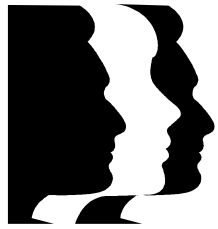


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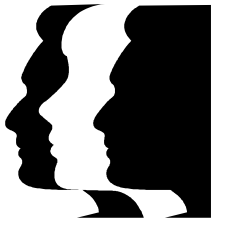


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Is Stimulus Money Needed for New Airport?

Cleveland Mayor seeks federal stimulus money to help build new airport that was to be funded by FAA

by Tonya Brantley
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Prior to the new year, Cleveland Mayor, Tom Rowland submitted a list of ten infrastructure projects to the U.S. Conference of Mayors as part of the MainStreet Economic Recovery plan. This plan calls for the nation's mayors to put together

a list of infrastructure projects that are "ready to go" in cities across the nation. Mayor Rowland's list requires funding totaling \$62.71 million and would potentially create 1,050 jobs. During the January 12, 2009 Cleveland City Council meeting, Mayor Tom Rowland said, "I think we became the first city in the

state to apply for stimulus funds, and maybe the first in the nation, or one of the first in the nation. We made national news with Akron, Ohio two Sundays ago on ABC News. They have received ours, and we just hope for the very best to come from it."

After an extensive Internet search, *The People News*

found the transcript from the national news program that Mayor Rowland had mentioned and discovered that the topics discussed were not entirely related to the mayor's comments.

In an excerpt from the national ABC News program, 'This Week', to which Mayor Rowland was referring, host Jake Tapper spoke with Republican Senator, Bob Corker of TN and Democratic Senator, Sherrod Brown of Ohio about many topics including Obama's economic recovery package.

Tapper said, "The nation's mayors have put together a list of what they call shovel-ready projects. Some of them might look an awful lot like pork to the average voter. For instance, in Akron, Ohio, Senator Brown, a request for \$14 million to construct a 100-room hotel next to the convention and visitors bureau there. That would create 25 jobs. And about 45 minutes from you, Senator Corker, in the city of Cleveland, Tennessee, a town of only 37,000 people, they want \$10 million to construct an airport, even though they're already less than an hour from the Chattanooga airport. Senator Corker, you talked about this needs to be done. Are these worthy projects? What should the standard be for Congress to allocate money?"

Corker responded, "Well, I think that's where it's really tough. Look, you know,

Cleveland is very close to us here. To me, those type of projects, whatever they are, ought to maintain whatever federal match is necessary. What we don't need to do, I think the worst idea that I've heard put forth so far, is just straight grants to cities and states. Straight grants to cities and states to me are exactly the wrong thing to do. We need to keep the matches in place. If the city of Cleveland is willing to put up their share and this actually fits within the FAA ground rules, fine. But again, causing projects to happen that wouldn't happen otherwise is not what we ought to be doing."

Senator Brown stated that projects like the those in Cleveland, TN and Akron, OH need to be investments that will bring job growth, not jobs to build that project itself. "It needs to be in categories, like the combined sewage overflow situation in my state and all over the country, where these water and sewer systems are old and really are a threat to public health. They will create long-term jobs, if you invest the way that you need to. That's not pork; it's not earmarks. It's categories of assistance that the states need."

There was no mention within the program's transcript of Cleveland, TN being the first city in the state or the nation to apply for stimulus funds. However, the construction for the future airport in the Tasso area north of Cleveland was

discussed. Mayor Rowland included in Cleveland's "ready to go" project list the airport construction at \$5.060 million and sewer for the airport at \$5 million with total funding at \$10.060 million.

In the past, Mayor Rowland mentioned that the funding to construct the new airport would not cost local taxpayers one cent. However, when asked how much money has been spent on the airport project so far, Cleveland City Finance Director, Mike Keith stated the cost at \$9,004,191, in which \$8,089,404 has been reimbursed to date and the remaining \$914,787 paid to date on the new airport by local taxpayers.

The Airport Authority had originally planned for August 2009 to advertise for bids for phase one of the construction work and Earth work, which would require the relocation of a creek on the selected site, however, the date has been moved up to June 2009. The Airport Authority anticipates the opening of the new airport prior to June 30, 2012.

If the total cost for the new airport is estimated to be approximately \$30-\$35 million, with 90% covered by grant money and the remaining 10% anticipated to be taken care of by the sale of the old airport, which is estimated to be between \$3 - \$3.5 million, then why did Mayor Rowland feel it was necessary to include the new airport project in the list submitted, stating it required funding for the construction and sewer for the new airport at \$10.060 million?



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