

Road Construction Employment Increased

Employment numbers showing an increase in road construction employment in Iowa is directly tied to the federal stimulus money Iowa received. Governor Culver and the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) recently released information on these numbers.

Iowa received a total of \$358 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act highway funds. Back in January, DOT developed a list of shovel ready projects before Iowa knew how much money it would receive through the federal stimulus package. This was done so that Iowa could use all available money. Nancy Richardson, Director of DOT, reported that Iowa ranked second in the nation in timeliness of appropriating federal stimulus road money.

Employment figures collected by DOT show that during the last week of July, the number of private sector workers on DOT-let construction projects was 31.5% higher than the same time period for the previous year. The report also shows that the July 2009 figures are close to 30% higher than the number of private sector workers from five years ago. The report also shows that minority employment and participation in these types of trade jobs has increased by almost 7% since 2000.

Annually, the Federal Highway Administration requires every state to collect information concerning highway projects that receive federal aid, and Iowa DOT collects this same data for all DOT-let projects. This report can be found at www.iowadot.gov/contracts/job_counts_report.pdf

Governor Culver reports that 1,300 construction jobs were saved or created with the federal stimulus funds (www.iowa.gov/recovery/jobdata). Business owners in the construction industry report that construction jobs related to vertical infrastructure were down, but those related to horizontal infrastructure (highways) were steady. Construction companies that were able to benefit from the stimulus funds remain thankful, but do remain concerned about next year's construction season.