

Senate leader: No 'meaningful' road-funding talks yet

By Dave Eggert, April 30, 2025

LANSING — Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks said there have yet to be "meaningful" talks among all parties on reaching a long-term, sustainable and bipartisan road-funding deal, saying a proposal approved by the House and ideas floated by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer are "incomplete" and the issue has been complicated by uncertainty at the federal level.

Brinks, a Democrat, said some elements of House Republicans' \$3.1 billion plan, which would halt economic development incentives and other funding to boost road funds, would not address the problem over time. New or increased taxes "very likely" will be needed, she told Crain's, saying the Democratic governor's approach — a mix of new revenue and unspecified spending reductions or savings — is "fair." She did not specifically commit to or oppose concepts Whitmer has floated: raising business taxes, possibly the corporate income tax, and imposing an additional tax on marijuana and a new one on digital ads.

Brinks questioned if Republican House Speaker Matt Hall is "serious" about coming to an agreement and said he should stop insulting Senate Democrats. She also said federal funding disruptions and the prospect of federal cuts to programs like Medicaid could hamper Michigan legislators' ability to act.

"I know I have members who will acknowledge that fixing the roads is a core function of state government, but so are so many other things that are under threat," she said in an interview Tuesday. "So we have to know what we're choosing between. And it's particularly difficult right now to know what that looks like in the absence of a federal budget and in the presence of all the chaos and dysfunction that we see coming out of the Republican-led Congress, Senate and president's office right now. I think that that makes it harder for us to really commit to this being our top priority. And there are members of our caucus who will say, 'I'm not putting potholes over people.' There are other members who I think acknowledge that it is a priority that is on equal footing, but it's a pretty difficult choice to take money away from something that people count on for health care, education or essential services and put it into roads."