

Opinion

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Santa Clarita pursues stimulus money

When the Depression of the 1930s gripped our country's economy, FDR's "New Deal" brought forth funding for nationwide infrastructure projects that has yet to be repeated.

With the enactment of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, communities throughout our country will have an opportunity to bring home funding that will enable a wide variety of new projects aimed at stimulating the economy in a big way.

In an effort to assure that Santa Clarita receives any and all funding available, I have put together an interdepartmental task force at City Hall that will research, apply for and otherwise make sure Santa Clarita receives every dime of stimulus funding possible.

Your city is very aware that many in our community are struggling right now. Our goals in securing these stimulus dollars for Santa Clarita are to bring money into the community and to help spur new jobs.

We believe new money being spent in Santa Clarita has far-reaching benefits for our community. Stimulus funds help provide



Ken Pulskamp

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needed infrastructure, additional jobs and the multiplier effect of dollars being spent locally.

The city's efforts at securing stimulus funding began long before the bill was signed into law. Right after the November election, the new president and congressional leadership began talking about enacting a federal stimulus bill that could be take effect early in 2009.

It was initially thought an economic stimulus bill would focus primarily on road and other infrastructure projects. With that focus in mind, in December 2008, the city of Santa Clarita developed a list of projects that could be ready to go to contract within 180 days after enactment of a federal stimulus bill.

Santa Clarita submitted \$41.2 million worth of project needs to Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. and Congressman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, R-Santa Clarita, on Dec. 26, 2008, so they would be aware of the city's needs and ability to bring new projects to construction within a few months of enactment of a stimulus bill.

The list was also shared with the governor's office, Caltrans and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

As the stimulus debate developed in Congress, the overall package of spending and tax cuts eventually reached close to \$1 trillion before being scaled back to the enacted level of \$787 billion.

While the debate was raging in Washington, Santa Clarita was already working with the Metro and Caltrans to start processing local road projects in anticipation of the legislation's enactment.

In fact, Caltrans mentioned to Santa Clarita our city was the first to submit its list.

Metro and Caltrans were able to work with Santa Clarita and other cities prior to the bill be-

ing signed into law because it was clear that funds were going to be distributed, for the most part, through existing formulas and pathways to ensure that the money gets to intended targets as quickly as possible, as opposed to waiting for the development of new distribution methodologies.

Under existing formula allocations, transportation funding targeted for cities within Los Angeles County will primarily come through Metro, which expects to receive approximately \$200 million to \$300 million in transportation funds from the stimulus package.

Last week, under the leadership of Supervisor Michael Antonovich and Metro San Fernando Valley/North Los Angeles County Representative Ara Najarian, the Metro Board of Directors determined that 100 percent of the roads and highway funding received through Metro will be passed on to Los Angeles County and its 88 cities for local projects.

Santa Clarita initially expected to receive only \$1.7 million in road funding, but with the Metro board's action in February, Santa Clarita was allocated \$3.5 million in road funding.

In addition, the city expects to receive more than \$5 million in transit-related funding.

There are a wide variety of funding categories contained within the American Recovery and Reimbursement Act of 2009. In addition to just under \$10 million in potential road and transit funding, the city anticipates receiving approximately \$300,000 through the Community Development Block Grant program, as well as funds from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, Workforce Investment Act and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants.

It is the city's highest priority to work with all of our local, regional, statewide and national entities to partner and identify projects for Santa Clarita that result in bringing this money to our community to finance greatly needed public projects.

As more information becomes available about each of the funding categories, the city will continue to be as aggressive as possible.

Ken Pulskamp is city manager for Santa Clarita. His column reflects his own views and not necessarily those of The Signal.