

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
Aka: The “Stimulus” Bill

ITS/Operations Funding:

- No specific funding category (set-aside) for ITS or operations
- Eligible for 100% federal funding
 - Multiple efforts are eligible, see attachments for examples
 - All projects meeting eligibility requirements of Surface Transportation Program (STP), PLUS passenger and freight rail transportation and port infrastructure projects are eligible
- Very high B/C ratio (see attachments)
- Engages non-traditional (e.g. technology) sector for job creation
- Can be “stand alone” or “companion” project (see below)

Important Dates:

- March 3 – date of apportionment of funds – “clock begins ticking.” States have 120 days to obligate highway funds (50%); 180 days to authorize transit funds
- March 17 – all states required to submit preliminary list of projects to FHWA
- April 10 – all states required to submit first monthly report to FHWA on recovery efforts
- April 30 – FHWA reports to Congress on status of recovery projects
- September 30, 2010 – all unobligated funds lapse (return to Treasury)
- September 30, 2015 – unexpended funds expire

Resources:

- Federal government recovery website: www.recovery.gov
- FHWA recovery website: www.fhwa.dot.gov/economicrecovery
 - Includes Q & A’s about highway funding
- FHWA website on Operations technology:
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/resourcecenter/teams/operations/solutions.cfm>
- FTA website on ARRA: http://www.fta.dot.gov/index_9118.html
- Illinois recovery website: www.illinois.gov/recovery

From FHWA’s website on “How To Expedite [ARRA] Projects¹:”

Use of Operations tools in the ERD.

Strategies to Expedite:

The use of operational strategies to mitigate the traffic impacts of the expanded program, and inclusion of ITS or other operational elements in larger infrastructure-oriented projects are important considerations which should be examined during the identification and development of recovery projects.

¹ <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/economicrecovery/expedite.htm>

The investment in recovery projects will likely result in a significant increase in work zones over the next couple of years. We should make every effort to avoid degrading the safety and operations of the system and assure that the economic benefits of the recovery are not offset by work zone delays. The Divisions should be advocating the concepts and tools of the Work Zone Safety and Mobility Final Rule, use of Traffic Incident Management techniques, and improvements in traveler information systems. These can significantly reduce the potential network congestion which might occur when a large number of projects are on the system at the same time.

There is also an opportunity to include operational elements in larger projects or advance them as stand alone projects. Examples include traffic signal upgrades, traffic monitoring and weigh-in-motion equipment, ramp metering, dynamic message signs, road weather information systems, and similar projects. Many operational investments require limited or no environmental review time, making them very attractive for quick deployment.

The HQ Offices of Transportation Operations and Transportation Management are prepared to assist the Division offices in advancing these operational investments.

From FHWA's economic recovery website, additional resources²:

What will be the impact of the increased level of construction on congestion and mobility?

The infusion of a large number of new projects under the recovery initiative will require appropriate coordination, sequencing, and scheduling of projects in order to minimize conflicts and delays, and maintain an acceptable level of mobility and safety during construction. Unless appropriately coordinated and managed, the cumulative effect of projects in close proximity can lead to poor, inefficient operations that magnify impacts.

The Work Zone Safety and Mobility Rule (23 CFR 630 Subpart J) established a framework for the comprehensive consideration of the safety and mobility impacts of work zones across project development stages, and the adoption of strategies that help manage these impacts during project implementation. The Rule expands thinking beyond the project limits to address corridor, network, and regional issues while planning and designing road projects. Additional information on the Rule and guidance on a number of related topics including:

Work Zone Impacts Assessment; Developing and Implementing Transportation Management Plans; and Work Zone Public Information and Outreach can be found at http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/resources/final_rule.htm.

Some best practices relating to the coordination of multiple projects can be found at <http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/practices/best/topindex.asp?id=107>.

Among the large variety of work zone strategies are some that can help expedite project completion:

- Full Road Closures http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/construction/full_rd_closures.htm
- Night Work http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/construction/night_offpeak_wrk.htm
- Alternative Contracting Strategies <http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/contracting/>

² <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/economicrecovery/additionalresources.htm>

- Accelerated Construction Techniques
<http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/construction/accelerated/index.htm>

From FHWA's economic recovery website, work zone considerations³:

It has been estimated that work zones on freeways account for nearly 24 percent of non-recurring delay, and 10 percent of overall delay. In addition, the number of people killed as a result of crashes in work zones remains significant (835 in 2007).

Related Regulations and Guidance:

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Information and guidance on additional regulations that supplement/complement the Work Zone Safety and Mobility Rule to further emphasize specific safety considerations can be found at <http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/resources/policy.htm>. These include the Temporary Traffic Control Devices Rule (23 CFR 630 Subpart K), and the Worker Visibility Rule, both of which became effective toward the end of 2008.

Best Practices:

A broad variety of work zone best practices in areas such as prediction, modeling and impact assessment, planning and programming, contracting and bidding procedures, project design, public relations/outreach, and many others are available at <http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/practices/practices.htm>.

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Data from outside sources:

Inrix just released their 2008 Traffic Scorecard⁴. Chicago remains #3 in the country for congestion, despite a national reduction in miles traveled. Chicagoland has two of the top 10 worst bottlenecks in the country – Dan Ryan at Canalport (#8) and Eisenhower at Mannheim Road (#10). Both of these locations have been reconstructed recently, highlighting the need for alternative management/operations solutions. The report concludes:

With a new presidential administration, the just-passed stimulus package, and the upcoming expiration of SAFETEA-LU, this is an important year for transportation issues. The Scorecard has generated some relevant findings to assist in both national and regional debates, including:

³ <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/economicrecovery/workzones.htm>

⁴ <http://scorecard.inrix.com/scorecard/default.asp>

- Volume changes have much bigger impacts under congested conditions. FHWA data shows that in 2008, traffic on “urban interstates” was down 3% nationwide compared to 2007. This has translated to a nearly 30% reduction in peak hour congestion and an even larger 36% drop in off-peak congestion. This illustrates multiple issues:
 - Demand management can have sizeable impact on congestion, even if total volume changes are modest. Massive increases in fuel prices had effects similar to policy initiatives under consideration such as variable pricing, managed lane strategies and better travel information. When a road network is at capacity, adding or subtracting even a single vehicle has disproportionate effects for the network. This phenomenon has been well known for a long time, but this data illustrates it in real-world terms on a nationwide basis.
 - While the drop in congestion is welcomed in general, the primary root causes – high fuel costs and lagging economic activity – are not. Ideally, the nation’s economy will turn around in short order and fuel prices will remain moderate. If so, we can expect congestion to largely snap back to levels comparable to 2007 levels or worse. While we all should cheer the reduction in congestion in 2008, we should be under no illusion that this is permanent. We must still continue to focus energies on policies and methods to tackle congestion. When the economy is growing again, congestion will likely move to the front and center again as the nation’s primary surface transportation problem.
- The linkage between work zones and bottlenecks. The significant percentage of bottlenecks that appear to be related to work zones underscores the need to focus on managing work zones in ways that mitigate congestion. With the upcoming stimulus spending, the amount of work zones is likely to grow to numbers never before seen. Further, there is strong desire to move as quickly as possible in getting highway projects underway. Proper work zone planning will be essential if we are to keep the nation’s highways from becoming a parking lot.