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# Highway bills advance, but it's not

# clear who has the right of way



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There was good news and bad news Thursday as far as addressing the looming shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund.

The good news is that both the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee approved legislation that would provide nearly \$11 billion in highway funding, enough to keep road and bridge projects going through next May.

The bad news is that each committee came up with this money in different ways. Those differences will have to be resolved in the next three weeks, or else the Federal Highway Administration will start [rationing funding to states](#) for highway projects on Aug. 1.

Both committees rejected an increase in the federal gasoline tax, the main source of funding for the Highway Trust Fund.

"I've never supported an increase in the gas tax," House Speaker [John Boehner](#), R-Ohio, told reporters Thursday.

Boehner said he would bring the House committee's bill to the floor for a vote next week.

"We're not going to get to a long-term highway bill here over the next couple of months," he added.

Both short-term highway bills would raise revenue through so-called "pension smoothing" — allowing employers to delay pension plan contributions, thereby raising their taxable income. Both bills also would increase customs fees and transfer money from a trust fund for leaking underground storage tanks into the Highway Trust Fund.

The [Senate bill](#), however, also relies on several tax-compliance provisions to raise revenue, including additional information reporting from taxpayers who take the mortgage interest deduction and higher penalties against Medicare services providers who are delinquent on their taxes.

Rep. [Dave Camp](#), the Michigan Republican who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, considers these provisions to be tax increases, and that's "not a path

forward in the House.”

“Furthermore, it is inconceivable that the House would, as the Senate proposes to do, grant the [IRS](#) additional authority to audit and investigate taxpayers simply so Washington can spend more money,” Camp said.

Instead, he urged the Senate to stick to [his committee’s revenue raisers](#).

“Given that the Senate has repeatedly backed these policies before, I urge my Senate colleagues to quickly take up this bill after it passes the House next week and avoid any brinksmanship,” Camp said. “There is no need to jeopardize critical road and transit projects, let alone the thousands of jobs they provide.”

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