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Reid wants votes on highway bill next month

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said that if the Senate passes the “minibus” spending bill, he would take that as a positive sign that lawmakers can work on the surface and transportation bill next month.

“The manner in which we handle these funding measures will largely dictate how other appropriations bills are managed over the coming months,” Reid said on the Senate floor Tuesday. “If we are successful in considering and passing these bills in a timely manner, we can then move next month to other essential legislation, such as a much-needed surface transportation bill.”

The Senate’s \$120 billion minibus includes funding for the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Justice, Transportation and Housing and Urban Development. Votes on this bill are expected as early as Tuesday night or Wednesday morning.

“Today we hope to begin work on three very important appropriations bills,” Reid said. “We hope to move forward on this bill immediately. ... It’s something we should be doing to fund our government.”

The House has already passed its version of those three spending bill, meaning lawmakers could begin a conference committee process after the Senate acts.

Last month, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee **unanimously approved** a plan that would spend \$265 billion on transportation projects over the next six years. If Reid has his way, that would be the next major legislative debate in the Senate.

The Highway Trust Fund is expected to run out of money while lawmakers on back in their home states during August, so action in July is viewed as a top priority.

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