The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) was enacted by the 111th United States Congress and signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. The purposes of the Recovery Act are to:

- Preserve and create jobs and promote economic recovery;
- Assist those most impacted by the recession;
- Provide investments needed to increase economic efficiency by spurring technological advances in science and health;
- Invest in transportation, environmental protection, and other infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits; and
- Stabilize state and local government budgets, in order to minimize and avoid reductions in essential services and counterproductive state and local tax increases.

The Recovery Act contains a total of $787 billion in investments, of which $48.12 billion is for modernizing the nation’s transportation infrastructure. The distributions of the transportation investments are shown in Fig. 1.

The Recovery Act appropriates a total of $27.5 billion in Highway Infrastructure Investment funds for restoration, repair, construction, and other improvement activities for roads and bridges under the Surface Transportation Program (STP). The Recovery Act establishes the set-asides shown in Fig. 2.

The remaining $26.66 billion ($27.5 billion less set-asides of $0.84 billion) of the Highway Infrastructure Investment funds is to be distributed in accordance with provisions in the Recovery Act. The Recovery Act requires that 3% of the funds be dedicated to transportation enhancements, 30% be dedicated and distributed according to urban areas with a population greater than 200,000, and 70% be dedicated and distributed according to provisions in the Recovery Act.
The First 120 Days

The Recovery Act further provides that after 120 days following the date of apportionment of funds, the Secretary of Transportation shall withdraw from each state an amount equal to 50% of the funds awarded to that state (excluding funds suballocated within the state) less the amount of funding obligated (excluding funds suballocated within the state). This means that only the funds for Transportation Enhancements (3%) and For Any Area of State (67%) are subject to the 120-day provisions.

During the weeks and months following the enactment of the Recovery Act, FHWA has worked diligently with state partners and stakeholders to meet the purposes and provisions of the Recovery Act, to be ready to put Americans back to work by making needed investments in the nation’s infrastructure.

On March 3, 2009, President Obama and Vice President Biden came to the U.S. Department of Transportation to join Secretary LaHood in announcing that nearly $26.7 billion was available to the states for investment in roads and bridges. Within hours of the President’s announcement, the states began approving projects in full compliance with the federal laws and regulations.

On April 13, 2009, the President and Vice President returned to the U.S. Department of Transportation to celebrate the 2000th highway project near Phoenix, Ariz., became the $68 million interchange on I-94 in Portage, Mich., to improve safety, reduce congestion, and create 900 jobs. Of the first 2000 transportation projects approved for funding, 1860 were FHWA-funded projects. On August 3, 2009, the $44.5 million highway project near Portage, Mich., was the 6000th project funded by the Recovery Act.

FHWA continues to work together with the states as successful partners in approving, authorizing, and contracting Recovery Act projects to put America to work for a quick economic recovery. The 120-day deadline for having 50% of the Highway Infrastructure Investment funds apportioned to the states was June 29, 2009. By June 22, the FHWA Division Offices have already authorized 4836 projects in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the territories for a total of $15.4 billion obligated. That was 58% of total funds available and beat the deadline by many days! FHWA is working diligently with the states to ensure that the funds for the Recovery Act projects continue to be distributed quickly, responsibly, and with unprecedented transparency and accountability.

Figure 4 shows the progress of the projects.

Closing Remarks

Recovery Act dollars are creating jobs and promoting economic recovery. The funds are directed toward needed investments in people and in the transportation infrastructure. Every new project FHWA obligates is a signal for states to advertise construction contracts, and for contractors to begin hiring workers and ordering construction materials, such as concrete, steel, and asphalt. The nation is making investments in projects that will save lives; to help the highway system operate more efficiently and effectively, while moving the people and goods needed to regain a healthy economy.


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Expanded Shale, Clay, and Slate Institute

The Expanded Shale, Clay & Slate Institute (ESCSI) is the international trade association for manufacturers of expanded shale, clay, and slate (ESCS) aggregates produced using a rotary kiln. The institute is proud to sponsor ASPIRE™ magazine.

Sustainable concrete bridges must be durable bridges. Durable concrete must have both low permeability and few or no cracks. Lightweight aggregate concrete has been shown to have enhanced properties in both of these issues. The enhanced performance of lightweight concrete has been attributed to a number of factors including:

- Internal curing provided by premoistened lightweight aggregate;
- Elastic matching of the lightweight aggregate and hardened paste;
- Excellent bond between the lightweight aggregate and paste; and
- Lower modulus of elasticity and higher strain capacity.

The enhanced durability of lightweight concrete, combined with the obvious benefits of reduced density, results in structures that will last longer. Such structures conserve valuable natural resources as well as scarce funds for bridge construction and rehabilitation.

For more information on lightweight concrete, including references discussing the factors mentioned above, please visit www.escsi.org. The members of ESCSI look forward to assisting owners, designers, and concrete producers in using lightweight concrete for bridges.

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