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## Mica Plans to Start Transport Bill in March

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Six-year bill to target all elements of infrastructure, Mica says

John D. Boyd

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The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will begin late this month to write its next six-year surface transportation legislation, said Chairman John Mica, R-Fla.

"We'll start the end of March," he told reporters March 2 after addressing the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Mica said he wants it to be "a multi-modal bill," not just targeted at highway programs, because "we've got to improve all of the elements of infrastructure."

He did not estimate how large the next bill will need to be, but said Congress should be done with it before the next budget year begins in October. He insisted that it be for a full six years and said he would oppose any talk of a shorter term. Later on Wednesday, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood repeated his view that a final bill would be on President Obama's desk before Congress breaks for an August recess.

The House planned to vote Wednesday to extend the surface transportation programs through September, to give "certainty" to states' construction plans, Mica said. The Senate could follow suit later this week, which would largely shield federal highway and intermodal spending programs from short-term budget extensions now moving through Congress as lawmakers decide how much spending to cut for the rest of the 2011 fiscal year.

Mica told AASHTO he wants the process of crafting new legislation to be both bipartisan and bicameral. His T&I committee held the first of its public "listening sessions" around the country on transportation needs in Beckley, W.Va., the home town of his ranking Democratic member, Rep. Nick Rahall. Mica said working with the Senate included a listening session in Los Angeles with Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee that will help write a bill in the Senate.

He told reporters that when the last listening sessions are done and it is time to put ideas into legislation, the effort will first involve planning with lawmakers who will write the bill. "I promised to buy beer and pizza for members," he said. "Mrs. Boxer said they would also have to have fruit smoothies or something, so I would offer to do that, too. And we will sit down and discuss how much we can put in together and how we can move forward."

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