

# Transport Topics

## **NJ Road Construction Shutdown Nears Month with No End in Sight**

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New Jersey's Democratic-controlled Senate Budget Committee passed a transportation funding measure July 29, but the chamber's leaders declined to bring the bill to the floor Aug. 1.

Committee Chairman Paul Sarlo told reporters in the Garden State that he didn't have the 27 votes necessary to sustain Republican Gov. Chris Christie's expected veto, continuing the road construction shutdown that the term-limited Christie ordered July 8.

Christie and Senate President Steve Sweeney have shot down each other's proposals since the crisis began in earnest when the Transportation Trust Fund's borrowing authority expired July 1.

On July 25, Christie declared that legislation agreed to by the Senate and the Democratic-dominated Assembly was "dead on arrival."

The shutdown has prompted thousands of layoffs in the construction sector, Bob Briant CEO of the Utility and Transportation Contractors Association of New Jersey, told lawmakers July 29.

"We're in a mess," added Sal Risalvato, executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline-Convenience Store-Automotive Association. "The longer you wait, the worse this gets."

Both sides in the impasse have proposed hiking fuel taxes, with diesel soaring by 27 cents per gallon and gasoline by 23 cents per gallon to fund a 10-year, \$20 billion infusion for the nearly-broken Transportation Trust Fund.

The current rates of 17.5 cents on diesel and 14.5 cents on gas haven't risen since 1988 and are the lowest in the continental United States.

However, Sweeney and Christie have rejected each other's suggestions on off-setting tax cuts such as reductions in the New Jersey's sales tax or estate tax and an earned income tax credit hike.

*By David Elfin  
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