

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING: Stimulus is First Step, More is Needed to Build America's Infrastructure

Our economy is about to receive a down payment on our economic future. According to the San Diego Association of Governments, the region's planning agency, an estimated \$7.4 billion of federal infrastructure funds are being sought for our region... **Good, but not a panacea. Given the limited impact that fed moneys would have on permanent, and appropriate, new jobs, my fear is that this is about to become a diversion.**

(Uncle Sam's Stimulus Is Down Payment on Economic Security. *San Diego Business Journal*. 2/16/09)

John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, said in a statement: "While it will still take many months for our economy to recover, **this plan is a crucial first step that will put people back to work now, save and create good jobs, rebuild our crumbling roads, bridges, and schools and invest in a stronger economy at a time when there's nothing more important.**" (Partisan spat continues on stimulus. *Boston Globe*. 2/17/09)

Nationwide, the estimated \$90 billion to \$100 billion in proposed infrastructure spending amounts to a **mere down payment** on what's needed to repair and improve the country's physical backbone. (Infrastructure portion of stimulus just a 'down payment.' *Associated Press*. 2/9/09)

The leadership shown by President Obama and Congress must continue as lawmakers begin to consider other build America investments, particularly the Surface Transportation Act. The economic recovery plan will help build America so America works. But although it will create as many as 700,000 construction jobs, over 1.7 million construction workers are jobless. And **while, it provides needed investment, it is only a fraction of the \$2.2 trillion our transportation systems, energy systems and schoolhouses need. The plan is a leap forward, but it cannot become a "we already gave" sign that blocks sorely needed resources, leading to continued deterioration of the basics of our country and our economy.** (Press release: LIUNA Hails Economic Recovery Package. LIUNA. 2/13/09)

Transportation Commissioner Sarah Nuckles, who represents the Fifth Congressional District, said every county in the state deserves some of funds from the package. Nuckles would like to see about a third of the money used for infrastructure improvements. **"I just like the idea of going in there and doing something about this crumbling infrastructure," she said. "I know it's just a drop in the bucket, but at least it gives us some headway."** (State to receive \$463 million from stimulus for roads, bridges. *Florence News*. 2/17/09)

"I think [transportation groups] should be concerned that Congress is going to see the stimulus as doing the job," said Janet Kavinoky, transportation director for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. **"We have to keep the pressure on leadership to move these transportation bills."** (Highway Funding: Too Much of a Good Thing? *CQ Politics*. 2/11/09)

Marcia J. Van Wagner, the deputy comptroller for budget for New York City, said it will take a leader like this to overcome years of disinvestment. "The federal government has extricated itself from local infrastructure spending," she said. "There used to be more federal money for water treatment, mass transit, public housing, all of these things that over the last 25 years have shrunk. The localities have had to take over responsibility for these infrastructure systems, and it's expensive." Weiner said he is hopeful. **"It's clear in this bill that there's a new sheriff in town, and the administration and Congress understand the needs of urban areas,"** he said. **"One bill and a few weeks of an administration does not a legacy make, but it sure does seem like seeing the light at the end of a tunnel."** (Big-city leaders call stimulus a fine start. *Washington Post*. 2/17/09)

The fundamental problem with the so-called stimulus bill is that most of the money will not be directed toward short-term projects that would create jobs and construct needed public assets. Only about 15 percent of the measure will be used for public works projects that can be started quickly. This part of the measure makes sense. There are innumerable transportation and other construction jobs that could improve the nation's aging infrastructure, boost employment and help the overall economy both short and long-term. (Editorial: Stimulus bill has too many flaws. *Contra Costa Times*. 2/13/09)

"Transportation infrastructure pays off in so many ways that the argument for budget busting deficit spending is probably stronger for transportation infrastructure than it is for most anything else," said Leslie Blakey, Executive Director, Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors. "Construction puts people to work and the efficiency of the transportation network improves the ability for us as a country to improve and get more production out of our economy."... **"This is a good start, but there is much more demand out there,"** said **Kavinoky. "It is a down payment on what Congress has to turn around and do, which is deal with the major re-authorization bills towards the end of this year.** I want to see the recipients of this stimulus funding put the dollars out so quickly that it defies the expectations of people who feel the money is not going to go out very fast...and I would like to be able to go back to Congress and say this is why you need to make sure we have very strong authorization bills for highway and transit, for water, and aviation, and additional assistance for rail. The need is clearly out there." (Transportation policy: Obama signs economic stimulus package into law. *Logistics Management*. 2/17/09)

"There is little doubt that Florida is undergoing the worst financial crisis that I can remember in my adult life," Martinez said. But he added that the Democratic package **did not spend enough money on programs that could quickly create jobs, such as roads and bridges.** "There's still too much spending in this bill that's not timely, that's not targeted or temporary," he said. (2 plans: Which is best for Florida? *Orlando Sentinel*. 2/11/09)

However, with the decreasing of federal funding and the rising prices of asphalt and salt, MDOT is projected to lose two billion dollars in federal aid over the next three years. "On the Department of Transportation side, we're looking at **this stimulus money--it just basically puts us back to our normal program for the next two years. That's how much we've lost in revenues and our ability to match federal funding,**" said Randy Van Portfliet, a Superior Range Engineer. The stimulus plan is expected to create 36,000 construction jobs across the state. (Boost in construction projects and jobs. *NBC25.com*. 2/13/09)

"Obviously Michigan has been in dire straights for awhile," Frazier said. "Obviously this will help the citizens of Michigan." Competition for a piece of this stimulus pie will be strong however. The Governor already has wish lists from cities and counties totaling in the billions of dollars. **"Even though this is a large stimulus package, there won't be enough money to cover all of these projects,"** Frazier said, "but we are hoping those projects that are the most worthy will rise to the top." An estimated \$7 billion is headed this way from Washington and local townships hope it flows in their direction. (Township stimulus wish list. *WILX-Lansing, MI*. 2/16/09)

The state will receive about \$550 million for roads and infrastructure... Brown County's wish list includes \$10 million to \$12 million to expand the Central Library on Pine Street in Green Bay, Executive Tom Hinz said... Hinz also wants \$300,000 to \$400,000 to provide solar heating for the county jail, \$25,000-\$35,000 to replace the roof of the Barkhausen Waterfowl Preserve building, and \$4 million to \$5 million to replace the old facilities at the Brown County Fairgrounds in De Pere. **"These aren't things that have come up just because of the federal stimulus funds," Hinz said. "We've been talking about this for some time."** (Local officials seek their share of federal stimulus funds. *Green Bay Press Gazette*. 2/13/09)

REPORTER: And Mayor Reid, what is your top infrastructure priority? Is it a road project, a bridge project, a sewer project, something else? MAYOR CHUCK REED: We have all of the above. **There is no shortage of things we can spend the money on.** It really depends on how it washes down to us through the formulas. **We'll be competing in every category, because everywhere you look, we've got something we can spend stimulus funding on.** (Mayor Chuck Reed, San Jose on CNN. 2/18/09)

ASCE's 2009 Report Card on America's Infrastructure is a sobering reminder of the importance of properly funding and maintaining the nation's backbone. If the country is going to meet future demands, **Congress needs to take this report more seriously than it did four years ago** -- when we previously received a cumulative D for our efforts... **The longer Congress waits to address the nation's crumbling public transportation system and other infrastructure in a comprehensive way, the greater the expense and risk to safety.** While \$150 billion hardly seems meager to most people, the ASCE reports it would cost \$2.2 trillion over the next five years from all levels of government and the private sector to repair and rebuild our aging structures. (Editorial: Repair, rebuild nation's infrastructure. Grand Rapids Press. 2/13/09)

Riverside County Supervisor John Tavaglione said he hopes the money arrives quickly to get building projects started and reduce the number of foreclosures. "Sixty days, that's the number everyone's been pushing for, or no later than that," Tavaglione said. **Even the Republican lawmakers who oppose the bill say such [infrastructure] projects are needed in the region.** Rep. Jerry Lewis, R-Redlands, has repeatedly called for more spending on road, freeway and bridge construction. "All along he has believed infrastructure spending, in particular, should provide a boost to the Inland Empire's economy," Lewis spokesman Jim Specht said. (Inland ready to spend stimulus. Riverside Press Enterprise. 2/13/09)