



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Maine firms 'shovel-ready and willing'

Transportation industry survey shows businesses have capacity to get projects underway quickly

AUGUSTA — With Congress wrangling over the final details of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009, the question here in Maine is, "Will we be ready?" The answer is yes, according to results of a survey released today by the Maine Better Transportation Association (MBTA) and the American Council of Engineering Companies of Maine (ACEC Maine).

The MBTA/ACEC Maine survey showed that, with more than a decade of declining transportation investment, there is both pent-up demand and capacity at almost all levels of the industry workforce to handle an influx of funding. The survey was undertaken at the request of MaineDOT from December through early February and polled several dozen construction and engineering firms doing work in Maine. It looked at capacity for fiscal years 2009 and 2010.

"Frankly, when we started this survey in late December, we wanted to determine if we had the people to do the work. We found that we most certainly do," said MBTA Executive Director Maria Fuentes.

Fuentes said that in recent years, many firms have downsized and shifted their personnel from transportation to work in other areas, including commercial and residential real estate and energy. Several firms have been forced to compete for contracts out of state. The two organizations found that the overall downturn in construction markets means capacity remains in the industry to handle a significant increase in work. (A summary of the survey results are attached.)

While the survey was undertaken for the transportation sector, it also has ramifications for other segments of the construction market that could benefit from stimulus funding, including energy, water, wastewater and renovation of state and federal facilities. "Congress is seeking to invest in these areas where the needs for modernization are equally great," noted Paul Lariviere, executive director of ACEC Maine.

Early indications are that Maine could receive up to \$130 million in new funding for shovel-ready highway projects. The survey showed that would only occupy roughly one-quarter of the annual \$500 million capacity of the firms surveyed. Maine could readily accommodate the additional \$100 million or more for other infrastructure projects that is anticipated from the stimulus package.

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"This stimulus package couldn't come at a better time. Every firm we surveyed is what we're calling 'shovel-ready and willing,'" said MBTA President Gregory Dore, who is also the head of the Skowhegan Highway Department. "These are businesses that have been hit hard in the past couple of years. They've laid off many hundreds of workers, and there was the sense that they were all scratching their heads and wondering what kind of work would be out there for their crews this year."

Dore said the Federal Highway Administration estimates that \$1 million in highway and bridge investment supports 35 jobs. "If Maine receives the transportation funding that's been discussed, it could mean more than 4,800 family wage jobs – and those are the kinds of jobs that are very important to Maine's economy," said Dore.

ACEC Maine's Lariviere added: "While the infrastructure component is only about 6 percent of the total bill, it is an important area in terms of Congress' goal to stimulate the economy."

MBTA is a 700+-member organization founded in 1939 and representing businesses, municipalities and individuals involved in the transportation industry. For more information, please visit: www.mbtaonline.org. ACEC Maine has 57 member companies with approximately 1,000 employees and represents the interests of engineering firms on the state and national level. For more information, please visit: www.acecmaine.org.

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Survey highlights:

MBTA/ACEC Maine Shovel-Ready Survey of Transportation Industry

Survey compiled:

- Between December 2008 and February 2009

Firms surveyed:

- 35 engineering firms, including those with transportation, water, wastewater, environmental, geotechnical and structural specialties
- 18 heavy construction, including paving, highway reconstruction, bridge construction

Category capacity:

- Engineering: approximately 149,000 man hours over 180 days
- Highway construction: \$500+ million bonded capacity per year 2009 & 2010
- Bridge construction/reconstruction: \$66 million - \$88 million

Specifics/Engineering:

Staffing levels

Transportation:	196
Structural:	69
Geotechnical:	34
Water/wastewater:	187
Environmental:	97

Firms with design-build experience: 9

(incl. 4 with transportation design-build experience)

Specifics/Construction:

Type of construction

Paving	4
Highway rehab/reconstruction	13
Bridge construction/reconstruction	6