

METRO

 THE PLAIN DEALER

Key Cleveland projects win OK

Inner Belt bridge, waterfront work part of U.S. transportation bill

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Plain Dealer Reporters

Three key Cleveland waterfront developments and a new Inner Belt bridge over the Cuyahoga River valley received major boosts Friday with passage of a federal transportation bill.

Ohio will receive an estimated

\$1.3 billion a year under the six-year, \$286 billion spending measure, a 35 percent increase from current funding, the Ohio Department of Transportation said.

The state is to receive an additional \$85 million specifically for the Inner Belt bridge work. The money will probably solve a budget problem created when ODOT learned recently that the existing

bridge could not be expanded, department spokeswoman Lindsay Mendicino said.

ODOT would like to build a new bridge to carry westbound traffic and convert the existing bridge to eastbound traffic only. Work is at least five years away.

Also in the bill that cleared both the House and Senate on

Friday are:

- \$6.4 million to begin engineering work and perhaps some construction on the Towpath bike and hiking trail extension to Lake Erie from its current ending point at Harvard Avenue. The total cost is estimated at \$25 million.

- \$5 million to build a pedestrian bridge from north of the

Great Lakes Science Center to Voinovich Park in the North Coast Harbor.

- \$5 million for work on waterfront boardwalks and streets along the eastern edge of the Cuyahoga River in the Flats.

"It's extremely good news," Mayor Jane Campbell said.