

WP 2007-19  
October 2007



# Working Paper

Department of Applied Economics and Management  
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853-7801 USA

## **Distributional and Efficiency Impacts of Increased U.S. Gasoline Taxes**

**Antonio M. Bento, Lawrence H. Goulder,  
Mark R. Jacobsen, and Roger H. von Haefen**

# **Distributional and Efficiency Impacts of Increased U.S. Gasoline Taxes**

Antonio M. Bento  
University of Maryland

Lawrence H. Goulder  
Stanford University, Resources for the Future, and NBER

Mark R. Jacobsen  
Stanford University

Roger H. von Haefen  
North Carolina State University

July 2007

We are grateful to David Austin, Tim Bresnahan, Don Fullerton, Michael Greenstone, Ken Small, James Sweeney, Kenneth Train, Kurt van Dender and Frank Wolak for very helpful suggestions, and to Emeric Henry for his important contributions to the econometric efforts. We also thank the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for financial support.

# **Distributional and Efficiency Impacts of Increased U.S. Gasoline Taxes**

September 2007

We gratefully acknowledge financial support from William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Precourt Institute for Energy Efficiency.

## I. Introduction

For several reasons, reducing automobile-based gasoline consumption is a major U.S. public policy issue. Gasoline use generates environmental externalities. In 2004, approximately 22 percent of U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide – the principal anthropogenically sourced “greenhouse gas” contributing to global climate change -- derived from gasoline use. Other environmental externalities from gasoline combustion include the impacts from emissions of several “local” air pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds. Reduced gasoline use could lead to improved air quality and associated benefits to health.<sup>1, 2</sup> In addition, gasoline consumption accounts for 44 percent of the U.S. demand for crude oil, and the nation’s dependence on crude oil makes the U.S. vulnerable to changes in world oil prices emanating from disruptions in the world oil market. Some analyses claim that this vulnerability is not accounted for in individual consumption decisions and thus represents another externality from gasoline consumption.<sup>3</sup> The various externalities provide a potential rationale for public policy oriented toward gasoline consumption.

Recently, analysts and policy makers have called for new or more stringent policies to curb gasoline consumption. The U.S. Senate recently passed a bill that would raise corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards for passenger vehicles for the first time since 1985. The standards would be increased from the current 27.5 miles per gallon to 35 miles per gallon by 2020. The 2005 Energy Bill includes tax-credits for households purchasing high-mileage vehicles such as hybrid cars. The California State Assembly recently enacted AB 1493, which mandates carbon dioxide emissions that would require significant improvements in automobile

---

<sup>1</sup> Parry and Small (2005) and the National Research Council (2002) examine the various externalities from gasoline use and offer estimates of the overall marginal damages. The former study estimates the overall external cost from U.S. gasoline consumption (including effects relating to local pollution, climate change, congestion, and accidents) to be about 75 cents per gallon. This suggests that U.S. taxes on gasoline are below the efficiency-maximizing level, since the federal tax plus average state tax totals 41 cents.

<sup>2</sup> The extent of the health improvement from improved air quality depends on both the reduction in gasoline use and possible changes in pollution per gallon of gasoline used. Air districts currently in compliance with air pollution regulations under the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments might well respond to reductions in gasoline use by relaxing “tailpipe” emissions requirements, that is, on the allowable emissions per unit of fuel combusted. This would offset the air-quality and health improvements from reduced gasoline consumption.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, National Research Council (2002).

fuel economy. Other proposals include subsidies to retirements of older (gas-guzzling) vehicles and increments to the federal gasoline tax.<sup>4</sup>

This paper examines the gas tax option, employing an econometrically-based multi-market simulation model to evaluate the policy's efficiency and distributional implications. We investigate the impacts of increased U.S. gasoline taxes on fuel consumption, relating these impacts to changes in fleet composition (shifts to higher mileage automobiles) and vehicle miles traveled (VMT). We also evaluate the economy-wide costs of higher gasoline taxes, and explore how the costs are distributed across households that differ by income, region of residence, race, and other characteristics. We consider how the distribution of impacts depends on the ways revenues from the tax are returned to the private sector.

Some prior studies have examined the impact of gasoline taxes by estimating the demand for gasoline as a function of gasoline price and household income. For example, Hausman and Newey (1995) and West and Williams (2005) use household-level data on gasoline consumption to estimate deadweight loss and the optimal gasoline tax, respectively.

Other studies obtain the demand for gasoline indirectly by deriving it from estimates of the demand for VMT. For example, Berkovec (1985), Mannering and Winston (1985), Train (1986), and West (2004) sequentially estimate households' automobile ownership and VMT decisions.<sup>5</sup> The ownership decision is based on discrete choice of a range of automobile types, while the VMT decision is a continuous choice. Feng, Fullerton, and Gan (2005) estimate jointly households' ownership and VMT decisions.

A third set of studies focuses on supply-side phenomena – in particular, the impacts of policies on new-car production and the composition of the automobile fleet, and the associated effect on gasoline consumption. In contrast with the previously mentioned studies, this third set considers explicitly the imperfectly competitive nature of the new car market and the pricing behavior of new-car producers. For example, Berry *et al.* (1995), Goldberg (1998) and Austin and Dinan (2005) develop models of new car market that combine supply decisions by imperfectly competitive producers with discrete demand choices by households. The latter two

---

<sup>4</sup> The general public appears to be growing increasingly supportive of stronger measures to curb gasoline use. A February 2006 New York Times / CBS News Poll found that a majority of Americans would support a higher gasoline tax if it reduced global warming or made the U.S. less dependent on foreign oil.

<sup>5</sup> Poterba (1991) generates elasticities of demand for gasoline use by transforming Train's (1986) estimated elasticities for VMT.

studies explore impacts of automobile policies on the new car market. Goldberg (1998) and Kleit (2004) analyze tighter CAFE standards; Austin and Dinan (2005) examine CAFE standards and a gasoline tax increase.

The present study differs from earlier work in several ways. First, in contrast with nearly all prior work,<sup>6</sup> this analysis considers supply and equilibrium not only in the new car market but in the used car and scrap markets as well. The wider scope helps provide a more complete picture of the impact of a gasoline tax. In addition, addressing the equilibrium in all three car markets enables us to capture important dynamic effects. Higher gasoline taxes are likely to cause an increase in the share of relatively fuel-efficient cars among new cars sold. The extent to which the fuel-efficiency of the *overall* (new and used car) fleet improves will depend on the rate at which the newer, more efficient cars replace older cars. This depends on the relative size of the stocks of new and used cars and the rate at which older cars are taken out of operation (scrapped). By considering the new, used, and scrapped car markets, the model is able to consider the dynamics of changes in fleet composition and related short- and long-run impacts on gasoline consumption. As in Goldberg (1995), Berry, Levinsohn, and Pakes (1995), Petrin (2002), and Austin and Dinan (2005), we consider the imperfectly competitive nature of the new car market. However, in contrast with these studies, we connect this market to the used and scrap markets. This allows us to consider how policies affect the entire fleet of cars and associated demands for gasoline.

A second major difference from earlier work is the model's ability to capture distributional effects. The model considers over 20,000 households that differ in terms of income, family size, employment status (working or retired), region of residence, and ethnic background. This enables us to trace distributional impacts in several important dimensions. All household demands stem from a consistent, utility maximization framework, enabling us to measure distributional impacts in terms of theoretically sound welfare indexes. Prior studies have examined distributional effects by focusing on how gasoline expenditure shares differ across income groups<sup>7</sup>. In contrast, the present model considers not only the expenditure-side

---

<sup>6</sup> One exception is Berkovec (1985), who develops a model with interactions among these markets. His model assumes pure competition among auto producers, however.

<sup>7</sup> See Poterba (1989, 1991) for expenditure-based estimates of the incidence of gasoline taxes.

impacts but also the ways that the government's disposition of gas tax revenue influences the distribution of policy impacts.

Finally, the model differs in its econometric approach to estimating consumer demand for automobiles, trips (VMT), or gasoline. Some prior studies have examined the demand for automobiles separately from the demand for gasoline and VMT.<sup>8</sup> Yet these demands are interconnected. Some earlier studies have accounted for these connections by exploiting reduced-form, two-step estimators.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, we adopt a one-step (i.e., full-information) estimation strategy that integrates each household's automobile and VMT decisions within a utility-theoretic framework and permits us to recover sound welfare estimates.<sup>10</sup> In addition, we assume that all parameters entering preferences vary randomly across households. Random coefficients allow us to account for correlations in the unobservable factors influencing a household's discrete car choice and continuous VMT demand while simultaneously allowing for more plausible substitution patterns among automobiles (McFadden and Train, 2000; Bunch *et al.*, 2000).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the equilibrium simulation model. Section 3 outlines the model's data sources, with emphasis on the data employed to estimate household demands for vehicles and travel. Section 4 presents our approach for estimating households' automobile purchase and driving decisions. Section 5 presents and interprets results from simulations of a range of gasoline tax policies. Section 6 offers conclusions.

## 2. Structure of the Simulation Model

---

<sup>8</sup> Berry, Levinsohn, and Pakes (2004), Goldberg (1995), and Petrin (2003) focus on the demand for automobiles; Goldberg (1998) and West (2004) estimate the demand for VMT; Hausman and Newey (1995), Schmalensee and Stoker (1999), and West and Williams (2005) concentrate on the demand for gasoline. Austin and Dinan (2005) obtain demand functions for cars by calibrating the parameters of their simulation model to be consistent with internal estimates by General Motors.

<sup>9</sup> Examples are Berkovec (1986), Mannering and Winston (1986), Goldberg (1998), and West (2004).

<sup>10</sup> A difficulty with welfare measurement from two-step estimators is that each step generates a different set of estimates for the same parameters. Each set may have different welfare implications for the same policy. One-step estimators generate a single set of parameter estimates and therefore avoid this difficulty. To our knowledge, the only other automobile study to incorporate a one-step procedure is that of Feng, Fullerton, and Gan (2005).

## **a. Overview**

The economic agents in the model are households, producers of new cars, used car suppliers, and scrap firms. The model considers the car-ownership and vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) decisions of 20,429 households. The ownership and VMT decisions are made simultaneously in accordance with utility maximization.

The model distinguishes cars according to age, class, and manufacturer. Table 2-1 displays the different car categories, which imply 350 distinct cars of which 284 appear in our dataset and simulation.<sup>11</sup>

The used-car market equates the supply of used cars remaining after scrapping with the demand for ownership of those cars. Producers of new cars decide on new-car prices in accordance with Bertrand (price) competition. These producers consider households' demand functions in determining optimal pricing. Price-markups reflect the various price elasticities of demand for cars as well as the regulatory constraints posed by existing CAFE standards.

The model solves for a sequence of market equilibria at one-year intervals. Car vintages are updated each year, so that last year's new cars become one-year-old cars, last year's one-year-old cars become two-year-old cars, etc. Once a car is scrapped, it cannot re-enter the used car market. Characteristics of given models of new cars change through time based on specified growth rates of horsepower and fuel economy, as described in Section 5.

## **b. Household Demands**

Households obtain utility from car ownership and use, as well as from consumption of other commodities. The utility from driving depends on characteristics of the automobile as well as VMT. Each household has exogenous income; most households also are endowed with cars. If a household has a car endowment, it chooses whether to hold or relinquish (sell or scrap) that car; if it relinquishes the car it also decides whether to purchase a different car (new or used). If a household does not have a car endowment, it chooses whether to purchase a car.

If household  $i$  owns car  $j$ , its utility can be expressed by:

---

<sup>11</sup> The number of distinct cars increases over time as some unique new models become old and enter the used car fleet.



$$(2.1) \quad U_i = U_i(\mathbf{z}_j, M_i, x_i)$$

where  $\mathbf{z}_j$  is a vector of characteristics of car  $j$ , and  $M_i$  and  $x_i$  respectively refer to household  $i$ 's vehicle miles traveled and its consumption of the outside good. The household's utility conditional on choosing car  $j$  can be expressed through the following indirect utility function:

$$(2.2) \quad V_{ij} = V'_{ij} + \mu_i \varepsilon_{ij}$$

with

$$(2.3) \quad V'_{ij} = V'_{ij}(y_i - r_{ij}, p_{ij}^M, p_{ix}, \mathbf{z}_j, \mathbf{z}_i, \mathbf{z}_{ij})$$

where

$y_i$	=	income to household $i$
$r_{ij}$	=	rental price of car $j$ to household $i$
$p_{ij}^M$	=	per-mile operating cost
$p_{ix}$	=	price of the outside good, $x$
$\mathbf{z}_i$	=	vector of characteristics of household $i$
$\mathbf{z}_{ij}$	=	vector of characteristics of household $i$ , interacted with characteristics of car $j$

Household income  $y_i$  is devoted toward purchasing a car (or cars<sup>12</sup>), car operation, and the purchase of the outside good. We treat car purchases as rentals, so that payments are spread over many years. The household budget constraint can then be written as:

$$(2.4) \quad y_i = r_{ij} + p_{ij}^M M_i + p_{ix} x_i$$

If a household owns a vehicle, the stream of rental income from that vehicle is included in its income. A household that chooses to retain its existing car effectively makes a rental payment equal to its implicit rental income from that car. Income also includes the household's share of

---

<sup>12</sup> In Section 4 we discuss how we allow for multiple car ownership.

profits to new car producers, government transfers, and capital gains or losses resulting from changes in automobile prices.<sup>13</sup> The government transfer component of income includes revenue from the gasoline tax and adjusts as policy changes.

The operating cost  $p_{ij}^M$  includes the fuel cost (including gasoline taxes) as well as maintenance and insurance costs. The rental price  $r_{ij}$  accounts for depreciation, registration fees, and insurance. As indicated in expression (2.2) above, indirect utility includes the random component  $\mu_i \varepsilon_{ij}$ , where  $\varepsilon$  has a type I extreme-value distribution (following the econometric model) and  $\mu$  is a scale parameter. We assume the household chooses the vehicle (or vehicles) yielding the highest conditional utility, given  $V'$  and the random error. The probability that a given car  $j$  maximizes utility for household  $i$  is:

$$(2.5) \quad \exp\left(\frac{V'_{ij}}{\mu_i}\right) / \sum_j \exp\left(\frac{V'_{ij}}{\mu_i}\right)$$

The indirect utility function  $V_{ij}$  can be differentiated following Roy's identity to yield the optimal choice of miles traveled,  $M_{ij}$ , conditional on the purchase of car  $j$ . Aggregate automobile and VMT demand are the sum of these micro decisions. In specifying aggregate demand for automobiles, we treat each individual in our sample as a representative of a subpopulation of like individuals and sum up the probabilities. Similarly for aggregate VMT demand, we sum up each individual's probability-weighted VMT demand for each car.

### c. Supply of New Cars

Each of the seven producers in the model sets prices for its fleet of automobiles to maximize profits, given the prices set by its competitors and subject to fleet fuel economy constraints. Thus we assume Bertrand competition. Producers face less than perfectly elastic

---

<sup>13</sup> If a household is endowed one vehicle of type  $j$  entering the period, its gain is computed as:

$$(r'_j - r_j) \cdot (1 - \theta_j) + \frac{1}{2}(r'_j - r_j)(\theta_j - \theta'_j)$$

where  $r_j$  and  $r'_j$  respectively denote the rental price of car  $j$  in the reference and policy-change cases, and  $\theta_j$  and  $\theta'_j$  represent the probability of the car's being scrapped in the two cases. The first term represents the gain in value of cars supplied in the baseline, while the second is a triangle approximating the increase or decrease in surplus associated with changes in the number of vehicles scrapped.

demands for their cars: that is, two new cars of the same class can sell at different prices if produced by different firms.

The producer problem accounts for the presence of CAFE standards. These standards require that each manufacturer's fleet-wide average fuel economy be above a certain level in each of two general categories of cars: "light trucks" and "passenger cars." The classes in the passenger car category are non-luxury compact, non-luxury midsize, non-luxury fullsize, luxury compact, and luxury midsize/fullsize. Those in the light truck category are small truck, large truck, small SUV, large SUV/van, and minivan.<sup>14</sup>

In the following, the subscript  $k$  refers to the cars made by a particular manufacturer. The boldface vector  $\mathbf{p}$  includes prices of the cars made by all seven manufacturers.<sup>15</sup>  $T$  and  $C$  denote the sets of cars (for a given manufacturer) in the light truck and passenger car categories, respectively.  $\bar{e}_T$  and  $\bar{e}_C$  refer to the efficiency requirements for light trucks and passenger cars and  $e_k$  is the fuel economy of car  $k$ . The profit-maximization problem solved by a given producer is:

$$(2.6) \quad \max_{\{p_k, e_k\}} \sum_k (p_k - c_k(e_k)) \cdot q_k(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{e})$$

subject to:

$$\frac{\sum_{k \in C} q_k}{\sum_{k \in C} e_k} \geq \bar{e}_C \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\sum_{k \in T} q_k}{\sum_{k \in T} e_k} \geq \bar{e}_T$$

where  $p_k$  and  $c_k$  refer to the purchase price and marginal cost, respectively, of a particular car and  $q_k$  is the demand as a function of all prices.<sup>16</sup> For any given model  $k$ , marginal cost is a function of  $e_k$ , the chosen level of fuel economy for that car. To identify the cost function

---

<sup>14</sup> We remove a small (fixed) fraction of the largest vehicles from CAFE in order to incorporate the fact that the very largest trucks and SUV's are exempt from CAFE standards.

<sup>15</sup> The purchase price is the same as the present value of rental prices over the life of the car.

<sup>16</sup> Our treatment ignores some complexities of the CAFE regulations. The actual regulations allow for intertemporal banking and borrowing: the standard can be exceeded in one year if the firm overcomplies in another. In addition, some manufacturers can and do elect to pay a fine rather than meet the standards, and others are not in fact constrained by the standards. Work in progress (Jacobsen, 2006) addresses these issues.

parameters, we employ data on automobile markups, prices, and quantities sold, along with our estimated household demand elasticities for different automobiles. The relationship between production cost and fuel economy is taken from engineering estimates of the incremental costs of fuel economy from the National Research Council (2002). Details are provided in the appendix, available online at <xxx>.

We must solve the constrained optimization problem for all of the firms simultaneously since the residual demand curve faced by a given firm depends on the prices set by the others. The solution method is discussed in subsection e below.

#### **d. Used Car and Scrap Markets**

##### **i. The Used Car Market**

In the model, “used car” refers to all cars that are neither new nor scrapped. Let  $\ell$  refer to a given manufacturer and class of vehicle. For each manufacture-class category  $\ell$ , the quantity of used cars evolves according to:

$$(2.7) \quad q_{\ell,t+1}^U = (1 - \theta_\ell)q_{\ell,t}^U + q_{\ell,t}^N$$

where  $q_{\ell,t}^U$  and  $q_{\ell,t}^N$  refer to the quantity of used and new cars of the manufacturer-class combination  $\ell$  available in year  $t$ , and  $\theta_\ell$  represents the average probability that used cars of type  $\ell$  are scrapped. We discuss the specification of  $\theta_\ell$  in the next section.

In general, each car type, or age-manufacturer-class combination, will have a different price. The model determines the set of prices for all car types that allows market-clearing in the used-car market, that is, that causes every car to be sold. Since the demand for a given car will depend on the prices of other used cars (and on new car prices), all used car prices need to be solved simultaneously.

##### **ii. The Scrap Market**

We assume that households will scrap a car when the scrap value exceeds the resale value. However, each car (age-manufacturer-class combination) in our model actually represents a group of cars of varying quality and value, some of which may fall under the cutoff for scrapping even if the average car in the group does not. To allow for scrapping of some cars of a given type, we assign a scrap probability to each car. The scrap decision depends on  $p_j$ , the purchase price or resale value of a used car. This is computed as the discounted sum of future rental prices, adjusted for the possibility that a car will be scrapped before reaching each progressively older age. The household is assumed to have myopic expectations regarding future rental values; that is, it assumes that future rental values will be the same as the current-period rental values.

Once we have arrived at resale values for each used car, the scrap probability  $\theta_j$  is modeled simply as:

$$(2.8) \quad \theta_j = b_j \cdot (p_j)^{\eta_j}$$

where  $b_j$  is a scale parameter used for calibration and  $\eta_j$  is the elasticity controlling the change in scrap probability as the price of the car changes. Scrap rates increase with car age.

### **e. Solution Method**

To solve the model, we must obtain the full vector of new and used car prices satisfying the following conditions: (1) every available (not scrapped) used car has a buyer (or retainer) and (2) for every new car producer, the first-order conditions for constrained profit-maximization are satisfied. Note that the second requirement is a function of all prices, not just new-car prices. Since each household demands a range of vehicles with varying probabilities, we determine demands for a given car by aggregating across households the probability-weighted demands for that car.

The solution method embeds the used-car problem within the broader problem of solving for both used- and new-car prices. Specifically, we solve for the used-car prices that satisfy requirement (1), conditional on a set of posited prices for the new cars. We then adjust

the new car prices in an attempt to meet condition (2), and solve again for used-car prices that meet requirement (1) conditional on the adjusted new-car prices. We repeat this procedure until conditions (1) and (2) are met within a desired level of accuracy.

The government's revenue from gasoline taxes is returned to households according to the various "recycling" methods described in Section 5. Government revenues and transfers are mutually dependent: the level of transfers affects household demands and government revenues, while the level of revenues determines the transfer level consistent with the government's budget constraint. Thus, solving the model also requires that we determine the equilibrium level of government revenue and transfers. The overall solution is a set of prices for each car that simultaneously clears all markets, and an aggregate transfer level that equals the government's revenues from the gasoline tax. To solve the multidimensional system we use Broyden's method, a derivative-based quasi-Newton search algorithm.

### **3. Data**

Our dataset has two main components: (1) a random sample of U.S. households' automobile ownership choices from the 2001 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) and (2) new and used automobile price and non-price characteristics from *Wards Automotive Yearbook*, The National Automobile Dealer's Association (NADA) *Used Car Guide*, and the Department of Energy (DOE) fueleconomy.org website. By merging these two types of information, we obtain an unusually rich data set, one that allows us to consider household choices among a wide range of new and used cars and that permits us to distinguish households along many important dimensions. In the appendix, we offer details on how we merged the data sets and constructed needed variables.

#### **a. The NHTS Sample**

The 2001 NHTS consists of 26,038 households living in urban and rural areas of the United States. With the help of Department of Transportation staff, we obtained the confidential NHTS data files containing relevant data for our analysis. For each household we

have information on income, automobile holdings (by make, model, and year), and vehicle miles traveled. In addition, we have data on the household's demographic characteristics (including household size, composition, gender, education, and employment status) and geographical identifiers (including the state, metropolitan statistical area, and zip code of the residence).

After cleaning the data our final sample consists of 20,429 households from the original 26,038. Table 3-1 presents major demographic statistics of our final sample.

## **b. The Automobile Sample**

The 1983- 2002 *Wards Automobile Yearbook* provided most of the car and truck characteristics used in our analysis. Automobile characteristics include horsepower, weight, length, height, width, wheelbase, and city and highway miles per gallon (MPG) by make, model, and year for all cars and trucks sold during this period. We obtained information on car and truck prices from the National Automobile Dealer's Association (*NADA*), which publishes this information in the monthly *NADA Used Car Guide*. We used price information from the April 2001 and 2002 editions of the *Car Guide*, which we obtained in electronic format. Each edition contained the manufacturer's suggested retail price and current resale price (a weighted average of recent transaction prices) for all new and used cars and trucks dating back to 1983. As indicated in the appendix, we calculated depreciation based on changes in prices for a given car over the 2001-2002 period.

Combining information from the Wards and NADA data sets yielded a vector of prices and various automobile characteristics for roughly 4,500 automobiles distinguished by manufacturer, model, and year. We aggregated these data into the seven manufacturer categories, ten class categories, and five age categories in Table 2-1. We used a weighted geometric mean formula to aggregate price and non-price characteristics within each make, class, and age category, where the weights were proportional to the holdings frequencies in the *NHTS*.

Table 3-2 displays statistics on miles per gallon, horsepower, and rental price from our data. The data show significant MPG differences across classes and age categories. A new

compact, for example, is 1.48 times more efficient than a large SUV. The newest compacts yield 1.47 more miles per gallon than those in the oldest age category. In contrast, the newest midsize and large SUVs are less fuel-efficient than the older models. As for horsepower, we note that most of the increases apply to compacts and full size cars. Average horsepower of compacts increased 60 percent, and average horsepower of full size cars rose 75 percent. Differences in rental price are most substantial for new cars, due to the particularly rapid depreciation of new luxury vehicles. Older cars have much lower rental prices, and these prices are more similar across classes.

### c. Calculation of Rental Prices and Per-Mile Operating Costs

Two important variables we must construct from our data are the automobile rental prices and per-mile operating costs (the “price per mile” variable in Section 2) for all 284 autos. The underlying inputs into these prices and costs differ by region as well as automobile type. For household  $i$  owning car  $j$ , the rental price is given by:

$$r_{ij} = D_j + 0.85I_{ij}^A + F_{ij} + R \cdot p_j$$

where

$D_j$	=	depreciation in the real value of car $j$
$I_{ij}^A$	=	household $i$ 's annual insurance costs for car $j$
$F_{ij}$	=	household $i$ 's automotive registration fees for car $j$
$R$	=	real interest rate

Thus, the one-year rental price of a car is the sum of depreciation, insurance, and registration costs, plus the forgone real return on the principal value of the car.<sup>17</sup> For the real interest rate,  $R$ , we use a value of 3.89 percent, the 2001 average daily real rate on 30-year T-bills. We include insurance costs in both the rental price (associated with the choice of car) and the per-mile operating cost (associated with VMT). Representatives from State Farm Insurance suggested to us that roughly 85 percent of auto insurance premiums are fixed and independent

---

<sup>17</sup> If the household has purchased the car using a loan, this term can be equivalently interpreted as the interest payment on that loan.



of VMT. Hence, 85 percent of insurance costs appear in the rental price formula, while the remaining 15 is allocated to operating costs.

The rental prices are included in the household utility function relative to the price of the outside good (cost of living) faced by each household. We incorporate a cost of living index for 363 distinct regions that, together with differences in insurance and registration fees, reflects variation across households in the effective rental price of vehicles.<sup>18</sup>

The per-mile operating cost,  $p_{ij}^M$ , is expressed by:

$$p_{ij}^M = \frac{P_i^{gas}}{MPG_j} + N_j + 0.15I_{ij}^M$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} P_i^{gas} &= \text{household } i\text{'s per gallon price of gasoline} \\ MPG_j &= \text{miles per gallon for car } j \text{ }^{19} \\ N_j &= \text{per-mile maintenance and repair costs for car } j \\ I_{ij}^M &= \text{household } i\text{'s per-mile insurance costs for car } j \end{aligned}$$

The price of gasoline (and therefore operating cost) varies among households based on differences across 363 distinct regions of residence. The average after tax gasoline price faced by households in 2001 ranged from \$1.19 to \$1.86 per gallon.

## 4. Estimation of Household Ownership and Utilization Decisions

### a. The Econometric Model

#### (i) Challenges

Two overarching concerns influenced our approach to estimating household automobile demand. The first was our desire to integrate consistently the car ownership and utilization

---

<sup>18</sup> Further details about the cost of living index are provided in the appendix; It varies by a factor of 1.77 across households.

<sup>19</sup> For *MPG* we use a weighted harmonic mean of the city and highway EPA mileage rating.

decisions. Such integration is crucial for generating consistent estimates of welfare costs from gasoline taxes. The second concern arose from an important feature of the data: households frequently own more than one car. In the 2001 *NHTS*, 41.5 percent of households own zero or one car, another 43.6 percent own two cars, and the remaining 14.9 percent own three or more autos. This implies that many households have a potentially enormous number of auto bundles from which to choose. If, for example, there are  $J$  different cars and trucks and we consider only bundles consisting of two or fewer than two cars, there are  $1+J+J(J+1)/2$  bundles that households can potentially choose. With our automobile data set consisting of 284 composite cars and trucks, there are 40,755 distinct bundles that households might choose (and this large number ignores all bundles with three or more autos).

Nearly all past efforts to integrate automobile ownership and utilization decisions have relied on reduced-form, sequentially-estimated models.<sup>20</sup> Our approach exploits Roy's identity to estimate simultaneously the decisions on both margins. To account for different households owning different quantities of cars, we adopt a variation of Hendel (1999) and Dube's (2004) repeated discrete-continuous framework. In the context of automobile choice, the framework assumes that a household's ownership and utilization choices arise from separable choice occasions. On each choice occasion, the household makes a discrete choice of whether to own one of  $J$  automobiles. If an auto is chosen, the household conditionally decides how much to drive it during the year. To account for ownership of multiple automobiles, households have multiple choice occasions on which different automobile services may be demanded. Intuitively, different choice occasions in our framework correspond to different primary tasks or purposes for which households might demand automobile services (e.g., commuting to work, family travel, shopping excursions, or any combination thereof). We assume their number depends on the number of adults in a given household.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Berkovec, 1985; Mannering and Winston, 1985; Train, 1986; Goldberg, 1998; West, 2004; Bento *et al.*, 2005 adopt the sequential approach. As mentioned in the introduction, Feng, Fullerton, and Gan (2005) employ a one-step approach.

<sup>21</sup> There is some evidence in the non-market valuation literature that the specification of the number of choice occasions, as long as it is larger than the chosen number of goods, does not have significant effects on estimated welfare measures (von Haefen, Massey, and Adamowicz, 2005). Moreover, we do not expect that it has much if any effect on the relative efficiency rankings of policies.

Our approach to modeling automobile demand has advantages and drawbacks. Its main advantages are that it consistently links ownership and utilization decisions and reduces the dimension of the households' choice set on a given choice occasion to  $J+1$  alternatives ( $J$  autos and the no auto alternative). The latter feature makes our approach econometrically tractable with our 284 composite auto data set. It also has the virtue of allowing for households to own several cars. A main drawback is that it does not allow for interaction effects among the fleet of autos held by households. For example, a four-person household's utility from holding a second minivan being less than holding a single minivan. To account for such interactions, one would need to regard bundles of automobiles, rather than individual cars, as the objects of choice. However, as suggested above, such an approach would require *substantially* more aggregation of cars beyond what we have pursued.<sup>22</sup> This would rule out significant product differentiation and thus severely limit our ability to account for the imperfectly competitive nature of the automobile industry. In addition, it would compel us to put a limit of two on the number of cars owned by any household, which would eliminate from our sample those individuals likely to be most affected by changes in gasoline taxes.

## (ii) Specifics

Our repeated discrete-continuous model of automobile demand works as follows. Household  $i$  ( $i = 1, \dots, N$ ) is assumed to have a fixed number of choice occasions,  $T_i$ . We let  $T_i$  equal the number of adults in each household plus one.<sup>23</sup> On choice occasion  $t$ , household  $i$  is assumed to have preferences for car  $j$  ( $j=1, \dots, J$ ) that can be represented by the following conditional indirect utility function:

---

<sup>22</sup> Feng, Fullerton, and Gan's (2005) bundling approach aggregates all automobiles into one of two composites – cars and trucks.

<sup>23</sup> The 2001 *NHTS* suggests that a significant percentage of households hold an additional automobile relative to the number of adults. For the 1.84 percent of household with more autos than the one plus the number of adults, we set the number of choice occasions equal to the number of held autos.

$$\begin{aligned}
V_{ijt} &= V_{ij}' + \mu_i \varepsilon_{ijt} \\
V_{ij}' &= \frac{-1}{\lambda_i} \exp\left(-\lambda_i \left(\frac{y_i / T_i - r_{ij}}{p_{ix}}\right)\right) - \frac{1}{\beta_{ij}} \exp\left(\alpha_{ij} + \beta_{ij} \frac{p_{ij}^M}{p_{ix}}\right) + \tau_{ij} \\
\alpha_{ij} &= \tilde{\alpha}_i^\top \mathbf{z}_{ij}^\alpha \\
\beta_{ij} &= -\exp(\tilde{\beta}_i^\top \mathbf{z}_{ij}^\beta) \\
\lambda_i &= \exp(\tilde{\lambda}_i^\top \mathbf{z}_i^\lambda) \\
\tau_{ij} &= \tilde{\tau}_i^\top \mathbf{z}_{ij}^\tau \\
\mu_i &= \exp(\mu_i^*)
\end{aligned}
\tag{4.1}$$

where  $(y_i, r_{ij}, p_{ij}^M, p_{ix})$  are household  $i$ 's income, rental price for the  $j$ th auto, utilization (or *VMT*) price for the  $j$ th car, and the Hicksian composite commodity price, respectively,  $(\mathbf{z}_{ij}^\alpha, \mathbf{z}_{ij}^\beta, \mathbf{z}_{ij}^\tau)$  are alternative automobile characteristics (including make, age, and class dummies that control for unobserved attributes<sup>24</sup>) interacted with household demographics,  $\mathbf{z}_i^\lambda$  contains just household characteristics,  $(\tilde{\alpha}_i, \tilde{\beta}_i, \tilde{\lambda}_i, \tilde{\tau}_i, \mu_i^*)$  are parameters that vary randomly across households, and  $\varepsilon_{ijt}$  contains additional unobserved heterogeneity that varies randomly across households, automobiles, and choice occasions. If the household instead decides not to rent a car (i.e., automobile 0), its conditional indirect utility function is:

$$(4.2) \quad V_{it0} = \frac{-1}{\lambda_i} \exp\left(-\lambda_i \left(\frac{y_i / T_i}{p_{ix}}\right)\right) + \phi_i^\top \mathbf{z}_i^\phi + \mu_i \varepsilon_{i0t}$$

where  $\mathbf{z}_i^\phi$  and  $\phi_i$  are individual characteristics and parameters, respectively. The rational household is assumed to choose the alternative that maximizes its utility on each choice occasion. Assuming each  $\varepsilon_{ijt}$  ( $j = 0, \dots, J$ ) can be treated as independent draws from the normalized type I extreme value distribution, the probability that individual  $i$  chooses alternative  $j$  on choice occasion  $t$  condition on the model's structural parameters is:

$$(4.3) \quad \Pr_{it}(j) = \frac{\exp(V_{ij}' / \mu_i)}{\sum_{k=0}^J \exp(V_{ik}' / \mu_i)}.$$

---

<sup>24</sup> Berry, Levinsohn, and Pakes (1995, 2004) use alternative specific constants for every automobile to control for unobserved characteristics. Given the highly nonlinear-in-parameters structure of our conditional indirect utility functions, we could not estimate a model with a full set of alternative specific constants and instead adopted a more parsimonious specification with make, age, and class dummies as in Goldberg (1995).

Assuming the household chooses automobile  $j$ , Roy's identity implies that the household's conditional  $VMT$  demand is:

$$(4.4) \quad M_{ij} = \exp \left( \alpha_{ij} + \beta_{ij} \left( \frac{p_{ij}^M}{p_{ix}} \right) + \lambda_i \left( \frac{y_i / T_i - r_{ij}}{p_{ix}} \right) \right).$$

We assume the analyst imperfectly observes  $M_{ij}$  due to measurement error in our data.<sup>25, 26</sup>

The analyst observes  $\tilde{M}_{ij} = M_{ij} + \eta_{ij}$ , where  $\eta_{ij}$  is an independent draw from the normal distribution with mean zero and standard deviation  $\sigma_i = \exp(\sigma_i^*)$ .<sup>27</sup> The likelihood of observing  $\tilde{M}_{ij}$  conditional on the model parameters is:

$$(4.5) \quad l(\tilde{M}_{ij} | j \text{ chosen}, j \neq 0) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^{1/2} \sigma_i} \exp \left( -\frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{\tilde{M}_{ij} - M_{ij}}{\sigma_i} \right)^2 \right).$$

Given our assumed structure, the full likelihood of household  $i$ 's automobile demand conditional on  $\delta = (\tilde{\alpha}_i, \tilde{\beta}_i, \tilde{\lambda}_i, \tilde{\tau}_i, \phi_i, \mu_i^*, \sigma_i^*)$  is then:

$$(4.6) \quad L_i = \prod_{t=1}^{T_i} \left[ \prod_{j=0}^J \text{Pr}_t(j)^{1_{ij}} \prod_{j=1}^J l(\tilde{M}_{ij} | j \text{ chosen})^{1_{ij}} \right]$$

where  $1_{ij}$  is an indicator function equal to one if car  $j$  is chosen on individual  $i$ 's  $t$ th choice occasion and zero otherwise.

## b. Estimation Strategy

Past econometric efforts to model vehicle ownership and derived VMT demand decisions have used variations of Dubin and McFadden's (1984) sequential estimation strategy that accounts for the induced selectivity bias in derived VMT demand with a Heckman-like

<sup>25</sup> Because the 2001 *NHTS* survey elicited VMT in part by asking respondents to recall their past driving behavior, we believe it is appropriate to account explicitly for measurement error in reported VMT.

<sup>26</sup> Our assumption that some disturbances capture preference heterogeneity while others pick up measurement error makes our model conceptually similar to the Burtless and Hausman (1978) two-error discrete-continuous model that is frequently used in nonlinear budget constraint applications.

<sup>27</sup> Following Dubin and McFadden (1984), past automobile applications assume some degree of correlation between  $\eta_{ij}$  and the type I extreme value errors in the discrete choice model. Similar to King (1980), we instead assume that these disturbances are independent and introduce correlations between the discrete and continuous choices through random parameters as described below.

(1979) correction factor. We employ a full-information estimation approach that accounts for correlations in the unobserved determinants of choice across discrete and continuous dimensions through random parameters (McFadden and Train, 2000). Intuitively, random parameters allow unobserved variations in taste to influence automobile ownership decisions and VMT demand decisions. We allow all parameters,  $\delta = (\tilde{\alpha}_i, \tilde{\beta}_i, \tilde{\lambda}_i, \tilde{\tau}_i, \phi_i, \mu_i^*, \sigma_i^*)$ , to be distributed multivariate normal with mean  $\bar{\delta}$  and variance-covariance matrix  $\Sigma_\delta$ . This approach is more general than earlier random coefficient discrete-continuous applications (e.g., King, 1980; Feng, Fullerton, and Gan, 2005) that include only one random parameter. The more general specification offers a far richer degree of unobserved preference heterogeneity to influence household's ownership and use decisions than previous applications.

Given the nonlinear nature of our likelihood function, the large number of households and sites in our data set, and the potentially large number of parameters on which we wish to draw inference, classical estimation procedures such as maximum simulated likelihood (Gourieroux and Monfort, 1996) would be exceptionally difficult, if not impossible, to implement. In light of these computational constraints, we adopt a Bayesian statistical perspective and employ a variation of Allenby and Lenk's (1994) Gibbs sampler estimation procedure that is less burdensome to implement in our application.<sup>28</sup>

The Bayesian framework assumes that the analyst has initial beliefs about the unknown parameters  $(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta)$  that can be summarized by a prior probability distribution,  $f(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta)$ . When the analyst observes a set of choices  $\mathbf{x}$ , she combines this choice information with the assumed data generating process to form the likelihood of  $\mathbf{x}$  conditional on alternative values of  $(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta)$ ,  $L(\mathbf{x} | \bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta)$ . The analyst then updates her prior beliefs about the distribution of  $(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta)$  to form a posterior distribution for  $(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta)$  conditional on the data,  $f(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta | \mathbf{x})$ . By Bayes' rule,  $f(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta | \mathbf{x})$  is proportional to the product of the prior distribution and likelihood, i.e.,  $f(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta | \mathbf{x}) = f(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta)L(\mathbf{x} | \bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta)/C$  where  $C$  is a constant. In general,  $f(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_\delta | \mathbf{x})$  will

---

<sup>28</sup> Although the Bayesian paradigm implies a very different interpretation for the estimated parameters relative to classical approaches, the Bernstein-von Mises theorem suggests that the posterior mean of Bayesian parameter estimates, interpreted within the classical framework, are asymptotically equivalent to their classical maximum likelihood counterparts assuming a correctly specified data generating process. Following Train (2003), we interpret this result as suggesting that both approaches should generate qualitatively similar inference, and thus the analyst's choice of which to use in practice can be driven by computational convenience.

not have an analytical solution, and thus deriving inference about the moments and other relevant properties of  $(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_{\delta})$  conditional on the data is difficult. However, Bayesian econometricians have developed a number of Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) procedures to simulate random samples from  $f(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_{\delta} | \mathbf{x})$  and in the process draw inference about the posterior distribution of  $(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_{\delta})$ .

Following Allenby and Lenk (1994), we specify diffuse priors for  $(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_{\delta})$  and use a Gibbs sampler with an adaptive Metropolis-Hastings component to simulate from  $f(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_{\delta} | \mathbf{x})$ . By decomposing the parameter space into disjoint sets and iteratively simulating from each set conditionally on the others, the Gibbs sampler generates simulations from the unconditional posterior distribution after a sufficiently long burn-in. The implementation details of the algorithm are described in the appendix.

One further dimension of our estimation approach is worth noting. Because of the large number of households in our data set ( $N = 20,429$ ) and our desire to account for differences in automobile demand across different household types (e.g., single males, two-adult households with and without children, retired couples), we stratified the sample into 12 groups based on demographic characteristics and estimated separate models within each strata. In addition to decomposing a computationally burdensome estimation problem on a large data set into a series of more manageable estimation problems on smaller data sets, stratification allows us to better account for observable and unobservable differences among households.

### **c. Empirical Results**

For all 12 strata, we obtain precisely estimated posterior mean values for  $(\bar{\delta}, \Sigma_{\delta})$ .<sup>29</sup> Many of the parameters that are common across the 12 strata vary in magnitude considerably, suggesting that there is significant preference heterogeneity across the different subpopulations. We also find that the diagonal elements of  $\Sigma_{\delta}$  are generally large, suggesting considerable preference heterogeneity within each stratum as well. The latter preference heterogeneity and the highly nonlinear structure of our preference function mean that the estimated parameters do

---

<sup>29</sup> Parameter estimates for each of the 12 strata are reported in the appendix.

not have a simple economic interpretation. Thus instead of focusing on the estimated parameters, we examine the various elasticities that they imply. We display these elasticities in Table 4-1, broken down by household and automobile types. Our cross-section estimation implies that these should be interpreted as long-run elasticities.

The first column of Table 4-1 reports the elasticity of gasoline use with respect to gasoline price. In the “All” and “by Household” panels, the elasticities allow for responses in both VMT and car choice (and associated fuel-economy). In the “By Auto” panel, the elasticities are conditional on car choice. Across all households and cars, we obtain a mean estimate of -0.35. The estimated elasticities are larger for families with children and owners of trucks and SUVs. Graham and Glaister’s (2002) survey of past studies indicates long-run elasticities in the U.S. ranging from -0.23 to -0.80. The authors note that prior estimates are quite sensitive to the data and modeling assumptions employed.

The second column of the table shows the elasticity of gasoline use with respect to income. On average, we find estimates of around 0.76. The elasticity is highest for families with children and owners of new vehicles. Graham and Glaister report long-run estimates in the range of 1.1 to 1.3.<sup>30</sup>

The third column reports car ownership elasticities with respect to the own rental price. For new cars, rental price elasticities should track purchase price elasticities if rental and purchase prices vary proportionally. Our results imply mean rental price elasticities of -0.88 for all vehicles and -1.97 for new vehicles only. Luxury cars, large SUVs, and large trucks, which have the highest rental prices, have the highest rental price elasticities among automobile classes. Much of the work estimating these elasticities has focused exclusively on new vehicles (e.g. Berry, Levinsohn and Pakes, 1995, Petrin, 2002, Berry, Levinsohn and Pakes, 2004, and Train and Winston, forthcoming). Train and Winston use a cross-section of household level data involving 200 new cars and find average elasticities for new cars ranging from -1.7 to -3.2, so that estimates tend to be somewhat larger than our average of -1.97. Other

---

<sup>30</sup> Although our estimated income elasticities are lower than in much of the previous literature, we note that our stratification of the sample allows parameters controlling income effects to vary among types of households, which may yield a more accurate estimation of income effects than in prior (mainly time-series) work.



estimates from the industrial organization literature use aggregate time-series data, and find elasticities ranging from -3 to -4.5 (e.g., Berry, Levinsohn and Pakes, 1995; Petrin, 2002).<sup>31</sup>

The final column of the table reports long-run VMT elasticities with respect to operating costs. Across all households and cars, the average elasticity is -0.74. This elasticity is lower for new cars than for older vehicles. Older cars are disproportionately owned by lower income households, who exhibit higher VMT elasticities. Because gasoline makes up slightly less than half of per mile operating costs, our average estimate implies an average VMT elasticity with respect to the price of gasoline of -0.34. In their survey, Graham and Glaister report that from prior studies the average estimate for this long-run elasticity is -0.30.

## **5. Simulation Results**

### **a. Assumptions Underlying the Simulation Dynamics**

The simulation model generates a time path of economic outcomes over 10 years at one-year intervals. As mentioned, the model solves in each period for the market-clearing new and used car prices. We assume that household incomes grow at an annual rate of one percent. In all simulations, the pre-tax price of gasoline is \$1.04 and is taken as exogenous and unchanging over time.<sup>32</sup>

### **b. Baseline Simulation**

---

<sup>31</sup> We explored the sensitivity of estimates to several alternative specifications and estimation strategies. For example, we experimented with allowing the income coefficient to vary across car classes and age groups, restricting a subset of parameters to be fixed across the sample, including alternative specific constants to account for unobserved automobile characteristics, and jointly estimating our model with five years of aggregate new car data on prices and quantities. None of these alternatives generated elasticities significantly different from those in Table 4.1.

<sup>32</sup> Pre-existing federal taxes are \$0.185 and average state taxes are \$0.225.

The baseline simulation offers a reference scenario with which we compare the outcomes from various gasoline tax policies. Consistent with historical trends, we assume in this simulation that automobile horsepower and weight increase at an annual rate of five percent. In our central case we adopt the “Path 1” assumptions of the National Research Council (2002) regarding improvements in fuel economy: over a 10-year period, such improvements range from 11 percent for compacts to 20 percent for large SUVs. As part of a sensitivity analysis below, we adopt in the baseline the more optimistic NAS “Path 3” assumptions regarding growth in fuel economy.

Table 5-1 displays the equilibrium quantities of new and used cars under the baseline simulation. Our reference case overpredicts the size of the vehicle fleet by about 8 percent, ranging from 5 percent for midsize cars to 14 percent for small trucks.

### **c. Impacts of Gasoline Tax Increases under Alternative Recycling Methods**

Here we present results from simulations of permanent increases in gasoline taxes. We start by focusing on the impacts of a tax increase of 25 cents per gallon (other tax increases are considered below) under the following alternative ways of recycling the additional revenues from the tax increase:

- *“flat” recycling*: revenues are returned in equal amounts to every household
- *“income-based” recycling*: revenues are allocated to households according to each household’s share of aggregate income
- *“vmt-based” recycling*: revenues are allocated according to each household’s share of aggregate vehicle miles traveled

Recycling could be accomplished by the government’s mailing rebate checks to households on an annual basis. The shares of total revenues going to different households depend on baseline values and thus do not depend on behavioral responses to the gasoline tax.

### **i. Aggregate Impacts**

## *Gasoline Consumption*

Table 5-2 presents the impacts of this policy on gasoline consumption. In the short run (year 1), the percentage reduction is about 5.1 percent under flat and income-based recycling, and about 4.5 percent under VMT-based recycling. Compared with other recycling methods, VMT-based recycling gives a larger share of gasoline tax revenue to car owners, who tend to have larger income elasticities of gasoline use. As a result, there is a larger offsetting income effect on gasoline use under VMT-based recycling than under other recycling methods, and the overall reduction in gasoline consumption is smaller.

The percentage change in gasoline use is approximately equal to the percentage change in miles traveled (VMT) minus the percentage improvement in fuel economy (miles per gallon). The table shows the contributions of these two components. Most of the reduction in gasoline use comes from the reduction in VMT: the improvements in fleetwide fuel economy are fairly small.

In the short run, the major channel for improved aggregate fuel economy is an increase in the scrapping rate for vehicles with unusually low fuel economy. The augmented gasoline tax raises per-mile operating costs, which makes vehicles with low fuel economy relatively less desirable, causing their demand and prices to fall and their scrap rates to rise. In the first year of the policy, an additional 160,000 used large trucks and large SUVs are scrapped. Over the longer term, average fuel economy is influenced by changes in fleet-composition attributable to increased relative sales of new cars that are more fuel-efficient, and by price-induced increases in fuel economy of given models. The percent increase in fuel economy is larger in the long run, although fuel economy improvements still account for a small share of the overall reduction in gasoline consumption.

Table 5-3 summarizes the changes in fleet composition. On impact, the higher gasoline tax occasions a shift away from cars (more cars are scrapped) and, among cars that remain in operation, a shift toward used cars (which, on average, are more fuel-efficient). In the long run, the percentage reduction in new cars is smaller. This is the case because new cars become

increasingly efficient relative to older cars as time passes, and the gasoline tax increase gives greater importance to fuel-economy.<sup>33</sup>

Several prior studies<sup>34</sup> suggest that the overall reduction in gasoline consumption should be larger in the long run than in the short run, since the fleet-composition (fuel economy) channel requires considerable time to take effect. In fact our simulations indicate that, in percentage terms, the long-run reduction is smaller than the short-run reduction. This occurs because VMT per household falls by a smaller percentage in the long run than in the short run (see Table 5-2). This in turn stems from the fact that although in the long run there is a larger percentage reduction in the number of cars owned by the average household, there is a smaller percentage reduction in miles traveled.<sup>35</sup>

Table 5-2 shows that the 25 cent-per-gallon increase in the gasoline price leads to a reduction of 4 ½ to 5 percent in the *equilibrium* demand for gasoline in the long run, or about a .2 percent reduction for each penny increase in the gasoline price. It is difficult to compare this result with other studies, since other studies do not consider market equilibrium for both new and used cars, and do not consider time explicitly. However, it may be noted that Austin and Dinan (2005) report that a 30 cent per gallon increase in the gasoline tax would reduce gasoline consumption (by new cars) by 10 percent (cumulatively) over a 14-year period, or .3 percent reduction (cumulatively) for each penny increase.

### *Efficiency Costs*

Table 5-4 displays the efficiency cost of gasoline tax increases of 10, 25, and 75 cents per gallon. This cost is the weighted sum of the negative of each household's equivalent variation, where a household's weight is proportional to its share of the total population. Here

---

<sup>33</sup> This increasing relative efficiency of new cars applies both under the baseline price path and under the policy change. The baseline path is based on the National Research Council's (2002) "Path 1" assumptions on new car fuel economy.

<sup>34</sup> Examples are Agras and Chapman (1999), Glaister and Graham (2002), and Johansson and Schipper (1997).

<sup>35</sup> In the long run, the cost of gasoline represents a smaller fraction of per-mile operating cost, a reflection of both exogenous and endogenous improvements in fleet fuel economy.

“cost” should be interpreted as a gross measure, since it does not net out the environmental or national security benefits stemming from the policy change.

Under flat recycling, the (gross) cost per dollar raised is \$.16, \$.18, and \$.24, for gasoline tax increases of 10, 25, and 75 cents per gallon, respectively. The costs under the alternative recycling cases are not much different from those in the flat recycling case: the nature of recycling, though very important distributionally (as indicated below), does not much affect the aggregate costs. This result requires careful interpretation. Another choice in the recycling decision is whether to return revenues in lump-sum form or instead by way of cuts in the marginal rates of prior taxes such as income or sales taxes. Prior studies have shown that returning revenues through marginal rate reductions can significantly reduce policy costs, relative to lump-sum recycling.<sup>36</sup> Because our simulation model does not include prior taxes (except for taxes on gasoline), we can only consider recycling through lump-sum transfers, and cannot contrast other aspects of recycling.<sup>37</sup>

## ii. Distributional Impacts

### *Effects across Income Groups*

Figures 5-1a and 5-1b display the impacts of a 25-cent gasoline tax increase on household income groups.<sup>38</sup> The distribution of impacts depends crucially on the nature of recycling. Under flat recycling, lower income groups experience a welfare improvement from the policy change, while higher income groups suffer a welfare loss. Here the lower income groups receive a share of the tax revenues that is considerably larger than their share of

---

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Goulder *et al.* (1999) and Parry and Oates (2000).

<sup>37</sup> The absence of prior taxes can also affect policy costs. The direction of the bias from this omission depends on the extent to which the commodity receiving the tax increase (gasoline) is a complement or substitute for taxed factors of production such as labor and capital. Previous studies indicate, in particular, that if gasoline is an average substitute for leisure, the presence of prior taxes raises the costs of a gasoline tax (or of an increase in this tax). See, for example, Goulder and Williams (2003). On the other hand, if gasoline is a sufficiently weak substitute (or relatively strong complement) for these factors, then the pre-existing taxes imply lower costs from a gasoline tax. West and Williams' (2007) empirical estimates suggest that gasoline and leisure may be complements, which imply an upward bias in our model's estimate of the cost of a gasoline tax increase. Their study calculates the cost of an incremental increase in the gasoline tax to be about 26 cents, somewhat higher than the cost in our simulations.

<sup>38</sup> The pattern of impacts across households is similar for the 10-cent and 75-cent gasoline tax increases.

gasoline tax payments. While policy discussions often refer to the potential regressivity of a gasoline tax, these simulations indicate that flat recycling more than fully offsets this potential regressivity.

Under income-based recycling the pattern of impacts is U-shaped. In this case the middle-income households experience the largest welfare loss. As indicated in Table 5-5, for these households the ratio of miles driven (or gasoline taxes paid) to income is highest; hence recycling based on income benefits these households less than other households. Only the very rich experience welfare gains under income-based recycling; these households have the lowest ratio of miles traveled (or gasoline tax paid) to income.

VMT-based recycling implies a fairly flat pattern of impacts across the income distribution, although the welfare losses are greater for higher-income households. In comparison with lower-income households, rich households drive more luxury cars, which are relatively less fuel-efficient. As a result, the ratio of gasoline taxes paid to VMT is especially large for richer households, and these households benefit least from VMT-based recycling.

Table 5-6 decomposes the welfare impacts into the various contributing factors: the change in gasoline price, the transfer (rebate) of gasoline tax revenue, the net capital gain or loss associated with policy-induced changes in car prices, and changes in profit to new-car producers. We have assumed that households own shares of new-car profits in proportion to their share of benchmark aggregate income. The table makes clear that changes in the gasoline price and the transfer are by far the most important sources of the household welfare impact. It also confirms that, depending on the type of recycling involved, the transfer may or may not offset the gasoline price impact to a particular household.

### *Effects along Other Demographic Dimensions*

Figures 5-2a and 5-2b show VMT and policy impacts by race and income. The figures reveal two main results. First, income seems to be a more important determinant of welfare impact than race: there is greater variation in welfare impacts across income groups than across racial categories. This reflects the fact that much of the welfare impact is determined by VMT, and the differences in VMT across income groups are much larger than the VMT differences across racial groups, after controlling for income (Figure 5-2a). Second,

low-income African-American households enjoy the largest gains from flat recycling, while high-income African-Americans experience the smallest losses. This is in keeping with the relatively small differences in VMT between low-income and higher-income African-American households.<sup>39</sup>

Figures 5-3a and 5-3b display differences in welfare impacts across states.<sup>40</sup> The top map displays average VMT per household from the data. The bottom map exhibits the differences in average household welfare impact. The top and bottom maps are nearly identical, indicating that benchmark VMT is a strong predictor of the welfare impact. Benchmark VMT seems to be strongly correlated with population density. Several relatively densely populated states – New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Florida – experience the smallest average welfare impact, while many of the relatively sparsely populated states – Montana, Idaho, Utah, Oklahoma, Texas, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina – suffer the largest adverse impacts. However, population density does not perfectly correlate with benchmark VMT or the magnitude of the impact: some sparsely populated states – Wyoming and Nevada – nevertheless have low benchmark VMT and relatively small welfare impacts.

Table 5-7 shows how impacts differ depending on the employment status of the household. Retirees fare better than younger individuals, as they tend to drive less. Households with no children also do better, for the same reason.

#### **D. Sensitivity Analysis**

---

<sup>39</sup> Although not displayed, the same pattern emerges under other forms of recycling: differences in income account for more of the variation of welfare impacts than racial differences do, and the variation in impacts between high-income and low-income African-American households is relatively small compared to the variation for other households.

<sup>40</sup> To generate the results in these figures, we first regressed the household welfare impacts (EVs) from the simulation on household characteristics and on the predicted baseline VMT and predicted baseline VMT squared. Next we used the coefficients from the regression, the same set of household characteristics, and household baseline VMT from the data (as opposed to predicted VMT) to get a new fitted value of EV for each household. We then aggregated this information by state.

Here we consider the sensitivity of results to parameters affecting changes in fuel economy and scrapping. In addition, we explore the extent to which responses to gasoline tax increases depend on the existence of the CAFE standard.

The impacts of gasoline tax increases could well be affected by the rate of technology change in automobiles over the next decade. One aspect of faster technological improvement would be speedier growth in the fuel economy of given car models in successive years.<sup>41</sup> To explore this possibility, we perform an additional simulation allowing for faster improvements in fuel economy. Here we adopt the “Path 3” assumptions from the National Research Council (2002) study. In contrast with the central case, in which individual model fuel economy improves between 11 percent (compacts) and 20 percent (large SUVs), under this alternative scenario the improvements are more than twice as large (see note 2 to Table 5-8). The NRC study interprets the scenario involving faster fuel economy growth as due to technological advances that reduce producers’ costs of supplying more fuel-efficient cars. Our simulations also express such a scenario. However, it should be noted that changes in the baseline time-profile of fuel economy could also reflect changes in household preferences. Our model cannot capture such demand-side changes, since we assume a stable utility function in our econometric estimation.

Table 5-8 shows the different implications of the two technology paths. In the baseline, by year 10 average household gasoline consumption is 751.6 gallons in the fast technology improvement case. This is about 3 percent lower than in the central case baseline. Fuel economy (miles per gallon) is about 22 percent higher in the fast-improvement case. Average VMT is also higher (by 18 percent), reflecting the lower per-mile cost of driving associated with higher fuel economy.

In the case with faster baseline fuel economy improvements, the gasoline tax increase induces a smaller long-run percentage reduction in consumption than it does in the central case. This is because gasoline occupies a smaller share of the household budget in this alternative scenario, implying a smaller income effect from the tax increase. The average long-run

---

<sup>41</sup> Growth in fleetwide fuel economy has been promoted by the increased production and sale of hybrid vehicles. In our model, hybrid vehicles are merged with conventional cars within given manufacturer-class combinations (e.g., Toyota compacts). We are considering splitting out hybrids in future work. To estimate demands for hybrids, we may need to supplement our revealed-preference data with stated-preference information, since hybrids were introduced in the automobile fleet in 2001, the year corresponding to our benchmark data. Today they represent about four percent of the compact car fleet.



welfare impact (EV) is 18 percent smaller under the fast technology growth scenario, which is also consistent with gasoline's smaller budget share. Thus, the baseline time-profile of fuel economy significantly influences the welfare consequences of a gasoline tax. However, the differences across the two scenarios in baseline welfare are greater than the welfare impact, within either of the two scenarios of introducing a 25 cent gasoline tax increase.

The third main row heading in the table reports results from a simulation in which we double increase the scrap elasticity  $\eta_j$  to -6.0 from its central value of -3.0. With this change, the gasoline tax causes a somewhat larger reduction in gasoline use in the short run, reflecting a higher scrapping rate: with the higher scrap elasticity, the policy change causes 22 percent more cars to be scrapped compared with the policy under the central case. While the higher scrap elasticity implies a larger policy impact on gasoline consumption in the short run, it has little influence on the policy impact in later years.

The final panel of Table 5-8 displays results in the counterfactual case where there is no existing CAFE standard. In the absence of this standard, the increase in gasoline taxes yields a significantly larger short- and long-run improvement in fuel economy compared with the case of a pre-existing CAFE standard. Correspondingly, there is a larger reduction in gasoline consumption. After 10 years, gasoline consumption is reduced by about 6.2 percent, as compared with 5.0 percent in the central case. When firms are not constrained by the CAFE standard, producers have greater incentives to change the composition of their car or truck fleets to meet the increased consumer demands for fuel economy that stem from higher fuel costs. In contrast, when firms are constrained by the CAFE standard, the increase in the gasoline tax leads to smaller changes in the composition and average fuel economy of their fleets of cars and trucks. The composition of a producer's car or truck fleet is largely determined by the CAFE standard. In the presence of the CAFE standard, an increase in the gasoline tax affects a car producer's fleet composition mainly by altering the relative sales of cars versus trucks.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper has examined the impacts of gasoline tax increases with a model that considers jointly supply- and demand-side responses to policy changes. The model links the markets for new, used, and scrapped vehicles, and accounts for the imperfectly competitive nature of the automobile industry. Linking the three markets enables us to account for the penetration of the car fleet by new cars and thereby assess how the impacts of policy interventions evolve through time. We also address the considerable range of car choices in a high-dimensional discrete-continuous choice model. Parameters for the household demand side of the model stem from a one-step estimation procedure that integrates individual choices for car ownership and miles traveled, thereby yielding consistent welfare measures. Finally, we allow for the considerable heterogeneity among car owners, which enables us to explore the distributional impacts of policy changes along many important dimensions.

We find that each cent-per-gallon increase in the price of gasoline reduces the equilibrium gasoline consumption by about .2 percent. The reduction in demand mainly reflects reduced miles traveled by car owners; shifts in demand from low to high miles-per-gallon vehicles appear much less important. Under a 25-cent gasoline tax increase the size of the vehicle fleet falls about .5 percent. The impacts on new and used car ownership differ substantially over time. In the first year of the policy, the reduction in vehicle ownership comes largely by way of a decline in new car purchases. However, ratio of fuel economy of new to old vehicles increases over time, and the increased gasoline tax gives greater importance to fuel economy. As a result, the decline in new-car ownership is attenuated over time, and by year 10 the reduction in car ownership applies nearly uniformly to new and used vehicles.

The gasoline tax's marginal excess burden (excluding external benefits) per dollar of revenue raised ranges from about \$.15 for a 10-cent tax-increase to \$.25 for a 75-cent increase. This efficiency cost is considerably lower than the estimates of the marginal external benefits from higher gasoline taxes,<sup>42</sup> suggesting that increases in the gasoline tax would be efficiency-improving. Taking account of revenue-recycling (and disregarding external benefits), the

---

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Parry and Small (2005).

impact of a 25-cent gasoline tax increase on the average household is about \$30 per year (2001 dollars).

The distributional impacts of the gasoline tax differ dramatically under the three revenue-recycling approaches we considered. Under flat recycling, the average household in each of the bottom four income deciles experiences a welfare gain from a gasoline tax increase. The gain to the average household in the lowest income decile would be equivalent to about \$125. This suggests that a single-rebate-check approach to recycling would more than eliminate (for the average household within a given income group) the potential regressivity of a gasoline tax increase. On the other hand, if revenues are recycled in proportion to income, only very poor households (those in the lowest decile) and very rich households (those in the highest) stand to gain. The different impacts of the various recycling methods largely reflect differences across the income distribution in car use (VMT). However, household income does not perfectly correlate with VMT and other important determinants of the welfare impacts: controlling for income, we find significant differences in impacts across racial categories and regions of residence.

The framework presented here has considerable potential to address other automobile-related policies, including tightening of CAFE standards and subsidies to retirements of low-mileage (or high-polluting) automobiles. We plan to investigate these policies in future work, examining impacts not only on gasoline consumption but on automobile-generated pollution as well.

Two limitations in our model deserve mention. First, although the model allows the fuel-economy of new cars to respond endogenously to policy or price changes, it does not distinguish the demands for some of the most fuel-efficient cars – namely, hybrids – from the demands for conventional-fuel cars in the same model category. Only recently have sales of hybrids become significant, and thus the data for isolating demands for such cars are quite limited. Nonetheless, in future work we hope to develop surveys that will enable us to consider specifically the demands for hybrid vehicles. In addition, the model abstracts from transactions costs relating to car purchases and sales. Although data limitations currently make it impossible to assess such costs in a rigorous manner, we believe it would be useful in the future to incorporate alternative assumptions about such costs within the estimation effort and to judge the implications of such costs for policy outcomes.

## References

- Agras J., and D. Chapman.** 1999. "The Kyoto Protocol, CAFE Standards, and Gasoline Taxes," *Contemporary Economic Policy* 17:296-308.
- Allenby, G., and P. Lenk.** 1994. "Modeling Household Purchase Behavior with Logistic Normal Regression," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 89:669-679.
- Austin, D. and T. Dinan.** 2005. "Clearing the Air: The Costs and Consequences of Higher CAFE Standards and increased Gasoline Taxes," *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 50:562-582.
- Bento, A., M. Cropper, M. Mobarak and K. Vinha.** 2005. "The Effects of Urban Spatial Structure on Travel Demand in the US," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 87:466-478.
- Berkovec, J.** 1985. "New Car Sales and Used Car Stocks: A Model of the Automobile Market," *RAND Journal of Economics* 16:195-214.
- Berry, S, J. Levinsohn, and A. Pakes.** 1995. "Automobile Prices in Market Equilibrium," *Econometrica* 63:841-890.
- Berry, S, J. Levinsohn, and A. Pakes.** 2004. "Differentiated Products Demand Systems from a Combination of Micro and Macro Data: The New Car Market," *Journal of Political Economy* 112:68-105.
- Burtless, G. and J. Hausman.** 1978. "The Effects of Taxation on Labor Supply: Evaluating the Gary Income Maintenance Experiment," *Journal of Political Economy* 86: 1103-1130.
- Dube, J.** 2004. "Multiple Discreteness and Product Differentiation: Demand for Carbonated Soft Drinks," *Marketing Science* 23:66-81.
- Dubin, J., and D. McFadden.** 1984. "An Econometric Analysis of Residential Appliance Holdings and Consumption," *Econometrica* 52:345-362.
- Feng, Y., D. Fullerton, and L. Gan.** 2005. "Vehicle Choices, Miles Driven, and Pollution Policies," NBER Working Paper No. 11553, Cambridge, MA.
- Glaister, S. and D. Graham.** 2002. "The Demand for Automobile Fuel: A Survey of Elasticities," *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy* 36:1-25.
- Goldberg, P.K.** 1995. "Product Differentiation and Oligopoly in International Markets: The Case of the U.S. Automobile Industry," *Econometrica* 63:891-951.
- Goldberg, P.K.** 1998. "The Effects of the Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency Standards in the US," *Journal of Industrial Economics* 46:1-33.

- Goulder, L., I Parry, R. Williams III and D. Burtraw.** 1999. "The Cost-Effectiveness of Alternative Instruments for Environmental Protection in a Second Best Setting," *Journal of Public Economics* 72:329-360.
- Goulder, L and R. Williams III.** 2003. "The Substantial Bias from Ignoring General Equilibrium Effects in Estimating Excess Burden, and Practical Solutions" *Journal of Political Economy* 111:898-927.
- Gourieroux, C., and A. Monfort.** 1996. *Simulation-Based Econometric Methods*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Hausman, J. and W. Newey.** 1995. "Nonparametric Estimation of Exact Consumers Surplus and Deadweight Loss," *Econometrica* 63:1445-1476.
- Heckman, J.** 1979. "Sample Selection Bias as a Specification Error," *Econometrica* 47:153-161.
- Hendel, I.** 1999. "Estimating Multiple-Discrete Choice Models: An Application to Computerization Returns," *Review of Economic Studies* 66:423-446.
- Hensher, D., F. Milthorpe, and N. Smith.** 1990. "The demand for vehicle use in the urban household sector - theory and empirical-evidence," *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy* 24:119-137.
- Jacobsen, Mark R.** 2006. "Impacts of Changes in CAFE Standards in an Econometrically Based Simulation Model," unpublished manuscript, Stanford University.
- Johansson O., and L. Schipper.** 1997. "Measuring the Long-Run Fuel Demand for Cars," *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy* 31:277-292.
- King, M.** 1980. "An Econometric Model of Tenure Choice and Demand for Housing as a Joint Decision," *Journal of Public Economics* 14(2): 137-159.
- Mannering, F., and C. Winston.** 1985. "A Dynamic Empirical Analysis of Household Vehicle Ownership and Utilization," *RAND Journal of Economics* 16:215-236.
- McFadden, D., and K.E. Train.** 2000. "Mixed MNL for Discrete Response," *Journal of Applied Econometrics* 15:447-470.
- National Research Council.** 2002. "Effectiveness and Impact of Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards," National Academy Press.
- Parry, I. and K. Small.** 2005. "Does Britain or The United States Have the Right Gasoline Tax?" *American Economic Review* 95:1276-1289.

- Parry, I, C. Fischer, Carolyn and W. Harrington.** 2004. "Should Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency Standards be Tightened?," *Resources for the Future Discussion Paper 53*.
- Parry, I, and W. Oates.** 2000. "Policy Analysis in the Presence of Distorting Taxes," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 19(4):603-13.
- Petrin, A.** 2002. "Quantifying the Benefits of New Products: The Case of the Minivan," *Journal of Political Economy* 110:705-729.
- Poterba, J.** 1989. "Lifetime Incidence and the Distributional Burden of Excise Taxes," *American Economic Review* 79 (May):325-330.
- Poterba, J.** 1991. "Is the Gasoline Tax Regressive?" in D. Bradford, ed., *Tax Policy and the Economy* 5:145-164.
- Schmalensee and Stocker.** 1999. "Household Gasoline Demand in the United States". *Econometrica* 67:645-62.
- Train, K.E.** 1986. *Qualitative Choice Analysis: Theory, Econometrics, and an Application to Automobile Demand*. MIT Press, Boston, MA.
- Train, K.E.** 2003. *Discrete Choice Analysis with Simulation*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Train, K.E. and C. Winston.** Forthcoming. "Vehicle Choice Behavior and the Declining Market Share of U.S. Automakers," *International Economic Review*.
- von Haefen, R.H., D.M. Massey, and W.L. Adamowicz.** 2005. "Serial Nonparticipation in Repeated Discrete Choice Models," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 87:1061-1076.
- West S., and R. Williams III.** 2005. "The Cost of Reducing Gasoline Consumption" *American Economic Review* 95:294-299.
- West, S., and R. Williams III.** 2007. "Optimal Taxation and Cross-Price Effects on Labor Supply: Estimates of the Optimal Gas Tax," *Journal of Public Economics* 91 (April): 593-617.
- West, S.E.** 2004. "Distributional Effects of Alternative Vehicle Pollution Control Policies," *Journal of Public Economics* 88:735-757.

**Table 2-1: Included Car Types**

<u>Classes</u>	<u>Age categories</u>	<u>Manufacturers</u>
Compact	New cars	Ford
Luxury compact	1-2 years old	Chrysler
Midsize	3-6 years old	General Motors
Fullsize	7-11 years old	Honda
Luxury mid/fullsize	12-18 years old	Toyota
Small SUV		Other Asian
Large SUV		European
Small truck		
Large truck		
Minivan		

**Table 3-1**  
**Sample Demographic Statistics from the 2001 NHTS – 20,429 Observations**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>mean (std. dev.)</i>
Household size	2.490 (1.34)
# of adults ≥ 18 years old	1.861 (0.69)
# of adults ≥ 65 years old	0.380 (0.67)
# of children ≤ 2 years old	0.096 (0.32)
# of children 3-6 years old	0.136 (0.41)
# of children 7-11 years old	0.185 (0.49)
# of children 12-17 years old	0.211 (0.54)
# of workers	1.272 (0.95)
# of females	1.033 (0.52)
Average age among adults (≥ 18)	49.56 (16.8)
Household income (2001 \$s)	56,621 (43,276)
<b>Household breakdown:</b>	<b>percentage</b>
1 male adult, no children, not retired	5.71
1 female adult, no children, not retired	7.88
1 adult, no children, retired	10.3
2+ adults w/ average age ≤ 35, no children, not retired	7.10
2+ adults w/ average age > 35 & ≤ 50, no children, not retired	8.43
2+ adults w/ average age > 50, no children, not retired	9.04
2+ adults w/ average age ≤ 67, no children, retired	9.29
2+ adults w/ average age > 67, no children, retired	8.47
1+ adults w/ youngest child < 3 years old	8.69
1+ adults w/ youngest child 3-6 years old	7.65
1+ adults w/ youngest child 7-11 years old	8.64
1+ adults w/ youngest child 12-17 years old	8.85
White household respondent <sup>b</sup>	85.6
Black household respondent	7.62
Hispanic household respondent	6.25
Asian household respondent	2.17
Adults with high school diplomas	89.4
Adults with 4-year college degrees	30.5
Resident of MSA < 250k	7.62
Resident of MSA 250-500k	8.22
Resident of MSA 500k-1m	8.30
Resident of MSA 1-3m	22.2
Resident of MSA > 3m	32.5
Non-resident of MSA	21.1
Household income ≤ \$25,000	22.8
Household income ≤ \$50,000 & > \$25,000	33.3
Household income ≤ \$75,000 & > \$50,000	19.8
Household income > \$75,000	24.1

<sup>a</sup> Based on 8 level index where 1=less than high school graduate, 2= high school graduate including GED, 3= vocational/technical training, 4=some college, but no degree, 5=Associate's degree, 6= Bachelor's degree, 7= some graduate or professional school, but no degree, 8= Graduate or professional school degree.

<sup>b</sup> The white, black, Hispanic, and Asian percentages sum to more than 100 percent because some respondents have multi-cultural backgrounds.



**Table 3.2 – Automobile Characteristics <sup>a</sup>**

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Compact</i>	<i>Luxury Compact</i>	<i>Midsize</i>	<i>Fullsize</i>	<i>Luxury Mid/Full</i>	<i>Small SUV</i>	<i>Large SUV / Van</i>	<i>Small Truck</i>	<i>Large Truck</i>	<i>Minivan</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Miles Per Gallon <sup>b</sup></b>											
<i>All Car Ages:</i>	29.73 (27.8, 35.6)	24.18 (22.2, 26.9)	27.16 (24.2, 31.0)	25.57 (22.6, 30.5)	23.65 (21.3, 25.0)	23.75 (17.8, 27.0)	20.04 (16.6, 26.8)	23.60 (19.1, 27.7)	19.82 (16.8, 23.5)	23.45 (19.2, 27.2)	24.39 (16.6, 35.6)
<i>Model Years:</i>											
<i>2001-2002</i>	30.29 (28.0, 32.8)	24.47 (22.9, 26.9)	26.90 (24.2, 30.5)	25.61 (23.0, 28.0)	23.70 (23.0, 24.2)	24.17 (21.9, 26.4)	19.08 (17.2, 22.5)	22.62 (19.2, 25.9)	19.65 (16.8, 23.5)	23.25 (20.6, 25.0)	24.15 (16.8, 32.8)
<i>1999-2000</i>	30.32 (28.1, 35.6)	24.45 (23.1, 26.8)	27.29 (25.1, 29.7)	25.79 (22.6, 28.0)	23.86 (23.0, 24.4)	23.80 (19.8, 27.0)	18.21 (16.7, 19.6)	23.29 (19.1, 26.3)	20.34 (18.8, 23.4)	22.99 (19.2, 24.6)	24.18 (16.7, 35.6)
<i>1995-1998</i>	30.02 (28.4, 32.1)	24.24 (22.3, 26.4)	27.50 (25.4, 29.8)	25.51 (23.0, 27.8)	24.29 (23.3, 25.0)	23.44 (19.6, 26.3)	19.60 (16.6, 23.7)	23.30 (19.6, 26.0)	18.67 (17.7, 19.4)	23.65 (21.3, 27.2)	24.44 (16.6, 32.1)
<i>1990-1994</i>	29.21 (27.8, 30.4)	23.81 (22.2, 26.3)	26.74 (25.2, 30.0)	25.37 (23.5, 28.8)	22.91 (21.3, 24.0)	22.67 (17.8, 24.9)	20.90 (17.2, 26.0)	23.10 (20.5, 24.4)	18.56 (17.6, 20.0)	23.57 (22.2, 26.0)	24.08 (17.2, 30.4)
<i>1983-1989</i>	28.82 (28.2, 29.4)	23.94 (22.6, 26.1)	27.38 (24.3, 31.0)	25.56 (23.8, 30.5)	23.23 (22.1, 24.3)	24.84 (23.3, 26.3)	22.88 (18.1, 26.8)	25.70 (23.7, 27.7)	21.76 (20.0, 23.3)	23.97 (21.1, 26.7)	25.14 (18.1, 31.0)
<b>Horsepower/100</b>											
<i>All Car Ages:</i>	1.286 (0.88, 1.78)	2.275 (1.56, 3.63)	1.530 (0.98, 1.96)	1.726 (0.86, 2.21)	2.177 (1.42, 2.81)	1.531 (1.02, 1.95)	1.909 (0.88, 2.59)	1.386 (0.94, 1.72)	2.011 (1.30, 2.79)	1.575 (0.99, 2.18)	1.719 (0.86, 3.63)
<i>Model Years:</i>											
<i>2001-2002</i>	1.526 (1.34, 1.78)	2.621 (1.64, 3.63)	1.787 (1.65, 1.96)	2.123 (1.97, 2.21)	2.463 (2.13, 2.81)	1.763 (1.65, 1.95)	2.391 (2.15, 2.59)	1.650 (1.52, 1.72)	2.377 (2.20, 2.79)	1.833 (1.40, 2.18)	2.036 (1.34, 3.63)
<i>1999-2000</i>	1.454 (1.23, 1.68)	2.488 (1.70, 3.45)	1.682 (1.58, 1.80)	1.917 (1.50, 2.07)	2.376 (2.10)	1.648 (1.45, 1.88)	2.271 (2.12, 2.52)	1.556 (1.34, 1.69)	2.323 (2.15, 2.63)	1.765 (1.40, 2.10)	1.932 (1.23, 3.45)
<i>1995-1998</i>	1.342 (1.09, 1.47)	2.414 (1.75, 3.38)	1.597 (1.47, 1.72)	1.835 (1.41, 2.07)	2.237 (2.01, 2.53)	1.554 (1.35, 1.83)	2.024 (1.86, 2.17)	1.430 (1.22, 1.59)	1.992 (1.88, 2.06)	1.513 (1.09, 1.77)	1.773 (1.09, 3.38)
<i>1990-1994</i>	1.152 (1.05, 1.24)	2.075 (1.60, 2.54)	1.418 (1.28, 1.54)	1.469 (0.90, 1.74)	1.952 (1.83, 2.11)	1.467 (1.29, 1.59)	1.476 (0.90, 1.77)	1.257 (1.07, 1.46)	1.698 (1.55, 1.78)	1.378 (1.09, 1.51)	1.516 (0.90, 2.54)
<i>1983-1989</i>	0.955 (0.88, 1.03)	1.777 (1.56, 2.15)	1.166 (0.98, 1.41)	1.212 (0.86, 1.36)	1.637 (1.42, 2.01)	1.164 (1.02, 1.27)	1.244 (0.88, 1.46)	1.038 (0.94, 1.12)	1.435 (1.30, 1.50)	1.272 (0.99, 1.51)	1.270 (0.86, 2.15)
<b>Rental Price /1000</b>											
<i>All Car Ages:</i>	2.570 (0.38, 6.84)	5.959 (0.55, 26.6)	2.749 (0.38, 8.55)	3.029 (0.39, 8.67)	5.680 (0.45, 21.4)	3.141 (0.42, 7.81)	4.289 (0.43, 14.4)	2.654 (0.37, 6.88)	3.478 (0.46, 8.31)	3.336 (0.26, 8.32)	3.681 (0.26, 26.6)
<i>Model Years:</i>											
<i>2001-2002</i>	5.798 (5.14, 6.84)	15.94 (7.23, 26.6)	6.528 (5.65, 8.55)	7.463 (6.84, 8.67)	14.45 (11.8, 21.4)	6.823 (6.12, 7.81)	10.27 (7.92, 14.4)	5.686 (4.78, 6.88)	7.022 (5.83, 8.31)	7.270 (6.21, 8.32)	8.792 (4.78, 26.6)
<i>1999-2000</i>	3.258 (2.14, 4.24)	6.819 (3.74, 12.6)	3.274 (2.10, 4.72)	3.628 (3.13, 4.52)	5.712 (3.99, 8.69)	3.724 (3.11, 4.35)	4.566 (2.20, 7.69)	3.455 (2.91, 4.02)	4.089 (3.75, 4.59)	3.888 (2.95, 5.24)	4.237 (2.10, 12.6)
<i>1995-1998</i>	2.320 (1.62, 3.27)	4.506 (2.59, 5.72)	2.420 (1.68, 3.18)	2.521 (2.06, 3.17)	3.823 (2.54, 5.61)	2.884 (2.20, 3.58)	3.638 (2.53, 5.66)	2.548 (2.08, 3.12)	3.149 (2.85, 3.63)	2.844 (1.94, 3.68)	3.051 (1.62, 5.72)
<i>1990-1994</i>	0.972 (0.72, 1.29)	1.679 (1.11, 2.34)	1.015 (0.73, 1.33)	1.019 (0.75, 1.26)	1.317 (0.86, 1.79)	1.259 (0.98, 1.74)	1.253 (0.69, 2.04)	1.092 (0.87, 1.34)	1.183 (0.97, 1.39)	1.081 (0.74, 1.51)	1.186 (0.69, 2.34)
<i>1983-1989</i>	0.503 (0.38, 0.67)	0.850 (0.55, 1.31)	0.509 (0.38, 0.67)	0.491 (0.39, 0.64)	0.714 (0.45, 1.21)	0.589 (0.42, 0.82)	0.676 (0.43, 1.31)	0.489 (0.37, 0.64)	0.561 (0.46, 0.69)	0.454 (0.26, 0.73)	0.585 (0.26, 1.31)

<sup>a</sup> Minimums and maximums reported in parentheses.

<sup>b</sup> Weighted harmonic mean of EPA test miles per gallon estimates.

**Table 4-1: Posterior Mean Elasticity Estimates**

	Elasticity of gasoline use wrt price <sup>1</sup>	Elasticity of gasoline use wrt income <sup>1</sup>	Car ownership elasticity wrt rental price	VMT elasticity wrt operating cost <sup>1</sup>
<i>All</i>	-0.35	0.76	-0.82	-0.74
<i>By Household</i>				
Retired	-0.32	0.61	-0.93	-0.69
Not retired, no children	-0.32	0.68	-0.72	-0.69
Not retired, with children	-0.39	0.96	-0.85	-0.83
<i>By Auto</i>				
<i>By Class</i>				
<i>All Cars</i>				
Compact	-0.27	0.83	-0.65	-0.59
Luxury compact	-0.30	0.78	-1.25	-0.64
Midsize	-0.28	0.74	-0.67	-0.60
Fullsize	-0.29	0.75	-0.73	-0.63
Luxury midsize/fullsize	-0.30	0.79	-1.25	-0.63
Small SUV	-0.29	0.93	-0.73	-0.63
Large SUV/van	-0.32	0.88	-0.98	-0.69
Small truck	-0.34	0.78	-0.62	-0.72
Large truck	-0.31	0.79	-0.85	-0.66
Minivan	-0.31	0.85	-0.77	-0.65
<i>New Cars</i>				
Compact	-0.28	1.14	-1.44	-0.60
Luxury compact	-0.27	0.76	-3.14	-0.46
Midsize	-0.29	0.95	-1.58	-0.60
Fullsize	-0.29	1.04	-1.77	-0.61
Luxury midsize/fullsize	-0.28	0.83	-3.04	-0.47
Small SUV	-0.26	1.86	-1.58	-0.55
Large SUV/van	-0.34	1.06	-2.30	-0.69
Small truck	-0.37	0.91	-1.32	-0.75
Large truck	-0.32	1.05	-1.69	-0.65
Minivan	-0.31	0.98	-1.67	-0.63
<i>By Age</i>				
New cars	-0.30	1.10	-1.97	-0.63
1-2 year old cars	-0.29	0.79	-1.01	-0.63
3-6 year old cars	-0.27	0.76	-0.73	-0.59
7-11 year old cars	-0.30	0.75	-0.28	-0.65
12-18 year old cars	-0.31	0.83	-0.13	-0.68

<sup>1</sup> Elasticities in the *By Auto* panel are conditional on car choice.

**Table 5-1: Baseline Fleet Composition**

Class	Year 1			Year 10		
	New	Used	All cars in operation	New	Used	All cars in operation
Compact	4.98	44.68	49.66	5.27	49.52	54.79
Lux compact	0.22	4.44	4.66	0.26	2.79	3.05
Midsize	2.63	27.58	30.21	2.82	27.30	30.12
Fullsize	1.32	16.32	17.64	1.49	14.64	16.13
Lux mid/full	0.32	8.30	8.62	0.39	4.67	5.06
Small SUV	1.32	10.65	11.97	1.41	12.99	14.40
Large SUV	1.10	15.93	17.02	1.30	12.92	14.23
Small truck	1.27	10.26	11.54	1.35	12.25	13.60
Large truck	2.17	19.83	22.00	2.42	22.16	24.58
Minivan	1.32	12.74	14.06	1.45	13.62	15.07
Total	16.65	170.73	187.39	18.15	172.87	191.03

Units are millions of privately owned cars in operation.

**Table 5-2: Change in Gasoline Use with 25 Cent Tax Increase**

Recycling Method	Flat		Income-based		VMT-based	
	Year 1	Year 10	Year 1	Year 10	Year 1	Year 10
Baseline gasoline use per household (gallons)	775.18	828.89	775.18	828.89	775.18	828.89
% change in gasoline use	-5.09%	-4.99%	-5.06%	-5.07%	-4.51%	-4.40%
% change in VMT	-5.01%	-4.84%	-4.98%	-4.93%	-4.43%	-4.21%
% change in VMT per car	-4.62%	-4.37%	-4.56%	-4.38%	-4.01%	-3.69%
% change in cars in operation	-0.41%	-0.49%	-0.44%	-0.57%	-0.44%	-0.54%
% change in overall MPG	0.08%	0.16%	0.08%	0.15%	0.09%	0.20%

**Table 5-3: Fleet Size and Composition**

	Baseline <sup>1</sup>		25-cent gasoline tax increase <sup>2</sup>					
	Year 1	Year 10	Flat recycling		Income-based recycling		VMT-based recycling	
			Year 1	Year 10	Year 1	Year 10	Year 1	Year 10
Cars in operation:								
All	188.3	191.0	-0.41%	-0.49%	-0.44%	-0.57%	-0.44%	-0.54%
New	16.7	18.2	-1.00%	-0.08%	-1.12%	-0.38%	-0.93%	-0.07%
Used	171.6	172.8	-0.35%	-0.53%	-0.37%	-0.59%	-0.39%	-0.59%
Low MPG	75.9	78.9	-0.47%	-0.81%	-0.50%	-0.82%	-0.49%	-0.77%
High MPG	112.4	112.1	-0.37%	-0.26%	-0.40%	-0.39%	-0.40%	-0.38%

<sup>1</sup>Millions of cars.

<sup>2</sup>Percent change relative to the baseline.

**Table 5-4: Revenue and Costs from 25 Cent Increase in Gasoline Tax  
(Results for Year 1)**

Revenue recycling	Flat			Income-based			VMT-based		
	10	25	75	10	25	75	10	25	75
Tax increase (cents)									
Net tax revenue (\$billion)	7.43	17.96	48.46	7.43	17.97	48.43	7.52	18.29	49.91
Efficiency cost*									
Total (\$billion)	1.23	3.24	11.43	1.25	3.28	11.72	1.11	2.89	10.38
Per dollar of additional revenue	0.165	0.180	0.236	0.168	0.183	0.242	0.147	0.158	0.208
Per avoided gallon of gasoline consumed (\$)	0.71	0.76	0.96	0.73	0.78	0.98	0.72	0.77	0.97

\*Negative of the weighted sum of equivalent variations of each household.

**Table 5-5: Consumption, Mileage, and Car-Ownership Patterns of Household Income Groups\***

Income Decile	Gasoline Consumption		Miles Traveled		Avg. Fuel-Economy of Owned Vehicles**	Share of Economy's Light Trucks and SUVs
	Avg. Level (gallons)	Share of Total	Avg. Level (000's)	Share of Total		
1	157.3	0.02	4.03	0.02	25.61	0.02
2	315.7	0.04	7.97	0.04	25.25	0.04
3	473.6	0.06	11.69	0.06	24.68	0.05
4	588.3	0.08	14.33	0.08	24.35	0.08
5	724.0	0.09	17.65	0.09	24.38	0.09
6	823.7	0.11	19.76	0.11	23.98	0.11
7	922.0	0.12	22.35	0.12	24.25	0.13
8	1060.8	0.14	25.46	0.14	24.00	0.15
9	1227.1	0.16	29.55	0.16	24.08	0.17
10	1459.8	0.19	35.28	0.19	24.17	0.17

\* Predicted values from simulation model

\*\* VMT-weighted

**Table 5-6: Decomposition of Welfare Impacts of 25 Cent Gasoline Tax Increase  
(Results for Year 1)**

	Gasoline price	Transfer	Car prices	Producer profits	EV	EV as a percent of income
<i>Flat Recycling</i>						
Income						
<25	-84.36	157.58	2.62	-3.12	74.96	0.45%
25-50	-196.36	160.22	-0.43	-7.19	-51.87	-0.14%
50-75	-284.09	158.88	-3.16	-11.88	-154.50	-0.24%
>75	-334.45	160.29	-4.62	-19.11	-213.94	-0.21%
All	-176.02	159.04	0.04	-7.22	-29.73	-0.08%
<i>Income-based Recycling</i>						
Income						
<25	-83.90	68.33	2.90	-3.42	-13.75	-0.08%
25-50	-196.40	157.21	-0.40	-7.86	-55.45	-0.15%
50-75	-284.65	259.81	-3.40	-13.00	-55.33	-0.09%
>75	-336.04	417.87	-5.07	-20.90	39.99	0.04%
All	-176.06	157.83	0.10	-7.90	-31.48	-0.08%
<i>VMT-based Recycling</i>						
Income						
<25	-84.26	79.40	2.86	-2.80	-2.01	-0.01%
25-50	-197.37	181.56	-0.38	-6.44	-30.56	-0.08%
50-75	-285.89	261.01	-3.31	-10.64	-52.80	-0.08%
>75	-340.00	307.48	-4.92	-17.12	-69.87	-0.07%
All	-177.08	162.93	0.11	-6.46	-25.70	-0.07%

Welfare effects are expressed in price-adjusted dollars.



**Table 5-7: Welfare Impact of 25 Cent Gasoline Tax Increase on Selected Household Groups**

	Year 1			Year 10		
	Flat	Income- based	VMT-based	Flat	Income- based	VMT-based
Recycling						
All	-29.73	-31.48	-25.70	-31.02	-32.64	-25.55
Retired	46.81	8.65	-15.02	52.78	11.98	-12.69
Not retired, no children	-26.27	-33.02	-21.55	-21.52	-28.77	-15.16
Not retired, with children	-88.01	-58.40	-37.81	-101.03	-68.64	-45.98

Welfare effects are expressed in price-adjusted dollars.

**Table 5-8: Impacts of Gasoline Taxes under Alternative Parameter Assumptions**

	Year 1		Year 10	
	Baseline	25 cent tax increase <sup>1</sup>	Baseline	25 cent tax increase <sup>1</sup>
<b>Central Case</b>				
Gasoline consumption (gallons/household)	775.18	-5.09%	828.89	-4.99%
Aggregate VMT (000's miles/household)	18.80	-5.01%	21.23	-4.84%
Avg. MPG (miles weighted)	24.26	0.082%	25.62	0.155%
Avg. EV (price-adjusted dollars)	-	-30.13	-	-31.28
<b>Faster Fuel-Economy Improvements<sup>2</sup></b>				
Gasoline consumption	773.66	-5.07%	751.56	-4.48%
Aggregate VMT	18.83	-4.99%	22.25	-4.23%
Avg. MPG	24.34	0.080%	29.60	0.263%
Avg. EV	-	-29.67	-	-24.23
<b>High Scrap Elasticity</b>				
Gasoline consumption	775.18	-5.16%	828.89	-5.00%
Aggregate VMT	18.80	-5.08%	21.23	-4.86%
Avg. MPG	24.26	0.088%	25.62	0.154%
Avg. EV	-	-29.75	-	-30.93
<b>No CAFE Standard</b>				
Gasoline consumption	775.18	-5.25%	828.89	-6.21%
Aggregate VMT	18.80	-4.93%	21.23	-4.90%
Avg. MPG	24.26	0.339%	25.62	1.401%
Avg. EV	-	-29.28	-	-30.11

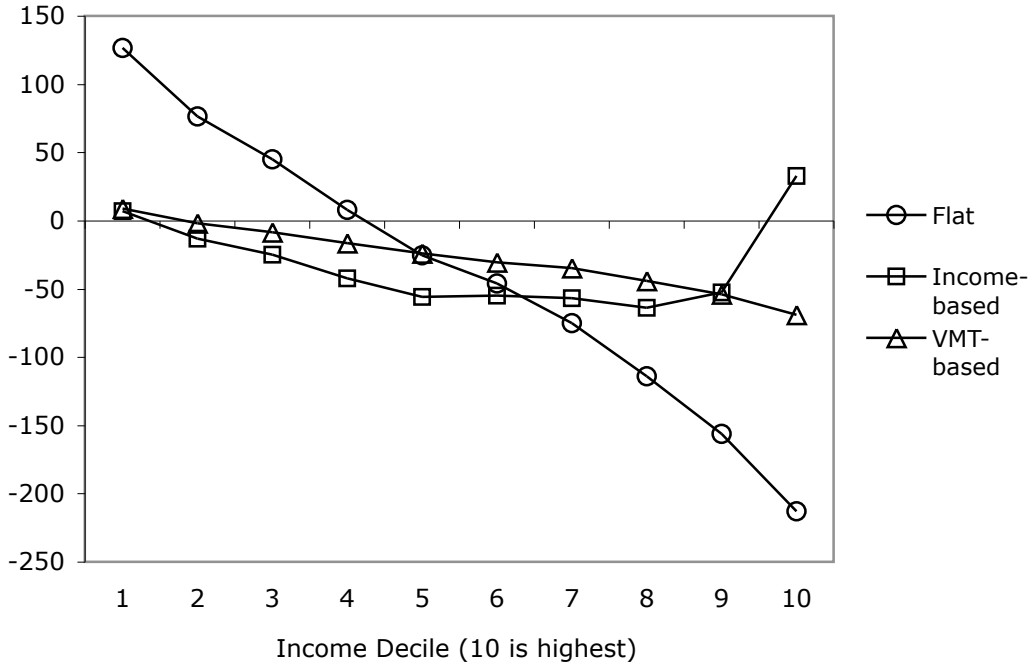
<sup>1</sup>Percent change relative to the baseline under the same parameter assumptions.

<sup>2</sup>Percent increases in fuel economy over 10 years are:

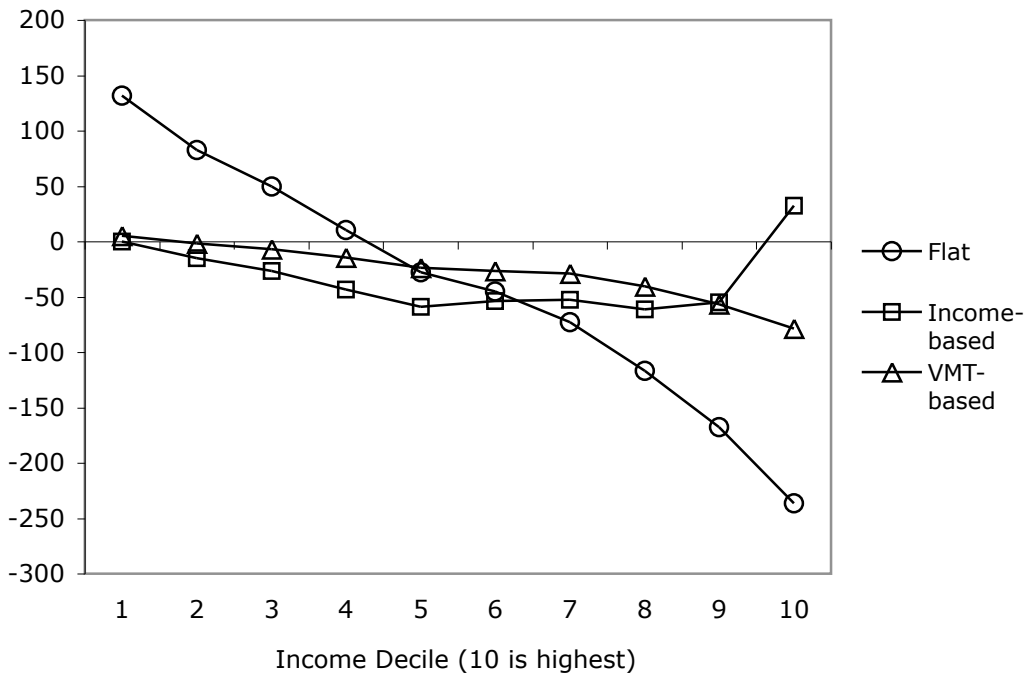
Compact 41, Lux compact 41, Midsize 52, Fullsize 58, Lux mid/full 55,  
Small SUV 54, Large SUV 65, Small truck 58, Large truck 59, Minivan 59

**Welfare Impacts<sup>1</sup> across Household Income Groups Under Alternative Revenue-Recycling Methods**

**Figure 5-1a: Year 1, 25 Cent Tax**

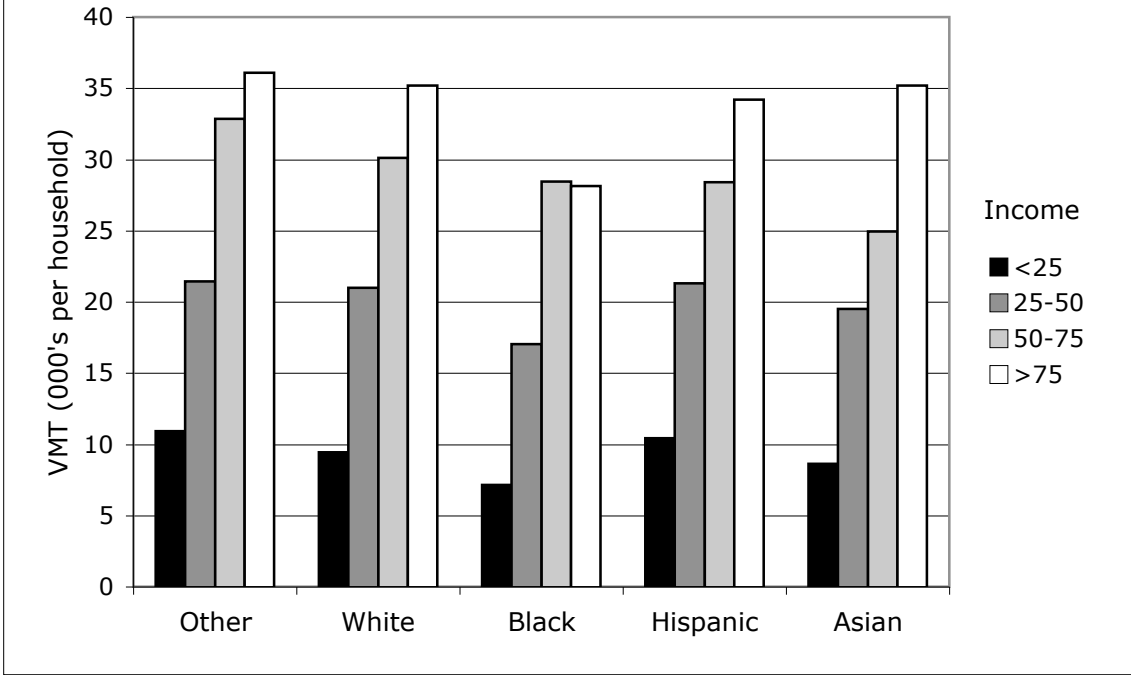


**Figure 5-1b: Year 10, 25 Cent Tax**

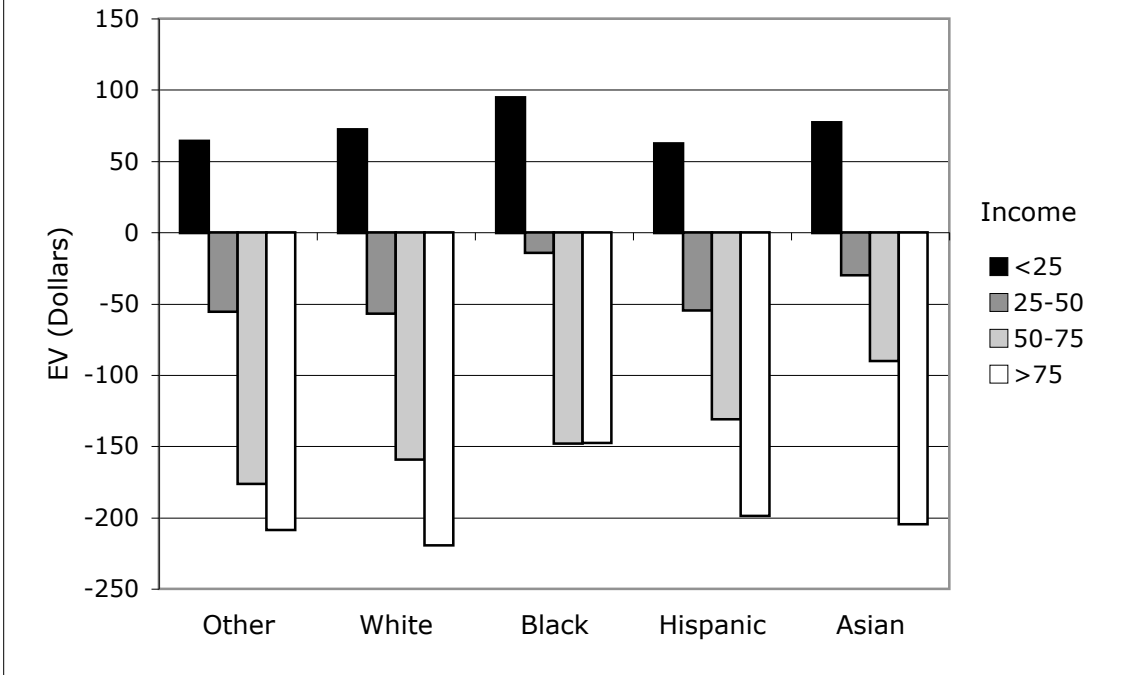


<sup>1</sup>Welfare impacts are in average price-adjusted dollars per household.

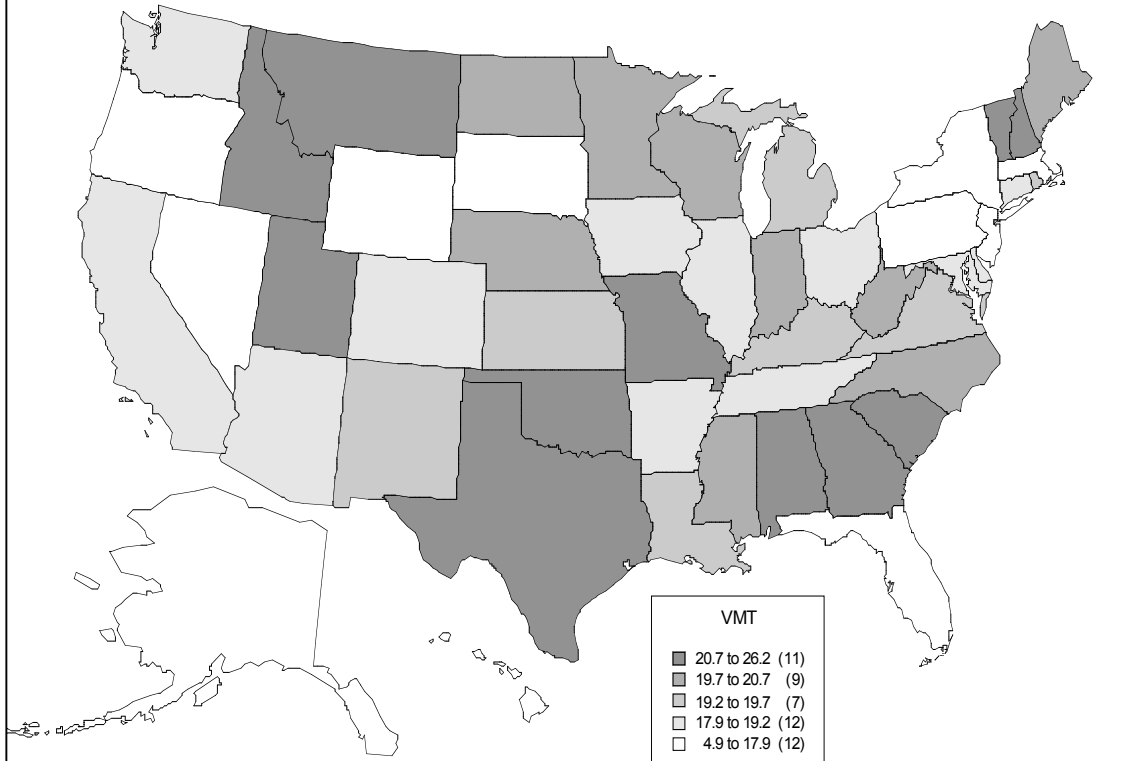
**Figure 5-2a: Base VMT by Race and Income**



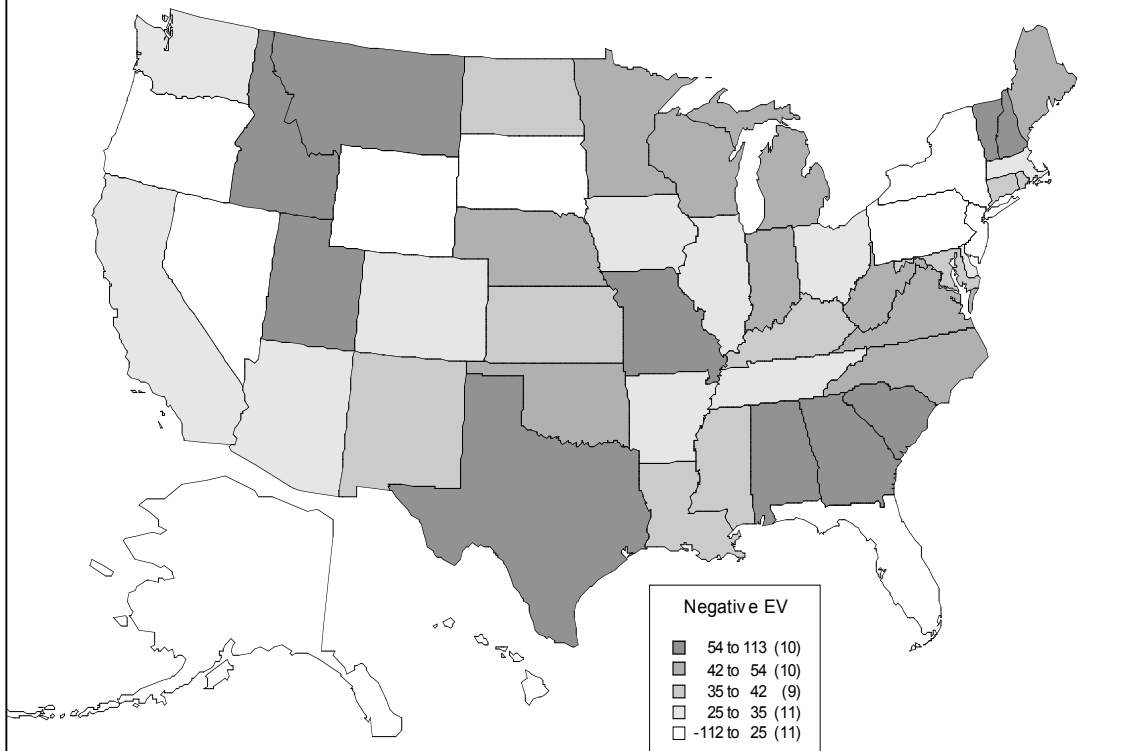
**Figure 5-2b: Household EV by Race and Income - 25 Cent Gas Tax Increase with Flat Recycling**



**Figure 5-3a: Average Household VMT by State**



**Figure 5-3b: Average Household EV --25 Cents Gasoline Tax With Flat Recycling--**



**OTHER A.E.M. WORKING PAPERS**

<b>WP No</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Fee (if applicable)</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
2007-18	Measuring the Welfare Effects of Slum Improvement Programs: The Case of Mumbai		Takeuchi, A., Cropper M. and A. Bento
2007-17	Measuring the Effects of Environmental Regulations: The critical importance of a spatially disaggregated analysis		Auffhammer, M., Bento, A. and S. Lowe
2007-16	Agri-environmental Programs in the US and the EU: Lessons from Germany and New York State		von Haaren, C. and N. Bills
2007-15	Trade Restrictiveness and Pollution		Chau, N., Färe, R. and S. Grosskopf
2007-14	Shadow Pricing Market Access: A Trade Benefit Function Approach		Chau, N. and R. Färe
2007-13	The Welfare Economics of an Excise-Tax Exemption for Biofuels		deGorter, H. & D. Just
2007-12	The Impact of the Market Information Service on Pricing Efficiency and Maize Price Transmission in Uganda		Mugoya, M., Christy, R. and E. Mabaya
2007-11	Quantifying Sources of Dairy Farm Business Risk and Implications		Chang, H., Schmit, T., Boisvert, R. and L. Tauer
2007-10	Biofuel Demand, Their Implications for Feed Prices		Schmit, T., Verteramo, L. and W. Tomek
2007-09	Development Disagreements and Water Privatization: Bridging the Divide		Kanbur, R.
2007-08	Community and Class Antagonism		Dasgupta, I. and R. Kanbur
2007-07	Microfinance Institution Capital Structure and Financial Sustainability		Bogan, V., Johnson W. and N. Mhlanga
2007-06	Farm Inefficiency Resulting from the Missing Management Input		Byma, J. and L. Tauer
2007-05	Oil, Growth and Political Development in Angola		Kyle, S.
2007-04	The Impact of Generic Fluid Milk and Cheese Advertising on Regulated Dairy Product Markets: A System Dynamics Analysis		Nicholson, C. and H. Kaiser

Paper copies are being replaced by electronic Portable Document Files (PDFs). To request PDFs of AEM publications, write to (be sure to include your e-mail address): Publications, Department of Applied Economics and Management, Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801. If a fee is indicated, please include a check or money order made payable to Cornell University for the amount of your purchase. Visit our Web site (<http://aem.cornell.edu/research/wp.htm>) for a more complete list of recent bulletins.