



## Rural Counties Win Big With Stimulus Money

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Mar. 7--The Treaty of Ghent ended the War of 1812. The Dayton Agreement brought peace to Bosnia.

And the Casa Grande Accord, according to regional transportation officials, cost the Valley millions of dollars for highway projects.

A couple of weeks ago, I mentioned a meeting of the Maricopa Association of Governments' Transportation Policy Committee, in which municipal leaders squabbled about money -- who in the Phoenix area was getting it, who wasn't.

But the Valley cities eventually united, because there was another enemy to fight: rural Arizona.

And that's where Casa Grande comes in.

According to the Arizona Department of Transportation, in 1999 that Pinal County town hosted representatives from the state, the Federal Highway Administration, regional councils of government and metropolitan planning organizations as they determined how to equitably allocate resources.

Somehow, it was worked out so MAG would get 37 percent and 13 percent would go to the Tucson area via the Pima Association of Governments. Taking the half left over was the TOC: Thirteen Other Counties. (Really, that's what everyone calls them.)

Sure enough, this was the formula used by the State Transportation Board last week when it came time to divvy up \$350 million in federal stimulus money.

\$175 million will be going to the rural areas, MAG got \$129 million and PAG received \$46 million.

To be fair, it's not as if Valley residents will never see the results of the money spent in the rural areas. On TOC's list of 27 projects, the most expensive, at \$30 million, is for the widening of Interstate 10 near Picacho.

Still, Valley officials are not fond of this split, and if you count noses you can see why.

As determined by the 2000 U.S.Census, Maricopa had about 60 percent of the state's 5.13 million people. (Pima was at 16 percent.) So, three-fifths of Arizona's population receives two-fifths of the available transportation funding.

Which makes many here want to reach for a fifth of hard alcohol.

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