

SLT interchange on radar for federal stimulus funds

By [Mark Fagan](#)

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Kansas City, Kan. — Plans for a new interchange along the South Lawrence Trafficway could become reality as part of a federal economic stimulus package being anticipated by state transportation officials.

Deb Miller, Kansas transportation secretary, told a crowd of 150 engineers, planners and government officials Wednesday that her department had compiled lists of projects that could be financed with federal stimulus money.

President-elect Barack Obama is promoting a recovery plan that would feature spending on roads and other infrastructure projects, energy-efficient government buildings, new and renovated schools and environmentally friendly technologies.

Projects could be started within six months or a year, and would cost an estimated \$1.28 billion. Among the projects that could be started within a year: \$10 million to add an interchange along the trafficway at Bob Billings Parkway.

Also possible: \$100 million to add two lanes to a six-mile stretch of Kansas Highway 10, either in Douglas or Johnson counties.

"Everything that we're hearing points us in the direction that there will be an economic stimulus package, and I think it will be of substantial size," Miller said during a transportation summit in Kansas City, Kan. "We're certainly, at the Department of Transportation ... trying to get ourselves put into a position so that we can quickly and effectively utilize any resources."

Miller emphasized that the lists were by no means complete, considering that they did not include any transit or rail projects. But the key is having work lined up the instant federal officials come through with money to get the economy moving.

"This is not a list of the highest priorities in the state of Kansas," she said. "This is a list of the work we could get moving quickly, that we think is the most valuable."

"We just decided it was worth taking a risk that we're going to get a big bill, so we started moving forward, contacting consultants, really trying to craft the program to be sure that we'll be in good shape so that we're able to effectively spend these dollars for Kansas."

Sen. Sam Brownback, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, acknowledged that the package likely would be large: \$500 billion to \$1 trillion, with a "fair amount" of it in "green" projects.

"That's what I'm hearing," the Kansas Republican said, having already cautioned that he wasn't inside the loop. "I'm not being solicited so much by the Obama administration on anything. I'd like to be, but I'm not."