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Group with Whitmer ties urging senators to support road plan

America Works USA, an affiliate of the Democratic Governors Association that spent at least \$3 million to assist [Governor Gretchen Whitmer](#)'s 2022 reelection campaign, is sponsoring an ad on social media that calls on people to tell their state senators to support the MI Road Ahead Plan.

The ad included a link to an Action Network site that said, "Even with record road construction from state Democrats, Michigan drivers continue to face a bumpy ride." It continued to say it is time to invest in local roads with comprehensive funding.

The website also said that the failure to act would mean thousands of jobs lost, skyrocketing vehicle repair costs and higher expenses for infrastructure later, urging people to "call your senator and ask them to get the job done on a road funding fix today."

In 2023, The Detroit News reported America Works USA received \$11.2 million from a Whitmer nonprofit, "Road to Michigan's Future," in 2022, which was 58 percent of its spending. Tracking by AdImpact showed America Works USA spent \$3.1 million on television, radio and digital advertisements supporting Whitmer during her 2022 campaign.

The Legislature and Whitmer failed to reach agreement on a budget before the July 1 statutory deadline. Whitmer and House [Speaker Matt Hall](#) (R-Richland Township) had pressed for a long-term road funding solution – Whitmer's top priority since she first ran for governor in 2018 – as part of getting at least the K-12 school aid budget completed.

But Senate [Majority Leader Winnie Brinks](#) (D-Grand Rapids) said repeatedly that majority Democrats in the Senate would only support a road funding plan if it was part of completing the entire

budget, not just K-12. Whitmer has been frustrated with Senate Democrats' lack of movement on roads and said earlier this year she and Hall were the only ones with "the guts and brains" to put forward a road funding plan, a thinly veiled shot at Brinks.

The ad, seen on Instagram, raised the specter that the governor or the governor's supporters are starting to apply external pressure to her fellow Democrats in the Senate.

Whitmer press secretary Stacey LaRouche did not respond to requests for comment prior to publication.

A release for the ads touted Whitmer and Michigan Democrats for "historic road construction" and says that the progress and thousands of jobs are under threat if the State Senate does not approve long-term funding to continue "improving roads and bridges." It continues to say the plan under consideration by the Senate is "a sustainable, lasting solution." "Governor Whitmer and Michigan Democrats in the legislature have delivered real results in fixing roads and bridges – and now it's time to build on that progress and adopt a long-term solution to fix roads and bridges," America Works USA spokesperson Kevin Donohoe said in a statement. "It's time for the State Senate to step up and ensure that Michigan drivers and businesses have reliable, safe infrastructure for decades to come."

Brinks, through a spokesperson, declined to comment on the ad.

The "Mi Road Ahead Plan," introduced by Whitmer earlier this year, is a \$3 billion plan that would invest \$1 billion in local communities to fix neighborhood roads and would move the state sales tax on gas toward roads instead of schools. It would also use marijuana tax dollars on the roads and allocate \$250 million to invest in every local bus service and build new transit projects. It also proposes a new tax on digital advertising and repurposing \$500 million in current year spending toward roads.

– By Liz Nass

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