



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

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Highway engineer outlines 2017 road program

The Lebanon Reporter
Rod Rose
2/21/17

More than an increase in the gas tax will be needed to maintain Boone County's roads, local officials have been told. In appearances before the county commissioners and county council recently, County Highway Engineer Craig Parks called for the county to implement "the dreaded" wheel tax, properly called a local option highway user tax. The LOHUT imposes a surcharge on license plate fees for passenger cars, light trucks and motorcycles, and a separate "wheel tax" on semi tractors, semi trailers and recreational vehicles. The latter fee applies to the vehicle, not to the number of wheels or axles. In 2016 the Indiana General Assembly doubled the wheel tax cap to \$50 per vehicle, Parks said. Implementing a wheel tax at the maximum level could raise an extra \$1.8 million for county roads, he said. "It's a dedicated fund for roads," Parks said. "I would encourage you to do that." Councilman Kevin Van Horn asked whether he was correct in believing that a wheel tax would be applied to any vehicle that has a license. Yes, Parks said, although it is up to the county council to approve an ordinance approving the LOHUT. About 40 to 50 percent of LOHUT revenue would go to the county, Parks said, with the balance distributed between the county's towns and the city of Lebanon. It may also become necessary to implement a wheel tax to win more grants from the state, Parks said. He leveraged \$3 million in local funds into \$7 million in grants, including awards from the state's Community Crossing program. But state officials are increasingly telling local governments that they need to share more of the expense of maintaining roads, rather than depending on the state for that money. "This is becoming one of the preferred sources of leveraging those Community Crossing grants," he said. Also being neglected are the county's 189 major bridges and the 300 structures fewer than 300 feet long that span streams and ditches. http://www.reporter.net/news/local_news/highway-engineer-outlines-road-program/article_79bf86af-51e0-5f2d-af96-4f5b0a84eb8c.html

FEIGENBAUM: The highway-funding math is getting fuzzier

Indianapolis Business Journal
2/18/17

When the session opened, there was universal, bipartisan consensus a gas tax increase was a principal funding source for the massive road and related infrastructure package in House Bill 1002. All the key participants in the interim examination of needs and alternatives had seemed to agree to a long-term, data-driven, user-funded, sustainable package that would cover repair, rehabilitation, new construction and ongoing maintenance—and no potholes were seen on the road to approval by the Republican supermajority. Yet funding for the road and infrastructure package is taking serious hits. Reasons behind the temporary reversal are lessons that should have been learned long ago. The process began in the 2016 session, when agreement evolved

during highway funding debate that a long-term solution was needed. Legislative leaders agreed to a holistic summer review. Incumbents skittish about tax increases could make their case to voters that any ambitious plan to maintain and embellish the Crossroads of America—and offer economic development payback—would require serious revenue enhancements. But a funny thing happened on the way to the election. As the volatile political environment veered from comfortable to unpredictable, the review was purposely placed on hold before November. General needs were well-established when things stalled, but funding mechanisms hadn't been identified, much less debated. Republican leaders didn't want members associated with a mega tax hike shortly before the election. That determination was made despite (wink-wink) Hoosiers' understanding that a world-class transportation network and well-paved local roads and streets would require pain. But no one was out selling the specific need for a gas tax hike that would affect most Hoosiers ... and other fees to capture cash from those using roads but not paying at the pump, such as electric vehicle owners. Then came the dogs that barked—and the big one that didn't. <http://www.ibj.com/articles/62573-the-highway-funding-math-is-getting-fuzzier>

Bluffton Road bridge safe to use, but ruled deficient

WANE

Kelly Roberts

2/17/17

FORT WAYNE (WANE) – More than 30,000 drivers travel on the bridge on Bluffton Road over the St. Mary's River every single day. Recently it made a list of the top 25 most used, structurally deficient bridges in the state. That may worry some of these drivers, but county officials say there's no need to worry. "It's an unfortunately harsh term and it sounds like you shouldn't drive over the bridge," Allen County Highway Department Director Bill Hartman said. So what does structurally deficient mean? Well, according to the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, which released the list, it means one or more of the key bridge elements is considered in poor or worse condition. Hartman said after inspections last year the Bluffton Road bridge was ruled deficient. "There's just minor cracking in different locations that had to be recorded and put into a formula and it makes that designation," Hartman said. Hartman isn't worried. According to the Association eight percent of the state's bridges, more than 1,500 of them, are ruled deficient. Right now there are no travel restrictions, like weight limits, on the Bluffton Road bridge, and there are no immediate plans to put money toward repairs. Those plans would come about if there were to be a weight limit put on it like there is on 19 other bridges in the county. "They are the ones on my radar to immediately try to do something with," Hartman said. <http://wane.com/2017/02/17/bluffton-road-bridge-safe-to-use-but-ruled-deficient/>

Road, Bridge Funding Bill Clears House

Inside Indiana Business

Dan McGowan

2/16/17

INDIANAPOLIS - The Indiana House has approved a long-term infrastructure funding bill. House Bill 1002 includes gas tax and vehicle registration hikes and imposes new fees on electric vehicle owners. The proposal also calls for the Indiana Department of Transportation to seek a waiver from the federal government to open up tolling on existing interstates. House Minority Leader Scott Pelath (D-4) challenged GOP lawmakers, which hold a supermajority in the House and Senate, to fund the bill without raising taxes. "All it takes," he said in a statement, "is the kind of courage that recognizes you do not have to inflict the largest tax increase in state history on the people who can least afford it. I will remind you that House Democrats advanced a plan that would have provided upwards of \$800 to \$900 million a year toward state and local roads without increasing a tax or raising a toll. House Republicans voted it down." HB 1002 would also shift the sales tax on gasoline to the State Highway Fund, bump up the taxes on special fuel and the motor carrier surcharge and index fuel tax rates annually to 2024. Ed Soliday (R-9), who chairs

the House Roads and Transportation Committee and authored the bill, says the average Hoosier would pay around \$4 more per month at the pump under the current plan. He calls the bill "a responsible plan that supports safe roads and bridges, which directly effects the health of our economy. This comprehensive bill is backed by years of data, providing funding for state and local infrastructure without creating unnecessary debt. The House road funding proposal is now in the hands of Senate lawmakers, and I look forward to continuing the discussion."

<http://www.insideindianabusiness.com/story/34523257/road-bridge-funding-bill-clears-house>

Also, http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/house-oks-higher-taxes-fees-to-pay-for-road-improvements/article_574db794-02f1-54b2-8a39-b40d3fbc986c.html

House GOP budget plan banks on \$1 cigarette tax increase

WSBT-TV

Brian Slodysko

2/16/17

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Shortly after Indiana House Republicans unveiled their two-year budget proposal on Wednesday, it ran into a major stumbling block: a powerful senator from their own party. Key components of the \$31.7 billion spending plan — including a \$1 cigarette tax hike and a significant rerouting of sales tax revenue to pay for infrastructure improvements — were panned by state Sen. Luke Kenley, the powerful lead budget writer in the GOP-controlled state Senate. That could set up a showdown as the annual legislative session nears its midpoint and Republicans who dominate state government debate how best to pay for improvements to the Indiana's crumbling infrastructure, which all agree are overdue. Kenley and Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb have signaled they are open to increasing the fuel tax, which House Republicans proposed hiking by at least 10 cents a gallon. But Kenley says he objects to a proposed shift of sales taxes that are also charged on all fuel purchases. Currently sales taxes charged on fuel purchases are allocated however lawmakers please, but the House GOP wants to dedicate that money solely to infrastructure. To backfill the budget hole such a move would create, they want to hike cigarette taxes, which many predict will yield diminishing returns as more people quit smoking. <http://wsbt.com/news/business/house-gop-budget-plan-banks-on-1-cigarette-tax-increase> -

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