

Will this be a tax deductible donation to CSM?

No. The money will not be funneled through the CSM bookkeeping system as a donation. Two reasons for this:

1. we won't be limited in the way we give the money away (e.g. we can give as much as we wanted to political/legislative-oriented groups); and
2. it won't become confused with other contributions/donations to sustain the life of the Community of St. Martin. We feel strongly that this tax should not in any way replace people's yearly pledges to support CSM.

What about other modes of travel?

We realize that this gas tax program does not address e.g. air travel, which also has a carbon cost. We decided that this project would for now just address auto gasoline, but acknowledged that we'd like to have further CSM discussions about the costs of air travel.

Ways in which this tax is "alternative":

- Clearly, those who have better fuel-efficient cars, and those who drive fewer miles, and those who drive in a more fuel-efficient way, would pay less than others -- which is sort of the point -- this is a tax where the goal is actually to pay the *least* amount of tax.
- But it's also a tax that you can feel good about paying -- a tax where you have direct input in deciding how it is used; a tax that is used to work for a better environment and a more sane foreign policy.
- Hopefully, the increased cost will be a motivation to influence everyone's habits and gas usage behavior over time.

Could others join us?

We have talked about having this be a CSM-only experiment for a period of time (a year?), work out the kinks, and then either open up the effort to others, or encourage others to start their own Voluntary Gas Tax groups.

Are other people doing this?

Yes, there are several known groups (not necessarily communities of faith, but citizen groups) that are doing something similar (a group in Goshen, Indiana, is one example). There are also many people who are convinced that steeper gas taxes (or carbon taxes) -- like in Europe, where people pay up to \$8.00/gallon -- are needed to fight CO2 emissions. However, since 1993 no prominent American politician has seriously supported a major increase in the gas tax. While many climate scientists, economists, and an increasing number of American citizens believe that a carbon tax is necessary, we need to convince our leaders to summon the political will to support a gas tax to reduce consumption.



What is it?

Beginning in 2011, a group of people -- in this case, some folks from the Community of St. Martin -- will agree that they will voluntarily pay more per gallon of gasoline.

This gas tax campaign grows out of the awareness that the society in which we live relies too heavily on petroleum products to the detriment of our environment, health, and the quality of life in our communities. It also reflects a concern that the price of gasoline does not reflect the actual costs that our global community incurs as a result of our dependence on oil.

The current cost of gas does *not* include:

- the cost of carbon emissions and its effect on climate change (e.g. global warming; air pollution);
- the costs of maintaining a stable and inexpensive supply of oil through political and military intervention in oil producing regions of the world;
- the costs to the health of ourselves and our communities (pollution-related illnesses, lack of exercise, lack of opportunities to interact with neighbors).
- the cost of maintaining roads and bridges.

So we are preparing for the future by undertaking this public, symbolic act in support of the idea that we need to reverse the negative impacts of our oil addiction and identify and support sustainable alternatives.

Basic Goals of the Gas Tax:

- Provide motivation to change our own gas-buying and car-usage behavior.
- Encourage ourselves to use different modes of transportation: walking, biking, mass transit, and creative community-based solutions to transportation (e.g. car-sharing, car-pooling).
- Encourage the use of fuel efficient vehicles and driving more slowly.
- Reduce dependence on foreign oil, and decrease the need for war to ensure oil supply.
- Prepare us for the future by putting a dollar charge on the external cost of carbon emissions—which is what will eventually have to happen if we are reduce emissions). It's an effort to make the private cost of driving a car reflect more closely the actual social costs: including global warming, air pollution, traffic congestion, and highway maintenance.
- Send a signal that there are some people who are willing to pay more for gas in order to combat climate change.

What are the rates?

Those who sign the CMS Voluntary Gas Tax Covenant at the beginning of 2011 would commit to a tax rate.

These are the proposed rates based on income*:

Up to \$30,000/year	\$1.00/gallon gas tax
\$30,000-\$60,000/year	\$1.50/gallon gas tax
\$60,000-\$90,000/year	\$2.00/gallon gas tax
Above \$90,000/year	\$2.50/gallon gas tax

**You have freedom to define this income level as you would like. If you cannot participate at any of these rates, you are free to decide to pay half the tax rate, for example.*

**Those who are required to drive their vehicle for work – beyond just commuting to and from work – are not expected to include those miles in this calculation.*

How will it work?

Individuals in the group will make a commitment to a sliding scale voluntary tax rate and then each person will keep track of his/her gas receipts or gas expenditures in whatever way they choose.

If the tax rate you committed to is \$1.00, then for every gallon of gas you bought during those 3 months, you'd pay an additional \$1.00 to the CSM Gas Tax Fund.

At the end of every three month period (4 quarters per year) the group will meet (with snacks!) to:

- write out checks to pay the tax and pool this money together. An assigned treasurer would then disperse the money according to the group's pre-determined wishes.
- talk with each other about changes in their gasoline usage habits.

Different ways to keep track:

- Keep all your gas receipts. At the end of the quarter, total up your gallons purchased and multiply by the gas tax rate.
- Keep a notebook in your car and write down how many gallons you purchased. At the end of the quarter, total them up and multiply by the gas tax rate.
- Keep track of your beginning and ending mileage for each quarter. Take the total miles driven and divide it by your average gas mileage (m.p.g.) your car gets. This is approximately the number of gallons of gas you used. Multiply that by the gas tax rate.

Where will the money go?

The group has talked about various possibilities. There seems to be consensus that the money should primarily be contributed to organizations that advocate for political change around climate change/global warming/alternative transportation issues.

There is also some interest in a portion of the money being used as a small fund from which CSMers could draw to help ease the burden of the tax (e.g. help buy bus passes, or membership in Hour Car, or help subsidize the buying of a bicycle, etc.).

This hasn't been worked out entirely, but several people are doing research on what organizations might make the most sense.