

*Only Cook County, Ill., receiving more stimulus money*

[AZ Capitol Times](#)

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Nearly two months after it was implemented, the massive economic stimulus program aimed at restarting the U.S. economy has pumped millions of dollars into Arizona as shovel-ready projects kick off with the aim of creating new jobs.

A review of projects receiving funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act shows Maricopa County among the top recipients of federal aid throughout the country, with so-called shovel-ready projects in the process of getting under way.

According to Recovery.org, a private Web site that tracks federal spending, Maricopa County has been allotted more federal dollars than any county other than Cook County, Illinois, where Chicago is the major population center. Other cities such as Washington, D.C., New York City and Los Angeles are receiving massive infusions as well.

In total, 64 projects slated for Maricopa County are in some stage of development or implementation, adding up to some \$813.1 million in federal funding.

Aides to members of Congress from Arizona said it makes sense that the county would receive so much assistance. As the fourth-largest county in the nation and one of the hardest-hit by the economic slowdown, it would stand to reason the state would get moving quickly.

"Arizona has been hit especially hard, and we have one of the worst budget crises in the country, so we certainly can use more support," said U.S. Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, a Democrat who represents Arizona's 1st Congressional District.

"Arizona's job losses are among the worst in the nation, with the majority of those coming in Maricopa County," added Adam Bozzi, a spokesman for Arizona's 5th Congressional District Rep. Harry Mitchell. "Maricopa County is going to see a big impact from the stimulus."

Mitchell, a Democrat who held an event at Arizona State University to encourage local businesses to pursue stimulus funding, was among many U.S. representatives who touted stimulus projects during the two-week congressional recess.

Projects range from relatively small studies, such as \$1 million earmarked for an Arizona Department of Transportation study on the feasibility of commuter rail in Chandler and nearby areas, to much larger improvements set for the region's airports.

Money has been set aside for road improvements along several state highways, from \$1.15 million to replace road signs stretching for seven miles along the Red Mountain Freeway between Mesa and Phoenix to \$59 million to widen a stretch of Interstate 10 for 18 miles.

Construction projects at Sky Harbor International Airport, Mesa's Falcon Field, Phoenix-Mesa Gateway and the Deer Valley Airport will all receive millions of dollars for projects ranging from runway resurfacing to improved drainage systems.

The single largest project, slated for \$166 million in stimulus funding, will contribute to the ongoing construction of an Automated People Mover, linking Terminal 4 with the 44th Street light rail station. Eventually, the system will link each terminal, with phase one scheduled for completion by 2013.

Luke Air Force Base, west of Phoenix, will also receive millions in funds for projects from base and airfield paving to repairing roofs and air conditioning units.

"A big chunk of the money would go toward runway repair," Justin Oakes, public affairs officer for Luke Air Force Base. "But this is just our proposed list, nothing has been finalized. Just waiting."

Arizona has gotten off to one of the fastest starts so far in boosting its economy through stimulus funding, and Kirkpatrick promised to ensure that funding goes to more than just

Maricopa County.

"Communities in my district also have the additional burden of fighting for resources that typically go to big cities like Phoenix and counties like Maricopa. I am going to continue to fight to make sure that communities in my district get the resources we need," she said.

Estimates from the White House and the Senate Democratic Policy Committee show the stimulus package creating or saving 70,000 jobs in Arizona.

The legislation will dole out \$522 million in highway funding, more than \$100 million for investments in mass transportation and about \$66 million slated for home-building and foreclosure prevention. Arizona has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the nation, according to federal statistics.

The state's education system will benefit from about \$497 million in funding, including money for the Department of Labor's Adult and Youth State Grants to \$11.6 million to upgrade computers and software for Arizona classrooms.

Republicans in the House, who unanimously opposed the stimulus package, offered an alternative they said would have cost half as much as the \$787 billion package and would have created twice as many jobs. But the Democratic measure passed with help from just three Republican senators - Sens. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, and Susan Collins, R-Maine.

Though the GOP has sought to use the massive stimulus package against Democrats, public opinion polls show the measure is widely popular.