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House considers the future of road funding with commercial EVs

A House committee considered ways to make sure that electric commercial vehicles were paying their fair share toward Michigan's infrastructure.

The [House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee](#) heard testimony on Tuesday on [HB 5433](#), [HB 5434](#) and [HB 5435](#), which would establish a tax for electric commercial vehicles.

"When you look at how our road system operates today, there is a clear gap today. Diesel trucks pay for roads every time they fuel up, or in the case of interstate carriers, based on the number of miles driven in Michigan," [Rep. Pat Outman](#), R-Six Lakes, said. "Electric semi-trucks, however, can currently operate without contributing under that same structure, and that creates an obvious fairness issue, and also a long-term road funding issue."

The bills apply a tax to commercial vehicles that use electric fuel and would be calculated using miles driven on Michigan roads. It would be tied to the existing motor fuel tax rate of \$0.526 per gallon. The tax would not apply to passenger vehicles in addition to the use tax exemptions.

Four other states – Indiana, Iowa, Wyoming and Pennsylvania – currently have tax structures for commercial electric trucks.

The bills would prevent a patchwork of electric truck taxes and would apply equally to interstate and intrastate trucks, Outman said.

"If Michigan fails to modernize this system now, we face a future where diesel use continues to decline, electric freight continues to expand, and road funding steadily erodes," he said. "These bills ensure that as technology evolves, road funding adapts without shifting the burden on the families, taxpayers or small businesses."

[Rep. Reggie Miller](#), D-Van Buren Township, asked if electric freight drivers would be unfairly double-charged with registration fees, but Outman said that it would not be different from the registration fees traditional diesel trucks already pay.

"It's going to be the exact same tax structure as traditional diesel vehicles," he said. "They'll pay the registration, but they'll also pay a user fee for the roads, just like traditional trucks do."

Outman said he was open to changes if electric trucks were paying an enhanced registration fee.

Carmen Martorana of the International Fuel Tax Association testified in support of the bills.

"Being proactive now just makes sense," he said. "The progression of electric vehicles is going to continue ... if you have an electric commercial vehicle transversing through Michigan right now, they are not helping to contribute towards revenue to maintain the infrastructure, and that's simply not fair ... they're not contributing in any form to the revenue that you use to support your infrastructure."

Justin Carpenter, representing the Michigan Energy Innovation Business Council, also testified on the bills.

The council was neutral, Carpenter said, but he acknowledged the importance of adapting to electric vehicles.

"There has been a nationwide challenge to adapt our transportation tax structures to electrification," he said. "We wanted to express our mutual interest in ensuring that Michigan meets that challenge in a fair and balanced manner."

No further action was taken on the bills on Tuesday.

– By Elena Durnbaugh

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