



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

June 7, 2016

Bangert: County takes heat for state on roads, again

Lafayette Journal & Courier
Dave Bangert
6/7/2016

One more time, when it came to taking care of the long-term maintenance of local roads and bridges, the Tippecanoe County commissioners played the heavies, the bad guys. They knew it, too, as they followed through Monday morning on a tax that will put an additional \$682,000 a year onto property owners, starting in 2017. The tax will raise cash to replace four of what are considered the county's 27 major bridges over the next 20 years. What's worse, the three Republican commissioners knew the folks at the Statehouse would be fine with that, as the no-new-tax clubs in Indianapolis hand down ways to pick up any slack on road maintenance — and let the locals deal with the fallout. "One of the things you'll learn from the state legislators is that the tools they give to the county, they give them and say, 'You guys take the heat. We won't take the heat,'" said Dave Byers, president of the Tippecanoe County commissioners. "They're very good at offering you some options. But not instituting them (themselves)." When Byers said that — trying to rationalize a new one-cent-per-\$100 property tax that works out to be \$10 for every \$100,000 — he wasn't complaining. He was stating a natural fact. When it comes to long-term ways to find money for road maintenance, the General Assembly isn't big on taking the heat. "We're lobbying for something that's permanent and sustainable," said Commissioner Tom Murtaugh, who said "about 90 percent" of his time at the Statehouse has been devoted to questions about road and bridge maintenance — "the biggest issue for counties and cities across the state." "What that method is, we're open," Murtaugh said. "Whether that's an increase in the gas tax, whether that's tied somehow to miles driven, it simply is that we're concerned about it being something long term and sustainable. ... We were hoping we'd see it this session, and we didn't. But they promised us it was going to move forward in 2017 in the budget year. I'm very optimistic that's going to happen."

<http://www.jconline.com/story/opinion/columnists/dave-bangert/2016/06/07/bangert-county-takes-heat-state-roads-again/85491096/>

Commission approves bid for bridge repair

Shelby News
John Walker
6/7/2016

Trisler Construction Co. won the project to repair Bridge 106, which is located on County Road 300 West about 1/4 mile north of CR 600 South. Based in Indianapolis, Trisler was one of four bidders striving to win the project, part of the county's larger bridge repair effort. The company placed a bid for \$248,065.50. "They were about six percent over our estimate," said Mike Obergfell, and engineer and vice president with USI Consultants, the county's consultant on the bridge repair program. However, in today's market, he said, that is to be expected, and it's not

excessive. Additionally, Oberfell told commissioners the county will have about \$10,000 coming back to it because the cost of USI's design work for the project came in under the initial estimate. Work on Bridge 106 is part of the county's ongoing road and bridge repair project fueled by the state legislature's decision earlier this year to make funding available. The Indiana General Assembly voted to return a portion of local income tax revenues held by the state to the counties for use in road and bridge repairs. One condition was that the counties do an assessment of their roads and bridges and create, essentially, a triage list to put the worst first in terms of a repair schedule.

http://www.shelbynews.com/news/article_cad250fa-3246-5025-adcb-955228a48dfd.html

County continuing road funding push

Greensburg Daily News

Brent Brown

6/7/2016

Decatur County Highway Superintendent Mark Mohr told the Decatur County Board of Commissioners Monday that the county is continuing its efforts in securing state funding for road projects. Mohr said the county has a little more than \$667,000 received last month from the state, leaving it about \$333,000 short of reaching its funding goal of \$1 million. The \$667,000 was received via a one-time redistribution of tax funds previously held in escrow by the state. The funds must be used for road and bridge improvements. The county has moved to put those funds toward the Indiana Department of Transportation's (INDOT) Community Crossings matching grant, which allows counties and municipalities to receive up to \$1 million from the state for road and bridge repair. The legislation passed in March essentially halves the cost of certain potential projects, though counties are restricted in what monies they can use to match the state's contributions. Matching funds must come from wheel taxes or surtaxes, the Local Option Income Tax fund, or Rainy Day (reserve) funds. The Decatur County Council voted last month to increase the wheel tax by 30 percent and bump the maximum surtax from \$20 to \$50 per vehicle. The measure will be subject to approval at a public hearing set for 9 a.m. Tuesday, June 14, in the Decatur County Courthouse's meeting room. Even if that measure sees approval, however, those funds would not be received by the county highway department until early 2017.

http://www.greensburgdailynews.com/news/local_news/county-continuing-road-funding-push/article_1e9db4fb-310d-548f-ab39-87a0e1cc5420.html

Tippecanoe Co. moves forward with proposed bridge tax increase

WLFI, Channel 18

Kayla Sullivan

6/6/2016

Despite some opposition, Tippecanoe County commissioners move forward with a bridge tax proposal. It's designed to save money for the county's 27 major bridges. Tippecanoe County Highway executive director Opal Kuhl said in 20 years, four major bridges will need fixing or repairing that will cost at least \$15 million. A major bridge is defined as any county bridge longer than 200 feet. The proposal increases property taxes by one cent per \$100 of assessed value. If you are already at your tax cap, this tax does not apply to you. It's expected to raise about \$680,000 per year and passed unanimously at a commissioners meeting on Monday morning but not without opposition. "If that room had been full of people like me, it probably would have gotten tabled for consideration," said Gary Wolfelt, the one person who stood up against the tax increase at the public hearing. Wolfelt owns four buildings in the 800 block of Main Street. He says he pays his fair share of property taxes and doesn't want to have to pay one cent more, literally. Wolfelt says the county shouldn't tax people's property to pay for bridges. He thinks a gasoline tax would be much more appropriate. But the county doesn't have the power to tax gas, that's up to the state. Tippecanoe County commissioners agree, a gasoline tax would be ideal but despite their efforts, the state hasn't given them the option.

<http://wlfi.com/2016/06/06/tippecanoe-co-moves-forward-with-proposed-bridge-tax-increase/>
Also <http://www.jconline.com/story/news/local/2016/06/06/-bridge-fund-tax-/85479798/>

Paving the road to long-term savings

Wheel, excise taxes help city catch up on neglected streets

Fort Wayne Journal Gazette

OPINION/Dr. John Crawford

6/5/2016

All Indiana cities are having problems maintaining their streets. Costs are rising while funds available are declining as a result of decreased gasoline tax revenue and decreased property tax revenue because of tax caps. The state legislature responded by providing cities a new possible tool to use. Indiana Code 6-3.5-10 and 6-3.5-11 allow cities to pass a municipal wheel tax and municipal motor vehicle license excise surtax to raise money specifically for road funding. The excise tax would be \$25 for passenger vehicles. The wheel tax would be \$40 for buses, semi-trailers, trucks, tractors, trailers and recreational vehicles. The total annual estimated revenue is \$6.7 million. These municipal excise and wheel taxes are designed specifically to help Indiana cities address their revenue shortfalls for road repair. They are user fees. Those of us driving our vehicles on Fort Wayne streets will be asked to pay more to maintain our streets. Money raised from these taxes can only be used for streets and cannot be diverted to other projects or purposes. Money used for street repairs increases home property values, while crumbling streets do the opposite. Maintaining infrastructure in good repair fosters economic development by making the city more attractive for new investment. Jobs are created to do the repairs that increase economic activity. No one on City Council ever wants to increase taxes of any kind. It's always best to keep citizens' money in the private sector, where it is most productive. But if a tax is to be considered, it is far preferable for it to be one like this which is a user fee and targeted specifically to a known serious problem. Governing is about choices. Without additional funding, our streets will not be maintained and each year road conditions will worsen. Most citizens would not want that. So I strongly favor adopting the municipal wheel and excise taxes. This is needed and is a good way to diversify road funding sources. Council will debate this in June and make a decision to pass it or not.

<http://www.journalgazette.net/opinion/columns/Paving-the-road-to-long-term-savings-13335801>

Commissioners approve \$1.5 million in road improvements

Fort Wayne Journal Gazette

Rosa Salter Rodriguez

6/3/2016

If it's summertime in Fort Wayne, it's time for road projects, as Allen County Commissioners learned Friday. The commissioners approved more than \$1.5 million in proposed maintenance and improvements presented by the county's highway department. Bill Hartman, highway department director, said work on the projects, several of which are in the far northeastern part of the county, would continue through the summer. One, a resurfacing of Schwartz Road from the Leo-Cedarville town line to Flutter Road, will also redo Amish buggy lanes that have become worn since they were installed about 15 years ago, he said. The lanes are eight to 10 feet wide on both sides of the road, he said, and the wear makes it more likely for buggies to gravitate to the main traffic lanes. The \$553,541 project was awarded to Brooks Construction Co., Fort Wayne, the low bidder, Hartman said. Other upcoming projects include resurfacing from Schwartz Road to Bull Rapids Road, Page Road from Notestine Road to Witmer Road, and Witmer Road from Page Road to the Grabill town line (\$318,813 to API Construction Corp, Fort Wayne) and the resurfacing of Cuba Road from Indiana 37 to Trammel Road and Grabill Road from Cuba Road to 675 East (\$177,360 to Brooks). A second phase of concrete street repairs in the Pleasant Run subdivision near Wayne High School also was approved for \$455,574 to low bidder, Primco, Inc., Fort Wayne.

A bridge improvement project for Antwerp Road over the Hamm interceptor was approved for \$111,200 to A&Z Engineering, Fort Wayne.

<http://www.journalgazette.net/news/local/Commissioners-approve--1-5-million-in-road-improvements>

Elkhart County governments get \$28 million for roads, discretionary spending

The Elkhart Truth

Ben Quiggle

6/2/2016

Municipalities across Elkhart County are beginning to see some extra money pour in to help with road and infrastructure costs as part of a plan passed by the state Legislature in March to help local governments afford road maintenance. Gov. Mike Pence announced that county auditors have distributed a one-time payment of \$505 million to local governments, including \$435 million that can be used for transportation infrastructure maintenance for counties, cities and towns. In Elkhart County, \$28.77 million will be divvied up among 37 public entities. The county will receive the lion's share of this state funding, at nearly \$10.5 million, with the city of Elkhart expected to receive more than \$8.3 million. Three-quarters of the money is to be used for road projects, per Senate Bill 67, while the rest can be used as local officials decide. Pence, in a statement, said the influx of cash was needed to help "preserve the Crossroads of America."

<http://www.elkharttruth.com/hometown/elkhart/2016/06/02/Elkhart-County-governments-get-28-million-for-roads-discretionary-spending.html>

www.buildindianacouncil.org