

State Gov. Approves \$31 B Capital Improvement Bill

“Illinois Jobs Now!” Aims To Spur Economic Recovery Through Capital Construction, “Green” Jobs

BY ANDY COLE

Contractors got what they’d hoped for from the Illinois State Legislature: Approval in May for the first capital improvement bill the state has seen in over ten years. Those looking for help from the state, however, had their hopes suspended seemingly indefinitely, as Governor Pat Quinn played a game of chicken with the legislature, demanding a finalized and balanced budget before he signed any sort of capital bill.

In mid-July, the Governor finally blinked.

The Illinois Jobs Now! Program, which plans over \$31 billion in construction for schools, roads and public transit, was signed into law with projects included in House Bill 312 and Senate Bill 1221. Funding and bonding for those projects were included in another five bills. The lynchpin of the funding package revolves around the proceeds from video poker machines.

“There were no changes to it so it’s basically the capital improvement bill that was out there two months ago,” said Jeff Glass of Capitol Consulting Group, the Builders Association’s lobbyist in Springfield. “The second installment of the bill included member initiatives and there was some more vertical building included in that.”

While the capital bill went first, legislators did manage to hammer out a budget deal. It shares some characteristics

with the unbalanced budgets of the past, but it doesn’t carry some of the things that business leaders may have worried about when the legislative session began.

“It didn’t include any new taxes for business, which is one of the things that was discussed a while back,” Glass said. “On the negative side, it kicked a lot of the problems and deficits further on down the line.”

\$125 million will go toward reconstruction of the Kennedy Expressway. A number of projects listed in the bill are engineered to upgrade public transit in the Chicago area, with \$400 earmarked for high-speed rail projects and \$150 million for AMTRAK.

The capital bill also includes \$4 billion for school construction. Roughly 20 percent of that money will end up in the hands of Chicago Public Schools, with other funds designated for the school maintenance program, the establishment of charter schools, vocational education and laptops for students. Projects for Northeastern Illinois University, the University of Illinois-Chicago, Chicago State University and Harper Community College are listed in the bill.

For full list of projects funded by this legislation, visit jobsnow.illinois.gov.

Get a look at bill verbiage in the legislative section of bldrs.org, and read more there about the Association’s PAC Fund, which allows the Association to look out for the legislative interests of your company.



Other Chicago & Cook County Highlights:

- \$360 million for bridge replacement and construction engineering on Wacker Drive.
- \$99 million for reconstruction and additional lanes for LaGrange Road from 131st to 179th.
- \$100 million for a new school energy efficiency retrofit program (statewide).
- \$130 million for affordable housing, including projects for veterans and people with disabilities (statewide).
- \$300 million for park and recreational facilities (statewide).