



## **BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL**

### **Infrastructure Media Summary**

**December 31, 2013**

#### **Not all Tippecanoe County commissioners aboard Amtrak funding deal**

Journal & Courier  
Chris Morisse Vizza  
12/30/13

On a two-to-one vote on Monday, the Tippecanoe County Board of Commissioners Monday approved a one-year contract to share the costs of operating the Hoosier State train route with six cities and the Indiana Department of Transportation. The state, county and cities served by the 196-mile passenger rail line between Indianapolis and Chicago agreed in October to pick up the \$2.7 million annual cost of running the four-day-a-week train after the federal government stopped funding Amtrak routes shorter than 750 miles. Combined with Amtrak's three-day-a-week long-distance Cardinal, the trains provide daily passenger rail service. Operating and equipment expenses were estimated at \$3.8 million for the line that carries about 37,000 passengers a year. Riders pay \$22 for a one-way trip, \$80 short of the actual cost, according to an INDOT study. Commissioners David Byers and Tom Murtaugh voted to spend \$25,000 a month in economic development income tax revenues for 12 months from Oct. 1 to Oct. 1, 2014. The total cost would run to \$300,000 for the period. The county's share would increase to \$32,500 a month if all of the parties to the contract agreed to extend the agreement until January 31, 2015. The lone no vote came from county commissioner John Knochel, who said there are other needs just as pressing within the county.

[Not all Tippecanoe County commissioners aboard Amtrak funding deal | Journal and Courier | jconline.com](#)

#### **Four reasons you should hate the Illiana tollway**

Post-Tribune  
David Rutter  
12/29/13

We're stoked. It finally looks like taxpayers will spend \$1.3 billion on the Illiana Expressway of legend as it reaches out to link Interstate 65 near Lowell with Interstate 55 near Wilmington, Ill. Illiana Fever! Catch It! But before we get all giggly and giddy, consider four questions that might make you hate the Illiana.

1: A toll road to Joliet? Really? Well, of course it's not necessary in the way real interstate highways make life better. You need real interstates to reach Chicago, Indianapolis and Cleveland. This road is not so much for you and your Honda. It's for big trucks. You'll make the trip from Lake County to Joliet marginally faster with the new road, but the Indiana share of the 47-mile road is at least \$100 million. For a \$10 toll, don't you want to go to somewhere more interesting than Joliet? To avoid charges of provincial parochialism, we'd ask Jolietees the same question. How would a slightly faster trip to East Chicago enhance your life? When the states commissioned the Illiana Expressway Feasibility Study eight years ago, they wanted to prove

traffic would be diminished by an extra highway. What it showed, even then, was that traffic likely would not diminish on U.S. 41, but rise about 35 percent. 2: It's that Peotone Airport hallucination again? 3: We need more big trucks? 4: Is a \$1.3 billion road twice as nice for \$2.6 billion?

[Four reasons you should hate the Illiana tollway - Post-Tribune](#)

### **Illiana gained green light at end of 2013**

Post-Tribune  
Carole Carlson  
12/28/13

The Illiana Expressway chugged into the home stretch in 2013, driving a wedge between elected officials and property owners over the merits of the 47-mile new highway aimed at moving truck traffic off the Borman Expressway. Illiana dominated the conversation at several Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission emotion-packed meetings and hearings this year. The highway drew fire from Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., who opposed it because he said it didn't confirm with NIRPC's 2040 master plan that focused on revitalizing urban core cities like Hammond, Gary and East Chicago. McDermott said Illiana would lead to disinvestment in his city and create urban sprawl in south Lake County where most residents oppose it. It engendered support from labor leaders who see the highway as a job magnet. But residents, whose property is in its path, criticized the route and the need for the highway, arguing it could lead to the creation of an airport in Peotone, Ill., hurting the Gary/Chicago International Airport. Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson sounded a call for harmony, calling Illiana "a regional asset," that could create benefits such as jobs for her citizens and for Northwest Indiana residents. INDOT officials have said about 3,350 short-term construction jobs would be created, along with an estimated 6,600 long-term jobs.

[Illiana gained green light at end of 2013 - Post-Tribune](#)

### **State Seeks Alternatives to Fuel Tax**

WIBC Indianapolis  
Eric Berman  
12/26/13

Fuel taxes are the backbone of state highway funding, but better fuel efficiency and the rise of electric cars and hybrids are reducing what the state collects. The Indiana Chamber wants to experiment with taxing you based on how many miles you drive and the weight of your vehicle. President Kevin Brinegar envisions a voluntary pilot program, perhaps with an income tax credit to recoup the taxes participants pay at the pump. He says gas taxes were originally designed as a stand-in for the wear and tear individuals cause to the roads. Decreased gasoline usage by hybrids or natural-gas-powered vehicles means those cars aren't paying their fair share. Brinegar says any new tax system needs to restore that balance without penalizing hybrid owners. Indiana Motor Truck Association president Gary Langston contends other states which have tried a mileage tax have had trouble calculating it accurately. He says if the state needs more highway funding, it should raise the fuel tax. A legislative study committee reviewed the issue this summer and recommended a more in-depth study next year.

[State Seeks Alternatives to Fuel Tax | Indy's News Center - 93.1 WIBC Indianapolis - Live. Local. First.](#)

