

Spratt says I-73/74 might be toll road

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By Gil Klein

WASHINGTON - Tolls may be required to build Interstate 73 and 74, the chairman of the House Budget Committee said today.

"I don't see any way to get this to fruition unless it is a toll road," Rep. John Spratt, D-S.C., told the National I-73/74 Corridor Association, a coalition of business and civic leaders.

The association is in Washington to push construction of new Interstate highways from Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Wilmington, N.C., through North Carolina, South Carolina, southwest Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio and Michigan.

Revenues into the federal Highway Trust Fund are dragging behind projections, Spratt said. The government now is running through the trust fund's reserves, which could be exhausted in a year.

"This is not a good environment in which to go to the committee and say we need several hundreds of millions of dollars to put this project into place," Spratt said.

The project is expected to cost more than \$11 billion. The association is seeking money to build the new interstates included in the 2009 federal transportation bill.

Spratt said Congress will have to make some hard political decisions, including raising gasoline taxes and constructing new toll roads.