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Don't Expect Trump's Infrastructure Plan to Propose New Revenue.

White House adviser DJ Gribbin also told mayors the plan would not propose cuts to existing, "formula" funding programs, like the Highway Trust Fund.

WASHINGTON — President Trump's infrastructure plan will not identify new revenues to help pay for spending and will also not call for cuts to certain mainstay programs now used to fund public works around the U.S., a White House official told mayors here on Thursday.

DJ Gribbin, a special adviser to Trump on infrastructure, also said the White House would submit a "relatively detailed" set of principles for the proposal to Congress one or two weeks after the president delivers his State of the Union address, which is scheduled for next Tuesday.

"Our infrastructure proposal, when we introduce it, will not include new revenue," Gribbin said during a panel at the U.S. Conference of Mayors winter meeting.

He noted that the administration does not support, or oppose, an increase to the federal gas tax, and that the White House believes decisions about direct federal funding for the plan need to be made collectively with the House and the Senate.

Gribbin said Trump's plan would not propose slashing so-called "formula" funding programs that the federal government now has in place to distribute infrastructure dollars to states.

"We're not reducing current programs, we're not eliminating the Highway Trust Fund, we're not eliminating state revolving funds to pay for the incentive funds and other things we want to do," he said. State revolving funds include federal-state partnership programs used to help finance water and sewer projects.

"The vision, in essence, is we keep for the most part existing programs in place," Gribbin added.

He did point out, however, the budget proposal for fiscal year 2018 that Trump sent to Congress last spring included a variety of cuts, including reductions to programs involving transit and Amtrak. "We will propose repurposing those dollars," Gribbin said.

But he added: "The major delivery mechanisms for funding for infrastructure will remain in place."

Congressional appropriators, in many instances, have not shown a willingness to adopt the sharp cuts the president's budget proposed.

Denver Mayor Michael Hancock said during Thursday's panel he was "pretty skeptical of the administration's plan. Because of the concern about where the dollars are coming from."

While he acknowledged mayors were generally supportive of the idea of an infrastructure package, he also raised worries about what federal spending could get cut to pay for it. "As cities, we don't

want to see opportunities to have more federal money come in but yet, on the back end, we're having to backfill," Hancock added.

"We're very sensitive to that," Gribbin said in his response. "At the end of the day, this isn't supposed to be a net loss for cities."

Despite Gribbin's assurances, Hancock, a Democrat, told Route Fifty after the meeting that he was still uneasy about the prospect of new infrastructure spending siphoning funds from existing federal programs. "There are a lot of questions we need to ask," he said.

Two overarching principles guiding the White House's infrastructure plan, Gribbin explained, are increasing investment by $1 trillion and shortening the federal permitting process for projects to two years.

"We are very open to ideas of how to accomplish those goals," he said. "We imagine this will be an iterative process."

The plan, Gribbin also said, would call for at least $200 billion of direct federal funding. The thinking is that amount will spur state, local and private investment to reach the $1 trillion target.

ROUTE FIFTY

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