
Monday, April 28, 2025

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Brinks: Link Roads Talks To Budget

An effective road funding deal needs to be crafted in concert with the upcoming state budget to properly address budget impacts, Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks said in a recent interview.

Speaking last weekend on WOOD-TV's "To the Point" program, Brinks (D-Grand Rapids) said in the Senate, they are on track to begin moving budget bills in the coming weeks. Brinks added that the House and Senate Appropriations chairs have been having conversations on setting parameters on the budget.

"It's really difficult when we don't know the impact of our roads conversation, because that negotiation isn't keeping up with the budget negotiation," Brinks said. "Those two things ... they need to be happening on a parallel track in a similar timeframe, so that would be really helpful for us to get progress, and it would be helpful to do that sooner rather than later so that we don't end up in a last-minute time crunch with a lesser product."

Brinks said a successful road funding deal will have budget implications.

Governor Gretchen Whitmer has called for cutting spending in other areas and redirecting it to roads. House Speaker Matt Hall (R-Richland Township) has proposed redirecting \$850 million in spending on other programs to roads.

"We're not willing to have a conversation where we fund filling potholes at the expense of people in general, so we need to figure out what that looks like," Brinks said. "If we are going to look at finding savings in our budget, then we need to know what choices we are making. ... We need to know what a roads plan looks like. If it is going to be successful, it needs to move in concert with the budget."

Leaders of the Democratic-controlled Senate have spoken of wanting to complete the budget for the upcoming fiscal year by the July 1 nonbinding statutory deadline, while the Republican-controlled House has seemed more inclined to finish budget work ahead of the October 1 fiscal year deadline.

Brinks called the House-passed budget proposal that it labeled a measure to avoid a potential government shutdown (See [Gongwer Michigan Report, March 6, 2025](#)) a message effort.

She said it is not a product that most people would want to see passed, pointing to the reductions in education funding as an example.

"What we need is not a messaging budget, but a real budget that talks about the real things that students need," Brinks said. "As is, that's not a responsible budget, and to pass it at all, without negotiation, is purely a messaging ploy. I don't know exactly what they thought that was going to result in, but what it shows me is there's an overzealous willingness to make cuts to things that the people of Michigan count on for their children."

Brinks repeatedly insisted that more in-depth negotiations are needed on the budget, roads and other policy items in general.

"It's incumbent upon on us to find ways to come together," Brinks said. "We've clearly had some disagreements right now, but it's going to require people of good will who are willing to put aside their personal ambitions and their press conferences and be willing to come together and actually talk about what those things are that we can come to a solution together on."

Brinks said she believed there are many areas both parties can agree on if there are negotiations.

"What we lack right now are people who are willing to put into practice, sitting down, hashing out our differences in good faith and having an honest negotiation," Brinks said.

— By Nick Smith

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