

Section 4: Transit, Rail and Air

2/19/10

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act outlines five goals for the program. The fourth deals directly with infrastructure improvements:

- To invest in transportation, environmental protection, and other infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits.

The previous section outlined how NCDOT selected projects for the \$735 million for highway and bridge improvements allocated in the Recovery Act. This section deals with the \$103 million allocated to NCDOT for urban and rural transit projects, North Carolina's successful competitive application for \$545 million in high speed rail funding, and money allocated by the FAA for airport improvements.

Transit

The N.C. Department of Transportation received \$103 million in federal funds designated for transit needs across the state.

On June 10, 140 transit projects received funding grants designated to enhance or expand transit options in both rural and urban North Carolina communities. A list of the projects is available on the NCDOT Web site, www.ncdot.gov/recovery.

Twenty-one urban transit systems will receive more than \$70 million for 77 projects. The largest allocation, \$20.8 million, goes to the Charlotte Area Transit System's North Davidson Street bus facility for renovations and expansion. In addition, two metropolitan planning organizations, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO and the Capital Area MPO, elected to designate \$5.1 million for transit projects instead of highway and bridge projects.

Projects in rural areas across the state totaled more than \$33 million. Three projects benefit transit efforts statewide, and 63 are designated for rural transit systems/areas of the state. These projects are expected to create or retain more than 3,200 jobs.

The Project Selection Process

The metropolitan planning organizations (made up of elected officials and staffed by town and county transportation planners) and urban transit systems decided which transit projects should receive ARRA funding in urban areas.

The NCDOT Public Transportation Division determined which transit projects should receive federal recovery funding in rural areas, based on applications from rural transit systems. Since the money requested exceeded available funds, the department asked the rural transit systems to prioritize their projects. NCDOT selected the projects using the priority list and eligibility guidelines.

Projects were considered eligible if they met one or more of the following criteria:

- The project is “shovel ready;”
- The use of recovery funds frees up other federal, state or local resources for other needs;
- The project is a high local or regional priority;
- The project could not have been implemented without supplemental funding;
- The funding accelerates completion and decreases overall project costs;
- The project provides equipment or facilities to increase transit ridership;
- The project is a needed investment to bring assets to a state of good repair; and
- The project addresses immediate maintenance needs.

(If printing [click here](#), or insert Guidebook Section 4 attachment 1 here)

(If printing, [click here](#), or insert Guidebook Section 4 attachment 2 here)

High Speed Rail

On February 16, 2010, North Carolina was awarded a \$545 million grant to increase high-speed rail service in the Richmond-to-Raleigh and Raleigh-to-Charlotte Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) Corridor and the state's intercity passenger rail program. The four-year program is projected to create or maintain 4,800 jobs in more than 30 projects in 11 North Carolina counties.

USDOT distributed application guidelines on June 17. On July 10, the department sent a list of 90 rail projects to the Federal Railroad Administration for consideration. The list includes more than \$900 million in applications for "shovel-ready" projects and more than \$3 billion for corridor development projects which involve Virginia and North Carolina. The list of projects is posted on the NCDOT Web site, www.ncdot.gov/recovery.

The projects will not only improve service for current train passengers, but will also help establish the framework for SEHSR. The projects include significant rail and highway work to add tracks, straighten curves, expand stations and build a rail shortcut between Richmond and Raleigh. The projects also include purchasing and rebuilding locomotives and passenger cars, improving stations, building passing sidings and double tracks between Greensboro and Charlotte as well as closing highway-railroad crossings, upgrading private crossings and constructing new highway bridges. A complete list of projects appears below.

High-speed rail trains travel at top speeds of 110 mph and average speeds of 85-87 mph. The service will offer an affordable option for trips between 100-500 miles and provide a competitive alternative to air and car travel.

Presently SEHSR totals 1,274 route miles across four states, which are at various stages of development. The projects funded by this new grant award are located in Alamance, Cabarrus, Davidson, Durham, Guilford, Halifax, Mecklenburg, Nash, Northhampton, Rowan and Wake counties and range from \$340,000 in Cabarrus County for station improvements to more than \$129 million in Mecklenburg County to begin modernizing the rail network. Several projects will begin in the next few months.

(If printing insert Guidebook Section 4 attachment 3 here)

Airport Improvement

The ARRA funded two programs for providing assistance and improvements for Airports: The Facilities & Equipment grants and the Grants-in-Aid for Airports program. Both of these programs are administered at the federal level by the USDOT's Federal Aviation Administration, and make grants directly to eligible airports.

The Facilities & Equipment (F&E) finances major capital investments related to modernizing and improving air traffic control and airway facilities, equipment, and systems. The F&E appropriation provides funds to establish, replace, relocate, or improve air navigation facilities and equipment and aviation safety systems based on their operational uses. Recovery funds will be used to upgrade power systems (\$50 million), air route traffic control centers (\$50 million), air traffic control towers and terminal radar approach control facilities (\$80 million), and navigation and landing equipment (\$20 million).

Grants-in-Aid for Airports (Economic Recovery) funds the planning and development of a safe and efficient national airport system to satisfy the needs of the aviation interests of the United States. This includes airport improvement grants for development projects that enhance capacity, safety, and security, as well as for aircraft noise compatibility planning and programs. Recovery funding will be used to issue discretionary grants to airports, with priority given to those projects that can be completed within two years.

As of October 2009 North Carolina airport authorities have been awarded a total of 10 of these federal discretionary grants, for a total of \$26.6 million.

Asheville Regional	\$7,500,000
Charlotte/Douglas Airport Authority	\$10,000
Charlotte/Douglas Airport Authority	\$22,500
Piedmont Triad Airport Authority	\$30,000
Piedmont Triad Airport Authority	\$5,595,500
Pitt County-City of Greenville Airport Authority	\$796,322
Pitt County-City of Greenville Airport Authority	\$6,820,500
Raleigh-Durham Intl	\$1,383,170
Raleigh-Durham Intl	\$4,500,000
Rocky Mount-Wilson Airport Authority	\$15,000

While it is not an official airport program, the USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Program is a joint loan/grant program designed to help rural communities to build and repair essential infrastructure. Both public and private infrastructure is eligible for this program, and to date only one Community Facility award has been made to an airport authority in North Carolina.

Jackson County Airport Authority	\$255,000 loan/\$45,000 grant
----------------------------------	-------------------------------