

**BREAKING NEWS****County awaits word on \$45 million in federal aid**[Print Page](#)**By Philip Franchine**

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Santa Cruz Valley officials hope to get millions of dollars for road improvements out of the federal stimulus package.

On Tuesday, the state transportation board approved \$45 million in projects proposed by the Pima Association of Governments for Pima County, and \$130 million proposed by the Maricopa Association of Governments for Maricopa County.

"We may be doing some pavement preservation work in the Green Valley area but until I know how much stimulus money I have, I won't be able to say which roads," Pima County Transportation Director Priscilla Cornelio said.

Sahuarita has placed \$2 million for pavement preservation on a list of projects submitted to the state.

Sahuarita Public Works Director Farhad Moghimi echoed Cornelio, saying, "We do not know exactly how much will be PAG's share of the economic recovery funding."

Santa Cruz County is seeking funding for the Palo Parado railroad crossing in Rio Rico and a sidewalk project in Nogales.

Another \$175 million allocated to Arizona's 13 other counties is expected to be approved by the transportation board Friday. Those projects would be overseen by the Arizona Department of Transportation. An additional \$171 million more will go directly to local governments out of the statewide \$521 million in federal stimulus funding for roads and bridges.

Cornelio said estimates vary, but that "Pima County could potentially get \$4 million or more."

In Santa Cruz County, SEAGO (SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization) has proposed improvements to the Palo Parado railroad crossing at the Union Pacific line north of Rio Rico, just east of the Santa Cruz River crossing, plus \$200,000 for sidewalks on Mastic Way in Nogales.

Pima County's approved projects include:

- Interstate 10 from Valencia Road to Interstate 19, a freeway management system, \$9.1 million.
- I-10 from Rita Road to Houghton Road, pavement preservation, \$6 million.
- I-10 Cienega Creek - Marsh Station traffic interchange reconstruction, \$18 million.
- All of I-19, sign replacement, \$1.5 million.

- State Route 86 widening in the Brawley Wash segment, \$5 million.
- State Route 86, pavement preservation from Kinney Road to La Cholla Boulevard, \$3.5 million.
- SR 86 shoulder widening from milepost 74 to milepost 77, \$3,327,000.
- SR 86, rehabilitation of the Santa Cruz River Bridge Deck, \$200,000.

One project that was not funded was a \$4 million request toward the larger cost of the I-19 frontage road from Canoa to Continental Road. That cost was estimated at \$12 million several years ago.

Under federal rules, half of the projects getting stimulus funds need to have Federal Highway Administration authorization within 120 days and the rest within one year. All funds must be spent and all projects must be complete within three years.

Projects that have been designed and have engineering plans and environmental and archeological surveys completed are considered "shovel-ready" and are eligible for approval, but the I-19 frontage project has not undergone those approvals, ADOT Tucson District Engineer Greg Gentsch said.

The Interstate 19 sign plans don't require time-consuming environmental or archeological surveys or detailed engineering plans, so they are "shovel-ready," and that helped move them up the priority list for federal economic recovery funds.

Gentsch said the frontage road project will be built, as there is a commitment of money from both ADOT and Pima County, but he said the county pulled it from the stimulus project list because it is not shovel-ready.

The projects funded by economic recovery money are expected to create 17,000 jobs statewide, according to ADOT.

Statewide there are more than 100 highway projects that are ready to be built and are therefore eligible to receive stimulus funding, but they total \$940 million, nearly twice the funding the state will get.

The project list will not change on March 13, but the priority of the projects could change, ADOT spokeswoman Linda Ritter said.

[pfranchise@sahuaritasun.com](mailto:pfranchise@sahuaritasun.com) | 547-9738

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