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Sen. Tom Carper said he hopes the White House will put forth a serious infrastructure proposal that could garner Democratic support. | Micaela Rodriguez/POLITICO

## **Democrats to Trump on infrastructure: Show us the money**

By **BEN WHITE** | 01/17/2018 05:02 AM EST

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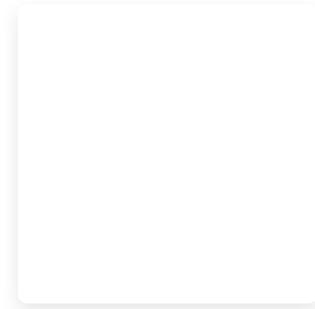
## Senator Tom Carper on i

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Taking serious action to address the crumbling state of U.S. infrastructure is likely to cost far more than the Trump administration is reportedly willing to spend, says a key Senate Democrat overseeing infrastructure policy.

Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), an Amtrak enthusiast who commutes to Washington on the train, said on the latest POLITICO Money podcast that he hopes the White House will put forth a serious infrastructure proposal that could garner Democratic support. But early reports on the White House plan, which suggest a federal contribution of around \$200 billion, do not give him great confidence.

“I think most people understand if we want to have better roads, highways, bridges, trains ... we gotta pay for them,” said Carper, the top Democrat on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which would play a major role in any infrastructure bill. Carper also sits on the Senate Finance Committee, which would authorize funding for any bill. (Republican Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, chair of the Senate Environmental and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, joins POLITICO Money next week to discuss infrastructure.)

Carper said that in addition to federal spending, expanded use of tolling should also be considered to help pay for infrastructure projects. “I think the idea of using tolling for new road construction is probably a pretty good idea, and acceptable. Especially now that we have the technology.”

The White House is expected to release an infrastructure plan in the next several weeks. Administration officials have discussed using \$200 billion in federal money to draw in state, local and private investment in major public works projects that could boost overall spending to \$1 trillion.

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Carper and other Democrats are skeptical that such a plan could work. Republicans will likely need significant Democratic support to get any infrastructure plan through both houses of Congress, especially if many Republicans are reluctant to add any more to annual deficits beyond the \$1.5 trillion in new debt included in the tax plan.

Carper said he is not giving up hope that the parties could work together on infrastructure. Still, he said, when he was Delaware's governor, he handled a split in which the federal government paid 80 percent on road projects while the state paid 20 percent. "You're telling me you're going to come in and say to a governor of a state that we're going to go from an 80-20 federal-state split to 20-80? Really? How does that work?"

Carper also said he was skeptical that voters will ultimately embrace the GOP tax cut bill. "I'm not so sure that at the end of the day, the tax cut bill that was passed is going to be viewed warmly by voters either this year or later on," he said. "People don't like it already, and I think as they get to know it better, they aren't going to be more fond of it."