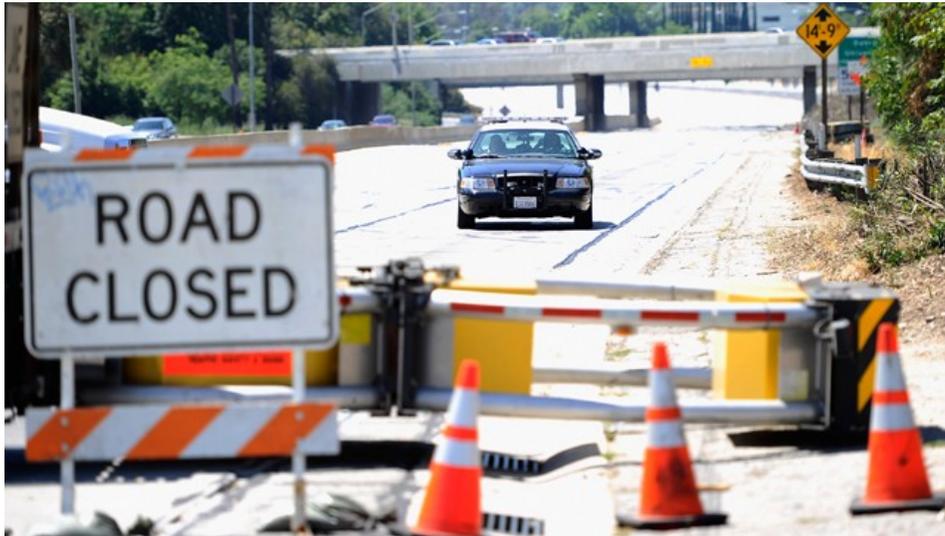




## House to Senate: You're \$2 billion short



By Keith Laing - 07/30/14 01:25 PM EDT

Getty Images

Legislation passed by the Senate Tuesday to save federal transportation funding falls \$2 billion short of its intended target, Speaker John Boehner's (R-Ohio) office said Tuesday.

A spokesman for Boehner said an amendment to the bill that **moved up** the expiration date for the highway funding from May 2015 to December contains a "critical error."

"The Senate-passed highway bill contains a critical error, and is not fully offset through December 19," Boehner spokesman Michael Steel said in a statement. "The only responsible course is for the Senate to pass the original House-passed highway bill, which we will soon send back to them."

The House bill called for transferring \$2.95 billion from custom fees to help offset the transportation funding, while the Senate measure only includes about \$1 billion from that source.

Boehner's office said the discrepancy is all the more reason for the Senate to accept the House's version of the transportation funding extension, which would last until next spring.

Republicans in the Senate said their counterparts in the House were exaggerating the impact of the error.

"Our amendment was intended to be a mirror image of the Senate Finance Committee bill with the elimination of pension smoothing and a change to the date of authorization, and we are working to address this technical error just as we worked with the House to fix the drafting error in their legislation before it came to the Senate," a spokeswoman for Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), Tara Julio, said in a statement to The Hill.

Corker is one of the primary sponsors of the Senate's amendment to shorten the House highway bill, along with Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Tom Carper (D-Del.). The Senate also approved a separate amendment by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) that included a similar December deadline.

The jockeying over the transportation bill comes with just days to go until the Department of Transportation begins to cut road payments to states by as much as 28 percent. The administration has said **those cuts** could begin on Friday.

Senate Democrats are pushing a shorter deadline on the bill to force action on a long-term transportation bill after the November elections, when they think it will be easier to win support for an increase in the 18.4 cents per gallon federal gas tax.

The gas tax has been the traditional funding source for transportation projects since the creation of the Highway Trust Fund in the 1950s. The tax has not been increased since 1993, however, and it has struggled to keep pace with infrastructure expenses as cars have become more fuel efficient, making the fund transfers necessary to sustain it.

House GOP leaders said they will reject the Senate's changes to their bill.

"I just want to make clear, if the Senate sends a highway bill over here with those provisions, we're going to strip it out and put the House-passed provisions back in and send it back to the Senate," Boehner told reporters on Tuesday.

GOP leaders have expressed **confidence** that the Senate would ultimately accept their version of the transportation-funding package because

neither party is eager to be blamed for shutting down construction projects in the middle of an election year.

Transportation advocates have attempted to **rally** behind the Senate's version of the highway funding bill because it would force lawmakers to revisit the issue of infrastructure spending before the end of the year.

— *This story was updated at 3:20 p.m.*

**TAGS:** John Boehner, Highway Trust Fund, Gas Tax, MAP-21 Reauthorization

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