

'Promising' moves for I-25 expansion in legislature



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A bill that's part of the overall state budget package has "promising" dollars attached to it for pushing north Interstate 25 expansion ahead, Sen. John Kefalas said at a Saturday town hall.

The bill, HB16-1416, contains \$200 million this year fiscal year and another \$158 million next fiscal year for state transportation projects. And part of that is earmarked for a pool of local dollars and, officials hope, federal grant money that could kick start the first phase of the expansion effort, which would run from Colorado Highway 14 (Mulberry Street in Fort Collins) to about 10 miles south.

LEGISLATURE: [Colorado Senate Oks \\$27 billion budget \(/story/news/2016/04/08/colorado-senate-oks-27-billion-budget/82786378/\)](/story/news/2016/04/08/colorado-senate-oks-27-billion-budget/82786378/)

The pool of money should total about \$235 million, according to Kefalas and Bill Becker, the chair-elect of the Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance. Kefalas said it should be "sufficient to get the ball rolling." The bill has passed the General Assembly and will go to Gov. John Hickenlooper for final consideration.

"(Expansion) could happen sooner rather than later," Kefalas said.

The effort includes pledges from the cities of Fort Collins, Loveland and others, as well as the initiative by the Larimer County Commissioners to pool mill levy money for I-25 bridge replacement and repair (/story/news/2016/03/08/larimer-county-taking-another-swing--25-expansion/81483456/).

Becker said the expansion will include some kind of toll. Plans for full three-lane expansion to the Longmont area, where I-25 currently fans out, would hinge on a future bond initiative that would cover some 50 projects throughout the state, though the details are still being worked out, he said.

INTERSTATES: [I-70, not I-25, to be widened for \\$1.2 billion \(/story/news/2016/02/09/70-not-25-widened-12-billion/79844168/\)](/story/news/2016/02/09/70-not-25-widened-12-billion/79844168/)

"If larger projects are to be done, the bonding issue is the way to do it," Becker said. "The federal government won't step up."

Kefalas continued his pitch for a multi-modal look at transportation in northern Colorado, particularly a passenger rail system to Denver.

"I think a lot of us would want to take a train down to see a Rockies game, who had their home opener yesterday," Kefalas said.

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Fort Collins legislators talk to constituents at a Saturday, April 9, town hall at New Belgium Brewing Co. From left, they are: Sen. John Kefalas, Rep. Jeni Arndt and Rep. Joann Gianli, all Democrats. (Photo: Nick Coltrain/Coloradoan)

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