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News

Obama's economic plan could boost city Havasu asking for \$244M for infrastructure projects

By Tony Waggoner

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Christmas may come a little later this year for federally funded infrastructure projects throughout the country with President-elect Barack Obama's proposed economic recovery plan, and Lake Havasu City could see a direct benefit.

Obama is looking at an \$850-billion package over two years to help with state infrastructure projects around the country. But after consulting with outside economists of all political stripes, his advisers have begun telling Congress the stimulus should be bigger than the \$600 billion initially envisioned, the officials said.

"As we understand it, (Obama) is going to sign the bill right after he walks down Constitution Avenue," Lake Havasu City Manager Richard Kaffenberger said.

Lake Havasu City already jumped the gun on their request for funds. At a recent meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the city handed over a wish list of projects they are seeking federal funding for, according to Kaffenberger.

The city is seeking a maximum of \$244 million for infrastructure projects that vary from landscaping State Route 95 and establishing a walkway at the channel to the sewer expansion project and the Pima Wash overlay. All of the projects are ready to begin, Kaffenberger said, could be completed by 2010 with federal funding from the stimulus plan.

One of the city's projects Kaffenberger discussed should be quite familiar to residents. They have long sought to establish a new golf course, university and convention center on the island. With the stimulus package, the possible completion of all three could draw closer.

The underlying purpose of the federal funding for the projects is creating jobs, Kaffenberger noted. He pointed out that Community Services Director Stan Usinowicz has been instrumental in getting Lake Havasu City's name in the hat for federal funding for the projects, which could create around 5,900 jobs in the city.

One agency that has received considerable discussion for funding is the Arizona Department of Transportation. ADOT released a project summary that calls for funding of projects in 13 of Arizona's 15 counties, seeking \$1.3 billion total. Much of the money would be slated for bridge improvements, widening lanes and guardrail and pavement improvements.

ADOT's projects are all in ready status, and could begin and see completion within 180 days with federal funding. ADOT Public Information Officer Michelle Beggs said the projects could create around 35,000 jobs statewide.

Mohave County would receive just over \$71 million for bridge improvements and pavement preservation along Interstate 40 and State Route 95.

Most of the money would be slated for Maricopa County, though, which ADOT is hoping would receive just over \$325 million for improvements and lane widening along State Route 74, US Highway 60 and Interstate 10, among others.

Discussion of the stimulus package is still in the early stages. Mohave County spokesman Darryle Purcell pointed as of now this is just a proposal. Purcell said the county has some ideas of projects they would seek federal funds for, but they aren't necessarily getting their hopes up. Purcell said it was just too early to tell.

You may contact the reporter at twaggoner@havasunews.com.

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