



2nd Detroit-Windsor bridge plan hits a dead end in Michigan Senate

A state Senate committee fell short in two attempts to muster enough support to approve the proposed new bridge linking Detroit and Windsor this afternoon, bringing to an end, at least temporarily, efforts to win legislative backing for the project.

Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville, R-Monroe, sponsor of the bridge legislation, said shortly after the Economic Development Committee rejected two versions of the proposal that he didn't foresee a renewed effort to win passage in the near term.

"I'm done with it at this point. It's unfortunate. An opportunity was missed" to create 20,000-40,000 jobs, Richardville said. "But there are other things we should be talking about."

The committee, meeting for the second day in a row on the issue, voted first on an amended version of the legislation which would have added requirements that the bridge contractor agree to a plan for so-called community benefits, including jobs and environmental abatements, tied to the \$1.8 billion project. That version was supported by the committee's two Democrats, Sen. Virgil Smith, D-Detroit, and Sen. Tupac Hunter, D-Detroit. A second vote on Richardville's original

proposal was supported by two of the committee's five Republicans, Sens. Dave Hildenbrand, R-Lowell, and Judy Emmons, R-Sheridan.

Geralyn Lasher, spokeswoman for Gov. Rick Snyder, who has made building a new bridge one of his top priorities, said after the vote that the committee's decision was "extremely disappointing," but declined to speculate on where the proposal would go from here.

Administration officials have hinted in the past that it might be possible to bypass the Legislature and greenlight the bridge by executive action. But they have not specified how that could be done, and said they preferred to have the endorsement of lawmakers.

Lasher said only that "we're going to assess our options" when asked about the possibility of a legislative bypass today. Matthew Moroun, vice chairman of the Detroit International Bridge Co. and son of Ambassador Bridge owner Manuel (Matty) Moroun, issued this statement after the vote.

"We applaud the committee for its efforts in

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acting as a jury in hearing all the facts. The Michigan Department of Transportation had a bad case to make as the bridge traffic reports and financial impact testimony before the committee clearly showed. Since 2006 when the initial effort to build this bridge began, the facts have proven it to be unjustified and unneeded. The Ambassador Bridge is the most efficient border crossing in North America and our mission remains to make it the absolute best border crossing. We look forward to working with the Governor and transportation officials in the future." The Ambassador Bridge company spent millions of dollars in the last six months in a campaign aimed at scuttling the new, government-owned bridge.

Proponent: 'We are deeply disappointed'

Tom Shields, a spokesman for the Coalition Supporting the New International Trade Crossing, a roster of more than 100 business, labor, and civic organizations, issued the following statement today: "We are deeply disappointed in the Senate committee's failure to move the New International Trade Crossing legislation to the full Senate for a vote. A majority of Senators on the committee support the building of the NITC, they just have to craft a piece of legislation that everyone can agree to. We urge the governor and the legislature to continue to work to find a compromise that a majority of senators can support. We encourage the legislature to put partisan politics aside and put the economic interest of our state and our workers first."

Gov. Rick Snyder sent a message on Twitter following the Senate committee vote: "We need a cooling down period to let the bridge issue calm down so we can find common ground and build the NTIC." *Contact Dawson Bell: 517-372-8661 or dbell@freepress.com*

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