



## Sustainability group ranks Louisiana near bottom for stimulus spending

By: Christian Moises, News Editor | February 11, 2011 | 0

Louisiana ranks 46th when it comes to how it is spending its \$430.5 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money, according to a report by Smart Growth America.

Smart Growth America is a national coalition of groups focused on sustainability, land conservation and neighborhood development.

The report also says the state, which has 62 percent of roads not in "good condition" has spent 38.8 percent on repairing roads and 59 percent on new projects.

Meanwhile, Louisiana ranked 48th in spending money on public transportation and nonmotorized projects, such as pedestrian and bike lanes and streetscape improvements. Just 14 percent was spent on those projects.

Citing a 2009 study by the University of Utah's Metropolitan Research Center, SGA noted that projects to repair roads and improve public transportation systems tend to create more jobs than projects to build new roads and bridges.

That study found that in comparison to new road construction, investments in public transportation create 31 percent more jobs per dollar and repair projects on roads and bridges create 16 percent more jobs per dollar.

William Schroeer, policy and research director for SGA, said that is because repair projects are more labor intensive and save money because they don't require the purchase of land or materials needed in new projects. That means repair dollars can create more jobs through cost savings, Schroeer said.

In the SGA report, the group used the Utah study as an underpinning to analyze data published by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for all 50 states.

"States like Arkansas, which has really poor roads overall, spent more money building new roads than they did on fixing the old ones," Schroeer said. "If they can't keep up with the old ones, it makes you wonder how much maintenance they'll be able to do on those new ones."

Arkansas used 19 percent of its money on road repairs and 81 percent on new projects; it was tied with Kansas for worst use of highway funds, he added.

"We really did see a wide variety in spending choices among the states," Schroeer said. "When the issue comes back up in Congress, we can use these findings to better direct where funding goes in the future."

Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Maine, New Jersey, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota and Vermont tied for first by spending 100 percent of their allocated money on repairing their roads.

*Dolan Media Newswires contributed to this report.*

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