



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

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State task force set to recommend tax hikes to fund road improvements

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Dan Carden
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INDIANAPOLIS — It appears likely that Hoosier drivers and motorists traveling through the Crossroads of America soon will pay more to ensure Indiana can afford to maintain and improve its highway network. The state's road funding task force is expected on Dec. 15 to recommend that the Republican-controlled General Assembly increase the 18 cents per gallon gasoline tax, index it for future inflation and toll new and existing roads where feasible, among other revenue-raising suggestions. "That is never an easy conversation to have," said state Sen. Brandt Hershman, R-Buck Creek, who represents a portion of Jasper County and is chairman of the Senate Tax and Fiscal Policy Committee. "But insofar as we want our state to be competitive from an economic standpoint, and the population expects high-quality infrastructure as well as safe infrastructure, this is a vital conversation." The Funding Indiana's Roads for a Stronger Safer Tomorrow, or FIRSST, Task Force got little pushback on any of those options during a public hearing Wednesday at the Statehouse. The co-chairman, state Sen. Luke Kenley, R-Noblesville, said that's because the panel has, through its research and analysis, come to accept that new revenue is effectively the only way to raise the \$800 million a year the state needs to spend to have 98 percent of its bridges and 95 percent of pavement rated fair or better by 2036. http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/state-task-force-set-to-recommend-tax-hikes-to-fund/article_b21999ab-043a-5309-ab11-4eca8e408c63.html

Editorial: Time to fix our road funding

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It's time to bite the political bullet — no matter the metallic taste left behind — and ensure a long-term fix for Indiana's road infrastructure. It's encouraging to see some of the state's top legislative leaders realizing that tax increases — no matter how politically unpopular — will be necessary to keep Indiana's crossroads safe and passable for future generations. But incorporating taxes into the fix need not be overly painful. At the top of legislative leaders' proposed list of road fixes heading into 2017 should be a plan that couldn't gain enough traction to pass the previous legislative session. We were encouraged earlier this week when Indiana Senate President David Long, R-Fort Wayne, and Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, both suggested that adjusting state taxes should be considered for sustainable road funding. Speaking at an Indiana Chamber of Commerce luncheon Monday, both men noted the possibility of, at the very least, adjusting Indiana's 18-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax to account for inflation. The tax has seen no change since 2003, and it should be central to a long-term funding fix for state roads. The Legislature also should be open to a fresh introduction, perhaps with some tweaks if

necessary, of Indiana Rep. Ed Soliday's road funding bill that failed to pass the General Assembly last year. Among other things, Soliday's bill would have reapportioned money from the gasoline sales tax to road funding. To make up for funding the Valparaiso Republican's bill would have channeled away from health care, Soliday also proposed an increased tax of \$1 per pack on cigarettes. <http://www.courierpress.com/story/opinion/editorials/2016/11/29/editorial-time-fix-our-road-funding/94622150/>

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