



The week ahead: Wheels begin to turn on highway bill

By Keith Laing - 04/23/12 09:00 AM ET

The next step in House and Senate negotiations over a new multi-year federal highway bill — naming members of a conference committee — could happen as early as this week.

It remains to be seen, however, if lawmakers actually start talking now. The current funding for transportation does not expire until June 30, and the extension that was passed by the House last week by runs until Sept. 30.

The idea is to provide a lot of time for what are expected to be contentious negotiations. The extension approved by the House includes approval of the controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline, which will likely not survive the conference.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is not optimistic his former colleagues in Congress can reach a deal this year at all.

“There will not be a bill before the election,” LaHood, who was a member of the House before being appointed by President Obama, said at a transportation event last week.

“I wish I could say we’ll get a transportation bill [in the next six months], but I know we won’t,” LaHood said.

Additionally this week, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's subcommittee on Aviation will hold a hearing Wednesday on aviation safety.

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