

## **Transportation Secretary Hammond leads western states in highlighting progress on stimulus project spending**

### **Local News**

Posted by: David Haviland

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SEATTLE- Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond and state department of transportation directors from 17 states hosted a news conference today highlighting the rapid pace of delivering federal Recovery Act jobs and highway projects bolstering the nation's economic recovery.

Nationwide 2,000 construction projects with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act are already underway with more to come in the months ahead. Hammond, Caltrans Director Will Kempton, and Utah Department of Transportation Executive Director John Njord each conveyed how thousands of projects were approved by states in record time, and below budget estimates.

A total of 5,600 projects have been identified and approved for bidding, which means that a total of \$16.7 billion will be flowing into the economy over the next two years. "Some critics have used federal ARRA reimbursement figures to reflect what's happening on the frontlines. Let's not confuse cash flow with real projects and jobs that are now underway in every state," said Hammond. Washington state received \$491 million from the Federal Highway Administration for 181 state and local highway projects and 138 have been advertised or awarded to contractors, and 66 are under construction, said Hammond. States award contracts and then pay contractors up-front to begin working. The federal government then reimburses the states, which can take up to 45 days. Despite a clamor from some areas for more funding, Hammond and the other state DOT directors told reporters "the facts speak for themselves." For example all 50 states moved swiftly to obtain federal approval for half of their federal funds within 120 days of the signing of the Recovery Act. WSDOT has been given approval on \$366 million, nearly 75 percent of Washington's total stimulus funding package. The ARRA is providing \$27 billion for highway and bridge projects to be spent over the next two years. Officials also said the recovery program is a good first step; but it is what's needed to sustain America's transportation system. Before the passage of the ARRA, states identified 5,000 "ready to go" projects worth \$64 billion. "Highway investment creates more than construction jobs, it keeps our whole economy moving forward," said John Horsley, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. "With unemployment in the construction industry at 21 percent, we need to keep our economic recovery goal in sight. We also must move to enact a six year highway and transit authorization bill that sustains this strategic investment in people and in the kind of transportation improvements the economy desperately needs," Horsley said.