



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

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Indiana's Bridge Deal Boondoggle, Part 1: A Financial Fiasco

Urbanophile
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I've noted before how the Indiana Toll Road lease was a stroke of genius. I attribute a lot of it to Gov. Mitch Daniels' shrewd assessment of the competitive landscape. As Daniels is fond of saying, "It was the best deal since Manhattan was sold for beads – only this time the natives won." Unfortunately, in the case of Indiana's recent agreement with Kentucky on a pair of new bridges across the Ohio River at Louisville, this time it's Indiana taxpayers and motorists who are back in the role of the Indians. I'm a big fan of Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, but this is a very bad deal for the state. In a four part series that starts today, I'll document the reasons why, explaining how: [The Urbanophile » Blog Archive » Indiana's Bridge Deal Boondoggle, Part 1: A Financial Fiasco](#)

Indiana's Bridge Deal Boondoggle, Part 2: Hoosiers to Pay Even More With Tolling

Urbanophile
1/10/12

The first thing to note is that tolling will not pay for the project. According to the News-Tribune, no decisions have been made on toll locations or prices. However, Indiana is already projecting that it will have to spend \$432 million out of its regular highway funds to complete the project. If this number is correct, this would put the project among the most expensive in the state. With Major Moves already significantly over budget such that projects have been kicked out of it to balance the books, and a projected significant decline in available highway funds after Major Moves expires in 2015, this project will clearly impact other projects throughout the state. This is money that can't be spent on any other projects – in effect it is a diversion of funds from other projects to cover a gap in this one.

That's not to say it wouldn't be a worthwhile investment. I'm a Southern Indiana native who strongly supports the construction of the East End bridge. But there are two points on which to be clear as things stand today: [The Urbanophile » Blog Archive » Indiana's Bridge Deal Boondoggle, Part 2: Hoosiers to Pay Even More With Tolling](#)

You cut it, you fix it: New Albany tightens responsibility of utility to repair paving

News and Tribune
1/10/12

NEW ALBANY — Amendments to a resolution that was passed to protect the city's infrastructure when it comes to utility excavations were approved by the New Albany Board of Public Works

and Safety on Tuesday. As multiple utility projects requiring street cuts are on the horizon for the city, Mayor Jeff Gahan's administration requested the amendments, which will likely be affirmed by the New Albany City Council this month. Essentially utility companies and contractors will be required to resurface the entire width of a street or alley for a full city block if they substantially disturb a section of the road. The resolution is needed "so that we don't put down fresh asphalt, resurface the street, and have a utility come back a few months later" and dismantle the infrastructure without proper compensation, New Albany City Plan Commission Director Scott Wood said. [You cut it, you fix it: New Albany tightens responsibility of utility to repair paving » Recent Local News » News and Tribune](#)

State forging ahead with Dickey, Riley improvements

NWI Times
1/10/12

No matter what happens with a replacement bridge for Cline Avenue, INDOT is plowing ahead with multimillion-dollar improvements to Dickey and Riley roads in East Chicago. Morrison Construction Co., of Hammond, already is performing \$1,296,000 in repairs on the Dickey Road drawbridge, and the Indiana Department of Transportation will open bids for building a new Cline-to-Riley ramp in February, according to INDOT LaPorte District Chief of Staff Angie Fegaras. The bid opening to rebuild Ramp D from eastbound Cline Avenue to Riley Road will take place Feb. 8 and construction should start not long after, Fegaras said. A 900-foot section of that ramp was imploded in early February because of structural deficiencies. The Cline Avenue Bridge itself has been closed since November 2009, when it was found interior support cables had corroded, gravely weakening the 1.2-mile span. Fegaras told a committee of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission on Tuesday that INDOT and an investor group called American Bridge Partners continue to work out details for the company's proposal to build a private toll bridge to replace the failed state span. American Bridge Partners was formed by the FIGG Group, an engineering firm that has built numerous private toll bridges in the United States. [State forging ahead with Dickey, Riley improvements](#)

Indiana's Bridge Deal Boondoggle, Part 3 – INDOT's Mini-Big Dig

Urbanophile
1/11/12

Plans for an East End bridge date back to at least 1969. Part of the problem with building it has long been that the Kentucky approach to this bridge would pass through the town Prospect, arguably the Louisville area's most affluent and influential suburb. (For readers in Central Indiana, think "Zionsville" or Southwest Clay Township in Carmel and you'll have the picture). The wealthy and influential residents there were long able to stymie progress on the East End bridge. They also had an ally in Louisville major Jerry Abramson, who greatly feared a beltway connection that would allow traffic to bypass downtown Louisville. He promoted a new downtown bridge instead. In the grand tradition of political compromise, Indiana and Kentucky agreed to build both bridges. This was in part possible because of a city-county merger in Louisville, which reduced the fear of downtown lobby because they would still control revenues from any East End growth the bridge might spawn. Hence was born the fiction of "two bridges, one project" even though there is no real transportation necessity to link the two and either one has independent utility. But the Prospect residents were never going to give up. As part of their plan to kill the East End bridge, they managed to get the Dumanard Estate put onto the National Register of Historic Places to make it much more difficult to route a roadway through it. After the original listing that included the home and gardens, the listing was later expanded to include the entire 55-acre grounds. [The Urbanophile » Blog Archive » Indiana's Bridge Deal Boondoggle, Part 3 – INDOT's Mini-Big Dig](#)

Project to upgrade Lincoln Avenue/Green River Road intersection under way
Evansville Courier & Press

1/11/12

EVANSVILLE —Crews have started a long-term project to upgrade one of Evansville's busiest intersections. The project, expected to cost more than \$1.5 million, will add three dedicated turn lanes to the Green River Road-Lincoln Avenue intersection. Improvements will add right-hand dedicated turn lanes in both directions on Green River Road onto Lincoln Avenue and a westbound left dedicated turn lane on Lincoln for vehicles turning southbound onto Green River Road. The construction contract was awarded to Evansville-based JBI Construction, but that does not include the current work being done to relocate utility lines so the two roads can be widened, said Patrick Keepes, the city engineer. That utility relocation work was contracted out by the Evansville Water & Sewer Utility to Deig Brothers Construction.

The entire project will take most of 2012. "We're looking at probably a November completion," Keepes said. Keepes said that except for the \$238,000 to Deig Brothers for the utility work, the project is being paid for with federal funds and is classified as a congestion mitigation and air quality improvement project. It includes work to the nearby curbs and sidewalks and to the stop light at the intersection to handle the new lanes as well. [Project to upgrade Lincoln Avenue/Green River Road intersection under way » Evansville Courier & Press](#)

Indiana's Bridge Deal Boondoggle, Part 4 – A Better Plan

Urbanophile

1/12/12

But just because I believe this deal is bad doesn't mean I think the project itself is all bad. Indeed, I'm a strong supporter of the East End bridge, which is a generational investment for that part of the state. I also think the \$1.5 billion in savings identified so far are great and a good start at getting costs under control on this project. But there's still more we can do. So with that in mind, I'll outline the changes I'd make to move the project forward: The first step is to kill the ludicrous \$261 million "tunnel under the trees" in Prospect. Regardless, where there's a will, there's a way. Kill the tunnel and save some more bucks. And even beyond that there's probably still more savings to be had on the Kentucky approach. I will only briefly cover this here since I've written about it extensively before, but 8664 is a plan to build the East End bridge, re-route I-64 through traffic across the resulting beltway, and tear down the I-64 Riverfront Parkway in downtown Louisville, reconnecting downtown to the river in the process. As a side benefit, Spaghetti Junction would be greatly simplified. Riverfront Parkway would be reconstructed as a surface boulevard, and I-64 outside of downtown would be re-signed as I-164, providing continued freeway access from Indiana and the East End to downtown on all existing routes. The proposed new downtown bridge would not be built. [The Urbanophile » Blog Archive » Indiana's Bridge Deal Boondoggle, Part 4 – A Better Plan](#)

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