

Maricopa eyes share of stimulus for transportation projects

A permanent park-and-ride location, new traffic signals and rerouting the Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway are just a few of the projects that Maricopa leaders are hoping may get funding from federal stimulus money trickling into Arizona.

The state is expected to receive nearly \$650 million in funding for infrastructure improvements, including money for highways and bridges, public transit and water projects; and cities such as Maricopa are gearing up in hope of receiving these funds.

“We were told the types of projects that are going to be funded with the money are ‘shovel-ready’ or bid-ready sites,” said Brent Billingsley, Maricopa development services director.

These types of sites are ones on which construction can begin within 30 to 120 days after receiving funding.

To get their names in the hat, the leaders of Maricopa compiled a list of projects and submitted it to the Central Arizona Association of Governments, the Arizona Department of Transportation and met with state representatives in an attempt to pull some more dollars into Maricopa.

Maricopa’s nearly \$16 million wish list includes five traffic signals, widening of the Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway and the construction of a permanent park-and-ride facility ([click here to view a full list of Maricopa projects](#)).

However, many of these items will prove to be wishful thinking.

ADOT’s State Transportation Board met nearly a week ago to determine how to divide \$350 million in transportation funding available through the stimulus package.

The group decided to divvy up the money using a standard funding formula that gives half of the state’s \$350 million share to the two biggest metro areas. That gives Maricopa County \$130 million and Pima County \$45 million.

The other half — \$175 million — goes to the remaining 13 counties in the state.

At that meeting, the board did not decide what projects that the money would be spent on, but ADOT has released a list containing nearly \$1 billion in projects.

Some projects on that list that could affect Maricopa, including the construction of a permanent park-and-ride facility, the purchase of buses for the city’s transit system, a feasibility study for a commuter rail from Maricopa through the Gila River Indian Community to Tempe and Chandler and the widening of Interstate 10 ([click here to view a full list of ADOT projects](#)).

“A lot of how this funding will be determined is still in the air,” said Maxine Brown, director of CAAG.

Brown said that her agency will be one of the primary distributors for the transportation projects in Pinal County. “We are hoping to get at least \$3 million in funds to distribute to the projects on our list,” she said.

Brown added that her organization will fund projects starting at the top of the list and continue down until the available money runs out.

On that CAAG list, Maricopa has two projects in the top 15, both being traffic signals. ([Click here to view a list of CAAG's project rankings.](#))

In addition to the money that will trickle into the county for transportation and infrastructure projects, Brown said she is estimating the county to see an additional \$2 million in available Community Development Block Grants – flexible government grants that allow communities with resources to address a wide range of development needs.

“I understand the state will start receiving the funding within the next week,” Brown said.

Photo by Michael K. Rich

