

## Obama calls for enormous public-works effort

### Plan's scope rivals 1950s interstate highway program

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — President-elect Barack Obama said Saturday that he wants to revive the economy through a job-creating public-works plan on a scale unseen since the building program of the interstate highway system in the 1950s.

He offered no price estimate for the grand plan, how the money might be divided or the effect on the country's financial health at a time of burgeoning deficits.

The ideas were outlined in his weekly radio address the day after the government reported that employers cut 533,000 jobs in November, the most in 34 years. They are part of a vision for a massive economic recovery plan Obama wants Congress to pass and have waiting on his desk when he takes office Jan. 20.

The president-elect's address never once used the word "spend," relying instead on "invest" or "investments," and pledging wise stewardship of taxpayer money in upgrading roads and schools, and making public buildings more energy-efficient.

"We won't just throw money at the problem," Obama said. "We'll measure progress by the reforms we make and the results we achieve — by the jobs we create, by the energy we save, by whether America is more competitive in the world."

### Use-it-or-lose-it project money

Obama said his plan would employ millions of people by "making the single largest new investment in our national infrastructure since the creation of the federal highway system in the 1950s." He said state officials would lose the federal dollars if they did not quickly use the money to repair highways and bridges.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, a 1991 final estimate of the cost of the interstate system put it at \$128.9 billion, with a federal share of \$114.3 billion. The estimate covered only the mileage (42,795 miles) built under the interstate construction program. Construction of the system began in 1956 under President Dwight Eisenhower.

### 5,000-plus projects ready to go

More than 5,000 highway projects are ready to go today, state transportation officials say, if Congress will pony up \$64.3 billion as part of an economic aid plan. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, which compiled the list, said the projects would provide jobs and help reduce a backlog of crumbling roads and bridges.

A bipartisan group of governors recently met with Obama to press for some \$136 billion in infrastructure projects, in addition to money for health-care costs.

Several governors welcomed Obama's economic plan.

Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine said the state had more than \$1 billion in "ready-to-go" projects that have been planned for and can be under contract within 180 days. "His plan will put people to work and give the economy a critically important boost," Kaine said in a written statement.

### on the net

[www.fhwa.dot.gov/interstate/history.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/interstate/history.htm)

### arizona angle

In response to a survey by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Arizona listed 72 highway projects worth \$1.09 billion that are ready to go if Congress were to include money for them in an economic stimulus plan.

— The Associated Press

In a joint statement, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said it would help the United States stay ahead of other countries. "To stay competitive globally, the time to repair and modernize our nation's infrastructure is now," they said.

In the address, Obama also said he wants to install energy-saving light bulbs and replace old heating systems in federal buildings to cut costs and create jobs.

School buildings would get an upgrade, too. "Because to help our children compete in a 21st-century economy, we need to send them to 21st-century schools," Obama said.

As part of the package, Obama said he wants to expand broadband Internet access in communities. "Here, in the country that invented the Internet, every child should have the chance to get online," he said.

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