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Concord paving project: stimulus plan in microcosm

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Contra Costa Times

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CONCORD — The story begins in Washington, D.C., with a tiny portion of the \$787 billion plan to stabilize the American economy.

In one sense, it stops with the city of Concord, where the stimulus cash paid to repave four intersections along Clayton Road.

But money does not sit still. The city paid Bay Cities Paving and Grading to do the work. The company, in turn, paid Antioch Building Materials for the asphalt. It paid truckers to deliver it and workers to lay it. It paid its bills to local landlords and suppliers.

At the national level, pundits speculate about how many jobs were created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

But even with this one construction project — less than one-millionth of the whole nationwide package — calculating the effects is not so simple.

It boils down to days of work for paving workers and truckers who might otherwise have sat idle and unpaid at home. It provided income for the asphalt company, which had been having its employees

work on plant upgrades because business was slow.

And both the paving and the asphalt companies said that in recent months, government-sector work is almost all that has been available.

The \$600,000 the city got for this project is not the only stimulus package money the city received. The city got another \$1.2 million to repave another part of Clayton Road, from Oakland Avenue to Market Street. (It may get even more of the road paved, because the contractors' costs for the projects came in under the city's estimates.)

The city hired Bay Cities Paving and Grading for both jobs. The project to repave the intersections is done; the work on the rest of the road is mostly done.

The intersection project took a bit more than a month in September and October, through which a bout eight union employees worked on the project, said Bay Cities Project Manager Adam Pfister.

When there is not enough work for everyone, lower-seniority employees stay home, he said.

Normally, the company does both government and private projects, Pfister said. But the private market has almost entirely dried up, he said. So all paving companies — even those that usually only do private projects — are competing for government contracts, he said.

"Everybody right now is struggling," he said. "It's definitely right now helping that there are (government) projects coming up."

At Antioch Building Materials, the project kept two workers busy for seven or eight days at the

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materials plant, in addition to about six truckers through the duration of the paving, said Niels Larsen of Antioch Building Materials.

Without the stimulus money, the project would not have gotten done this year, said Concord Public Works Director Alex Pascual. The city's engineering staff designed the project just before the stimulus money was released in hopes of getting the work done with federal money, he said.

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