



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

December 6, 2016

Our Opinion: Long-term investment in the Crossroads of America

South Bend Tribune

12/4/16

After years of kicking the can down the road — a pothole-filled road, at that — could Indiana finally be ready to find a long-term solution for the state's infrastructure funding? The subject was up for debate during the previous legislative session, but with elections looming, it never really had a chance of going very far. Instead, the state made do with a short-term road funding package that put about \$230 million in new money into Indiana highways and bridges over the next two years. At the ceremonial signing of that bill, Republican House Speaker Brian Bosma said he expected lawmakers to debate a longer-term road funding plan during next year's work on a new state budget. The focus on Hoosier infrastructure is welcome and long overdue: The state spends less per capita than most states on highways and transit — and hasn't raised the state gas tax, a major source of highway funding, since 2003. For years, lawmakers have searched in vain for a long-term answer, considering ideas but reluctant to do anything that included any sort of tax increase. A legislative study committee tasked with determining how the state should meet its infrastructure needs in the future discovered this truth: The resources available for state and local road and bridge construction and maintenance have failed to keep up with inflation, making the buying power of current revenue about 7 percent less than what the state spent in 2001. Could things be changing? Bosma, who initiated the debate about long-term infrastructure planning earlier this year, has recently offered some encouraging words.

http://www.southbendtribune.com/news/opinion/our_opinion/our-opinion-long-term-investment-in-the-crossroads-of-america/article_b78e0f7e-f318-5964-aa56-9d5f10f077ef.html

Putting up a fight for U.S. 31 highway

South Bend Tribune

Kyle Hannon

12/4/16

ELKHART — There are a couple of times a year that we really think about roads. In the near future we will think about our road and whether the snow is cleared or not. In the spring we will consider whether the potholes are patched properly. In the Chamber world, we think about roads all the time. Roads are how our businesses and people thrive. This coming legislative session I encourage you to think a lot about roads too. Transportation funding is going to be one of the top issues. It's a top issue because, quite frankly, road funding is not keeping up with road needs. Are our roads in good enough shape to move product from one place to another? Can employees get to work quickly and safely? Can you get to Indianapolis as quickly and safely as you need? U.S. 31 is a great example because it is the most visible, and I would say the most threatened. About 20 years ago the Elkhart Chamber and St. Joseph County Chamber realized that the dream of businesses and residents for a limited access highway between South Bend and Indianapolis

was not going to happen by dreaming. Our organizations collaborated with local government and other interested companies to form the U.S. 31 Coalition. Thanks to the work of the coalition, and legislative partners, U.S. 31 has been greatly improved. The limited-access roadways around Lakeville, Kokomo and through Carmel have shaved a half hour off my journey. If you get there even more quickly, well, that's between you and law enforcement. Regardless of which side of the speed limit sign we drive, U.S. 31 is getting closer to the roadway we imagined.

http://www.southbendtribune.com/news/elkhartconnection/putting-up-a-fight-for-u-s-highway/article_071d5743-d832-5ab1-ac0f-3e801529424b.html

Roads Task Force Members Rethinking Possible Gas Tax Hike

Indiana Public media

Brandon Smith

12/2/16

Most on the roads task force concur – Indiana needs to raise its fuel taxes for the first time since 2003. And many believe part of that plan should include regular, automatic increases, based on something like inflation or the consumer price index. But Indiana Petroleum Council executive director Maureen Ferguson says automatic tax hikes, while politically easier, fly in the face of transparency. “Your constituents’ lives and pocketbooks are who you’re affecting, so to raise taxes is very difficult,” Ferguson says. “We would argue to make it easy is the opposite of what we should be doing.” Ferguson adds any increase should be voted on each year by the legislature. Roads task force co-chair Sen. Luke Kenley (R-Noblesville) says he hadn’t thought about that issue before. “I’m going to have to think through whether or not that’s a real problem or not. I felt like the indexing was something that was just going to flow automatically,” Kenley says. Ferguson says, if the legislature decides to index fuel taxes, the increases should be tied solely to fluctuating gas prices. <http://indianapublicmedia.org/news/roads-task-force-members-rethinking-gas-tax-hike-110060/>

Tolls to Pay for Indiana Roads: Why Some Think It's a Good Idea

WIBC

Stan Lehr

12/1/16

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind.--How would you feel about being charged a toll to drive on Indiana's interstate highways? It's just one possibility. But consulting engineer Steve Davidson urges state legislators to consider it. He says tolls would serve as a "user's fee", requiring even out-of-state drivers to contribute to the maintenance of Indiana's roadways. Some have also suggested "indexing" the state gasoline tax. That would mean tying it to an economic indicator like the Consumer Price Index. "You get the advantage of charging those people who are driving through your state who are utilizing the interstate system or your roadway network, who are not buying any gas or diesel fuel, and yet still utilizing and having wear and tear on your assets," said Davidson. Indiana Petroleum Council Executive Director Maureen Ferguson says the oil and natural gas industry object to that, fearing it would cause inflation across the economy. Modern vehicles use less fuel--which reduces the gas tax revenue available for road funding. "We would absolutely support that, provided that those taxes are dedicated solely for that function," said Ferguson. How to replace that revenue is expected to be a major focus of the General Assembly in the session convening in January. <http://www.wibc.com/news/local-news/tolls-pay-indiana-roads-why-some-think-its-good-idea>

