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## Public asset: editorial

After two years of speculation and a \$3.4 million study, John Kasich settled Thursday on a fairly straightforward approach, opting to use the Ohio Turnpike to leverage funds for a \$1.6 billion backlog of road projects. An expanded Ohio Turnpike Commission will raise tolls, using the money to back \$1.5 billion in bonds for non-turnpike projects, with most of the work concentrated in Northern Ohio.

Much of the speculation had focused on privatizing the turnpike, leasing it to a private operator, the state getting a lump sum estimated to be in the billions. But strong opposition to that idea built up across the northern tier of the state, where the 241-mile roadway is a key transportation link.

The Kasich team estimates that an additional \$1.5 billion will be generated through local and federal matches, the result a \$3 billion pot of money available over the next six years to be spent in consultation with the Ohio Department of Transportation.

The goal is to use 90 percent of the money in Northern Ohio. Tellingly, though, the administration made clear that is not a hard figure. Still, if the commitment holds, it would free up other transportation dollars to speed up work for much-needed road projects, reducing the current 20-year time frame to six years. Additional money will be available to start on projects that now exist only on paper, again with a concentration in Northern Ohio. That list is more substantial, about \$8 billion in work on the drawing boards.

**Editorial continued here: <http://www.ohio.com/editorial/editorials/public-asset-1.357773>**

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