



July 17, 2009

## No delay on bridges

It's been almost seven years since two other governors of Indiana and Kentucky said a blessing over the Ohio River Bridges Project and promised to move it forward. Since then, progress has been as slow as interstate traffic after a Spaghetti Junction fender-bender.

And that's plenty slow.

Meantime the cost of this essential civic improvement has escalated to \$4.1 billion. But that's no surprise. Delay always costs. The price of everything goes up over time, from rent, food and gas to the materials needed for two new bridges and a Spaghetti Junction redo.

Delay also plays into the hands of those who don't want to see this project built, including the East-End-bridge-only crowd. They argue that the full ORBP never will be built, so the smart move would be adding a bridge upriver and forgetting about the downtown part of the plan. This ignores several facts: (1) The real regional traffic problem is downtown; (2) The East End bridge, while good for economic development in Southern Indiana and property values in the Snyder Freeway corridor, will take too little traffic off the downtown routes to solve the real traffic problems; (3) Bi-state agreement and funding require both bridges, and (4) Pursuing only the East End bridge would restart the process where it began decades ago.

Both the Indiana and Kentucky general assemblies finally have done the right thing, recently passing legislation that will make possible a bi-state authority to oversee funding the ORBP. That's what led to the ceremony this week in which Govs. Mitch Daniels and Steve Beshear met to pledge their support and urge speed.

Kentucky Transportation Secretary Joe Prather was just being realistic when he said setting a construction timetable is premature. But what's unrealistic, and unnecessary, is a series of hearings in every one of the 26 Louisville Metro Council districts, to reargue a project that has been decades in development. That approach would be nothing more than a delaying tactic. It would frustrate the broad governmental, civic and business coalition that supports the ORBP and delight the Walter Mitty types who prefer to chase fantasies.

A council majority apparently wants to move ahead, and quickly. That's the right direction and speed.

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