

## Boulder lawmaker targeting gas guzzlers with new tax

### Tax sought on fuel-thirsty vehicles would fund smart growth

By [Ryan Morgan](#)

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Buying that Hummer, Yukon or other fuel-thirsty vehicle could get a bit more expensive under a proposal a Boulder lawmaker says she'll make early next year.

Rep. Claire Levy, D-Boulder, says she's considering legislation that would impose a one-time "gas guzzler" tax — probably in the range of \$80 to \$100 — on the purchase of vehicles that get poor gas mileage. Levy said she's still working on the specifics but that she'll probably set the threshold at 20 or 25 miles per gallon.

"It's not like it's going to be large enough to discourage people from buying a gas guzzler, but it might make them think twice about the consequences of it," Levy said.

If the requirement kicked in at vehicles that get 20 or fewer miles per gallon, more than half of all sport-utility vehicle owners would be paying the extra fee, according to a search on [www.fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov), a Web site set up by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Levy's proposal would take the money that results and give it to the state's Office of Smart Growth. That office today only has two employees — Levy said they jokingly refer to themselves as the "cubicle of smart growth" — but she hopes her bill would fix that.

That office could, through workshops or grants, help local governments do a better job of planning growth that doesn't rely so heavily on cars, Levy said. Last year, the office handed out \$400,000 in smart-growth grants.

"What I'm trying to get at is the problem we have of inadequate transportation planning, combined with this upward spiral in greenhouse-gas emissions because our land-use patterns require people to drive ever-increasing amounts," she said.

Howard Geller, executive director of the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project in Boulder, said Levy's plan makes sense. Emissions from cars and trucks are a major part of the problem of climate change, he said, and the way towns and cities get built helps determine how much people drive.

"I think she's come up with a clever funding source, rather than trying to find that money in the overall state budget," he said. "The least-efficient cars — the SUVs and light trucks — those are the vehicles that are polluting the most. Asking the purchasers of those vehicles to pay an additional fee to support efforts to reduce pollution by vehicles and reduce congestion on the roads makes sense."

The American Automobile Association often weighs in on legislation that affects motorists directly. But Eric Escudero, a spokesman for Denver's AAA branch, said he can't comment on Levy's proposal before it's been drafted.

"Once she does draft it, we'll be taking a look," he said.

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