



## Reid 'not ready' yet to give up on passing a long-term transportation bill

By Keith Laing - 06/12/12 03:58 PM ET

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said Tuesday that he was not yet ready to discuss the possibility of a temporary extension of highway funding.

The 47-member conference committee that has been trying for a month to find a compromise between the House and Senate on a bill that would provide transportation funding for at least the next 18 months appears to be heading toward a stalemate in recent weeks.



But speaking with reporters after a Democratic Caucus luncheon at the Capitol Tuesday, Reid said he was not ready to throw in the towel on a long-term transportation bill being approved before a June 30 deadline for the expiration of current funding.

"I'm not ready to do an extension yet," Reid said Tuesday. "I don't even want to talk about it now. Senator [Barbara] Boxer [(D-Calif.)] and Senator [James] Inhofe [(R-Okla.)] have worked very hard. I think that we could surprise everybody and get a bill done here."

Reid said House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) "has told a number of people privately that he wants to get a highway bill that's different than what we've heard from other places.

"I'm not going to give up on the highway bill," Reid said. "It's really an important bill for stabilizing our economy."

Boehner said last week that if the highway bill conference committee fails to reach an agreement, he **does not want** lawmakers to pass another brief extension.

"If we get up to June 30th, I am not interested in some 30-day extension," Boehner said last week. "Frankly, I think if we get to June 30th, it'd be a six-month extension, and move this thing out of the political realm that it appears to be in at this moment."

In a separate lunch time availability on Tuesday, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) also expressed optimism about the possibility of the conference committee reaching an agreement on the highway bill before June 30. But unlike Reid, he did not rule out the possibility of an extension.

"We're still hoping to get the highway bill conference to come up with a recommendation," McConnell said. "And unless something has happened this morning that I haven't heard about, I don't know what that's going to be yet. We have until the end of the month and we're hoping that they're — they're going to come up with a solution here."

A spokesman for Boehner responded to Reid's comments Tuesday afternoon by saying "the Speaker has said – publicly and privately – that we'd like a highway bill."

*-This post was updated with new information at 4:39 p.m.*

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