



## **BUILD THE BRIDGES COALITION**

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### **Legislation introduced to help fund Bridges Project**

*Proposals allow funding options for Kentucky's major bridge, road projects*

Legislation that would create jobs now and in the future by providing new funding sources for large transportation projects – starting with the Ohio River Bridges Project – have been introduced in the 2009 Kentucky General Assembly.

“This type of legislation is urgently needed and could quickly take us to major construction and completion of the Ohio River Bridges Project,” said C. Edward Glasscock, chairman of Build the Bridges Coalition, a broad-based advocacy group for the project.

“By accelerating construction, we can save on construction costs and realize the project’s enormous benefits sooner,” he said, adding that construction will bring thousands of jobs and result in long-term job growth.

Build the Bridges Coalition and more than 15 chambers of commerce throughout Kentucky have endorsed the concept of two bills that have been filed. SB 15, sponsored by State Senators Dorsey Ridley, D-Henderson, and Jerry Rhoads, D-Madisonville, and HB 102 filed by State Rep. Don Pasley, D-Winchester, would establish a public authority that could issue bonds and use high-speed, all-electronic tolling to supplement federal and state highway funds for projects. There was strong bipartisan support for similar legislation in the 2008 Kentucky General Assembly, with the House passing a bill sponsored by Pasley that was not considered in the Senate.

The coalition, which represents 22 major employers, business and labor organizations and local elected officials, supported legislation in the last session that provided for state and local public authorities.

“We are pleased legislation is introduced and we look forward to working with the sponsors and others to make sure the Ohio River Bridges Project is completed as quickly as possible,” Glasscock said.

Kentucky Transportation Secretary Joe Prather has told legislators that new funding sources are needed for major projects or they will not be built. The projects include the Ohio River Bridges Project, a replacement for the Brent Spence Bridge (I-71 and I-75) in Northern Kentucky, and the I-69 project in Western Kentucky.

The 2008 Kentucky General Assembly overwhelming authorized \$231.5 million for the next two years to continue progress on the Ohio River Bridges Project, which includes two new Ohio River bridges and the rebuilding of a major interchange in Louisville where I-64, I-65 and I-71 converge. The General Assembly cited electronic tolling as a possible new revenue source for the project.

“Electronic tolls mean no stopping, no toll plazas, and they are increasingly used throughout the country because dwindling federal and state highway funds cannot begin to cover the cost of maintaining and upgrading the nation’s bridge and highway system,” Glasscock said.

In the past few years, \$120 million has been spent on the project, which was authorized five years ago by federal and state transportation agencies after decades of study, debate and public input. The bridge designs have been developed, a new interchange has been built in eastern Jefferson County and right-of-way has been purchased on both sides of the river.

Inflation has caused dramatic price increases for the project, now estimated at \$4.1 billion. Indiana has secured its \$1.1 billion share, largely from a toll road lease in Northern Indiana. Kentucky’s share is \$2.9 billion.

Glasscock noted that efforts continue to secure more federal funding but that new funding sources are needed through state legislation. “We are doing everything we can to make sure the Ohio River Bridges Project is completed as quickly and as cost effectively as possible,” he said.

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[Build the Bridges Coalition](#) is a private, non-profit organization founded by business and economic development leaders in Louisville and Southern Indiana to advocate for completion of the Ohio River Bridges Project as quickly and as cost effectively as possible. The coalition includes major employers and businesses, and organizations representing economic development, businesses, minority businesses, union and non-union trade groups and offices of local elected officials throughout Kentucky and Southern Indiana.