



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

April 5, 2016

Pothole season brings little new funding to fix them

CNBC

John W. Schoen

4/5/16

With the arrival of spring, potholes are sprouting across the country. The money needed to fill them, though, is turning out to be harder to find. Despite a relatively mild winter, this year's seasonal thaw is inflicting another cycle of blown tires, busted axles and other repairs related to bad roads. The cost of fixing the nation's roadways, on the other hand, can be measured in the billions. The Federal Highway Administration estimates it will cost \$170 billion a year to make a dent in the backlog of bridge and highway overhaul projects. The effort to fund those repairs advanced late last year when Congress broke years of gridlock and passed a five-year, \$305 billion bill to bail out the Highway Trust Fund, which had been running on financial fumes. But the measure was loaded with accounting tricks and earmarks and failed to address the longer-term deficit in funding America's bridges and highways. Much of the shortfall stems from the two-decade failure to adjust gasoline and diesel fuel for inflation. As a result, the main funding sources for road construction and upkeep have lost much of their spending power.

<http://www.cnbc.com/2016/04/05/pothole-season-brings-little-new-funding-to-fix-them.html>

City preparing project list for new street money

Vincennes Sun-Commercial

Jenny McNeece

4/4/16

A new program aimed at giving tax dollars back to communities for infrastructure upgrades is something of a moving target, but city officials are doing their best to track its changes. City engineer John Sprague has been keeping in close contact with representatives from the Indiana Department of Transportation on how the new program will work. The General Assembly at the last minute of this year's session approved the measure, which divvies out some \$430 million to fix roads and streets across Indiana. Vincennes is expected to get just over \$1 million while the county hopes to get about \$1.3 million. The legislation also came with a matching grant process, but its details continue to confuse local officials. Cities and counties, it seems, will be given an opportunity to double their money, but local officials initially thought they would have to pass a wheel tax to get the additional dollars. That, most of them said, shouldn't be necessary as they are already investing in infrastructure. The city alone has spent \$2 million over the last two year with plans to spend another \$1 million this summer. But as INDOT officials have gotten a better handle on the new legislation, it looks like passing a wheel tax isn't the only way to get more money. And there seems to be little chance of a local wheel tax being adopted. However, it's possible, Sprague said, that cities and counties will be able to use other funding sources — such as rainy day funds or even the new road money itself — as a match for more dollars.

http://www.suncommercial.com/news/article_45cd7628-fac6-11e5-a621-c788672709d0.html

County to crunch numbers on bridge tax

Journal & Courier

Matthew Kent

4/4/16

Tippecanoe County officials said Monday they plan to look at how different entities would be financially impacted if the county established a property tax that would provide dedicated funding for nearly 30 large bridges. The county is considering the establishment of a major bridge fund that would help build up money to make repairs or reconstruct bridges more than 200 feet long. The proposal was first raised a month ago by Opal Kuhl, executive director for the county's highway department. Kuhl proposed a 1 cent property tax, which would generate about \$680,000 annually for the major bridge fund. For a home assessed at \$100,000, the owner would pay \$10 a year. County commissioners on Monday were expected to pass a resolution to establish a public hearing in May. That was delayed, however, after Auditor Bob Plantenga said he wanted to see how other taxing entities would be affected by the establishment of a major bridge fund. He said homeowners in Lafayette and West Lafayette already have reached their maximum tax rate and noted that an increased rate would create tax cap credits. "If we have people that are tax capped and now we're adding taxes to it, the amount of credit that has to be shared by all the taxing (entities) — whether it's the library, the city, the bus, whatever, and so — there is going to be some impact on us imposing a tax rate on the other people," he said.

<http://www.jconline.com/story/news/local/2016/04/04/county-crunch-numbers-bridge-tax/82608354/>

Utica leader on bridge: 'Our town's destroyed'

The Courier-Journal

Lexy Gross

4/2/16

The top elected official of Utica, Ind., was "thrilled to death" for the span that would connect his town of 800 to Prospect, Ky. Those dreams of economic development and growth now seem far-fetched, said Utica Council President Steve Long as he sat in the town's community center, his truck parked out back with fresh bread in the backseat awaiting delivery. "Our town's destroyed," he said. "... I know construction takes time and makes a mess, but you reap the benefits. Utica is not reaping the benefits." Other local projects have slowed the Old Salem widening, which is funded 20 percent through the Clark County highway department and 80 percent with federal and state funds. Brian Dixon, the county's highway engineer, said they are waiting on the design of a state-funded portion of the new \$30.4 million heavy-haul route for big trucks that will cut across Old Salem and link River Ridge and the Port of Indiana-Jeffersonville. "The River Ridge side (of the heavy-haul road) is already under construction," Dixon said. "The other side ran into environmental issues... It's really been one stumbling block after another." Will Wingfield, an Indiana Department of Transportation spokesman, said the River Ridge portion of the heavy-haul route advanced quickly because it didn't involve the use of state or federal funds. The exact route for the road between I-265 and the port hasn't been proposed yet, Wingfield said.

<http://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/indiana/2016/04/02/utica-leader-bridge-our-towns-destroyed/81826322/>

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