

**LOCAL NEWS**

Councilman: Gas tax could help tackle racial disparities in predominantly black Jacksonville communities

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Decades after Jacksonville's consolidation, City Council members say they want to address the racial disparities in predominantly black neighborhoods.

"We've delayed this for 52 years, and it's time to change that," said City Councilman Aaron Bowman.



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Bowman is proposing the creation of a Urban Core Development Authority and said the gas tax will be discussed at the City Council's next Finance Committee meeting. Bowman said the size of the increase is undetermined, but he said a \$0.01 gas tax increase would generate \$5 million annually for the city.

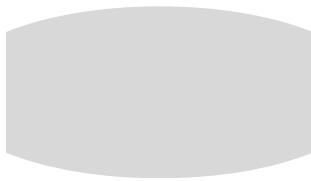
Jacksonville's current gas tax is 6% and by law can be raised to no more than 12%. Asked about the proposal Wednesday, Mayor Lenny Curry met the idea with optimism.

"I need to have a more detailed description about use, but the gas tax is a vehicle that we could use to invest in neighborhoods that have not been invested in equitably and have been left behind, so I am very interested in the idea. I think it's a positive development," Curry said.

The even distribution of taxpayer dollars to communities is one of the demands peaceful protesters have called for in Jacksonville. Ben Frazier, president of the Jacksonville Northside Coalition, said the proposal sounds like a step in the right direction.

"It would help empower under-served communities like residents living in ZIP codes 32206 on the east, and 32209 on the northwest of the city, but we will need more than a drop in the bucket," Frazier said. "It's going to take a lot of money to redevelop these ravaged areas of our community."

Frazier said that economic development would have a huge effect on public safety, saying the development would in turn interrupt crime. As for the specifics as to where the money would go, that would be the decision of members who sit on the Urban Core Development Authority.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**Tarik Minor**

Tarik anchors the 4, 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. weekday newscasts and reports with the I-TEAM.

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