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# Alaska Journal | Compromise gives Knik Arm bridge to DOT, makes KABATA operator

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The compromise version of the bill to build the Knik Arm bridge, reported out of its House-Senate conference committee shortly before 9 a.m. today, transfers all authority to finance and build the project to the state Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

House Bill 23 now leaves the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority only with authority to "operate and manage" the bridge after it is built by DOT. Transportation Commissioner Pat Kemp said construction could begin in 2015.

The revised bill retains the project financing mechanism in versions passed by both bodies. A federal Transportation Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act, or TIFIA, loan for at least 30 percent of the roughly \$900 million project cost must be secured before state revenue bonds could be issued. The bill caps those to \$300 million.

Lawmakers from both parties questioned the delay to smaller regional transportation projects the bridge might cost.

Rep. Harriet Drummond, D-Anchorage, complained that "post-bridge" costs for another billion dollars worth of work for connecting routes on both ends of the bridge are not addressed in the bill.

"It seems like a significant omission," she said.

Sen. Peter Micciche, R-Soldotna, said he's received calls and emails from constituents fearful that the bridge will delay projects queued in the State Transportation Improvement Plan, or STIP.

Kemp said he would have to "backfill" the STIP, but did not mention specific projects or dollar amounts. "I believe there are no impacts in the long run," Kemp said.