

## Arizona eyes share of \$850 billion stimulus

by **Max Jarman** - Dec. 21, 2008 12:00 AM  
The Arizona Republic

Construction-industry and government leaders are forming a coalition to make sure Arizona gets its share of the estimated \$850 billion in economic-stimulus funding proposed by President-elect Barack Obama.

The Transportation and Infrastructure Working Group has identified more than \$10 billion in public projects that could be undertaken with the stimulus money.

The group plans to aggressively lobby Arizona's congressional delegation and other lawmakers for funds that could become available soon after Obama's inauguration Jan. 19.

"We need to get in front of the line and let them know we are not going away," said Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, a coalition member.

Much of the proposed \$850 billion would go to fund infrastructure projects including new airports, highways, bridges, reservoirs and wastewater-treatment plants.

The construction projects would create new jobs in Arizona that could replace the approximately 100,000 jobs lost because of the housing bust and the recession.

David Martin, president of the Arizona chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America and a member of the coalition, estimated that each \$1 billion invested in infrastructure construction could generate up to 35,000 jobs. That's close to the 40,000 Arizona construction jobs lost in the past year alone.

Using a multiplier to account for rounds of spending, Martin said the total economic impact of the \$1 billion direct investment balloons to more than \$5 billion.

Martin is confident that Arizona's construction-labor pool, much of which was employed framing houses during the housing boom, has the skills to work on more complex infrastructure-improvement projects.

"The crossover from vertical to horizontal construction won't be a problem," he said.

The Arizona coalition is scrambling to come up with a list of projects that can be started quickly if funding becomes available.

"It's a very fluid number, but it looks like about \$10 billion worth of work," said Sarah Morgan, vice president of the contractors group.

Many are planned projects that have been postponed because of a lack of funding. They include expanding the light-rail system in Phoenix, airport improvements in Yavapai County and the beginnings of the Loop 303 freeway in the northwest Valley.

"We have the immediate ability to create jobs that will help people stop foreclosures on their homes, buy new cars (and) airline tickets, and get the economy moving again," Gordon said.

Phoenix has come up with a list of 120 projects, valued at \$2.1 billion, that could be undertaken with stimulus dollars. Besides light-rail improvements, they include airport improvements, public-housing projects, advanced suspect identification for police and street repairs.

Phoenix's jobs are included in 725 projects, worth more than \$7 billion, that have been identified by the Maricopa Association of Governments.

The Arizona Department of Transportation has an additional \$1.2 billion in projects that could be started within 180 days and provide a quick jolt to the economy. They include work on the Loop 303 and a new Cordes Junction interchange on Interstate 17.

