

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Communications, Energy, and Public Utilities

BILL: SB 1538

INTRODUCER: Senator Simpson

SUBJECT: Natural Gas Rebate Program

DATE: March 17, 2015

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Wiehle	Caldwell	CU	Pre-meeting
2.			AGG	
3.			AP	

I. Summary:

SB 1538 creates a heavy transportation industry natural gas rebate program within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACCS or department). The department is to award rebates for “eligible costs,” a term defined to mean the cost of conversion, purchase, or lease of a locomotive or ship which uses natural gas fuel and which is placed into service on or after January 1, 2015.

The rebate:

- May not exceed 50 percent of the eligible costs of a natural gas locomotive or ship with a dedicated or bi-fuel natural gas fuel operating system placed into service on or after January 1, 2015;
- Is limited to a maximum of \$500,000 per vehicle;
- Is limited to a total of \$1,000,000 per applicant per fiscal year; and
- Is limited to fuel powered natural gas locomotives and ships that comply with applicable United States Environmental Protection Agency emission standards.

To receive a rebate, an applicant must submit to DACCS an application which meets specified requirements as to content. The total amount of rebates in each fiscal year may not exceed the amount appropriated for the program in that fiscal year. Rebates are to be allocated to eligible applicants on a first-come, first-served basis, determined by the date the application is received, until all appropriated funds for the fiscal year are expended or the program ends, whichever comes first. Incomplete applications will not be accepted and do not secure a place in the first-come, first-served application process. The department is to determine and publish on its website on an ongoing basis the amount of available funding for rebates remaining in each fiscal year.

The department is to adopt rules to implement and administer this section by January 1, 2016. By October 1, 2016, and each year thereafter that the rebate program is funded, DACCS must provide an assessment of the rebate program during the previous fiscal year. The report must contain

specified information and must be provided to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability. By January 31, 2017, the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability must submit a report analyzing the economic benefits resulting to the state from the program to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The bill does not appropriate funding for the rebate program.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2015.

II. Present Situation:

Florida currently has the Natural Gas Fuel Fleet Vehicle Rebate to provide rebates to applicants who have converted to, purchased, or leased natural gas fuel powered fleet vehicles. The department administers the rebate program, which allocates \$6 million annually through 2018. Applicants receive a rebate for half of the conversion or incremental cost, or the difference in cost between a gasoline or diesel fuel powered vehicle and a natural gas fuel powered vehicle. This program applies only to motor vehicle fleets; it does not include heavy transportation assets.

There is no state incentive for the conversion to, purchase, or lease of natural gas fuel powered heavy transportation assets such as locomotives, waterborne ships, and high horsepower transportation assets.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates a heavy transportation industry natural gas rebate program within the department for the purpose of helping to reduce transportation costs in this state and encouraging freight mobility investments that contribute to the economic growth of the state. The department is to award rebates for “eligible costs,” a term defined to mean the cost of conversion¹ or the incremental cost² incurred by an applicant in connection with an investment in the conversion, purchase, or lease lasting at least 5 years, of a locomotive or ship placed into service on or after January 1, 2015.³

The rebate:

- May not exceed 50 percent of the eligible costs of a natural gas locomotive or ship with a dedicated or bi-fuel natural gas fuel⁴ operating system placed into service on or after January 1, 2015;

¹ The bill defines the term “conversion costs” to mean the excess cost associated with retrofitting a diesel or gasoline powered locomotive or ship to a natural gas fuel powered motor vehicle.

² The bill defines the term “incremental costs” to mean the excess costs associated with the purchase or lease of a natural gas fuel powered locomotive or ship as compared to an equivalent diesel- or gasoline-powered locomotive or ship.

³ The definition expressly excludes costs relating to fueling infrastructure.

⁴ The bill defines the term “natural gas fuel” to mean any liquefied petroleum gas product, compressed natural gas product, or combination thereof used in a motor vehicle as defined in s. 206.01(23). This term includes, but is not limited to, all forms of fuel commonly or commercially known or sold as natural gasoline, butane gas, propane gas, or any other form of liquefied petroleum gas, natural gas, or liquefied natural gas. This term does not include natural gas or liquefied petroleum placed in a separate tank of a motor vehicle for cooking, heating, water heating, or electric generation.

- Is limited to a maximum of \$500,000 per vehicle;
- Is limited to a total of \$1,000,000 per applicant per fiscal year; and
- Is limited to fuel powered natural gas locomotives and ships that comply with applicable United States Environmental Protection Agency emission standards.

To receive a rebate, an applicant must submit an application to DACS by a date established by department rule. The application must include:

- A complete description of all eligible costs;
- Proof of purchase or lease of the locomotive or ship for which the applicant is seeking a rebate;
- A copy of the vehicle registration certificate;
- A description of the total rebate sought by the applicant;
- An affidavit from the applicant certifying that all information contained in the application is true and correct; and
- Any other information deemed necessary by the department and set forth in department rule.

The department is to determine the rebate eligibility of each applicant in accordance with the requirements of this section and department rule. The total amount of rebates allocated to certified applicants in each fiscal year may not exceed the amount appropriated for the program in the fiscal year. Rebates are to be allocated to eligible applicants on a first-come, first-served basis, determined by the date the application is received, until all appropriated funds for the fiscal year are expended or the program ends, whichever comes first. Incomplete applications submitted to the department will not be accepted and do not secure a place in the first-come, first-served application process. The department is to determine and publish on its website on an ongoing basis the amount of available funding for rebates remaining in each fiscal year.

The department is to adopt rules to implement and administer this section by January 1, 2016, including rules relating to the forms required to claim a rebate, the required documentation and basis for establishing eligibility for a rebate, procedures and guidelines for claiming a rebate, and the collection of economic impact data from applicants.

By October 1, 2016, and each year thereafter that the program is funded, DACS must provide an annual assessment of the use of the rebate program during the previous fiscal year. The report must be provided to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability. The assessment must include, at a minimum:

- The name of each applicant awarded a rebate under this section;
- The amount of the rebates awarded to each applicant;
- The type and description of each eligible locomotive or ship for which each applicant applied for a rebate; and
- The aggregate amount of funding awarded for all applicants claiming rebates under this section.

By January 31, 2017, the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability shall release a report reviewing the rebate program to the Governor, the President of the Senate,

and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The review shall include an analysis of the economic benefits resulting to the state from the program.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2015.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. Other Constitutional Issues:

The bill provides that:

- Rebates are to be awarded for “eligible costs,” a term defined to mean the cost of conversion or the incremental cost incurred by an applicant in connection with an investment in the conversion, purchase, or lease lasting at least 5 years, of a locomotive or ship placed into service on or after January 1, 2015;
- Rebates are to be limited by four express restrictions or conditions;
- To receive a rebate, an application meeting specified requirements must be submitted to DACS;
- The department is to adopt rules to implement and administer the bill’s provisions, including rules relating to the basis for establishing eligibility for a rebate; and
- The department is to determine the rebate eligibility of each applicant in accordance with the bill’s requirements and department rule.

It is unclear what additional eligibility requirements the bill contemplates will be established by department rule, and what legislative guidance the bill provides for crafting such rules. Dependent upon how the department implements the eligibility provisions, the uncertainty of legislative direction may raise issues of unlawful delegation of legislative authority.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill may provide a rebate to those who own a locomotive or ship and convert it to natural gas fuel, or who purchase or lease a locomotive or ship that uses natural gas fuel.

Additionally, the bill may benefit importers and suppliers of natural gas fuel, and, to the extent that it creates additional demand for natural gas fuel, may encourage investments in fueling infrastructure in Florida.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill does not contain an appropriation to fund the rebate program.

DACS provided the following information on the fiscal impact to implement the bill.

Recurring Costs	
Salaries & Benefits – Government Analyst I (1)	\$53,296
Expenses	
• Professional Expense Pkg	\$6,166
• Admin-Travel Annual Rebate Sample Site Visit	\$1,340
Special Category – Human Resources Services (1)	\$344
Total Recurring Expenditures	\$61,146
Non-Recurring	
Expenses	
• Professional Expense Pkg (1)	\$3,882
• Admin-Travel Rulemaking Workshops	\$2,103
Total Non-Recurring Expenditures	\$5,985

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

The bill defines the term “fleet vehicles” but never uses the term.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates section 377.811 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
