

Infrastructure bill brings promise locally

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HIGH POINT — Details still need to be ironed out about how money from the massive infrastructure bill will benefit High Point, but given the potential impact, City Transportation Director Mark McDonald won't mind the wait.

High Point and communities across the country stand to receive money for infrastructure needs such as roadways and bridges from the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that passed on a bipartisan vote in Congress and was signed earlier this month by President Joe Biden.

"I think there are a lot of hopes and dreams out there," McDonald told The High Point Enterprise. "The money will go from the federal government to the state, and it will be apportioned out from the state to the municipal level. We don't know what that mechanism is going to be just yet."

Still, McDonald said he can envision the infrastructure bill helping speed up the timetable for projects such as widening part of Johnson Street in northwest High Point or widening a segment of Eastchester Drive in north High Point.

"Both of those projects slipped by one to three years," he said.

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FROM PAGE A1

It also could help the city with water and sewer projects and mass transit, such as purchasing more fuel-efficient public transportation vehicles. McDonald also expects it to help with roadway maintenance and resurfacing.

U.S. Rep. Kathy Manning, D-6th, whose congressional district covers High Point, provided broad outlines of how North Carolina as a whole will benefit from the infrastructure spending, including repairs for more than 3,100 miles of roads and 1,400 bridges.

Among the major provisions in the bill cited by Manning's office are:

- \$7.2 billion for road repairs and \$457 million for bridge repairs in North Carolina over the next five years
- \$910 million for public transportation and mass transit over the next five years
- \$100 million to expand broadband access for an estimated 424,000 North Carolinians who currently lack access to high-speed internet
- Makes 31% of North Carolinians eligible for the Affordability Connectivity Benefit, which helps low-income families afford



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The infrastructure bill may speed up the timetable for local projects such as the widening of Eastchester Drive in north High Point, now scheduled to start in the latter part of this decade.

internet access

- \$1.1 billion to improve water system infrastructure over the next five years
- \$32 million for wildfire prevention
- Approximately \$460 million for airport infrastructure development over the next five years
- \$109 million to expand the electric vehicle charging network across North Carolina over five years

"This law is the largest investment in infrastructure our nation has made since the creation of the interstate highway system," Manning said.

The funding will help the N.C. Department of Transportation with ongoing and future projects and escalating construction

costs, said spokesman Aaron Moody.

"While it is too early to know how the funding will impact specific projects, this federal investment will help offset some of these cost increases and support N.C. DOT's efforts to build resilient infrastructure and enhance all modes of transportation," Moody said.

McDonald said it most likely will be the first part of next year before local officials have a better understanding about availability of funding.

"We can identify needs once we know what the plan is," he said.

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