

NEWS RELEASE

Kansas Department of Transportation news release

Dec. 22, 2009

09-114-00

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Recovery Act projects provide welcome boost

Ted Willard's Christmas came early this year – back in August when he was hired as a crane operator on the U.S. 69 expansion project in Johnson County.

Willard, a crane operator from Salina who had been out of work since May, is one of hundreds of people who have worked this year on Kansas road projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. In November, nearly 1,100 workers were employed on Recovery projects.

“I’m a perfect example of what the stimulus has done. I was really excited that I was picked for this job,” said Willard, 52, who has been a crane operator for 32 years and is now employed by Clarkson Construction Co. of Kansas City, Mo.

“I normally work year-round, but this is probably the worst year I’ve had for the last 10 years.”

Through the end of November, contracts have been awarded for 81 projects in Kansas and construction is under way on nearly 40 of those. The payroll for non-Kansas Department of Transportation workers totals \$5.8 million for all projects. Many more projects will be under contract during the next year, and the work force on the major projects already under way will significantly expand as construction ramps up to full speed in the spring.

“Building roads creates well-paying jobs during construction and provides the infrastructure necessary to both sustain and grow the Kansas economy,” said Transportation Secretary Deb Miller. “And when hundreds of workers spend millions of dollars in thousands of Kansas businesses, it creates a ripple effect felt throughout the local and state economies.

“The Recovery projects have done exactly what they were intended to do.”

Kansas received \$378 million in Recovery funds. Of that, \$348 million will be spent on highway projects and \$30 million on transit. The Recovery Act is funding five major road projects on the state level and more than 100 local projects in the state’s urban and rural communities.

Willard is back home in Salina spending some holiday time with his wife and 11 year old daughter while construction of the \$84-million U.S. 69 project is on winter hiatus. Having a job will help make this Christmas special.

“I knew the summer was going to be pretty slim, so I was surprised I went to work when I did. If it wasn’t for the stimulus money, I probably wouldn’t have gone back to work,” Willard said.

“It makes the holiday a lot better.”

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