



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

December 22, 2015

Tully: An important debate about taxes and Indiana's roads

Indianapolis Star
Matthew Tully
12/21/15

An important debate popped up last week, and while much of it will get bogged down in politics and talking points, it's a debate worth having. It began when Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma did something as politically unthinkable as it was downright responsible: He raised the possibility of raising taxes to deal with the state's infrastructure plans and needs. It's unthinkable, of course, because so many voters treat any talk of new taxation as unforgivable and because so many of Bosma's fellow Republicans have taken no-new-taxes pledges that might as well be written in blood. It's responsible, of course, because so much of Indiana's infrastructure is crumbling or at least wearing down, and without a serious revenue discussion all we will see are Band-Aids on Hoosier roads and bridges. So let's give Bosma big credit for raising this possibility, for pushing this discussion into the open during these strange political times, and for forcing Indiana to at least hear a dose of reality as opposed to more politically popular rhetoric that, in the long term, won't do nearly enough to address our problems. On the other side of this debate is Gov. Mike Pence. On Friday his political fundraising operation sent out an email to supporters asking them to sign a petition that supports an infrastructure plan that steers clear of new taxes. <http://www.indystar.com/story/opinion/columnists/matthew-tully/2015/12/21/tully-important-debate-taxes-indianas-roads/77562978/>

The fix is almost in

The Journal Gazette
12/18/15

Veteran Indiana lawmaker Luke Kenley said he's seeking a seventh term in 2016 because he wants to develop a long-term plan to pay for Indiana's infrastructure. To his credit, the Noblesville Republican wants money to build and maintain Indiana's roads and bridges permanently included in the state's two-year spending plans. "I want to do that in the context of the budget," he told a Legislative Conference audience Wednesday. "When you do it in the context of the budget, you are forced to measure that priority against any other priority that you have in the state. The only real way you get this done anywhere near on a permanent basis is to get the legislature to agree that these are our true priorities. Otherwise, you slip back into what we had to deal with in 2013, where you have (funding for) the state police on the motor vehicle fund; the BMV on the motor vehicle fund. Somebody at one time decided roads weren't quite as important." Kenley's approach looks like the best hope for a permanent solution, and we hope the Senate Finance Committee chairman is successful in his plan. Hoosiers can't wait, however, for a budget year to address problems with streets, roads and bridges across the state. Just Wednesday, a southbound lane of the heavily traveled Interstate 65 near Lafayette was shut down for repairs

to a hole developing on a bridge – the same bridge that was closed for weeks this summer when crews found problems with support piers. <http://www.journalgazette.net/opinion/editorials/The-fix-is-almost-in-10517144>

NWI mayors kick tires on Soliday road plan

NWI Times
Keith Benman
12/18/15

PORTAGE — State Rep. Ed Soliday, R-Valparaiso, briefed region mayors Thursday on a road-funding proposal that includes a wheel tax and using a local option income tax to help repair and upgrade local streets. Soliday told them a bill to be introduced in the House would empower local communities, as well as start to raise the \$1 billion needed to fix state highways and bridges. "I like the fact we are all focused on fixing our roads," said Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson after Soliday's presentation. "It has taken some time and it has taken frankly some very dangerous situations." Soliday made his pitch at a morning meeting of the Northwestern Indiana Planning Commission, which is made up of officials from 50 communities in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. House Bill 1001, authored by Soliday, who chairs the House Roads and Transportation Committee, is the latest of four plans that all claim to address the issue of the state's badly deteriorating roads and bridges. http://www.nwitimes.com/business/nwi-mayors-kick-tires-on-soliday-road-plan/article_e568d9d5-c6bb-538f-9332-dcb25aaf5a25.html

GUEST COMMENTARY: I-65 is highlight of INDOT's list

NWI Times
Mike Pence and Brandye Hendrickson
12/18/15

Our recent announcement that INDOT will invest \$70 million to widen I-65 from Merrillville south to at least Ind. 2 is a major win for Northwest Indiana, and welcome news to the thousands of drivers who use this busy segment of highway each day. Once this project is complete, drivers traveling south on I-65 will no longer look up and see "Left Lane Ends" as they drive through Merrillville. That is an illustration of what this administration's transportation vision for Indiana is all about — preserving and upgrading our infrastructure to break down barriers to economic development. Adding travel lanes to I-65 increases capacity, reduces congestion and improves safety, and those are merely the transportation benefits. Across the country, interstate widening projects, like the one planned for I-65 in Northwest Indiana, are creating new business sales, generating new income for workers and raising overall economic output. Those are the reasons that make the I-65 expansion the right investment at the right time. While the I-65 project is a significant investment by the state in Northwest Indiana's infrastructure, it is only a small part of our larger commitment to the Region's economic prosperity. http://www.nwitimes.com/news/opinion/columnists/guest-commentary/guest-commentary-i-is-highlight-of-indot-s-list/article_c5d2cff7-554f-5398-b744-1ee4a1b147d4.html

Indiana gasoline tax would see 5 cents per-gallon hike under House Republican proposal

The Republic
12/17/15

INDIANAPOLIS — A road funding proposal from Republican leaders of the Indiana House that includes increasing the state's gasoline and cigarette taxes received a tepid response Thursday from Gov. Mike Pence. The plan outlined by House Speaker Brian Bosma would add a projected 5 cents a gallon to the state's gasoline tax and increase by \$1 the state's per-pack cigarette tax to help shift all of the current sales tax on gasoline to funding road projects. The Republican governor has proposed a \$1 billion highway funding boost over four years by drawing money from

the state's cash reserves and taking out loans. Pence said he believed his plan was the right approach for lawmakers to consider during the General Assembly session that starts in early January. "I think it's going to be a very important debate and the proposal that we have to invest a billion dollars in preservation over the next four years I think is the right approach — without a tax increase," Pence said. Indiana's 18 cents-a-gallon gasoline tax was last increased in 2002, and Bosma said Wednesday the plan would index that tax to the inflation rate since then and ensure it automatically changes with national economy without future legislative action.

<http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/02c5a97991d541cead9ed75582efec78/IN--Indiana-Road-Spending>

Bangert: I-65 potholes and pot shots

Journal & Courier

Dave Bangert

12/17/15

On a day when state lawmakers finally broached the subject of a long-term solution to Indiana's road and bridge repair needs, flashbacks to this summer were only natural when a 2-by-2-foot pothole on a busy road caused huge backups and prompted advice on detours. After all, it was on Interstate 65. It was near Lafayette, just four miles south. And it was on a bridge. If the proximity and three-mile traffic jams weren't enough, the partisans in Indianapolis were quick with the political hay to make sure Hoosiers connected dots between a pothole fixed in one day and a slipping pier that took a month this summer at an I-65 bridge over the Wildcat Creek. In other words, as Indiana drives toward the 2016 rematch between Gov. Mike Pence and Democratic challenger John Gregg, every pothole might just be enough for political sniping. To wit ... "Add today's I-65 bridge crisis to the list of the glaring problems showing that Indiana's D-plus rated infrastructure is literally crumbling before the eyes of Hoosier motorists," Drew Anderson, Indiana Democratic Party spokesman, said. "Problems like the large hole on another I-65 bridge put innocent lives at risk, and all Mike Pence can do is come up with short-term funding solutions that wouldn't even go into effect until summer of 2016 — if approved." An answer came from Sen. Brandt Hershman, a Buck Creek Republican familiar with that stretch of I-65, not to mention the call-and-response the Democratic Party employs through targeted email and social media.

<http://www.jconline.com/story/opinion/columnists/dave-bangert/2015/12/17/bangert--65-potholes-and-pot-shots/77487610/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>