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Senate MDOT budget reported, Klinefelt says Senate being deliberative on road funding plan

The [Senate Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee](#) moved a Department of Transportation budget Thursday that includes language authorizing \$3 billion in contingency spending if a long-term road funding plan were to be negotiated and approved.

Subcommittee Chair [Sen. Veronica Klinefelt](#) (D-Eastpointe) said this item was not funded at this time and is meant to acknowledge the possibility of a long-term road funding deal.

Under the Senate bill, there is language that outlines general recommended uses for the \$3 billion contingency funding. These include long-term funding for local roads and state trunkline needs, additional state funding for local bus and transit services, increased funding for passenger and freight rail services and for critical infrastructure including bridges, non-motorized infrastructure and emergency and disaster response needs.

The list of uses for the contingency monies also includes "a revised road funding distribution formula" that would account for the lane miles of local roads and prioritizes local roads that are in poor condition and have high traffic volume.

Totaling \$6.9 billion, the Senate's transportation budget contained more than the governor's \$6.8 billion in spending.

When asked if the Senate Democrats might release its version of a road-funding plan this spring, Klinefelt said she did not feel it necessarily was something the caucus needed to have a final decision on at this time.

"Just because somebody's dropped a road plan and is demanding that everybody follow suit in 2.5 seconds, doesn't require us to follow the

same timeline," Klinefelt said, adding the Senate is looking for more information on the federal funding situation. "The Senate is going to follow its own timeline and act methodically. ... We're looking at the numbers, we're watching the federal government, and we want to make our determinations or come up with our ideas and our plans based on having the full information."

Klinefelt was asked if she was concerned about recent comments from Senate [Majority Leader Winnie Brinks](#) (D-Grand Rapids) about the need for budget road funding talks needing to be on the same track and that currently they are not (See [Gongwer Michigan Report, April 28, 2025](#)).

"I don't think they're on Matt Hall's track. That doesn't necessarily mean they're not on our track," Klinefelt said. "The Senate's going to follow its own decision, its own timeline on any discussions on a road package."

The senator was not impressed with comments by House [Speaker Matt Hall](#) (R-Richland Township) on Wednesday that Senate Democrats should let [Governor Gretchen Whitmer](#) negotiate a road funding deal on their behalf (See [Gongwer Michigan Report, April 30, 2025](#)).

"If we spent our time getting concerned over what he was saying, we wouldn't be getting anything done over here," Klinefelt said. "We may be getting a lot done behind the scenes and not be putting it all out there at press conferences, but that's just because we don't do things the way that Matt Hall does things. We're not going to get caught up in this 'he said, she said' thing in the press. We're just going to keep going."

The Senate MDOT budget included several changes from the governor's budget recommendation in funding levels and in programs included.

The governor proposed \$112.2 million General Fund to match federal money, which would enable the state to fully match all \$1.8 billion in expected federal highway aid. The Senate recommendation provided \$90 million for matching federal dollars.

In the Senate recommendation, \$50 million was included for local infrastructure projects, as was \$25 million for grants to local businesses and municipalities negatively affected by lengthy construction projects.

The Senate recommendation included an additional \$15 million for local bus operations, bringing total spending to \$241.8 million.

A total of \$1.1 million was recommended by the Senate for an increase in the state's aircraft registration fee, which was less than the \$2.5

million proposed by the governor.

Michigan Public Transit Association Executive Director John Dulmes in a statement thanked the Senate panel for adding the \$15 million in additional public transit funding.

"While it isn't yet the amount needed for meaningful improvements, it would help avert the larger cuts that local bus systems were fearing in this budget," Dulmes said. "We have always believed that a comprehensive transportation package remains the best opportunity to actually fund Michigan transit at appropriate levels."

—By Nick Smith

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