

Cities struggle to deal with infrastructure needs



Publisher's note: The following is reprinted with permission from South Lake Tahoe City Manager Dave Jinkens.

Mayor and Council:

Darin Dinsmore of Sustainable Community Strategies was kind enough to pass along study results from the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The study can be accessed [here](#).

As you proceed with your City Council meeting on March 2 that includes a discussion of city public infrastructure needs, the report confirms a lot of things we know.

1. 77 percent of cities responding to the survey report their infrastructure budget for 2009 have been adversely impacted by the global economic crisis.
2. 59 percent of cities responding identify the lack of funding to meet infrastructure needs as a serious challenge.
3. Most cities expect to benefit from government stimulus package over the long term â€¦ if they get them, I suppose.
4. 51 percent believe their infrastructure budget will increase by less than 5 percent over the next five years from stimulus funding.
5. 79 percent agree that current federal and state practices must be reformed to give greater decision-making power over infrastructure investment.

6. Most cities (62 percent) agree that climate-friendly technologies represent an “enormous economic opportunity” for their city.

If the city of South Lake Tahoe is to increase investment over time to needed public infrastructure (e.g. roads, storm drainage, fire stations, erosion control, etc) it will need to first keep the state of California from taking local funds to balance the state budget. We will need to generate new revenues through vigorous economic growth programs and strategies that are environmentally friendly and grow the local economy. Creating new retail opportunities to keep local people shopping locally, adding to and diversifying our economic base by creating areas of tech and green technologies in cooperation with schools and our community college [i.e. job training] and other government and private sector partners, and helping and assisting local businesses to expand with incentives, sound and rational land use policies, and regulatory relief will result in more local jobs and more money locally to make infrastructure improvements. In addition, new sources of funding may be needed to make the investment required in ways that minimize the impact on local residents.

We shall overcome!

I appreciate Mr. Dinsmore forwarding this report to us.

Dave Jinkens, South Lake Tahoe city manager