



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

June 21, 2012

Lawmakers try to save transportation bill, their best bet for passing a jobs bill

Daily Reporter
6/19/12

WASHINGTON — House and Senate leaders made a last-ditch effort Tuesday to revive stalled legislation to overhaul federal transportation programs — Congress' best bet for passage of a major jobs bill this year — but prospects for approval before the November elections are chancy at best. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., and House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, as well as two key committee chairmen, Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., and Rep. John Mica, R-Fla., held a closed-door meeting at which the senators made a new offer on how to handle a collection of sensitive policy and financing matters still in dispute. The two party leaders told the chairmen to "redouble our efforts," Mica told reporters as he left the meeting. "We're going to take it hour by hour to see if we can get the job done," he said. A 47-member House-Senate committee has been holding negotiations on the bill for over a month, but it has been unable to reach agreement on a host of difficult issues, lawmakers involved in the process and their staffs said. Those include easing environmental regulations to speed up construction projects, reducing the number of transportation programs and providing funding for bike paths, sidewalks and other "transportation enhancements." [Lawmakers try to save transportation bill, their best bet for passing a jobs bill](#)

I-69 begins to take shape

Evansville Courier & Press
6/20/12

PETERSBURG, Ind. — The 65-mile stretch between Evansville and Crane, Ind., is looking less like dirt cleared for something to come and more like the interstate highway that is set to open six months from now. Though motorists leaving Evansville can't go much past the Interstate 64 exchange, they can see miles of paved highway adorned with Interstate 69 signs. When paving and striping for that section is finished, the first half of the 142-mile Evansville-to-Indianapolis project will be completed — just as the man who pushed to fund it, Gov. Mitch Daniels, packs up and exits the Statehouse doors. As Daniels prepares to leave office in January, the "Major Moves" deal — a \$3.85 billion, 75-year lease of a northern Indiana toll road, the proceeds of which are funding the I-69 extension — is getting a new round of attention. [I-69 begins to take shape » Evansville Courier & Press](#)

Feds OK 2 new bridges linking Indiana, Kentucky

Indianapolis Star
6/20/12

The Federal Highway Administration on Wednesday cleared the way for a \$255-million tunnel in Kentucky that has drawn widespread criticism, particularly among Hoosiers, who will pay for it. The authorization, viewed as a mere formality, was the final obstacle for a \$2.6-billion project to ease transportation around the Louisville area, which includes portions of Indiana. The two states will hold a ceremonial groundbreaking in August, hire contractors by year's end and begin work in 2013. "We're eager to break ground and move ahead with construction," Gov. Mitch Daniels said, "but more importantly, this is about convenience, safety, jobs and unlocking greater economic potential in southeastern Indiana." Each state will pay about \$1.3-billion. Kentucky will expand the existing I-65 bridge over the Ohio River. Indiana will build a new I-265 bridge, the part of the project that includes a tunnel beneath property of disputed historic significance near Kentucky's shore. [Feds OK 2 new bridges linking Indiana, Kentucky | Indianapolis Star | indystar.com](#) Also, [Bridges Construction Receives Federal Approval - Newsroom - Inside INdiana Business with Gerry Dick](#)

In Indiana, A U.S. Superhighway May Hit The Skids

NPR

6/20/12

The story of the so-called NAFTA Superhighway is long and winding — and without a new influx of funds, the end of the road may still be a long way off. When complete, Interstate 69 would pass through eight states and provide a direct route through the Midwest between Canada and Mexico. Most of the states along the route are upgrading existing roads to interstate standards. Indiana, in contrast, must build almost 100 miles of entirely new road for its portion of the project. Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels has been fast-tracking construction. But when he leaves office in January, the road will be less than half-finished — and money for the project is running out. As he drives his big silver Cadillac past earthmovers, bulldozers and mountains of dirt, Tom Baumert points out a recently completed overpass, beaming like a proud father. Baumert lives in Washington, Ind., a railroad town in the southwestern part of the state. Washington flourished in the 19th century, when the country depended on trains to move goods and people, but languished as train travel waned and the modern highway system left it behind. This is where the idea for I-69 developed more than two decades ago, and where some of the freeway's biggest supporters live. But the project collected dust for years. Four different governors studied the effort, but none committed funds to begin construction. That is, until Daniels took office in 2005. "I-69 was clearly one of the promises that had been made, or the commitments the state had, that there was no prospect of paying for," he says. [In Indiana, A U.S. Superhighway May Hit The Skids : NPR](#)

Bad roads or higher taxes?

The Journal Gazette

6/21/12

Hoosiers who depend on safe, convenient roads and streets are inevitably going to have to pay more for them. If only state legislators and city and county officials statewide understood that. As Niki Kelly's Sunday story explained, the state's excise tax on gasoline — 18 cents per gallon — is bringing in less money each year. That means both state and local governments have less money to repair, maintain and build highways, roads and streets. The choice is difficult but clear: Raise taxes (or user fees), spend less money on roads or, most likely, a combination of both. Of course, no one wants to see taxes go up, least of all politicians responsible for increasing them. Indeed, state legislators are loath to raise taxes but would be happy if county governments did. Similarly, county officials across the state want to hold the line on local taxes and believe the state should find the ways to provide more money. State Rep. Jeff Espich of Wells County, the Republican House expert on budget issues who is retiring this year, has long called for indexing the gasoline excise tax to inflation, allowing for regular but small increases. And in retrospect, after agreeing to lease the Indiana Toll Road for \$3.8 billion, legislators could have changed the formula on distributing the excise tax revenue to provide more to local government and less to

state government, which received the bulk of the lease proceeds. [Bad roads or higher taxes? | The Journal Gazette](#) Also, [Gas tax shortfall puts roads, streets at risk - 13 WTHR Indianapolis](#)

Hoosiers Still Slow to Embrace Public Transportation

WIBC

6/21/12

IndyGo is urging drivers to "Dump the Pump" Thursday and leave the driving to them. But Indianapolis residents still seem to prefer their cars. Indy is the nation's 11th-largest city, but the American Public Transportation Association says ridership for its bus system ranks 92nd. Spokesman Bryan Luellen points out IndyGo is on pace for a record 9.8 million riders this year, up five percent from four years ago. Rising gas prices have nudged more people to consider the bus, and Luellen says even when those prices fall, many people prefer the predictability of bus fares to the fluctuations at the pump. But Luellen acknowledges bus systems tend to get more riders if they run more often, and through more of the day. He says IndyGo's funding limits most service to once every half hour. Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard has lobbied the legislature for a regional tax referendum to pay for a mass transit system that would reach into surrounding counties. The city has also been urging commuters to carpool to reduce gas consumption. The commuter matching service Commuter Connect says it has six-thousand people in its database, and has found matches for about half of them. [Hoosiers Still Slow to Embrace Public Transportation | Indy's News Center - 93.1 WIBC Indianapolis - Live. Local. First.](#)

www.buildindianacouncil.org