



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

July 30, 2015

Senate Passes Three-Month Highway Spending Bill

The Wall St. Journal
Siobhan Hughes
7/30/2015

The Senate on Thursday passed a three-month highway spending bill, a measure that allows Congress to avoid a cutoff of transportation funds set to occur on Saturday and give lawmakers time to develop the sort of multiyear package they haven't been able to pass in years. The House approved the bill on Wednesday, and President Barack Obama is expected to sign it. The Senate vote was 91-4. With the longer-term in mind, the Senate also passed a bill that would continue highway programs for six years. That measure, which passed 65-34, would likely serve as the Senate's opening volley in what are expected to be high-profile, contentious negotiations with the House this fall, when lawmakers return from a recess. The question is whether the two chambers, which have taken sharply different approaches, can work out a multiyear package by the end of October, when the three-month patch would expire.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/senate-expected-to-pass-three-month-highway-bill-1438276309>

House passes three-month highway funding bill

The Washington Post
Kelsey Snell
7/29/15

The House on Wednesday took the first step toward ending a standoff with the Senate over highway funding by passing a three-month stopgap bill that will keep money flowing to transportation projects into the fall. The Senate is expected to take up the bill on Thursday after first passing a separate three-year funding bill, giving the chamber just two days to extend spending authority for road and bridge projects before it expires on July 31. The House vote was 385 to 34 in favor of what is expected to be the 34th short-term extension of the Highway Trust Fund in the past six years. The ongoing struggle to reach a deal on transportation funding has in recent weeks exposed Republican infighting over the lack of a long-term plan for a program that supports transportation projects across the country. House and Senate leaders said Tuesday that they hope the short-term extension will provide the House with enough time to draft its own long-term highway bill so that both chambers can enter formal negotiations in the fall. "The House wants to produce a long term highway bill," House Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) said on Tuesday following a House GOP meeting. "We've got work to do, and we've got to buy some time to get that work done."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2015/07/29/house-passes-three-month-highway-funding-bill/>

Donnelly seeks 'fair share' of highway funds

South Bend Tribune

Lincoln Wright

7/30/15

The deadline to reauthorize every state's federal funding for road and bridge work is upon the U.S. Congress. But even with bipartisan agreement that a long-term fix is needed, a lasting plan isn't going to be made before time runs out. The federal Highway Trust Fund will expire Friday, and without allocating money to states, a shutdown or delay of infrastructure projects across the country could ensue. But there's a bigger issue beyond Indiana just getting its money; is the state getting its fair share? With current allocations, there is about a \$1 billion annual road funding gap, according to a Build Indiana Council report released last month. That represents the amount of additional money needed to adequately maintain all aging roads and bridges. That doesn't include the costs of upgrading road systems to "create new, convenient connections and economic development opportunities," said the report. If funding continues at its current rate, 11.4 percent, or about 1,300 miles of the state's roads, will be classified in "poor" condition in the next 10 years, according to the Indiana Department of Transportation. In 2014, Indiana was allocated almost \$920 million of the total Highway Trust Fund. If Indiana received what is argued to be its fair share of the total fund, the state would have been given about an additional \$21 million. The fairness issue is what Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., addressed in an amendment to the Senate's highway funding bill he co-authored this week with Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz. "If we are going to make our highways safe for travel and open for business, we need to get back our fair share of federal highway funding," Donnelly said in a statement to The Tribune. "Right now, Hoosier taxpayers are providing hundreds of millions of dollars to build roads in other states. That is unacceptable." Donnelly's amendment follows his vote against moving forward with the Senate's six-year highway bill late Monday. Without the amendment, the bill would allow states to continue to miss out on funds and would cost Indiana about \$240 million over the life of the bill, according to Donnelly. The Senate voted Wednesday, though, to end discussion on its plan for the time being.

http://www.southbendtribune.com/news/local/donnelly-seeks-fair-share-of-highway-funds/article_9d196525-69e5-5d9e-9d4a-5eb903ce47cd.html

INDOT to change work zone penalty signs statewide

The Indy Channel

Kara Kenney

7/28/15

Weeks after Call 6 Investigates raised questions about penalties for highway work zone crashes, the Indiana Department of Transportation is changing signs statewide. Chances are you've seen the signs posted in construction zones all over Indiana warning "Speeding Max \$1000, Reckless Driving Max 8 Yrs." But those maximum penalties are rarely issued, if ever, according to information Call 6 Investigates obtained from dozens of courts, prosecutors and state agencies. Several county prosecutors said the work zone signs are wrong, because new "criminal code reform" legislation went into effect in July 2014 changing the maximum penalty for reckless driving from eight years to six years. After meeting with the Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council, INDOT issued a memorandum on July 23 ordering the signs to reflect current law. INDOT spokesman Will Wingfield said approximately 1,720 signs will be changed across the state, at a cost of about \$25 a sign. "It's a fairly simple fix, because it's a matter of just changing the number on the sign," said Wingfield. "The signs are an important tool for us to convey information to people entering the work zone." Wingfield said the state will not have to pay any additional expenses for signs associated with new contracts, which will be bid starting in September. The INDOT website has also been updated to reflect the law change, now saying drivers "who injure or kill a highway worker may end up paying a \$10,000 fine and serving up to six years behind bars." Fines generated from the work zone law are used to fund additional work zone patrols in an around work zones, according to INDOT.

<http://www.theindychannel.com/news/call-6-investigators/indot-to-change-work-zone-penalty-signs-statewide>

www.buildindianacouncil.org