

## **\$19 Million OK'd For Utah Road Projects**

By Lee Davidson

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Sandy was the big winner and I-15 and West Valley City were the big losers as a House subcommittee gave Utah the go-ahead for only \$19 million of the \$253.9 million worth of federal highway projects it has been seeking.

But Rep. Karen Shepherd, D-Utah, says that's still a victory of sorts. She said only 4 percent of such requests were granted nationally as part of a debate on creating the new Federal Highway System, and Utah received 7.5 percent of what it wanted.

Still, that provides only a fraction of the total authorization needed to widen I-15 in Salt Lake County, convert U.S. 89 in Davis County into a controlled-access expressway and rebuild Provo's University Avenue interchange on I-15.

It also provided no authorization for a plan to widen 5600 West in West Valley City.

The only Utah project that was a true winner was one to expand 2000 East in Sandy, which received the full \$6 million it sought.

Utah officials had testified that in order to host the Olympics, they needed \$148 million over many years to widen I-15 in Salt Lake County.

A House Public Works and Transportation subcommittee approved only \$6 million through 1997, Shepherd aides said. That would allow work to begin and may allow the state later to seek additional authorizations to finish it.

The state also has to fight for actual appropriations in each year's budget after it receives final authorization for the project. However, appropriators have been more willing than authorizing committees to help the projects.

Shepherd - a member of the full transportation committee, which will next consider the bill - said, "Although \$6 million will only allow us to take the initial steps in adding new lanes and reconstructing interchanges on I-15, this decision reflects the difficult budget times our nation is facing."

Craig Zwick, director of the Utah Department of Transportation, tried to sound optimistic Friday morning about the congressional action.

"At least we got our foot in the door," he said. "Two-thirds of the projects got nothing. We are grateful for the authorizations of the projects."

Zwick said the authorization could clear the way for more funding in the transportation appropriations process but admitted it is "doubtful" that Utah will get more money than has been authorized.

Shepherd said the \$6 million authorization that I-15 received was larger than what 75 percent of the projects approved by the subcommittee received.

Combined with \$12 million in available state money, Zwick said, the money could start rebuilding a few interchanges on I-15 and further design of an I-15 overhaul. Specifically, the authorization may help rebuild several interchanges, including 7000 South, 9000 South and 10600 South. There won't be enough money to begin other improvements on the 16-mile stretch of freeway proposed to be expanded and rebuilt.

Utah had sought \$77 million to convert Davis County's U.S. 89 into a freeway but received only \$4 million. Zwick said that's enough to construct some interchanges on the road.

The state sought \$17.5 million for the University Avenue interchange and received only \$3 million. Zwick said that will provide a "jump start" for that project.

The state and West Valley City had sought \$5.4 million to widen 5600 West but received no authorization. West Valley Mayor Jerry Wright, who had made two visits to Washington to lobby for road money, said he was "extremely disappointed."

"We are extremely hamstrung if we don't get some help," Wright said, noting that traffic on the road is expected to increase fourfold in the next 20 years. He said the road is also critical to the city's development of West Ridge Commerce Park. Big-name companies have lost interest in the park after hearing about the delays in approving the road.

But the state and Sandy received the full \$6 million it sought to expand 2000 East as a four-lane roadway from 9400 South to Seago Lily Drive. Construction is expected to begin in 1995.

Shepherd said, "Sandy's rapid growth has left them in dire need of federal help with their transportation problems. This project will make a real difference in relieving congestion on Sandy streets."