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House rejects Senate transportation bill with procedural vote

By [Ashley Halsey III](#), Published: March 21

House Republicans on Wednesday held ranks in defeating an attempt to force a vote on the [\\$109 billion](#) bipartisan transportation bill approved by the Senate last week.

With [10 days left](#) until current transportation funding expires, [House leaders said](#) they plan to introduce legislation on Thursday that would continue transportation funding at current levels for 90 days. If approved, it would be the ninth such extension since the last long-term funding plan expired more than two years ago.

With the [Obama administration](#) and Senate Democrats pressing hard on Wednesday for approval of the Senate bill, Democrats in the House tried to append the Senate bill to unrelated legislation up for approval on the House floor. Their attempt was defeated in a procedural vote.

The vote came after Transportation Secretary [Ray LaHood](#), a former Republican congressman, joined with Senate Democrats in ramping up the pressure for the House to act on the bill.

“We’re right on the eve of the construction season,” LaHood said in addressing the [2012 National Bike Summit](#) in Washington. “The spinoffs that come off a transportation bill will put people to work for years.”

Later, he joined with several senators, including [Mark Begich](#) (D-Alaska), [Barbara Boxer](#) (D-Calif.),

[Benjamin L. Cardin](#) (D-Md.), [Charles E. Schumer](#) (D-N.Y.) and [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) (D-R.I.) at the Capitol to amplify the message.

“The clock is ticking on the shutdown of our transportation programs,” said Boxer, who was floor leader in crafting bipartisan support for the Senate bill. “We’re talking about almost 3 million jobs, and the House is playing games. This is a jobs bill — make no mistake about it.”

The senators displayed a chart that showed a state-by-state breakdown of the number of jobs they said were in jeopardy if the bill failed.

Cardin said state transportation planners can’t launch projects in [Maryland](#) because short-term funding extensions don’t provide the certainty they need to commit funding.

An ambitious House transportation bill faltered in the face of bipartisan [opposition](#) to several provisions, including a proposal to end dedicated funding for mass-transit systems. House Transportation Committee Chairman [John L. Mica](#) (R-Fla.) said Monday that he [hoped to revise](#) that bill after considering the concerns expressed by opponents.

A [central question](#) in all transportation debates has been how to find funding at a time when the federal gasoline tax, the traditional funding source, [can no longer support the nation’s transportation needs](#). House Republicans had proposed to expand offshore oil production to help fund transportation, and Mica said Tuesday that continued to be their goal.

“We continue to believe that linking energy and infrastructure is the responsible thing to do in order to meet our long-term needs,” Mica said.

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