

Mica Says FAA Authorization Would Pave Way to GOP Version of Jobs Bill

By Nathan Hurst, CQ Staff

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee chairman said that he hopes to wrap up by the end of the year a long-term Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization, which he said would clear the way for action on a six-year surface transportation measure that would be the House Republicans' "primary jobs bill."

But Chairman [John L. Mica](#), R-Fla., acknowledged Monday that resolving the major obstacles to an FAA bill — including differences with the Senate over funding levels, an overhaul of rural airport subsidies and a labor ruling that makes it easier for airline employees to unionize — is in the hands of leadership.

"There are some issues that need to be solved at a level higher than myself and Mr. Rockefeller," Mica told reporters. Referring to Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Chairman [John D. Rockefeller IV](#), D-W.Va., Mica said, "If he and I sat down, we'd probably have it worked out in 30 minutes."

A House-Senate impasse over extending the aviation authorization shut down most FAA operations for about two weeks in summer, leading to 3,500 furloughs and the suspension of hundreds of airport construction projects. Disagreements over Essential Air Service subsidies for flights to rural airports contributed to the standoff, as did the language in the House-passed reauthorization bill that would block enforcement of the disputed labor ruling.

But Mica said that if an FAA reauthorization ([HR 658](#), [S 223](#)) could be completed, he would try to move immediately to a six-year surface transportation bill with a price tag of about \$285 billion. The draft legislation would be House Republicans' answer to a transportation infrastructure package that Senate Democrats unveiled last week as the second piece of President Obama's jobs-creation package.

Seeking Funding for a Highway Bill

There is "movement on the GOP side to make this our primary jobs bill," Mica said.

As with a similar two-year draft Senate highway bill set for an Environment and Public Works Committee markup on Nov. 9, there is a significant gap between the spending needs and what the Highway Trust Fund is expected to bring in through motor fuels taxes.

Mica said that given the House leadership's openness to identifying new revenue sources, the gap could be closed. Speaker [John A. Boehner](#), R-Ohio, has suggested dedicating levies on new oil production to surface transportation.

Senate Democrats plan to move forward with the draft legislation they are calling the

“Rebuild America Jobs Act” when they return from their recess next week. The proposal — unveiled last week by Majority Leader [Harry Reid](#), D-Nev., Sen. [Amy Klobuchar](#), D-Minn., and Transportation Secretary [Ray LaHood](#) — would cost an estimated \$60 billion, offset with a 0.7 percent surtax on incomes above \$1 million. That funding mechanism is similar to the one in the teachers and first-responders jobs bill ([S 1723](#)) that the Senate killed on Oct. 20 by a vote of 50-50.

While Mica seeks passage of a six-year highway bill, Senate authorizers are preparing a two-year, \$109 billion measure — which would cost about \$12 billion more than the trust fund is projected to have available. Senate Finance Chairman [Max Baucus](#), D-Mont., has been tasked with finding a way to bridge the gap.

Mica joked that there is an easy way to resolve the discrepancy between his six-year bill and the Senate’s two-year measure.