

Bloomberg Government

What to Know in Washington: Senators Near Infrastructure Deal

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The bipartisan group of senators trying to come up with an infrastructure compromise say they are moving closer to agreement on a proposal but are still wrangling with how to pay for their plan in the face of White House opposition to indexing the gasoline tax to inflation.

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), one of the leaders of the group, said yesterday the senators are requesting a meeting with White House officials today and plan to draw up a “fleshed out” framework for a proposal this week.

One of the sticking points continues to be coming up with a way to pay for their \$579 billion plan. Two of the negotiators, Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), said the idea of indexing the motor fuels tax to inflation is all but dead.

The administration has been pushing Biden’s plan to bolster funding for Internal Revenue Service enforcement to collect from tax cheats. The group has proposed limited new revenue from bolstering IRS enforcement but far short of the amount the White House estimates could be recouped in unpaid taxes. Portman said they also are looking at raising revenue from airwaves sales and fees from major polluters. [Read more from Erik Wasson.](#)



Photographer: Sarah Silbiger/Bloomberg
Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), right, on Capitol Hill on June 16

Infrastructure Bank Back in Play: Senate Democrats and Republicans trying to turn Biden’s signature infrastructure plan into legislation are looking to a new bank to help pay for roads, bridges, and transit. The idea, [endorsed](#) in a framework last week from the group of about 20 senators, has been floated for decades as an alternative to raising the gasoline tax or other infrastructure funding mechanisms. Democratic Sen. Mark Warner (Va.), who has been advocating for a \$20 billion infrastructure bank, called it “a personal part of the package.”

Proponents have argued that a federal infrastructure bank would allow more private funding to pay for the nation’s transportation network. But demand for privately funded infrastructure in the U.S. has been limited beyond toll roads, and when there has been interest, some projects have been plagued by overoptimistic forecasts that burned investors. Critics also warn that politics could seep into the lending process. [Read more from Lillianna Byington.](#)

Old Highways Need More Funds: Substantial money will be needed to repair the “deteriorating” interstate highway system, a report suggests as lawmakers negotiate over hundreds of billions of dollars for infrastructure funding. More than double the current annual federal spending would be required to reconstruct and modernize the 65-year-old highway system as roads become more congested and bridges and pavement fall into poor condition, the nonprofit transportation research organization TRIP said in [a report](#) today, doubling down on its assessments from previous years. [Read more from Lillianna Byington.](#)

Happening on the Hill

Happening Today:

- The House will consider 18 measures under expedited procedure that indicates broad, bipartisan support.
- The Senate plans to vote on whether to advance Democrats’ sweeping voting-rights legislation to the Senate floor, but a lack of Republican support indicates the bill is unlikely to advance.
- [Click here](#) for a complete list of today’s hearings and markups.

Biden Meets With Manchin and Sinema: Biden met yesterday with two moderate Democratic senators crucial to his massive infrastructure proposal as well as voting rights legislation, even as his party’s progressives complain that he’s giving away too much in pursuit of elusive compromise. Sens. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) had separate afternoon sessions with the president, according to a White House official. Biden and Manchin, the person said, discussed voting rights and how to advance a bill in the evenly divided Senate. They also talked about infrastructure. The meeting with Sinema also concerned infrastructure, the official added.

Manchin is the only Senate Democrat who hasn’t signed on to the Senate version of a sweeping overhaul of election laws that Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) will try to bring to the floor despite a lack of any Republican support. With the Senate split 50-50 between the two parties, 10 GOP votes would be needed to end a filibuster under Senate rules even with Manchin’s backing. [Read more from John Harney and Steven T. Dennis.](#)