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## Bridge supporters hope for progress

Supporters of the Ohio River Bridges project believe recent action by state lawmakers will get the project moving again. The plan still calls for the rebuilding of Spehghetti Junction, plus two bridges -- an East End bridge, and one next to the Kennedy Bridge.

The project has been in the slow lane waiting for the state to approve a way to pay for it. Action by the Kentucky General Assembly should get the project moving again. The next move has to come from the Louisville Metro Council.

Joe Reagan of Greater Louisville, Inc. explains, "Louisville Metro government and the Metro Council would pass a resolution requesting their chief executive, in our case the mayor and governor, to appoint a bi-state authority to work with Indiana to come up with long-term financing."

That financing is likely to include tolls as a way to help pay for the project. It's too early to tell how much that toll might cost. Reagan says, "The bi-state authority will look at all options, including high speed electronic tolls. More than likely, tolls will be one of the dominant things that are considered, and certainly right now 40% of all the new projects in the country are being built with high-speed electronic tolls."

Meanwhile, Tyler Allen of the 8664 group says, "We've been talking with them and other members of the community for about four years now about this project." His group remains in favor only of an East End bridge, and believes the tolling issue will become contentious: "As the project climbed to more than \$4 billion, people said, 'Well, the feds are gonna take care of that.' It's clear from this legislation that we're gonna be expected to pay for this ourselves, which means its awfully important for us to make the right choice to figure out what it is that we actually want."

Greater Louisville, Inc, the regional chamber of commerce, supports the bridges project. Reagan believes as many as 56,000 jobs, mostly construction, will be created as a result of the project. "There's a lot at stake here," Reagan says, "if you are looking for a stimulus package, it's called the Ohio River Bridges project."

Once the bi-state authority is created, final designs will be completed and land acquisition can begin. The Metro Council is expected to take up the issue in mid-July.



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