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Montana Contractors' Association urges speedy permitting for stimulus projects

HELENA- The Montana Contractors' Association (MCA) praises the passage of the American Economy and Restoration Act, which has funding for infrastructure improvements and construction, but urges speedy permitting for the projects.

“This funding will create or save more than 3.5 million jobs nationwide, including 11,000 jobs in Montana. It generate tremendous ripple effect of hundreds of millions of dollars for our state,” noted MCA Executive Director Cary Hegreberg. “In the package, there is more than \$211 million for highway funding, \$15 million for transit formula funding, \$39 million for Montana water system development and improvement, and more than \$18 million for housing—all positives for the construction industry.”

Highway and building contractors have been seeing a downturn nationally since September, 2006, so new construction jobs in Montana are being met with kudos.

“We have been working with our members in both the highway and commercial building sectors—along with their subcontractors—and they ready, willing and able to move on stimulus projects,” noted Hegreberg.

He cautions, however, that individual projects must not get bogged down in permitting bottlenecks. “In fact, MCA is supporting several bills in the Montana Legislature that will minimize delays,” Hegreberg said. “The stimulus projects need to be awarded within 180 days, and if Montana doesn't use that money, it goes to another state. It would be a shame to see the funding vanish, as well as the jobs these projects will create, due to permitting delays.”

Not only will Montana receive stimulus funding for roads, bridges and buildings, but contractors will find additional work on federal projects, as well. The Bureau of Reclamation is receiving \$1 billion, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer, \$4.6 billion, the National Park Service \$750 million and tribal projects will receive \$2.5 billion.

The Associated General Contractors of America worked tirelessly to ensure infrastructure needs were well represented in the bill, and MCA leaders met with Senator Max Baucus and Senator Jon Tester to express Montana's concerns and provide suggestions.

"Since the American Economy and Restoration Act has passed, it's time to get to work without delay," Hegreberg concluded.

MCA is a Helena-based trade association representing commercial and industrial construction firms across Montana, and is a chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America.