



BUILD THE BRIDGES COALITION

For immediate release

Sept. 24, 2008

Contact

Kay Stewart

kstewart@govplan.com

502-322-4396

Bridges anniversary highlights funding solution need

Project has strong public and elected official support

Accelerating construction will save millions on inflation costs

The five-year anniversary this month of the decision to build the Ohio River Bridges Project underscores the need for continued progress and a funding solution to accelerate work and save on construction costs.

“With every delay, the cost escalates while our congestion and safety issues are not addressed and the project’s benefits are not realized,” said C. Edward Glasscock, chairman of Build the Bridges Coalition, a broad-based group advocating for the project.

A one-year delay can add \$400 million to the project’s costs because of inflation, he noted.

“The project is vital for job growth and a better quality of life. In a region that serves as a major logistics and economic hub, we need faster, safer travel across the Ohio River and on the connecting highways,” Glasscock said.

The coalition of diverse business and civic organizations and local elected officials from Kentucky and Indiana will push for legislation from the 2009 Kentucky General Assembly establishing a public authority that could use new revenue sources to help pay for the project.

The concept had bipartisan support from Kentucky House and Senate leadership in the 2008 Kentucky General Assembly, Glasscock said, and will be revisited next year.

“We need legislation allowing new funding options so the Bridges Project and other transportation needs can be completed as quickly and as inexpensively as possible,” he said.

The Bridges Project has strong support from the public and Kentucky and Indiana elected officials, Glasscock said, noting that Congressional representatives from Kentucky and Indiana and the two states’ governors support the project.

At a meeting last week of the Louisville Metro Council’s Transportation and Public Works Committee, several council members also expressed support for the project and the need for progress.

Councilman Robin Engel, expressing concern about large amounts of freight carried over the I-65 Kennedy Bridge, said he wants the new north I-65 Bridge “built quickly.”

Councilman Stuart Benson, citing inflation and labor costs, said, “I think we need to get going, push on the governor and say, “Let’s go, guys.”

Several council members said they agreed with Councilman Dan Johnson’s admonition during the meeting to “stop talking and just build.”

Significant progress has occurred since the Federal Highway Administration authorized the two new bridges and the rebuild of Spaghetti Junction five years ago.

But the cost of the project, now estimated at \$4 billion, has escalated largely because of inflation. Kentucky’s share of the cost is about \$2.9 billion. Indiana, which has secured its share, will pay \$1.1 billion.

In the past five years, Kentucky and Indiana have spent more than \$100 million, largely on design and other pre-construction work. The bridge types are determined and a new interchange is operating in eastern Jefferson County for the new East End Bridge approach.

The 2008 Kentucky General Assembly overwhelmingly approved \$231.5 million to continue project progress in the next two years.

“We need to see continued progress now and a permanent funding solution. We haven’t built a new bridge in 45 years in the Louisville region and it is time to finish the job,” Glasscock said.

###