



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

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Road funding has miles to go in Legislature

The Banner-Graphic
Eric Bernsee
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With a little more than two weeks to go in the 2016 edition of the Indiana General Assembly, some major decisions lie in the road ahead for Hoosier lawmakers. State Sens. Pete Miller and Rod Bray tried to distill those remaining issues into palatable nuggets for a Legislative Update audience Saturday morning at the Farm Bureau board room in Greencastle. "The biggest issue we're still struggling with is road funding," Miller (R-Avon) told about 30 constituents who also voiced concerns over educational, environmental and agricultural issues during the 90-minute program. Road funding, Miller continued, "is probably one of those things that will come down to the last week" before it is eventually decided. Legislators have been hoping for bipartisan agreement on House Bill 1001 but that hasn't happened yet. House Democrats have one proposal and House Republicans have another, and thus far those two have not been merged into a single passable piece of legislation. But before the March 10 end of the session hits, Sen. Miller sees accord in the road ahead. An increase in the gasoline tax or cigarette tax or even creation of a toll road appears to be the proposed methods of providing new road funding sources. According to the Indiana Legislature website, House Bill 1001 provides for the transfer of the state's excess reserves to the local road and bridge matching grant fund and the state highway fund. As originally written, HB 1001 would increase the gasoline tax from the current rate of 18 cents per gallon to an indexed rate to be determined by the Department of Revenue, while increasing the cigarette tax to \$1.995 per pack. As it currently stands, the bill -- which is now before the State Senate -- would include a four-cent increase in the gasoline tax and a \$1 per-package increase on cigarettes. "The challenge is trying to get funds back into the hands of local government," Sen. Bray said. <http://www.bannergraphic.com/story/2279623.html>

M'ville eyes major road improvements projects

NWI Times
Chas Reilly
2/21/16

MERRILLVILLE — Merrillville officials are exploring the possibility of extending 86th Avenue between Merrillville Road and Broadway. That project, which is expected to cost about \$1.5 million, would occur in phases. Town Manager Bruce Spires said the first phase could get started this year, and that phase would include an area between Merrillville Road and past the Hunter's Glen North residential community that's under development. The road extension will require a new traffic signal to be installed at 86th Avenue and Merrillville Road, said Bob Csanyi, of Robinson Engineering. The signal, which will be erected in a future phase, is needed because of the increased traffic expected on 86th Avenue after the entire project is finished. Csanyi said the

road will become a straight route to Methodist Hospitals Southlake campus. The extension of 86th Avenue will be paid from the Merrillville Road tax increment financing district. Spires also is creating a list of subdivision roads that will be paved this year. The town has changed its approach to fund that work. Merrillville had contemplated pursuing a general obligation bond issue to complete improvements to subdivision roads. Spires said the town will instead use more than \$1 million in funding remaining from existing bond issues for the paving. Work would occur in all town wards, he said. http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/m-ville-eyes-major-road-improvements-projects/article_d1aa78a1-9cf4-5855-8a47-6bfb351d906.html

Roads legislation unfair to northwest Indiana

Indianapolis Business Journal

2/20/16

In response to your editorial favoring “user fees” to fund Indiana roads [Pence off-course with road-funding plan, Feb. 1], as long as we’re at it, let’s toll I-465. Your readers probably have the same reaction to that suggestion as northwest Indiana residents did to the news that the muddled mess that is the road-funding measure, House Bill 1001, actually contains a provision where the state will petition the feds for permission to place toll booths on I-94. That interstate runs solely through northwest Indiana. It’s the only region where generations of residents have paid tolls on the Indiana Toll Road and yet witnessed the bulk of Toll Road lease proceeds go elsewhere in the state. So northwest Indiana residents are being asked to carry a special burden yet again and once again be denied their fair share of road funding. That’s why the LaPorte County Commission I represent voted unanimously in bipartisan fashion to oppose HB 1001. The bill’s mix of gas tax increases and new local option taxes is toxic and then adds insult to injury by urging tolls on interstates like I-65 and I-94. Our county commission hopes the Senate starts over and takes the best of other proposals, like Rep. Scott Pelath’s suggestion that more sales tax proceeds on gasoline actually be dedicated to roads. The same with Sen. Brandt Hershman’s proposal for the state to timely return local income tax receipts to communities, nearly \$420 million of which was improperly hoarded by the state and kept from cities and counties.

<http://www.ibj.com/articles/57280-roads-legislation-unfair-to-northwest-indiana>

Our view: Road funds

The Star Press

2/20/16

By just about all measures, Indiana counties appear to be in line to get some needed relief in road funds and related expenses, thanks to the generosity of the Indiana Legislature. But this being the legislature, nothing is a sure bet until the session ends next month. (Remember the all-but-guaranteed efforts to extend civil rights protections to the LGBT community?) Two bills are working their way through the legislative maze, with both holding out the promise of a one-time windfall for many counties, especially rural ones. Senate Bill 67, approved 49-1, would allow for a one-time distribution of local option income taxes collected by each county. The state keeps a significant amount of tax in reserve in case of recession. This bill would require at least 75 percent of funds used exclusively for local road construction, maintenance or repair; capital projects or aviation. The remainder could be used for any purpose by a county, city or town. The other piece of legislation, House Bill 1110, passed by a vote of 98-0 with no restrictions on how the money is used. However, counties in general get a lower amount of money than in the Senate bill. Each bill awaits passage in the other chamber, and eventually a date with a conference committee to come up with one piece of legislation. We hope. Complicating matters is other legislation to raise the tax on cigarettes, which would divert some funds not to health care, but to road building and maintenance. Other proposals could raise the gasoline tax. This being an election year, the prospects of raising taxes are highly uncertain. Counties of all sizes deserve and need help fixing local roads and streets. Funds from the state have slowly been cut back as the state's gasoline tax has failed to keep pace with inflation. Plus, cars and trucks now burn less

fuel per mile traveled, also denting revenue.

<http://www.thestarpress.com/story/opinion/editorials/2016/02/20/our-view-road-funds/80619228/>

County awaits \$1.2 million for Zionsville bridge repair

The Lebanon Reporter

Rod Rose

2/20/16

A \$1.2 million allocation of federal funding is likely to be awarded to Boone County to repair a 60-year-old bridge over Eagle Creek in Zionsville, although the work isn't expected to begin for several years. The amount represents 1 percent of the total federal funds that will be distributed in fiscal 2020 by the Metropolitan Planning Organization, County Highway Engineer Craig Parks said Friday. The money, if received, will be used to offset 80 percent of the construction and inspection costs for the rehabilitation of the Sycamore Street bridge, Parks said. He had told the Boone County Commissioners at their Tuesday meeting about the possibility the county would receive the bridge money. It would be Boone County's first MPO award if approved, Parks told the commissioners. He said Friday that Boone County will pay its 20 percent matching grant for the bridge work using money raised through a 2014 bond issue. He has estimated Boone County's share of the repairs will be \$598,000. The design for the project must be paid with local funds, he said. The MPO will vote next quarter on which of dozens of regional transportation projects will receive funding, after review by its technical and policy committees. Parks said he believes the odds Boone County will receive the money are "pretty good," based on his review of other projects seeking MPO approval. http://www.reporter.net/news/local_news/county-awaits-million-for-zionsville-bridge-repair/article_2d9686fa-baef-50ac-a369-f43badbd24ad.html

Business owners and government officials spar over S.R. 37 overhaul project

Indianapolis Business Journal

Lindsey Erdody

2/20/16

The city of Fishers is trying to solve a problem before it starts. The municipality is investing tens of thousands of dollars in a consulting firm to address needs of the business community along State Road 37, which is expected to be redesigned into a free-flowing parkway, even though construction is two years down the road—at the earliest. Local officials say the project, which would replace traffic lights from 126th to 146th streets with overpasses and roundabouts similar to Keystone Avenue or U.S. 31, doesn't have to damage business along the heavily commercial corridor. "There are some people that are obviously very emotional, very concerned about the project, that just don't want to see it happen," Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness said. "But the vast majority in the middle agree that something needs to be done." The city's efforts have been noted by the business community, but the message hasn't convinced them yet. A group of businesses known as the 37 Business Alliance formed shortly after state and local officials announced funding for the project two months ago, and it's fighting to delay the project until alternatives can be thoroughly studied. Nearly all the funding for the \$124 million first phase of construction has been allocated, with \$100 million from the Indiana Department of Transportation and \$12 million from Fishers. The remaining \$12 million would come from Hamilton County, but the Hamilton County Council is not yet sold on the proposal. <http://www.ibj.com/articles/57292-business-owners-and-government-officials-spar-over-sr---overhaul-project>

NIRPC board OKs changes to road plans

NWI Times

Andrew Steele

2/19/16

PORTAGE — The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission on Thursday amended its Transportation Improvement Program to accommodate the widening of Interstate 65 between U.S. 30 and Rt. 2 and to expand projects to rebuild segments of U.S. 30 in Lake and Porter counties. The commission also amended its plan to use federal Highway Safety Improvement funds, adding four road projects intended to improve safety and traffic flow at several heavily traveled locations in Lake and Porter counties. The I-65 project had been part of an earlier NIRPC transportation plan, but was cut for the plan approved last May. Since then, the Indiana Department of Transportation has put the project back on its agenda. Thursday's action by NIRPC put the project back in its plans. The project has a \$70 million budget and four contractor/engineering teams have been qualified to compete for the design-build project. It is part of the state's Major Moves 2020 program. INDOT hopes to award a contract for the project in September or October. The U.S. 30 plans are for road rehabilitation along nearly 7 miles between Ind. 49 and U.S. 421 in Porter County, and along 5.6 miles between Ind. 55 and U.S. 41 in Lake County. http://www.nwitimes.com/business/transportation/nirpc-board-oks-changes-to-road-plans/article_f792f503-a715-53ab-8ae9-9c865b4da3b8.html

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