 2008 than in June 2007. The decline is most evident in rural travel, which has fallen by 4 percent – compared to the 1.2 percent decline in urban miles traveled – since the trend began last November.

Last month, Peters unveiled the USDOT’s transportation reform plan, which offers lawmakers several options to consider when Congress takes up highway and transit legislation next year. “It really makes little sense to try to upgrade our infrastructure using a revenue source as ineffective, unsustainable, and unpopular as the fuel tax,” she said.

“Secretary Peters’ plan to overhaul our nation’s transportation investment strategy begins the much-needed transition away from status quo solutions that produce status quo results. Her plan strengthens the abilities of state and local officials to integrate effective transit and highway solutions to meet Americans’ ever-changing travel demands,” said Acting Federal Highway Administrator Jim Ray.

As Americans drive fewer miles, less revenue is generated for the Highway Trust Fund from gasoline and diesel sales – 18.4 cents per gallon and 24.4 cents per gallon, respectively. During the first quarter of 2008, motorists consumed nearly 400 million fewer gallons of gasoline – about 1.3 percent less – and 318 million fewer gallons of diesel – about 7 percent less – than during the same period in 2007.

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation

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