

Summer gas prices may come to a boil



Sophomore Caroline Harper watches the total price rise at the Mobil at Hillsborough Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. DTH/LISA PEPIN

Some concerned about transit cost

BY ELIZABETH JENSEN
STAFF WRITER

As spring temperatures rise, so do gas prices, and students are making their summer plans with the high costs in mind.

"I'm nannying this summer, and I'm asking her to pay for gas," sophomore Kelly McLean said.

She is concerned that the cost of the 10-minute drive from her apartment will eat away her summer income.

The price of gas is the chief transportation issue North Carolinians care about, according to a March Elon University poll.

Out of 473 respondents, 31 per-

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SHARIS RAHIMTOOLA, EASTGATE BP MANAGER

cent identified gas prices as their primary concern.

Hunter Bacot, who conducted the Elon poll, said the gas prices exacerbate already difficult economic times.

"If economics improve for everybody, then gas prices won't be such an issue," Bacot said.

AAA local branch General Manager Anita Flippen said current prices are the highest she's seen in the more than 20 years she has worked in the travel industry.

Chapel Hill prices are \$0.49

higher per gallon than they were this time last year, according to www.gasbuddy.com, and still are on the rise.

Some drivers are carpooling or doing all of their errands in one trip in an effort to reduce gas demand.

"We, as consumers, could control prices more if we conserved," Eastgate BP manager Sharis Rahimtoola said.

"Already this morning we've had half a dozen Suburbans with one passenger."

Average price of gas per gallon in Chapel Hill

Today: \$3.335
Yesterday: \$3.342
One week ago: \$3.312
One month ago: \$3.282
One year ago: \$2.847

Senior Nick Reid planned a New York road trip during spring break, but he decided to save money instead. He said the high price of gas likely will influence his summer plans, as well.

"I used to have a second job delivering — not anymore," he said. "I'll lose money if I do that again."

Instead of asking AAA to plan road trips to California, people are flying and asking AAA to plan their routes as they drive through the state, Flippen said.

"We are seeing people driving, but not as far," she said. "Everyone still wants to go somewhere."

But even by traveling in alternatives to cars, people still are hit with additional charges from airlines and cruise lines.

Airlines are charging more for extra bags and heavier luggage. They try to reduce the weights of the planes' cargoes to save fuel, Flippen said.

Cruise lines now are requiring additional surcharges from passengers who have already bought their tickets as a way to cover the rising gas price. Beginning April 21, Carnival Cruise Lines will increase its fuel surcharge from \$5 per day to \$7 per day.

Managers at gas stations say they wish they could know for how much longer prices will climb.

The stations get a call from the oil company in the morning, telling them where to set their prices, Rahimtoola said.

The next call could tell them to set the price per gallon at \$0.99, he said, but he thinks that is impossible.

"Most people want to know when the gas prices are going down," Rahimtoola. "The answer is: I don't know."

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