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## Mayor Ballard rolls out mass transit plan for state lawmakers

Only hours after clinching his re-election as Indianapolis mayor, Greg Ballard went to the Statehouse to kick off his next campaign: Landing a mass transit system for central Indiana.

Ballard, a Republican, met at 11:30 a.m. today with Speaker of the House Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, and Senate Appropriations Chairman Luke Kenley, R-Noblesville, to discuss his top priority in the legislative session that begins Jan. 4.

"Certainly coming into the session we want to try to figure out a way to enhance mass transit in the city of Indianapolis and the region," Ballard said.

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- He sees this, he said, as an economic development issue.

"That's really the key, getting people to and from work and make sure there's a return on the investment," he said.

During the campaign both Ballard and his Democratic opponent, Melina Kennedy,

said they support the concept of transit but insisted they needed more details before championing the Indy Connect proposal by the Central Indiana Task Force for increased IndyGo bus service and rail lines to the suburbs.

The biggest stumbling block: Cost. The task force's proposal was estimated to cost about \$2.4 billion, evenly split between local government and federal funds.

Ballard said his discussion with Bosma and Kenley was more general, and that specifics on the plan remain to be worked out.

Asked if it might entail a tax increase, Ballard said: "I don't know. I don't know. I'm concerned about trying to attract high-level talent into the city in the future. The young men and women who are educated and provide a lot of economic vitality to the city are looking for a good mass transit system in big cities."

There are "different ways" to fund the

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system, he said without elaborating. But he added: "We're also the **guys** who saved \$740 million on sewers, so there's different ways to skin that cat. We'll have to see going forward what's the best way to do it and if we can get it done or not."

From his discussion with Bosma and Kenley, he said "there's a possibility" that the legislature would be open to the plan.

"But we'll have to make the **case**," he said.

So what did they tell him?

"Just that," Ballard said with a laugh. "I'll have to talk to some people and make the case."

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