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Michigan Lawmakers Clash Over 2025 Road Funding Solutions

Michigan's 2025 state budget debate has put road funding in the spotlight, with both Governor Gretchen Whitmer and House Speaker Matt Hall offering competing visions to address Michigan's crumbling infrastructure. Governor Whitmer's "MI Road Ahead Plan" proposes raising \$3 billion for transportation improvements through a mix of closing corporate tax loopholes—such as eliminating the marijuana wholesale exemption—and modest tax increases on large corporations and tech firms. Her plan avoids raising taxes on residents by also including \$500 million in proposed budget cuts to redirect funding toward road and bridge improvements.

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Speaker Hall has put forward an alternative \$3.145 billion proposal focused on reallocating existing revenue without raising taxes. His plan would redirect all gasoline tax revenue exclusively to roads and convert the sales tax on fuel to a revenue-neutral motor fuel tax dedicated to transportation. Critics argue this approach could reduce funding for other essential services, such as schools and public health.

In March 2025, the House passed Hall's plan along mostly party lines, sending it to the Senate for further debate. While there is bipartisan consensus that more money must be invested in Michigan's roads, sharp disagreements remain over how to fund it—and what trade-offs are acceptable.

The state's finalized fiscal year 2025 budget includes \$4.2 billion for road and bridge construction projects, with significant support from \$1.7 billion in federal infrastructure funds. An additional \$700 million from the last round of bonds issued under the Rebuilding Michigan Plan will support key projects, including work on I-94 near Detroit Metro Airport and I-696 in the Detroit suburbs.

Notably, Governor Whitmer's plan also dedicates 10% of transportation funding to public transit, a move welcomed by advocates who argue that long-term solutions must go beyond road paving alone. As negotiations continue, the coming months will determine whether Michigan arrives at a bipartisan solution—or continues down a path of political gridlock.

Lawmakers Weigh School Cellphone Limits

Michigan lawmakers are currently debating two bills aimed at limiting student cellphone use in K-12 public schools, reflecting a broader national conversation about technology's role in education.

House Bill 4141, introduced by Rep. Mark Tisdell (R-Rochester Hills), proposes specific restrictions based on grade levels.

- Kindergarten through 5th grade: Students would be prohibited from possessing cellphones on school grounds.
- 6th through 8th grades: Students would be barred from using phones during instructional time, breaks, lunch, and recess.
- 9th through 12th grades: Students would be restricted from using phones during instructional time.

This bill aims to reduce distractions and improve student focus during the school day.



In contrast, Senate Democrats, led by Sen. Dayna Polehanki (D-Livonia), have introduced a bill that would require local school boards to develop their own policies to limit cellphone use during school hours. This approach offers flexibility, allowing districts to tailor policies to their specific needs while still addressing concerns about distractions and student well-being.

Governor Gretchen Whitmer has expressed support for legislation that limits cellphone use in classrooms, citing data suggesting that such restrictions can lead to increased learning and reduced bullying.

As discussions continue, educators, parents, and policymakers are weighing the benefits of reducing screen time against concerns about student safety and the need for emergency communication.

Michigan's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Process Advances Amid Legislative Deliberations

As of early May 2025, Michigan's Fiscal Year 2026 budget process is progressing through the legislative stages. Governor Gretchen Whitmer proposed an \$83.5 billion budget in February, marking a nearly \$3 billion increase from the current fiscal year. The proposal emphasizes investments in education, workforce development, and public safety, including initiatives like universal pre-K, tuition-free community college, and a \$50 million deposit into the state's Budget Stabilization Fund

The Michigan House of Representatives recently passed a "continuation spending bill" as a precautionary measure to maintain government operations if a consensus on the budget isn't reached by the September 30 deadline. This move, primarily supported by Republicans, is seen as a contingency plan and has faced opposition from the Democrat-controlled Senate.

As part of this year's budget process, legislative-directed spending requests have drawn fresh attention, particularly due to a new transparency measure championed by House Speaker Matt Hall. Under the policy, lawmakers were required to publicly submit individual funding requests for local projects by a set deadline—last Thursday at midnight. The goal, Hall has said, is to bring greater accountability and



openness to the often opaque earmarking process. Early reports indicate that legislators submitted nearly \$4 billion in total requests, far exceeding what is likely to be approved in the final budget.

Some legislative budgets have been introduced, but to date no formal action has been taken. Governor Whitmer's proposal also includes a \$50 million deposit into the state's Budget Stabilization Fund, aiming to bolster Michigan's financial resilience.

As the budget deliberations continue, stakeholders are closely monitoring the process to ensure that the final budget aligns with Michigan's fiscal priorities and addresses the needs of its residents.

The 2026 Gubernatorial Race: A Diverse Field Emerges

As Michigan approaches the 2026 gubernatorial election, a diverse array of candidates from various political backgrounds have declared their intentions to run, signaling a competitive race ahead.

Democratic Candidates:

Garlin Gilchrist II: Currently serving as Michigan's Lieutenant Governor, Gilchrist announced his candidacy with a focus on expanding affordable

housing and improving access to healthcare, particularly mental health services. If elected, he would become Michigan's first Black governor.

Jocelyn Benson: Michigan's Secretary of State since 2019, Benson has emphasized her commitment to improving the state's education system and building upon her efforts to enhance government transparency and efficiency.

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Chris Swanson: The Genesee County Sheriff, Swanson gained national attention in 2020 for joining protesters during a Black Lives Matter demonstration. His campaign focuses on criminal justice reform and community engagement.

Republican Candidates:

Aric Nesbitt: The Michigan Senate Minority Leader, Nesbitt advocates for traditional values, manufacturing growth, and opposition to electric vehicle mandates. He criticizes the current Democratic leadership for high taxes and increased spending.

John James: A U.S. Representative for Michigan's 10th Congressional District, James brings military and business experience to his campaign, emphasizing strong leadership and economic development.

Mike Cox: Serving as Michigan's Attorney General from 2003 to 2011, Cox's campaign focuses on eliminating the state income tax, restoring Right to Work laws, and reducing government spending.

Anthony Hudson: A truck driver from Genesee County, Hudson's platform includes eliminating property and state income taxes, dismantling the Michigan Department of Transportation, and protecting parental rights.

Independent Candidate:

Mike Duggan: The current Mayor of Detroit, Duggan has announced his candidacy as an independent, aiming to offer voters an alternative to the traditional two-party system. His campaign emphasizes effective governance without partisan constraints.

The 2026 Michigan gubernatorial race is shaping up to be a dynamic contest, reflecting a wide spectrum of political ideologies and priorities. As the election approaches, voters will have the opportunity to evaluate a diverse group of candidates vying to lead the state into its next chapter.

