Debate continues about transportation's future

By JOHN HANNA
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TOPEKA (AP) — Discussions about transportation at the Statehouse this year have an almost panicky tone.

Many lawmakers and officials in Gov. Kathleen Sebelius' administration argue that the Legislature must act now to save the state's comprehensive transportation program from collapse.

Transportation Secretary Deb Miller has even promised to start canceling long-promised projects on July 1 if a transportation bill doesn't pass.

But the debate about Sebelius' proposal to float $465 million in bonds is really more about the future of transportation policy. The Democratic governor's administration and Republican legislative leaders are pondering what happens in 2009, when the current program of highway, rail, airport and public transit improvements ends.

Department of Transportation projections suggest that, starting in 2009, the state won't have enough money even to sustain a full maintenance program. Congress is debating federal transportation spending and could provide additional funds, but officials aren't confident enough in any estimates to plug them into their projections.

What's clear is that in 2008 or 2009, legislators and the governor will have to consider starting another transportation program, one that involves raising taxes or issuing additional bonds. And that prospect complicates this year's discussions.

"Down the line, how much are we going to cripple our ability to do another highway plan?" Rep. Gary Hayzlett, R-Lakin, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, said during a recent interview.

The state started its current program in 1999, promising $13.5 billion over 10 years to transportation improvements. Legislators authorized bonds, increased motor fuels taxes and vehicle registration fees and agreed to set aside an ever-growing amount of sales tax revenues to complete a long and specific list of projects.

But governors and legislators have never dedicated the promised amount of sales tax revenues to the program, siphoning off at least a portion of the funds to other government programs. Under the current budget, the state diverted $165 million and set aside no sales tax revenues for transportation.

The result is a gaping hole in funding for the program and Miller's threat to cancel $550 million worth of projects over five years.

Under the 1999 legislation, the state is supposed to set aside 12 percent of its sales tax revenues to transportation. Sebelius proposes resuming the set-aside in 2006 but then only 3 percent of sales tax revenues, rising to 6 percent for 2008. Bonds would plug any remaining gap.

Hayzlett wants the state to be more aggressive about resuming the set-aside. Sebelius and Miller argue that promising to set aside any more than 6 percent of the state's sales tax revenues is unrealistic and that Hayzlett's idea would not raise enough money, even if the state were to fulfill what it promises.

Hayzlett and other Republicans are looking for a compromise.

As for Sebelius' plan, Senate President Dave Kerr, R-Hutchinson said, "There are just issues everywhere regarding this thing."

Even without Sebelius' plan, bond payments backed by highway funds would jump from $123 million to $175 million in 2009. Her plan would add an additional $35 million in bond payments, backed by general tax revenues.

Annual debt payments would remain at or near $210 million until 2016, and that strikes Hayzlett and other legislators as too much of a burden. Under the 1999 program, the state was allowed to issue nearly $1.3 billion in bonds — on top of $890 million authorized for an eight-year program in 1989.

Miller said the debt load is manageable because part of the payments will come from general tax revenues.

"The same people who say, 'I'm concerned it's too much debt,' I don't think, are willing to cut projects, and I don't think they're willing to raise taxes," she said.

But KDOT faces future financial headaches even if Sebelius' program is approved.

For the budget that takes effect in 2009, KDOT figures show, the agency will have $238 million less than it needs to sustain even basic, maintenance-heavy operations. The deficit rises to $490 million in 2010 and $592 million in 2011.

Miller noted a projected deficit would exist even without Sebelius' plan. Also, she said, the state faced a similar situation in 1998, when the 1989 program ended, and legislators knew it would arise again eventually when they approved the 1999 program.

But initial projections in 1999 showed the deficit occurring at least a year later. Kerr said Sebelius' administration is managing the current program so that "it just kind of crashes" when it ends.

"A follow-on plan will be nearly impossible," he said, speaking of the next potential transportation program.

Miller's biggest fear is that KDOT will have to cancel projects and will lose so much credibility that legislators will not want to pursue a new, post-2009 program. Doing nothing, raising too little money to bolster the program, or failing to deliver promised revenues in the near future all could cause her to cancel projects.

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TV LISTINGS sponsored by the *COLBY FREE PRESS*

WEEKDAYS — MARCH 2 - MARCH 8

	6 AM	6:30	7 AM	7:30	8 AM	8:30	9 AM	9:30	10 AM	10:30	11 AM	11:30
KLBY/ABC 4 6	News		Good Morning America				The John Walsh Show		The View		Holly-wood	News
KSNK/NBC 8 9	News Cont'd		Today						Live With Regis and Kelly		Martha Stewart Living	
KBSL/CBS 12 11	News				The Early Show		The 700 Club		The Price Is Right		The Young and the Restless	
K15CG 3	World News	Priscilla-Yoga	Body Electric	Caillou	Boohbah	Barney-Friends	Dragon Tales	Lions	Sesame Street		Clifford-Red	Teletub-bies
WGN 13	Creflo A. Dollar Jr.	Believer Voice	Celebrity Justice	Hillbil-lies	Hillbil-lies	Happy Days	Matlock		In the Heat of the Night		Rockford Files	
NICK 29	Oddpar-ents	Rocket Power	Rugrats	Spon-geBob	Max & Ruby	Rubba-dubbers	Dora the Explorer	Blue's Clues	Dora the Explorer	Blue's Clues	Little Bill	Maggie-Beast
FAM 30	Digimon	Bey-blade	Power Rangers	Digimon	Growing Pains	Living the Life	The 700 Club		7th Heaven		Full House	Growing Pains
USA 31	JAG		Nash Bridges		Movie		Varied Programs		Movie			Varied
TBS 37	Saved by Bell	Saved by Bell	Movie				Dawson's Creek		Dawson's Creek		Saved by Bell	Saved by Bell
TNT 38	The Lost World		The Pretender		Charmed		ER		ER		Judging Amy	
DSC 42	Paid Program	Paid Program	Varied	Paid Program	Assignment Discovery		The Christopher Lowell Show		It's Christopher Lowell!		Rally Round the House	
A&E 47	Varied Programs		Movie				Murder, She Wrote		Murder, She Wrote		City Confidential	
ESPN 49	SportsCenter		SportsCenter		SportsCenter		SportsCenter		SportsCenter		SportsCenter	
HBO 7	Movie		Varied Programs		Movie		Varied Programs					Movie
DISN 17	JoJo's Circus	Stanley	The Wiggles	JoJo's Circus	The Wiggles	Stanley	Rolie Polie	Rolie Polie	Out of the Box	PB&J Otter	Koala Brothers	The Wiggles
MAX 21	Movie Cont'd		Movie		Varied	Movie	Varied Programs			Movie	Varied Programs	

WEEKDAYS — MARCH 2 - MARCH 8

	12 PM	12:30	1 PM	1:30	2 PM	2:30	3 PM	3:30	4 PM	4:30	5 PM	5:30
KLBY/ABC 4 6	All My Children		One Life to Live		General Hospital		Dr. Phil		Judge Judy	Judge Judy	News	ABC Wld News
KSNK/NBC 8 9	News	Family Feud	Days of Our Lives		Passions		Inside Edition	Family Feud	Million-aire	Jeop-ardy!	News	NBC News
KBSL/CBS 12 11	News	Bold, Beautiful	As the World Turns		Guiding Light		The People's Court		Oprah Winfrey		News	CBS News
K15CG 3	Reading Rainbow	Mister Rogers	Varied Programs			George Shrinks	Beren. Bears	Liberty's Kids	Cyber-chase	Arthur	Zoom	Busi-ness
WGN 13	News		In the Heat of the Night		Street Smarts	Street Smarts	Cosby Show	Cosby Show	Fresh Prince	Fresh Prince	Home Improve.	Will & Grace
NICK 29	Max & Ruby	Dora the Explorer	Rugrats	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	Angela Anacon.	Oddpar-ents	U-Pick	Spon-geBob	Amanda	U-Pick	Hey Arnold!
FAM 30	Family Matters	Family Matters	Step by Step	Step by Step	So Little Time	Full House	7th Heaven		Switche-d!	Knock First	Full House	Full House
USA 31	JAG	Varied	Texas Ranger	Varied Programs							Walker, Texas Ranger	
TBS 37	Cosby	Cosby Show	Cosby Show	Fresh Prince	Fresh Prince	Steve Harvey	Steve Harvey	Drew Carey	Drew Carey	Home Improve.	Home Improve.	Seinfeld
TNT 38	Law & Order		NYPD Blue		NYPD Blue		Judging Amy		Angel		Charmed	
DSC 42	Surprise by Design		Surprise by Design		Rally Round the House		Double Agents		Varied Programs			
A&E 47	American Justice		Movie				Murder, She Wrote		Murder, She Wrote		City Confidential	
ESPN 49	Varied Programs						Billiards		Around the Horn	Interrup-tion	SportsCenter	
HBO 7	Movie	Varied Programs						Movie	Varied Programs			
DISN 17	JoJo's Circus	Stanley	Winnie-Pooh	House of Mouse	House of Mouse	Recess	Lilo & Stitch	Recess	Kim Possible	Proud Family	Even Stevens	Sister, Sister
MAX 21	Movie	Varied Programs		Movie	Varied Programs			Movie			Varied	Movie

TUESDAY — MARCH 2

	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
KLBY/ABC 4 6	(5:59) News	Ent. Tonight	8 Simple Rules	I'm With Her (CC)	Accord-ing-Jim	Less-Perfect	NYPD Blue Chatty Chatty Bang Bang		News (CC)	Nightline Primary results. (CC)		Jimmy Kimmel
KSNK/NBC 8 9	News	Wheel of Fortune	Whoopi (N) (CC)	Happy Family	Frasier Boo! (N)	Scrubs (N) (CC)	Law & Order: Special Victims		News	The Tonight Show Liv Tyler. (N) (CC)		Late Night (N)
KBSL/CBS 12 11	News (CC)	Friends (CC)	Navy NCIS Bete Noir (N) (CC)		The Guardian The Watchers (N) (CC)		Judging Amy (N) (CC)		News (CC)	Late Show (N) (CC)		Late Late
K15CG 3	The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer		Nova Life and Death in the War Zone (N)		Innovation High-Tech War (N)		Now With Bill Moyers (N) (CC)		BBC World	That's My Boy	Charlie Rose (N) (CC)	
WGN 13	Will & Grace	Home Improve.	Columbo Now You See Him				News (CC)		Becker (CC)	Becker (CC)	Elimi-date (N)	The 5th Wheel
NICK 29	Rugrats (CC)	Spon-geBob	Oddpar-ents	Nick-toons TV	Full House	Full House	Cosby Show	Cosby Show	Rose-anne	Rose-anne	Cosby Show	Cosby Show
FAM 30	7th Heaven That Touch of Bink (CC)		Movie: Romy and Michele's High School Reunion ★★½ (1997) *Mira Sorvino.*				Whose Line?	Whose Line?	The 700 Club (CC)		America's Funniest Home Videos (CC)	
USA 31	JAG Legacy (Part 2 of 2) (CC)		Law & Order: Special Victims		Movie: The Musketeer ★½ (2001, Adventure) *Catherine Deneuve.* (CC)				Law & Order: Special Victims		Karen Sisco Nostalgia (CC)	
TBS 37	Seinfeld (CC)	Friends (CC)	Movie: Lethal Weapon 2 ★★★½ (1989, Drama) Riggs and Murtaugh battle drug-smuggling diplomats. (CC)				Movie: Lethal Weapon ★★★ (1987, Drama) (PA) *Mel Gibson.* (CC)					Movie: Lethal 2
TNT 38	Law & Order Venom (CC) (DVS)		Law & Order American Jihad		Law & Order Under God (CC) (DVS)		Charmed (CC)		Angel Sacrifice (CC)		The X-Files Fight Club (CC)	
DSC 42	Justice Files Con men and the elderly.		Monster House Old West House (CC)		Discovery Quest (N)		MythBusters Hosts test urban legends.		Monster House Old West House (CC)		Discovery Quest	
A&E 47	American Justice: Competition		Biography: Bugsy Siegel: Gambling		Cold Case Files A man stands trial for a murder committed at age 15. (CC)				Third Watch Crash and Burn (CC)		Biography: Bugsy Siegel: Gambling	
ESPN 49	College Basketball: Wisconsin at Michigan State. (Live) (CC)				College Basketball: Auburn at Mississippi State. (Live) (CC)				SportsCenter (Live) (CC)		Outside-Lines	Game-night
HBO 7	(5:30) Movie: The Saint ★★ (1997, Adventure) *Val Kilmer.*			Movie: Phone Booth ★★½ (2002, Suspense) *Colin Farrell.*			Dead Men Talking		Curb-Enthsm	G-String Divas	Real Time (CC)	
DISN 17	Sister, Sister	Lizzie McGuire	Movie: My Date With the President's Daughter ★★½ (1998) *Dabney Coleman.*				Sister, Sister	Boy Mts. World	Kim Possible	Proud Family	Even Stevens	Sister, Sister
MAX 21	(5:30) Movie: The Time Machine ★★½			Movie: Like Mike (2002) Magic sneakers propel an orphan to a slot in the NBA. (CC)			Movie: Juwanna Mann ★½ (2002) *Miguel A. Nunez Jr..*			Movie: Drive ★★ (1996, Adventure) *Mark Dacascos.*		

WEDNESDAY — MARCH 3

	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
KLBY/ABC 4 6	(5:59) News	Ent. Tonight	My Wife and Kids Empty Nest (N) (CC)		Stephen King's Kingdom Hospital Thy Kingdom Come (Series Premiere) (N) (CC)				News (CC)	Nightline (CC)	Jimmy Kimmel Live Molly Sims. (N) (CC)	
KSNK/NBC 8 9	News	Wheel of Fortune	The Apprentice Ice Escapades (CC)		The West Wing Eppur Si Muove (N)		Law & Order Hands Free (N) (CC)		News	The Tonight Show Carmen Electra. (N)		Late Night (N)
KBSL/CBS 12 11	News (CC)	Friends (CC)	60 Minutes II (CC)		King of Queens	Ray-mond	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation		News (CC)	Late Show Ben Stiller; Chloe Pang.		Late Late
K15CG 3	The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer		Secrets of the Dead Killer Flu (N) (CC)		Great Performances Concert for George (N) (CC)				BBC World	Two's Cmpny	Charlie Rose (N) (CC)	
WGN 13	Will & Grace	Home Improve.	Columbo Lt. Columbo's prime suspect in a homicide case is found murdered.				News (CC)		Becker (CC)	Becker (CC)	Elimi-date (N)	The 5th Wheel
NICK 29	Rugrats (CC)	Spon-geBob	Oddpar-ents	Nick-toons TV	Full House	Full House	Cosby Show	Cosby Show	Rose-anne	Rose-anne	Cosby Show	Cosby Show
FAM 30	7th Heaven Dick (CC)		Movie: Stuart Little ★★★ (1999) Human parents adopt a mouse into their family.				Whose Line?	Whose Line?	The 700 Club (CC)		Home Videos	Home Videos
USA 31	JAG Florida Straits (CC)		Law & Order: Special Victims		Law & Order: Special Victims		Monk Mr. Monk Gets Married (CC)		Law & Order: Special Victims		The Dead Zone Enemy Mind (CC)	
TBS 37	Seinfeld (CC)	Friends (CC)	Seinfeld (CC)	Seinfeld (CC)	Ripley's Believe It or Not!		Movie: On Deadly Ground ★★ (1994, Adventure) (PA) *Steven Seagal.* (CC)			Movie: K-9 ★★½ (1989) (PA)		
TNT 38	Law & Order Shield (CC) (DVS)		Law & Order Suicide Box		Law & Order Vaya Con Dios		Movie: The Gift (2000) A psychic attempts to solve a murder case in the Deep South.				Law & Order Blue Bamboo (CC) (DVS)	
DSC 42	The FBI Files No Remorse (CC)		Monster House Under Sea House		Death of the USS Arizona (CC)		Transatlantic Tunnel (CC)		Monster House Under Sea House		Death of the USS Arizona (CC)	
A&E 47	American Justice: Woodward		Biography: Genovese		American Justice		City Confidential Pittsburgh (CC)		Third Watch Judgement Day		Biography: Genovese	
ESPN 49	College Basketball: Georgia Tech at Duke. (Live) (CC)				NBA Basketball: Los Angeles Lakers at Houston Rockets. Toyota Center. (Live) (CC)					SportsCenter (Live) (CC)		Outside-Lines
HBO 7	(5:30) Movie: Nightmre Bfore		Movie: Adam Sandler's Eight Crazy Nights ★★ (2002) (CC)			Curb-Enthsm	Taxicab Confss	Starsky-Hutch	Real Time (CC)		Real Sports (CC)	
DISN 17	Sister, Sister	Lizzie McGuire	Movie: Brink! ★★½ (1998) An in-line skater deserts his pals to join a rival team.				Sister, Sister	Boy Mts. World	Kim Possible	Proud Family	Even Stevens	Sister, Sister
MAX 21	(5:00) Movie: The Relic ★★ (1997)		Movie: Blood Work (2002) An ailing agent comes out of retirement to solve a murder.				Movie: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets ★★★ (2002, Fantasy) *Daniel Radcliffe.* (CC)					Movie: Passion