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Bi-state bridges authority approved by Ky. transportation panel

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FRANKFORT, Ky. — A state transportation panel on Thursday approved the creation of a separate authority of Kentucky and Indiana officials to find ways to pay for the embattled Ohio River Bridges Project.

The action marks the latest step in attempts to accelerate plans for two new bridges at Louisville and a redesigned Spaghetti Junction where Interstates 64, 65 and 71 meet near downtown.

Thursday's meeting was the first by the Kentucky Public Transportation Infrastructure Authority, which will review and oversee financing plans submitted by the bi-state authority. That body has yet to be established.

Jay Blanton, a spokesman for Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear, said he expects the governor and Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson will work "as quickly as possible to get that bi-state authority appointed and moving, because we've got a lot to do."

Indiana has not announced who will serve on the bi-state authority.

That authority would decide how to pay for the bridges project, which had an estimated price tag of \$4.1 billion when the cost was last updated in early 2008. Kentucky Transportation Secretary Mike Hancock said Thursday that the cost is "in excess of \$4 billion."

The bi-state authority is likely to consider tolls as a possible funding source, along with state and federal dollars.
