

[A Prairie Home Companion](#) is sponsored by, among others, Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery: "If you can't find it at Ralph's, you can probably get along without it." That's my initial and preliminary take on some of the [energy and transportation provisions of the stimulus](#), although a lot that isn't in there we probably *can't* get along without, like a real commitment to energy efficiency and transit.

In all, it seems to me that this is okay, but really a missed opportunity: of course there is a whole lot of good spending in there, but that's what a stimulus is for. Priorities have not really — what's the word I'm looking for? — *changed*. It's going to take a lot more to turn this aircraft carrier around.

Highways: \$27 billion

Mass Transit: \$8.4 billion

Rail: \$3.1 billion

"Competitive Grants for Transportation": \$5.5 billion

Sigh: [the Highwaymen win again](#). [Might as well face it, you're addicted to concrete](#).

Better than what I thought was going to be in there for transit, but not really serious.

Of particular interest is \$5.5 billion in "Competitive Grants for Transportation," which can go for either highways or transit: Ray LaHood could be making some important decisions. What is the precise language for these grants? Who from the White House will be riding herd on this? And what will they tell DOT? Enquiring minds want to know. The energy side also has some news that is, well, pretty good:

\$2.6 billion for energy efficient and renewable energy research. Nearly doubling the [Bush Administration's FY 2009 request](#), but let's get serious. Compare this to the [research budget of NIH](#), which is \$29 billion. That means we are spending more than **10 times** more on medical research what we are on energy. Oy. (If this is not an apples-to-apples comparison, readers should let me know and I will update).

\$4.2 billion for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants, which go to state and local governments. These can be quite significant, providing money for key retrofits that can yield enormous (and enormously cost-effective) emissions benefits, like [cool roofs](#). Again, a doubling (even a little more) than [the traditional \\$2 billion](#), not nearly enough. [The US Conference of Mayors asked for \\$5-10 billion](#), but given how things ratchet up, this may be all they expected or could have hoped for.

One thing that jumps out at the environmentalist in me: \$4.6 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers, and \$1.4 billion for the Bureau of Reclamation. Just what we need: more dams. I don't trust these agencies. But I shouldn't paint with so broad a brush, and they do provide stimulus.

That's the sausage factory: not unexpected, but don't tell me I have to like it.

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