



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

October 21, 2014

DOUG ROSS: RDA renewal could get South Shore rolling

NWI Times
10/19/14

With the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority up for reauthorization next year by the Indiana General Assembly, the South Shore expansion could finally get the traction it needs. The RDA gets \$10 million a year in state funding as well as dues paid by Porter and Lake counties and casino host communities. That state share was carved out of Major Moves, the \$3.8 billion windfall Indiana received from the 75-year lease of the Indiana Toll Road. With Major Moves money basically spent by now, and with RDA architect Chet Dobis long since retired from the Indiana General Assembly, the budget hawks are going to be looking at RDA with a critical eye. I've heard from more than one Northwest Indiana legislator that Luke Kenley, chairman of the powerful Indiana Senate Appropriations Committee, doesn't want to give the RDA \$10 million a year to use as its board members see fit. The RDA is going to have to ask for funding for specific projects and show the state will get a good return on its investment. The return on investment is easy to show; the RDA evaluates projects based on ROI every time it spends money. The RDA has been criticized for spending money on Marquette Plan projects — improving public access to the Lake Michigan shoreline — but failing to bring mass transit expansion to reality. Therein lies the opportunity for the South Shore expansion. The RDA needs to convince Kenley, and other powerful legislators, of the benefits Indiana will gain from extending commuter rail service. The state is the key to making this happen. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Ind., has worked tirelessly to obtain the local match needed to pay for the massive rail project. http://www.nwitimes.com/news/opinion/columnists/doug-ross/doug-ross-rda-renewal-could-get-south-shore-rolling/article_958c6833-88f9-57dd-b8ba-c6b046340fe7.html

Send gas tax money to states: Opposing view

USA Today
Chris Chocola
10/18/14

Not only is raising the gas tax misguided, but we should not even have a federal gas tax to begin with because it finances a program that is inherently broken. The Highway Trust Fund — into which gas tax revenue is placed — is a politician's dream because it transfers power to Washington and away from states, where the real decisions are made. Why send tax dollars to Washington only to see a portion of that money sent directly back to the states after federal bureaucrats chew up a sizable chunk of it? Why not just keep it with the states in the first place and keep the money away from greedy overspending politicians in Congress? All 50 states have Departments of Transportation. More than 70% of all transportation spending in this country is already financed and spent at the state and local level. Each state has very specific infrastructure needs, and those needs are most effectively addressed at the local level, where those making the

decisions are held most accountable by the taxpayers. The federal gas tax is just another layer of taxation that finances another layer of unnecessary bureaucracy. When the money is sent to Washington, the politicians spend it and then borrow even more. The result of this flawed system has been repeated taxpayer bailouts to the tune of tens of billions of dollars. And some of the actual expenditures, such as bike paths and "highway beautification," are of a dubious value.
[Send gas tax money to states: Opposing view](#)

Lease critics urge Indiana to reclaim toll road

Indianapolis Business Journal

10/18/14

Calls are mounting for Indiana to reclaim the Indiana Toll Road amid concerns over its bankrupt operator's ability to maintain the 157-mile roadway and its travel plazas. Chicago-based ITR Concession Co. filed for bankruptcy in Chicago last month, saying it can't afford the debt payments from the 2006 deal under which its parent company, the Spanish-Australian consortium Cintra-Macquarie, paid Indiana \$3.85 billion upfront for the rights to run the struggling highway and keep the toll revenue. It wants to sell the toll road lease to a new operator. Much of the \$3.85 billion was used to pay off debt, fund Major Moves projects, build hundreds of miles of new roads, fix more than 700 bridges and improve thousands of miles of highways. Lawmakers in Indiana and Washington, D.C., say the state should take the toll road back before conditions deteriorate further. Sen. Joe Donnelly called the situation "a mess of epic proportions" and has asked the Indiana Finance Authority, which owns the toll road, to ensure road conditions are safe, toll booths are staffed and rest plazas and restrooms are clean. "The people of northern Indiana and the entire state of Indiana deserve better, and were promised better," he said. Travelers have complained of long waits at toll plazas, bridges that haven't been repaired in more than a year and rest stops that reek of urine, Donnelly told The Times in Munster. "It needs to be run the way it's supposed to be run: in a clean fashion, in a safe fashion and in a timely fashion," Donnelly said. Former Gov. Mitch Daniels, who approved the lease, assured critics in 2006 that if the leasing consortium goes bankrupt, "the Toll Road reverts back to the state's control."

[Lease critics urge Indiana to reclaim toll road | 2014-10-18 | Indianapolis Business Journal | IBJ.com](#)

Can 'diverging diamonds' revolutionize Indiana highways?

Indianapolis Star

Vic Ryckaert

10/17/14

Construction has begun on a revolutionary highway ramp that will change the way drivers get on and off I-65 in Greenwood. The \$16 million "diverging diamond" interchange at Worthsville Road will criss-cross the east- and westbound lanes for a short span to allow cars to enter the highway without turning in front of oncoming traffic. "You're going to think you're in London driving on the wrong side of the road for a little bit," Mayor Mark Myers said. "I think, as well marked as it is, it will be pretty simple for people to pick up." Myers and state transportation officials held a ceremonial groundbreaking at the site on Wednesday. E & B Paving and Gradex were awarded the \$16 million construction contract earlier this month. Greenwood and the Indiana Department of Transportation are splitting the costs. "This project came in at \$6 million under costs," Myers said. "For the city of Greenwood, that means a \$3 million savings." Worthsville Road is scheduled to close in mid-November when crews begin demolishing the highway bridge. The new bridge and ramps will open in a little more than a year. Greenwood is getting Indiana's second diverging diamond ramp. The first opened last month at Dupont Road and I-69 in Fort Wayne.

[Can 'diverging diamonds' revolutionize Indiana highways?](#)

County Road 950 West now open

The News Dispatch
Jessica O'Brien
10/17/14

After months of planning and construction, the newly developed County Road 950 West is open for traffic – extending south from the intersection of Cleveland Avenue and County Road 400 North. This development was a \$700,000 project completed in a partnership between La Porte County, the Indiana Department of Transportation and the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission completed by Lochner Inc. and Rieth-Riley Construction. A large part of the project was paid for with federal funds, said Eric Wilson of Lochner Inc., with the county responsible for only 20 percent of the total cost. “We went from an 18-foot (wide) gravel road to a 24-foot asphalt paved road with curbs,” Wilson said. La Porte County Commissioner Willie Milsap said the difference before and after the construction project is like night and day. While 950 West currently dead-ends on its south end, Wilson said the plan is to install a cul-de-sac. Development is in the works to construct an intersecting road to the north of the proposed cul-de-sac, which will be known as County Road 375. This road will eventually connect 950 West to Frontage Road east of Highway 421, connecting to the I.U. Health Life Works facility. Wilson said he is hopeful this construction will begin yet this year, adding this project is a partnership between La Porte County and Life Works.

[County Road 950 West now open - TheNewsDispatch.com: News](http://www.thenewsdispatch.com/news/county-road-950-west-now-open)

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