



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

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Road funding a boost for South Bend-area contractors

South Bend Tribune
Erin Blasko
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SOUTH BEND — For local engineers and contractors, the state’s “Next Level Roads Plan” is cause for relief and excitement — and perhaps a tinge of anxiety — after years of uncertainty surrounding public road funding in the state. The plan, supported by a recent 10-cent increase in the state gas tax and new fees on electric and hybrid vehicles, calls for \$5.1 billion in road and bridge improvements over the next five years, including \$70.9 million in St. Joseph County. That spells steady work for local engineers and contractors after years of diminishing revenue for state road projects due to increasingly stringent federal fuel efficiency standards, the growing popularity of electric and hybrid vehicles and changing driving habits. At the same time, the sudden surge in investment is bound to put additional pressure on what is already a tight labor market in the county, with unemployment dipping below 3 percent in recent months. The plan represents the largest statewide investment in transportation since Major Moves, which relied on upfront payments from the 75-year lease of the Indiana Toll Road to finance more than \$3 billion in infrastructure improvements over 10 years, ending in 2015. Unlike Major Moves, the new plan relies on sustainable, long-term funding sources. “We never really came back from the recession — we struggled to utilize our assets, our plants and equipment — so we’re looking forward to this uptick in funding,” said Gene Yarkie, vice president of operations for Rieth-Riley, the area’s largest asphalt and concrete paving contractor. Even with lucrative contracts to repave the Indiana Toll Road and reconfigure South Bend’s streets, the Goshen-based company has operated below capacity in recent years, Yarkie said, due to the general lack of transportation funding at the state level. http://www.southbendtribune.com/news/local/road-funding-a-boost-for-south-bend-area-contractors/article_ffa8d5df-fc54-54e3-ae34-1b3c669055da.html

38 highway projects in 5 years coming our way

Palladium-Item
Jason Truitt
7/23/17

WAYNE COUNTY, Ind. — Here's the good news: Wayne County is getting a \$62 million-plus investment in its roads and bridges over the next five years. And the bad news? If you're tired of dealing with construction projects on major roadways after this year's burst of activity around the county, you won't be getting much relief soon. Gov. Eric Holcomb and Indiana Department of Transportation Commissioner Joe McGuinness recently kicked off the state's Next Level Roads initiative and shared construction plans for the first five years. The program calls for work on existing roads and bridges, with up to \$4.7 billion in investment around the state over the

next five years. After that, an additional \$342 million annually will be provided to support cities, towns and counties for local road projects. Wayne County will see an investment of \$62,254,462 between 2018 and 2022, according to figures released by the state. The majority of that money is earmarked for a series of 38 projects to be overseen by INDOT on the county's highways. Wayne County Commissioner Denny Burns said the money that eventually comes to the local communities likely will be split in the same way that the state's gas tax revenues are distributed. "It will probably use the standard formula for the gasoline tax," he said. "I'm pretty sure that that's the formula we'll use. It's based on population, road miles and number of bridges, etc." Burns said local municipalities typically have several projects that are just waiting for funding to be available to get started. "This could spur some of that," he said. One thing's for sure: INDOT will be very busy throughout the county between now and 2022. The vast majority of the work on the state agency's list for Wayne County will come in the form of smaller paving and bridge overlay projects, but because all of them will take place on highways, the impact to traffic certainly will be felt by local drivers. <http://www.pal-item.com/story/news/local/2017/07/23/plenty-more-road-construction-coming-wayne-county-over-next-5-years/487274001/>

Mark Bennett: Making 'the grade' safer

Tribune-Star
Mark Bennett
7/23/17

A connector route along the grade remains the No. 1 priority for "non-motorized projects" in the Terre Haute Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan. "And once a funding source is secured, it can be programmed for design and construction by the [West Central Indiana Economic Development District Metropolitan Planning Organization] Transportation Policy Committee," said Jeremy Weir, director of transportation planning for West Central. Such a connector path could be constructed as a concrete and steel framework anchored to piers mounted on the highway's south side, Weir said. An easement, already secured, would help facilitate its construction, he added, and the county parks would maintain the trail. The funding source is no small component, though. The connector path was included in the MPO's Trails and Greenways Plan compiled in 2010, with an estimated cost of the project at \$4.4 million. So, the source of funding continues being sought. The community receives between \$2 million and \$2.5 million annually for local streets and highways through the federal highway bill, and various projects are weighed as the funds get allocated, Weir explained. "[The U.S. 150 connector] is definitely an item we've identified that has a safety aspect to it," he said last week, "but at the same time, every road has that aspect to it." The highway is commonly referred to as old U.S. 40. However, under modern official designations, that stretch of highway is now U.S. 150. Meanwhile, U.S. 40 now runs concurrent with Interstate 70 from the 641 bypass and Indiana 46 to the Illinois state line. Regardless of its name, the highway features only a few feet of shoulder area between the edge of its pavement and a steel barrier. On the other side of the barrier is a fence (to divert turtles trying to cross the highway) and a hill descending into the Wabashki Fish and Wildlife Area wetlands. Once an eastbound pedestrian reaches the Theodore Dreiser and Paul Dresser bridges, those spans include a small walkway across the Wabash River toward Terre Haute. http://www.tribstar.com/opinion/columns/making-the-grade-safer/article_91f87afe-45f9-58d5-a23f-bd2f04953f05.html

Munster considers routes to funding underpass

NWI Times
Mary Wilds
7/23/17

MUNSTER — The Town Council has discussed possible funding options for its share of the grade separation project costs. Currently, the town must provide \$15 million in funding at this stage of the project. Costs at this stage will be also borne by the Northwestern Indiana Regional

Planning Commission and the Indiana Department of Transportation. The town is in line to get \$6 million in funds from the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, Town Manager Dustin Anderson told the council last week. That leaves "\$9 million and change" to be provided by Munster, Anderson said. The town has been working with its partners to build an underpass for 45th Street below the Canadian National Railroad. In addition, 45th Street east of Calumet Avenue will be realigned in order to meet 45th Street west of Calumet. This reconfiguration is meant to reduce traffic congestion around 45th Street and Calumet Avenue and "facilitate development at this landmark community crossroads," according to the town's website. Munster has a good chunk of money sitting in bond accounts, some of which go back five years, officials said. While it has been nice to have cash reserves, officials agreed, since Munster will be asked to release its money at the beginning of the project, those reserves may be the best place to go for the bulk of funding. According to the town's financial consultant, H.J. Umbaugh & Associates, the town also would qualify for a revenue bond, based on wheel and excise tax money, for up to \$3 million. The combination of revenue bond and reserve cash would give Munster the money it needs to go forward. A revenue bond is one repaid by a specific funding source. Wheel and excise tax money collected by the town would be put toward paying off the bond.
http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/munster-considers-routes-to-funding-underpass/article_9ba55a96-24ed-5d52-ab62-6f418d1b8b41.html

County sizes up state of bridges

The Republic
Mark Webber
7/23/17

Three of the five Bartholomew County bridges in most need of replacement are located northeast of Hope in Hawcreek Township. That's according to an inventory and inspection report of all 203 county-owned bridges by Indianapolis-based United Consulting, which it has submitted to the Bartholomew County Commissioners. However, no bridge currently being used has deteriorated to the point where there is an imminent public danger, the report said. All structures are in compliance with state and federal regulations, it said. Nevertheless, the Indianapolis firm has been working with county highway engineer Danny Hollander to make priorities for a repair and rehabilitation schedule, United Consulting engineer Dave Richter told the commissioners last week. "We try to repair at least two a year," Hollander said. "But we've got a couple of big ones in the works now." The two most expensive bridge projects on the county's radar both cross the Driftwood River northwest of Columbus. They are Bridge 149 on Tannehill Road and Bridge 170 on Lowell Road. While a regular bridge replacement costs about \$600,000, both the Tannehill and Lowell bridges are so large that it may take millions of dollars to fix the structures, which are both more than 50 years old, commissioner Carl Lienhoop said. Although the county is seeking federal assistance to pay 80 percent of the costs to repair those two bridges, commissioner Larry Kleinhenz still expressed reservations.

http://www.therepublic.com/2017/07/24/county_sizes_up_condition_of_bridges/

www.buildindianacouncil.org