



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

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30 Laws: Mass transit votes won't come for two years

The Statehouse File

Emily Metheny

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INDIANAPOLIS - Central Indiana voters won't see proposals to raise taxes for mass transit on the ballots until at least 2016. Lawmakers authorized the referendums in legislation that becomes law July 1 but local officials say they are only now in the planning stages for eventual votes - at least in Marion and Hamilton counties. "I never felt this was a short-term plan," said Sen. Pat Miller, R-Indianapolis, the author of the bill. The earliest the referendum could be on the ballot is 2016, but there will be a lot of educating voters on the issue, she said. The law allows Marion, Madison, Johnson, Hancock, Hamilton and Delaware counties to host a referendum to increase taxes to pay for an "approved transportation project" that will likely be expanding bus routes but can't include light rail. Indy Connect is a coalition that pushed for the legislation. It includes the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization, Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority, and IndyGo, the government agency that now provides bus service in Indianapolis. The group is hosting public meetings to talk about proposals for new routes, new buses and an expansion into the region. "It's always a challenge to get people informed," said Shawn Northup, assistant executive director of the Metropolitan Planning Organization. We're "just trying to help interested parties understand the legislation." He said that the group explains the impact, benefits and "how the plans come together" to the public. Hamilton County Commissioner Christine Altman said the process right now in her county is focusing on how to use the money that would be generated by higher taxes. One item to discuss is the cost of service as well as the type of service that the community wants - before focusing on a ballot referendum. She said the earliest that would happen is 2016. Initially, Hamilton County officials started working on a plan with Indy Connect. [30 Laws: Mass transit votes won't come for two years - TheStatehouseFile.com | TheStatehouseFile.com](http://TheStatehouseFile.com)

Wildlife concerns delay Illiana Expressway

NWI Times

Keith Benman

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Final federal approval for the Illiana Expressway has been delayed by concerns about endangered species and habitat that may be affected by construction of the 47-mile bistate expressway. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has raised concerns about how the expressway would affect endangered or threatened species like the sheepsnose mussel and the long-eared bat, INDOT project manager James Earl told members of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission on Tuesday. In addition, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and other agencies have expressed concerns with the expressway's impact on the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in

Illinois. Consultations over those concerns have delayed the federal record of decision that is needed to give the green light to the project, Earl said. That decision was originally expected by the end of May. The federal record of decision is now expected in the July-to-September time frame, Earl said. That pushes back the date for a host of other moves needed to get the road built. Those include some property acquisitions and the issuance of a request for proposals soliciting private investors who want to build and operate the toll road. The Indiana Department of Transportation now forecasts it will be late summer or fall of 2015 at the earliest before construction can start, Earl said. Environmental groups have been raising the issue of endangered species and the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie ever since the first draft environmental impact study for the expressway was underway in 2012, according to Andrew Armstrong, a staff lawyer with the Environmental Law & Policy Center.

http://www.nwintimes.com/business/wildlife-concerns-delay-illiana-expressway/article_b0dc6641-bff9-5471-a327-09c9206176d6.html

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