

## **Will Infrastructure Be Part Of The New Stimulus Package?**

Our federal government has come to the conclusion that the first tax rebate stimulus package did not work. As the economy worsens, the buzz in Washington is now about producing jobs by making funds available for infrastructure projects. Detractors are saying that these types of projects take too long to get the money into circulation. We disagree. CABE's successful involvement with the last major anti-recession legislation, the Public Works Employment Act of 1976 (PWEA), convinced us that local government, contractors and consultants can swiftly get infrastructure and public works projects underway, thereby directing government money into the economy quickly and efficiently. All in all, it was only about five months from the day application solicitation began until contracts for construction were awarded.

CABE had just been founded in mid-year 1976, less than three weeks before the PWEA was passed. Staff resources were very limited. Therefore, we restricted the number of applications for funding to four each in 1976 and 1977. All eight were accepted and fully funded. The competition was fierce; more than fifty-five Delaware applications were accepted as complete. From these, only sixteen were selected for funding in the first round. That means CABE's clients received twenty-five percent of all available funding in Delaware. Our success rate was due to our diligence in tracking the legislation and applicable regulations, then keeping our clients informed. Together, we collectively identified a number of projects that ranged in size and complexity so our clients would be in a position to select the ones that best fit the regulatory and financial constraints of the program once they were revealed. There was no engineering design done until after the awards were announced.

Without this 100% funding program, Delaware might not have the Millsboro civic center, the Hartly fire hall, substantially improved fire defense capabilities in Delaware City and Millsboro and the first new public works projects in Bridgeville and Greenwood in many years.

The PWEA was a major shot in the arm for the local economy, bringing twenty million dollars into Delaware where the economy had been shredded by the Arab oil boycott and the ensuing collapse of the home-building industry. Does this scenario sound familiar today? The essentials are the same. This country, by current estimates, has an aging infrastructure badly in need of more than \$1.5 trillion dollars in upgrades and repairs.

CABE is an active party in this discussion. We have strengthened our regulatory know-how and have improved, diversified and streamlined our project development procedures. CABE is perfectly placed to assist clients in securing funding in any new stimulus program directed at their needs. We are pursuing this issue with our congressional delegation and ask your support by doing the same.

Additionally, we recommend you review your proposed capital improvement projects and identify those public works and infrastructure projects which will likely be included in an upcoming stimulus package. CABE stands ready to advise you on that prioritization process with our unique experience with federal financial assistance programs of this type.

For more information, please contact Lee J. Beetschen, P.E., DEE at (302) 674-9280