

County in line for \$16 million in stimulus

BY ANTHONY ROBERTS

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How do you blow through hundreds of millions of dollars in a few months?

State and local officials are about to find out.

Federal and state stimulus funds are on the way, and while money for stabilizing schools and state budgets can be spread out over several years, funds for transportation and infrastructure improvements come with strings attached.

In most cases, half of the projects being funded must start in 120 days, with the remaining projects starting within a year.

Clackamas County is currently in line for more than \$16 million in state and federal stimulus money for transportation and infrastructure. **Clackamas Community College** also stands to gain \$1.35 million for maintenance and modernization.

Transportation money will generally be distributed in two ways.

About \$38 million will be distributed through Metro, the regional governing body, to members of its jurisdiction. Clackamas County is set to get about \$8 million of that money.

A larger share of federal stimulus money, about \$222 million, will be distributed to counties throughout the state by the Oregon Department of Transportation. Clackamas County is currently in line for another \$8 million for that distribution, though ODOT has not finalized a project list.

The time element for transportation projects presents a challenge for government agencies. Certain long-term projects could eventually create thousands of jobs but can't start within the 120-day timeframe.

Hence, the preponderance of repaving projects that appear on stimulus lists.

"We picked the kind of projects that will be fast to start in terms of preserving the system we have or replacing it," said ODOT spokesman Dave Thompson. "You don't see a lot of the major kinds of projects that are the modernization projects that would add more capacity to a roadway."

Clackamas Community College will receive \$1.35 million in state stimulus money for improvements to aging campus infrastructure.

Community college money requires matching funds, so CCC is putting up \$1.35 of its own money to complete the projects.

The college's board of directors declared a state of emergency so they could bypass their normal purchasing requirements and get the jobs started faster. Bill Leach, dean of campus services, said projects must start by April 30.

CCC is also giving preference to local contractors, and plans to repair its phone system, which Leach says is “near failure,” renovate the heating and cooling system and upgrade the college’s electrical system, among other projects.

CCC is also trying to secure federal stimulus money for higher education. They are proposing some items that Leach calls “pretty remarkable.” They include roof replacements and installing internal steam generators and wind and solar power generators.

“We would like to get off the (electrical) grid as much as possible with some of that money, and those are projects that all meet some of the requirements,” he said.