

106 SUCCESS STORY

Agency Cost-Share with SHPO Improves Efficiencies and Outcomes California

“Faced with a huge amount of submittals for review under ARRA, and limited amount of staff, the SHPO suggested that perhaps our partners would be willing to help. As the supervisor for the Federal Review and Compliance unit, I reached out to several of our partners to provide funding opportunities for limited-term staffing to assist the Office of Historic Preservation with the ARRA reviews, so projects could remain on schedule and cultural resources would receive their due diligence under the National Historic Preservation Act.”

— SUSAN K. STRATTON, PH.D.
former supervisor, California State
Historic Preservation Office



THE STORY

The Great Recession began in December 2007 and ended in June 2009, making it the longest recession since World War II. During that period, the net worth of US households and nonprofit organizations fell from a peak of \$69 trillion to \$55 trillion. In response to the economic disaster, the 111th Congress enacted a job and economic stimulus bill, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), in February 2009. ARRA was intended to help states and the national government restart economies and stimulate employment. Infrastructure investment was recognized as one of the best ways to create and sustain jobs, stimulate economic development, and leave a legacy to support the financial well-being of future generations. The urgency of the national situation tasked state departments of transportation and other stakeholders to quickly identify “shovel ready” infrastructure projects.

THE PROJECT

California received \$8.1 billion in ARRA funds out of the \$105.3 billion for infrastructure projects nationally. The funds were allocated to programs such as transportation, communication, waste water, and sewer infrastructure improvements. It also supported energy efficiency upgrades in private and federal buildings. Nationally, ARRA provided \$48 billion for transportation, and California received approximately \$2.57 billion for highways, local streets, and roads; freight and passenger rail; port infrastructure projects; and \$1.07 billion for transit projects.

Beyond transportation projects, other California infrastructure projects were proposed by the US Forest Service (FS), Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison, and California Broadband Cooperative. This sudden availability of funding for large projects threatened to overwhelm the ability of the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) to efficiently conduct federally required reviews without slowing progress on the ARRA projects. What was needed was a program that allowed federal and state agencies to expedite historic preservation reviews, thereby, enabling agencies to obligate the funds.

Photos: Above, ARRA funding sign; Right, bore work on Highway 395 near Mammoth Lakes (photo courtesy California Broadband Cooperative); ARRA road sign



THE 106 PROCESS

The Federal Transit Authority, Federal Highway Administration, FS, and Federal Communications Commission were among the federal agencies responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the historic property when adverse effects may occur.

The SHPO proposed cost-share agreements to hire limited-term employees to expedite reviews. These employees were dedicated to designated agencies whose projects received immediate attention. They kept abreast of the effort, and the SHPO made weekly reports to the governor's office.

An excellent example of a successful ARRA project was the expansion of rural broadband infrastructure access from Barstow, California, to Carson City, Nevada, along Highway 395 showing the complexity of the reviews in order to provide services to underserved communities. Digital 395, as it was called, cost \$81.5 million and was located on lands managed by the California Department of Transportation, as well as other agencies such as the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Bureau of Land Management, California tribal lands, Inyo National Forest, Department of Defense, communities along the route, and various state-owned lands. Now completed, an estimated 62,400 people and 2,500 businesses can benefit from access to the new broadband system.

THE SUCCESS

Federal and state agencies realized speed was essential to respond to the economic crisis facing the nation for ARRA to bring immediate value to the local, state, and national economy. The SHPO cost-sharing agreements lasted three years with a total of \$2 million in funding to the SHPO to hire staff and provide predictability, timeliness, and quick outcomes. The immediate reviews allowed flexibility to address specific situations without diminishing essential protections for historic properties across various landscapes. Thousands of miles were surveyed resulting in improved information about the existence of historic resources for future project development.

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Photos: From left, reels of conduit sit along Highway 395 as a bore machine works near Mammoth Lakes (photo courtesy California Broadband Cooperative); ARRA funding paid for \$11.2 million in projects at public housing in Oakland, including rebuilding 12 playgrounds at Campbell Village and Peralta Villas in West Oakland. (photo courtesy Oakland North/ USC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism); Governor Jerry Brown, U.S. Rep. Jim Costa, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, California High-Speed Rail Authority Chairman Dan Richard, and others celebrate the official groundbreaking for the high-speed rail system that will connect Los Angeles to San Francisco.

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to www.achp.gov



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