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## Cities plead for public works funds

### 9 Hoosier communities among those seeking federal aid

*By Ledyard King  
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WASHINGTON -- America's mayors are urging Congress to provide billions for public works projects they say will not only help rebuild cities but put money into the pockets of struggling Americans.

Carmel and Fort Wayne were among nine Indiana cities included in the U.S. Conference of Mayors report released Monday. Indianapolis, however, was not among the 427 cities that listed 11,931 projects in the report.

Jennifer Pittman, a spokeswoman for Mayor Greg Ballard, said the administration misunderstood the original survey request, thinking it was for major capital improvement projects scheduled for completion in 2009.

After seeing the report Monday and realizing that the national association was interested in all infrastructure projects that could be started immediately, Pittman said the city plans to submit its response today. It will include projects such as sidewalk repairs and sewer improvements.

A final report is expected at the end of January.

Work on the projects, which would cost about \$73 billion, could start soon if lawmakers approve the money as part of a sweeping economic recovery plan.

The mayors say the projects, including street repairs, sewer system upgrades and school renovations, would generate more than 800,000 jobs during the next two years.

"We need to invest where we can get the biggest return," Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, who chairs the conference, said Monday at a Capitol Hill news conference. "We are not here for a bailout."

President-elect Barack Obama has made spending on public works projects a key element of his plan to revive the moribund economy. In his Saturday radio address to the nation, Obama said he wants to "create millions of jobs by making the single largest new investment in our national infrastructure since the creation of the federal highway system in the 1950s."

The mayors say their list contains "ready-to-go" projects that could start within weeks.

"The mayors have been saying for eight months that not only do we have to fix Wall Street, we have to fix Main Street," said J. Christian Bollwage, mayor of Elizabeth, N.J. "Unless the mayors play a role in the economic recovery, it's not going to happen as quickly as we hope."

Key lawmakers stood with the mayors.

"We can't run away from our schools. We can't run away from our hospitals. We can't run away from our transit systems," said Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee. "These are everybody's problems."

Governors also have been lobbying Congress and the incoming administration for financial assistance. But several mayors said direct aid to cities offers the quickest road to recovery.

Evoking President Franklin Roosevelt's response to the Great Depression, they said municipal projects provide a strategic solution to two pressing problems: crumbling infrastructure and increasing unemployment.

"We're closest to the people, and our people want to go back to work," Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley said. "This will be good for America."