

Transportation Authority Bill Clears House

Kentucky legislation allowing statewide and local authorities over major transportation projects starting with the Bridges Project cleared the house yesterday on a 67-23 vote and is expected to be heard in the Senate this week.

The action is a major step in securing a funding solution and accelerated construction for the Bridges Project.

The bill was passed after adoption of an amendment giving the mayor, instead of the governor, the majority of appointments on a local authority. Rep. Darryl Owens' amendment would allow the mayor four appointments and the governor three, reversing the bill's original appointment stipulations for local authorities.

The House rejected, on a vote of 55-34, a motion to hear an amendment offered yesterday by Rep. Scott Brinkman to make the Metro Council a party to the project's finance plan. Rep. Don Pasley's bill, HB 102, requires consultation, but not approval, from Metro Council on the finance plan including tolls.

Brinkman argued that local representatives should have a say on tolls, but Speaker Pro Tem Larry Clark told the chamber that if Metro Council was in charge of approving tolls, the bridges would never be built. He said the bill provides local government input into the finance plan and final authority over tolls should remain with the newly created authority, which includes local representation, and state transportation officials.

The vast majority of Jefferson County's delegation voted in favor of the bill, although Brinkman and Rep. Jim Wayne voted no. Several members of the Northern Kentucky delegation also voted against the bill, although it applies only to projects costing more than \$500 million that border Indiana, which exempts the Brent Spence Bridge project linking Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati.