

Transportation Officials Press for Jobs Bill
Oct 21, 2011 08:37 AM

During a White House conference call Thursday, DOT officials made another pitch for the infrastructure components of the President's \$447 billion jobs package. Although proponents didn't have the votes to advance the bill in the Senate, the Obama administration is continuing to argue that the bill is necessary to improve our nation's infrastructure and create jobs.

Unable to move the entire jobs bill, Democratic lawmakers and administration officials have decided to break up the President's plan into smaller pieces. Wednesday, Vice President Joe Biden was on Capitol Hill trying to build support for a \$35 billion portion of the bill that would help preserve jobs for teachers, police officers and firefighters. (The International Association of Fire Fighters participated in the rally.)

Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez said during Thursday's call that the Senate is expected to vote on the first portion of jobs package this week. He also said that he expects a separate vote on the infrastructure portions of the bill. However, Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff said that it is unclear when the Senate will consider the transportation-related provisions of the bill.

National Journal

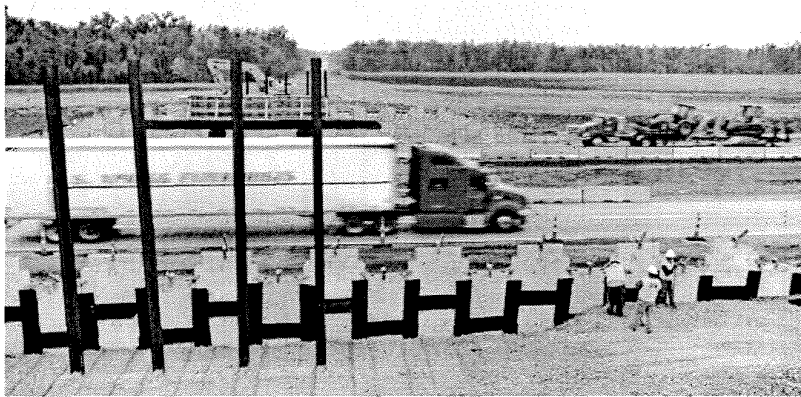
ECONOMY

Democrats' Next Jobs Message: Traffic, Potholes

by Fawn Johnson

Updated: October 21, 2011 | 2:05 p.m.

October 21, 2011 | 11:33 a.m.



MIKE GULLETT/AP

Construction takes place on Highway 71 south of Lamar, Mo., in 2009.

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From National Journal:

CONGRESS



Senate Blocks First Piece of Obama's Jobs Proposals

SOCIAL MEDIA



NYSE CEO Takes on Obama's Jobs

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Bill

OPINION



Sperling: Only
Obama's Plan
Would Deliver
Immediate Growth

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Republicans," said Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid**.

Transportation legislation is traditionally bipartisan. Including the Republican-opposed millionaires tax will likely change that dynamic for the Senate infrastructure bill, which may be the point. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, a Republican from Illinois, will travel the country sounding the call to fellow Republicans to at least allow transportation monies to flow to the states. "We proved that we can put people to work with the economic stimulus we had over the last two years. The economic stimulus created 65,000 jobs," LaHood said. Some Republicans argue that the infrastructure stimulus money has not been spent fast enough, but Transportation Department officials say that virtually all of the \$48 billion for infrastructure in the stimulus bill has been obligated to states to spend. States now have the responsibility to complete the projects and then ask for reimbursement from the feds.

Obama made a similar infrastructure proposal one year ago (without the tax provision) and got a tepid response from Congress, even when the House was still in Democratic hands. The measure's fate this time around isn't likely to be much different, but Senate floor votes will give Democrats and the White House the chance to harp on a few political easy targets—potholes and traffic.

Policymakers in the transportation arena have been wringing their hands for most of the year waiting to see if Congress can pass a long-term surface-transportation bill, now more than two years overdue. The most recent extension of the highway funding program expires on March 31. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will meet next month to pass a two-year surface-transportation bill, but it is unclear whether House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman **John Mica**, R-Fla., insists on a six-year bill, but that time frame would require budget cuts that many lawmakers won't be able to stomach.

Obama's \$50 billion infrastructure proposal is only a part of the roughly \$300 billion that would be needed to fund the nation's transportation systems at current levels for the next six years. "This is a shot in the arm for the economy right now," Reid said.

THE DAILY CALLER
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Senate rejects slimmed-down Obama jobs bill

By ANDREW TAYLOR 10:22 PM 10/20/2011

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's allies in the Senate on Friday unveiled the next piece of his failed \$447 billion jobs measure to get a vote in the Senate: a \$60 billion investment in infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges.

Like its two predecessors, however, the infrastructure package figures to be unanimously opposed by Republicans and a handful of Democrats over its stimulus-style spending and tax surcharge on the very wealthy. A test vote on the measure will come after the Senate returns from vacation next month.

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"This legislation will create hundreds of thousands of construction jobs rebuilding our roads, bridges and infrastructure," said Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev.

The measure would be financed by a 0.7 percentage point surcharge on income over \$1 million.

The announcement by Senate Democrats came the day after Republicans scuttled a pared-back jobs measure designed to boost hiring of teachers and first responders.

That plan failed on a 50-50 test vote that fell well short of the 60 needed to break a filibuster. Two Democrats abandoned Obama on the vote and two more who voted with the president said they couldn't support the underlying Obama plan unless it's changed.

Thursday's \$35 billion measure combined \$30 billion for state and local governments to hire teachers and other school workers with \$5 billion to help pay the salaries of police officers, firefighters and other first responders. The White House says the measure would "support" almost 400,000 education jobs for one year. Republicans call that a temporary "sugar high" for the economy and say it's a taxpayer-funded bailout of state and local governments.

Obama and his Democratic allies are acting like they've found a winning issue in repeatedly pressing popular ideas such as infrastructure spending and boosting hiring of police officers and firefighters. The sluggish economy and lower tax revenues have caused many teachers' jobs to be cut over the past several years.

"For the second time in two weeks, every single Republican in the United States Senate has chosen to obstruct a bill that would create jobs and get our economy going again," Obama said in a statement after the vote. "Every American deserves an explanation as to why Republicans refuse to step up to the plate and do what's necessary to create jobs and grow the economy right now."

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An AP-GfK poll taken Oct. 13-17 found 62 percent of respondents favoring the surcharge as a way to pay for jobs initiatives. Just 26 percent opposed the idea.

More ominously for Democrats, the poll shows that Obama's party has lost the faith of the public on handling the economy. In it, only 38 percent said they trust Democrats to do a better job than Republicans in handling the economy, the first time Democrats have fallen below 40 percent in the poll. Some 43 percent trust the Republicans more.

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Many Democrats and Obama support the idea but opposed it Thursday because it would be paid for with \$30 billion in cuts from domestic agency spending. Advocates of repealing the withholding requirement say it will help create jobs, especially from contractors on large projects with smaller profit margins.

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Senate Dems Tee Up Infrastructure Jobs Vote

By [Todd Zwillich](#) | October 21, 2011 – 4:32 pm

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Just hours after the failure of a bill spending \$35 billion preserving jobs for teachers and first responders, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) announced that Democrats will soon proffer \$60 billion in infrastructure projects as way to create jobs. It's paid for with a 0.7% surtax on income over \$1 million.

It's Democrats' second try pairing popular parts of President Obama's defeated jobs plan with tax increases on millionaires. In this case, Dems are going for \$50 billion for myriad transportation projects and \$10 billion in seed money for a federal [infrastructure bank](#). The bank would fund transportation projects and also water, sewer and other infrastructure needs.

"We're going to give Senate Republicans another chance to do the right thing," Reid told reporters on a conference call Friday.

Right or wrong, the bill stands little chance of becoming law. Republicans have shown unanimous opposition to using a millionaire's surtax to pay for stimulus spending. And while the idea of an infrastructure bank has bipartisan support in the Senate, House Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica (R-Fla.) has declared it "dead on arrival."

Still, the bill gives congressional Democrats and President Obama more ammunition against Republicans as they try to cast them protecting the rich at the expense of jobs. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood criticized fellow Republicans for "giving great speeches" about job creation but refusing to back the president on legislation. He said he'd "travel the country" calling GOP lawmakers to task and urging them to support the bill.

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Reid said he'll put the bill on the Senate floor the week of November 1, when lawmakers return from a week-long recess. If this vote goes how the last two have gone, expect Republicans to oppose it, come up with their own alternative, and for the election-year politics to fly.

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Published October 21, 2011

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Dianne Feinstein says Obama infrastructure plan won't pass Senate

By Jean Merl, Los Angeles Times

October 26, 2011, 3:58 p.m.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) said Wednesday that the next provision up for a vote from President Obama's jobs package was urgently needed but gave it long odds for passage in the Senate next week, citing Congress' highly polarized atmosphere.

The measure, which would provide money for hiring workers to repair aging bridges and roads, is not likely to get the 60 votes needed to end debate and pass it, Feinstein said during a wide-ranging luncheon appearance at Town Hall Los Angeles.

Pollster Mark Baldassare of the Public Policy Institute of California posed questions to the state's senior senator on such diverse topics as the economy, tax reform and the "Occupy" movement of protesters camped out in several major U.S. cities, including Los Angeles.

Feinstein blamed what she called "outliers," people on the extreme right and extreme left who are not interested in compromise, which she said was the only way to get things done in Washington.

She said tea party members are holding the Republican leadership captive and rendering House Speaker John A. Boehner and others unable to forge solutions to some of the nation's most pressing problems, including its sluggish economy.

She told the luncheon audience of about 220 in downtown Los Angeles that she favored many of the elements of a tax reform proposal formulated by former Bill Clinton aide Erskine Bowles and former Republican Sen. Alan Simpson, particularly its calling for collapsing the current six federal tax brackets into three and the elimination of many of the itemized deductions. She would keep the mortgage interest deduction and some others.

She said the Bowles-Simpson proposal would allow the federal government to collect about the same, or perhaps slightly more, revenue and would be simpler and fairer than the current structure because "everybody would pay something," with the wealthy paying a higher proportion of their incomes than others.

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