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contents

**FOCUS ON RURAL ISSUES**

8 | Riding the Rail
After Stimulus, States Hoping High-Speed Trains Draw Passengers
By Mikel Chavers

16 | 10 Questions with Gov. Jay Nixon
Stimulus Could Put Midwest High-Speed Rail on the Fast Track
By Mikel Chavers

20 | Advanced Placement in Rural Places
Rural Schools Turn to Distance Learning, Virtual Schools for Rigorous Courses
By Tim Weldon

25 | Field of Dreams
With Broadband Access, If States Build It, Will Customers Come?
By Mary Branham

**FEATURES**

28 | The Best & the Worst of Times
Community Colleges Get Recognition, But Budget Cuts Create Problems
By Mary Branham

**IN EVERY ISSUE**

5 | Toolbox
- States Scale Back HIV Prevention Due to Funding Shortages
- CSG Justice Center Report: Practical Help for Mental Health Courts

6 | State Source
- States Tackle Budgets Overtime
- States Again Address Water Policies this Summer

7 | State Snapshots
Designated High-Speed Rail Corridors

32 | CSG Spotlight
Highlights of activities and events by CSG, its affiliates and other associations

34 | Conference Calendar
Meetings and conference activities of CSG, its affiliates and other associations

35 | Timeline
A look back in time
Congress is still debating the health care reform bill on Capitol Hill. Follow the federal actions, and learn what impact that might have on state governments, from The Council of State Governments’ Washington office, as well as news from the states. That and other topics of interest to state policymakers are covered by State E-News, a bi-weekly electronic newsletter from The Council of State Governments.

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, part of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act signed by President Bush Oct. 3, 2008, will have a significant impact on the people enrolled in group health insurance plans. Learn more by visiting CSG’s Web site and clicking on Trends in America to read the policy brief, Mental Health Parity.

More and more, governments at all levels are tracking results of the services they provide. The State Comparative Performance Measurement Project, coordinated by CSG in conjunction with the Urban Institute, compares state service outcomes in multiple services. Learn more about the project, and see early comparisons, at CSG’s Web site.

Look for the Capitol Comments indicator throughout the magazine to find Web extras on the CSG blog.

**Question:**
What state has the highest rate of high school graduation? What state has the lowest?

To find the answer, log onto the State News Web site at statenews.csg.org.
States Scale Back HIV Prevention Due to Funding Shortages

The fight against AIDS in the states is far from over—and that fight has a lot to do with securing funding for HIV prevention. That’s based on statistics from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, used in a study released in July by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors.

That study basically says the fight against AIDS is coming down to dollars and cents. Funding for HIV prevention is remaining flat and the states are providing a key share of those dollars, the study reports. CDC funding makes up more than half of the funds for HIV prevention and state and local governments kicked in more than a third of the funding for HIV prevention, according to the report.

An estimated 56,000 people are infected with HIV each year, the CDC reports, and although the federal agency provides a centralized approach to preventing the spread of HIV, it’s the states that actually do the grunt work in preventing the disease from spreading, the Kaiser report said.

But state health departments are feeling the pain of dwindling funds and budget cuts. Funding challenges were cited the most frequently when it comes to problems in delivering HIV prevention programs, according to the report. In fact, 52 of the 65 health departments responding to the survey said funding was a challenge to HIV prevention.

Funding shortages resulted in some states scaling back HIV prevention efforts, according to the report.

To download a copy of the full report, visit http://www.kff.org/hivaids/7932.cfm.

CSG Justice Center Report: Practical Help for Mental Health Courts

The Justice Center of The Council of State Governments recently published a guide that reviews the body of research on mental health courts and distills the findings to help policymakers and practitioners develop effective interventions.

Mental Health Courts: A Guide to Research-Informed Policy and Practice summarizes the available research related to both the design of mental health courts—what types of charges are usually accepted, how individuals are referred to the program, and who is on the mental health court team—and the outcomes of mental health courts, such as recidivism rates and fiscal impact.

The guide also discusses the need for further research on these popular programs. Research questions that should be investigated further to expand the evidence base are also identified.

Please visit www.consensusproject.org to download a free copy of the report.
States Tackle Budgets Overtime

Even though states are making good use of Recovery Act dollars to aid ailing budgets, eight states went into overtime to address budget problems and were unable to finalize their budgets by July 1, according to the State Economic Review, a joint publication of the National Governors Association and the National Association of State Budget Officers. That’s the most states unable to finalize budgets in recent years—a sign of the times, according to the July State Economic Review.

To deal with budgets still up in the air, states issued executive orders to keep the state running, passed temporary budgets and even issued IOU’s to taxpayers, vendors and local governments, State Economic Review reports.

“That is the sad irony of this trend: States face enormous shortfalls but are unable to strike a deal during regular session,” said Sujit CanagaRetna, senior fiscal analyst for The Council of State Governments’ Southern office, the Southern Legislative Conference. “As a result, they have to go into special session, which ends up costing them even more scarce dollars.”

So far, at least 14 states—Alaska, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, New York, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia—called legislators back to special session to address shortfalls and enact their 2010 fiscal year budgets, according to CanagaRetna.

Facing an estimated $4.5 billion budget gap, North Carolina’s budget, for example, was more than a month overdue in early August when the state’s regular fiscal session was delayed, according to the News & Record, based in Greensboro, N.C.

In North Carolina’s tentatively approved version of the budget, income taxes would increase for those making $60,000 or more a year and the state would also increase sales taxes, excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco products, and could also require retailers to collect sales taxes on some Internet purchases, the News & Record reports.

But despite the possibility of increasing taxes, North Carolina—like other states—will still be hit hard by budget cuts across the board, according to the News & Record.

States Again Address Water Policies this Summer

Think water scarcity is an old issue? Think again. Governors in at least two states—Georgia and California—are still tackling issues of the basic necessity of life: water.

Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue met with officials this summer on the state’s ongoing battle with neighboring Alabama and Florida over federal water rights, the Associated Press reports.

A federal judge issued a ruling in July saying that Georgia has few legal rights to use Lake Lanier as the main water supply for the Atlanta metro, and the illegal reallocating of water to that region must stop, the AP reports. The judge set a three-year deadline for some kind of agreement among political officials on the issue, the AP reports.

“Atlanta has based its growth on the idea that it wanted it, and that the downstream states would simply have to do with less,” Alabama Gov. Bob Riley told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

In another thirsty state, California lawmakers proposed a package of water bills in early August that could create a politically appointed council with power to push through water projects dealing with the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, “the troubled hub of California’s waterworks,” according to The Los Angeles Times.

Sen. Joe Simitian, who authored one of the five bills and also chairs the Senate Environmental Quality Committee, believes the state’s water needs have suffered long enough. “The system of governance is broken and the system of conveyance is broken,” he told the newspaper.
States Ask for High-Speed Rail Stimulus Dollars

When the pre-applications for stimulus grants were submitted in July, the Federal Railroad Administration got a good idea of the competition for the more than $8.8 billion available for high-speed rail in the first wave of Recovery Act funding. In fact, some states have a long list of projects asking for money—some of them totaling far more than the pot of stimulus money available. The preliminary data was released in July by the Federal Railroad Administration.

The Top 10
States Seeking for the Most Stimulus Money for High-Speed Rail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Applied for in Stimulus Grants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California*</td>
<td>$24.2 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland**</td>
<td>$11.2 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nevada*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecticut**</td>
<td>$3.2 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas**</td>
<td>$3.2 billion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Federal Railroad Administration (all totals are rounded). *There were also funds submitted by non-public entities, according to the Federal Railroad Administration. **This state submitted on behalf of other states, according to the Federal Railroad Administration.

“I do think we’re looking at a tremendous paradigm shift when it comes to passenger rail. But there are a lot of dollars here that’s going to be required.”

—Missouri Rep. Charles Schlottach, chair of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission
American MagLev's prototype magnetic levitation train uses high-speed train technology not currently operating commercially in the U.S. Photo by Mikel Chavers.
After Stimulus, States Hoping High-Speed Trains Draw Passengers

The U.S. may have taken the slow train when compared to the rest of the world and fast passenger train travel, but thanks to a new push for high-speed rail in the federal stimulus funds, states are jumping on the train to stimulate their own high-speed rail corridors. But the tracks ahead offer steep competition for the more than $8 billion in federal stimulus grants and leave states facing the issue of how to fund fast train travel in the long term.

By Mikel Chavers

People in the Midwest get excited.
They get excited when they talk about taking faster trains from Chicago to Cincinnati, for example. That’s because plans for high-speed trains will cut that trip in half from eight hours to four hours, according to the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission.

“Rail is one of those particular issues that goes across state lines,” said Missouri Rep. Charles Schlottach.
And the benefits go across state lines.
Under the Midwest Regional Rail plan that calls for a system of railways radiating from a Chicago hub and an Ohio hub network, other Midwestern train trips will also decrease when the Midwest builds out and beefs up its passenger rail corridors for higher speeds. A trip from Chicago to St. Louis would decrease from 5 hours and 20 minutes to 3 hours and 50 minutes, according to Laura Kliewer of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, a part of The Council of State Governments Midwest office, the Midwestern Legislative Conference.
The trip from St. Louis to Kansas City could drop an hour and a half in travel time, according to Kliewer.
But for the Midwestern states and many states from Florida to California, fast trips aboard fast trains are like a dream that just got started late. The idea just hasn’t taken off ... yet.
But now states are competing for startup funds—the more than $8 billion in stimulus money the federal government is shelling out this year for faster train networks.
Trouble is, the stimulus only includes a limited pot of money—$8.8 billion in the first year and another $5 billion in coming years. Competing are 40 states and Washington, D.C., with grant applications for projects totaling a whopping $102.5 billion, according to the Federal Railroad Administration, much more than the funding available. Those applications include plans for more than 270 projects, according to the Federal Railroad Administration.

It’s going to be competitive, Joe Szabo, an administrator with the Federal Railroad Administration said at The Council of State Governments’ Eastern Regional Conference annual meeting in August. The overwhelming response to the grants “demonstrates the pent-up demand for passenger rail service,” he said.

Stimulus Won’t Fund Everything
Even so, federal stimulus dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act won’t be enough to get the whole job done, those in the states say.
A national high-speed rail network won’t be completed under the stimulus funding, said Patrick Simmons, rail division director for the North Carolina Department of Transportation. “The recovery bill is not going to build all these systems. We understand that,” Simmons said.
The states will have to continue the effort—a process that could take years if dollars are found either through state funding or leveraging private cash through public-private partnerships. In California, for example, the first high-speed passenger service could be available at the earliest in 2015, according to Curt Pringle, chairman of the California High-Speed Rail Authority.
It’s true, high-speed trains are shuttling passengers at speeds in excess of 180 miles per hour in France, Japan and Spain, and all over Europe for that matter. But the U.S. just doesn’t have that kind of fast train service.
The first phase of getting the train rolling in the U.S. is the stimulus funding.
“There needs to be a tremendous amount of public dollars invested up front,” said Pringle, who is also the mayor of Anaheim, Calif. Heretofore it’s been pretty hard to get even private companies to take on the risk of building the foundations for high-speed passenger rail, he said, without public dollars first.
“The public investment is that first step,” Pringle said. While states struggled in the past to garner funding for high-speed rail, even private companies weren’t fronting
Connecting California: Big plans in the West call for a 220 mile per hour train network in California linking the San Diego area, Southern California, Central California, the Bay area, San Jose and Sacramento. Estimates have the trip from San Diego to Los Angeles taking 1 hour and 18 minutes and costing about $30 for the ticket. Other trip times include L.A. to Sacramento in 2 hours and 17 minutes and L.A. to San Jose in 2 hours and 9 minutes.

Visit http://www.ca.highspeedrail.ca.gov/

Federal Stimulus Competition in the West

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Applied for in Stimulus Grants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California*</td>
<td>$24.2 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nevada*</td>
<td>$10.1 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>$2.1 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>$1.8 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>$237 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Mexico**</td>
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<td>Idaho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>$1 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Alaska, Hawaii, Utah and Wyoming did not apply for high-speed rail stimulus funding. *Includes funds submitted by non-public entities. **State submitted on behalf of other states. Source: Federal Railroad Administration.

The money either. “It’s very hard to get companies saying ‘yeah we’re going to take all that risk of time, and environmental clearance and purchasing of right-of-way and all of that.’”

Consider this: The entire California system is more than $40 billion when you contemplate building it all out, Pringle said.

That said, the California High-Speed Rail Authority’s business plan is seeking federal funding, state funding, local participation and public-private partnerships, Pringle said.

Last year, California voters approved Proposition 1A, which means the state is committed to $9.95 billion in bonds to fund high-speed rail.

“So you take $9 billion worth of bonds and generous applications of federal dollars, that still doesn’t get you there; it barely gets you halfway,” Pringle said.

California also applied for the most in stimulus funding. Pre-applications from the state asked for a total of $24.2 billion in stimulus funds for multiple projects.

But California, like other states seeking to build high-speed passenger rail corridors, hopes once the process gets started, funding for entire networks will come—funding that will exceed what’s available in the federal stimulus act.

“There are points at which, as you cover distances (and) as you get the volumes of passengers, our business model shows a revenue generation that comes off of the system,” Pringle said. “And with that, you can borrow against the streams of revenue, you can use those future earnings to expand the system and grow it and make sure you cover beyond that initial segment.”

For example, Japan is building a new high-speed train system that uses magnetic levitation technology where a train levitates and glides across a track using magnetics—all virtually frictionless. That new system is being funded from revenues generated from Japan’s existing high-speed train systems, Pringle said.

State officials hope something similar will happen in the Midwest to carry out an entire high-speed rail system radiating from a Chicago hub.

Take the proposed Chicago to St. Louis high-speed rail segment in the Midwest, a route Illinois is particularly focusing on.
It will cost $2.3 billion to fully build that route figuring in trains that can run up to 110 miles per hour, according to George Weber, bureau chief of the Illinois Department of Transportation Bureau of Railroads.

That price tag is to pay for upgrading track and adding more train trips—what Illinois is anticipating will be eight roundtrips a day for passengers traveling from Chicago to St. Louis, Weber said. There are currently three roundtrips subsidized by the state and two more that are a part of Amtrak’s basic system trains, Weber said.

The rest of the system will come later.

But as for a national high-speed rail network, the kind that European countries can boast about, that still is a long way off, Kiewer, of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, said.

“The states have led the way in paying for increased frequencies and creating plans for significant passenger rail improvements even when there was no federal partnership for passenger rail development,” Kiewer said.

“Yet even with all the attention it has received, and the wonderful boost of the $8 billion in stimulus funding, passenger rail is still only the only major mode of transportation that does not have a dedicated source of federal funding,” she said.

She hopes that will change in the future.

Upgrading Now, Innovating in the Future

When it comes to real innovation in building the first corridors for high-speed trains in the U.S., it seems this first phase aided by stimulus funding is more about creating foundation.

“Technically it’s just a faster train—it’s not that big of a leap in technology in itself,” said Rick Harnish, executive director of the citizens advocacy group, the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. “But on the other hand, when you get to these speeds, the product is revolutionary.”

In North Carolina, high-speed rail plans focus on linking Charlotte to Washington, D.C. But making the trip shorter is first about the many baby steps, such as upgrading rail crossings and expanding areas where trains can pass each other to get trains moving faster.

North Carolina isn’t gunning for superfast train travel all at once by investing in expensive, fast tech-

THE MIDWEST

Chicago is the Hub: Big plans in the Midwest call for a 110 mile per hour train network with Chicago serving as the central hub. An Ohio hub network will also link to the Chicago network, creating the Midwest Regional Rail Plan. Plans call for a faster trip from Chicago to St. Louis at 3 hours and 50 minutes and a 4 hour trip instead of an 8 hour trip from Chicago to Cincinnati, according to the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission.

Visit http://www.miprc.org/

Federal Stimulus Competition in the Midwest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Missouri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>$17.2 million</td>
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Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota did not apply for high-speed rail stimulus funding. *Includes funds submitted by non-public entities. **State submitted on behalf of other states. Source: Federal Railroad Administration.
From Charlotte to Washington, D.C.: Big plans in the South call for the Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor linking Charlotte, N.C., to Washington, D.C., with top speeds of 110 miles per hour. Plans call for the total trip to take an estimated 6 hours and 10 minutes to 6 hours and 50 minutes. Other trips include from Charlotte to Raleigh, N.C., at around 2 hours to 2 hours and 50 minutes and Raleigh to Richmond, Va., at an estimated 1 hour and 55 minutes to 2 hours.

Visit http://www.sehsr.org/default.html and www.bytrain.org

Federal Stimulus Competition in the South

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<td>Arkansas</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
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Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee did not apply for high-speed rail stimulus funding. *Includes funds submitted by non-public entities. **State submitted on behalf of other states. Source: Federal Railroad Administration.

nology. Instead, plans for passenger rail in the state call for average speeds of 85 miles per hour, according to Simmons. Compare that to California’s plans of a 220 mile per hour train system and the Midwest’s plans for trains traveling 110 miles per hour.

“We’re not going to get all of this in one bite,” said Simmons in North Carolina. “We can go faster, but it’s more expensive and it cost you like maybe 40 to 50 percent more to go faster and you get maybe 5 or 10 percent more riders. We’ve developed something—it doesn’t stretch the bounds of technology; it serves the marketplace well.”

Simmons said the state is instead focused on providing a foundation—raising the slowest speeds trains now travel. For example, in the segment from Charlotte to Raleigh, stimulus grant applications are for projects that would straighten track and lengthen what’s known as passing sidings, or extra tracks off to the side where a train can stop over and wait for another to pass.

Those kinds of improvements would raise the top speed from 79 miles per hour to 90 miles per hour, Simmons said. Those are all near-term plans, he said.

Other plans call for raising the slow speeds trains must travel in North Carolina by improving railroad crossing technology. In Durham, N.C., for example, trains had to slow from 59 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour and creep through the city. But thanks to improvements in railroad crossing technology, today trains can go through at 70 miles per hour, Simmons said.

So the U.S. won’t be breaking any speed records but will be upgrading train service to compete with the rest of the world.

And even though stimulus funding won’t be enough to fund an entire national network of high-speed passenger rail, it’ll be a start, state officials say.

“We’re not only building these high speed rail operations that will grow into a national network but we’re changing our transportation network,” Simmons said. “We need clear cut examples, clear cut projects that are ready to be built that demonstrate the concept.” That’s the purpose of the stimulus funding, he said.

“This is a catalyst.”

—Mikel Chavers is associate editor of State News magazine.
Improving Existing High-Speed Rail: Maryland is asking for the most for stimulus grants with applications totaling $11.2 billion in the East, according to the Federal Railroad Administration. Of that, $3 billion would be for projects within the state—mostly on Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor, according to Engineering News-Record magazine. Major projects seeking funding also include money to replace rail bridges—some which date back to the late 1800s—and a high-speed rail project linking Baltimore to Washington, D.C., along the Northeast corridor. 
Visit http://www.mtamaryland.com/

Federal Stimulus Competition in the East

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<td>Connecticut**</td>
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<td>$26 million</td>
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<td>Rhode Island</td>
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Source: Federal Railroad Administration. *Includes funds submitted by non-public entities. **State submitted on behalf of other states.

Sharing the Tracks

In most states, plans calling for faster trains also call for those trains to share the tracks with freight trains. That could get tricky in some areas where there’s not enough space for trains to pull over and wait—extra tracks called siding—or where additional passenger trips are planned for certain corridors of track.

Congestion could be an issue, state officials say.

“Well obviously you need a signal system in place that for one will allow you to have your trains operating at speeds up to 110 miles per hour, and you want the capacity to separate them as much as possible,” said George Weber, bureau chief of the Illinois Department of Transportation Bureau of Railroads.

Right now, for example, the segment from Chicago to St. Louis only has one railroad track, Weber said. The one track has siding spaced throughout the corridor—to the railroad world’s version of passing lanes or tracks where a train sits while another one goes by—but if that corridor were to support eight roundtrips of passenger rail a day, Weber said, another track would be needed.

To compound what could amount to a lot of rail congestion, Union Pacific—the railroad that owns most of the corridor—is opening a new intermodal facility nearby next year and will be operating more freight trains on the route, Weber said.

“The fact that you would potentially having 40 trains a day on this Chicago to St. Louis corridor requires the need for additional capacity,” Weber said.

Ironically, the corridor actually did have another track until back in the 1960s when one track was removed, Weber said.

“We would be putting that second track back in to accommodate both passenger and freight,” Weber said.

That is the case all too often when it comes to railroads.

“I think you’d find out that a lot of railroads wish that they’d never given up capacity or tracks that they had,’’ Weber said. Some tracks were taken out to save money or sold to communities or towns that later made bike paths out of them, Weber said.

So some of the stimulus applications in both Illinois and North Carolina, for example, call for rebuilding a railroad track that was removed decades earlier. In North Carolina, it’s the abandoned CSX corridor from Raleigh through Petersburg, Va., a segment that would connect Charlotte to Washington, D.C.

High speed rail plans don’t come cheap, especially when some states are seeking to rebuild or build all new railroad tracks.

—Mikel Chavers
Out in the middle of open land in rural Powder Springs, Ga., just outside the hustle and bustle of the busy Atlanta metro, a passenger train nicknamed the Magic Carpet floats and glides effortlessly down a raised track. There, a startup company called American MagLev Technology Inc. is testing its prototype train.

It’s not the typical steel wheels on steel tracks train that comes to mind when you think of fast trains like France’s TGV or Japan’s Bullet trains or even the fast trains Amtrak operates in the U.S. No, this one is different. The technology is different.

This kind of train uses magnets to allow the train to levitate and raise itself off the track where it can glide, almost frictionless on its way. It’s so light when it’s levitating in fact, that American MagLev CEO Tony Morris, a middle-aged businessman, can actually push it down the track by himself.

And with a flurry of activity surrounding high-speed passenger rail and the more than $8 billion available from the federal government this year to stimulate high-speed passenger rail around the country, proponents of magnetic levitation hope it will be the fast train technology of the future.

Morris said traditional street wheels on steel train systems generally cover only about a third of their operating cost with the fares people pay to ride the trains. “And so the taxpayer has to pay all the capital costs and two-thirds of the operating costs,” he said.

He found that out in the early 1990s when he was working on a Georgia Tech study commissioned to see if the Atlanta Braves stadium could be moved to the suburbs—to eliminate traffic gridlock in the city—and connected with mass, rapid transit. But that study found it couldn’t be done with the traditional train systems—mostly due to financing problems mentioned above, Morris said.

And that’s how Morris’ company, American MagLev was born. If traditional trains wouldn’t work, then he’d find something that would.

Americans didn’t invent magnetic levitation technology—the Germans did, Morris said. And the first commercially operating magnetic levitation train runs in China from the Shanghai airport to the downtown area, taking just more than seven minutes to travel the nearly 19 miles. But those trains are expensive and complex to build, Morris said.

His prototype is more economical—that’s because its speeds top out at 110 miles per hour and the train tracks aren’t as complex to build as other more technology driven magnetic levitation models, Morris said.

“Our strategy has been instead of being technology driven, which is what the German approach has been and what you do if you want to go with supersonic airplanes or go to the moon or those sorts of things—you don’t care what it costs, you just want the hottest technology,” Morris said. “We’re market-driven and that means we have to compete with other alternatives. We have to be the best price.”

According to Morris, the American MagLev train system can be built for around $20 million per mile. That price includes everything except the land where the raised tracks are placed. Morris has a solution for that.

He proposes putting the raised MagLev tracks along the interstates and highways in existing right-of-way corridors where the land is already owned by the state.

Morris also hopes to tout the green factor in his train systems. The American MagLev system uses 70 percent less energy than steel wheel trains on steel tracks, Morris said.

The prototype in Georgia runs on the equivalent amount of electricity 15 hairdryers use, he said.

The American MagLev system also uses no drivers; many traditional train systems must have drivers to operate them.

And some states are interested in newer technology (well, new to the U.S., at least) for faster trains.

Part of a multistate application from Illinois and Wisconsin for high-speed rail stimulus funds is seeking money for new trains, according to George Weber, bureau chief of the Illinois Department of Transportation Bureau of Railroads.

The states are looking for the kinds of trains capable of doing 110 miles per hour—“possibly European-type equipment or if there was an American car that could meet the 110 mile per hour-standards,” Weber said.

The applications won’t get as specific as naming a particular company, but once the grant is awarded, the process will likely go out to competitive bid for high-speed train equipment and technology, Weber said.

The applications won’t get as specific as naming a particular company, but once the grant is awarded, the process will likely go out to competitive bid for high-speed train equipment and technology, Weber said.

Since most of the high-speed train systems are manufactured in other countries where they are used, Morris is hoping the “Buy American” clause in the federal stimulus bill will encourage states to go with American-made equipment.

—Mikel Chavers
1. Why is building up high-speed rail so important for Missouri and for the Midwest?

“Development of these corridors will mean not only greatly reduced travel time for our citizens, it also will create much-needed jobs during construction and during operation. Our group estimates that more than 15,000 construction jobs will be created through the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, with another 57,000 permanent jobs also being created.”

2. What could high-speed rail mean for the state’s economy?

“Job creation will be the most immediate impact, through construction of the corridors. But it also will increase the profile of our major cities as places to live and to establish businesses.”

3. What could high-speed rail mean just for Missouri’s residents?

“With the development of the first priority of corridors, it will enable Missourians to travel to Chicago in an efficient and expedient manner. The second priority group of corridors holds even more benefit for Missourians, with high-speed rail connecting our two major metropolitan areas. The quickest way to travel between St. Louis and Kansas City currently is on Interstate 70, which is heavily used by trucks and by drivers going across the country. High-speed trains between those two cities can relieve some of that strain on drivers and on the infrastructure, portions of which are more than 50 years old.”

4. What are the big plans for high-speed rail in Missouri and in the Midwest, and what kind of vision do you have along these lines for the state’s future?

“Missouri will be an important player in development of high-speed rail in the Midwest. St. Louis will serve as the end of one of the primary spokes coming out from the Chicago hub, with travelers not only being able to reach Chicago more quickly than ever before, but also the next set of cities beyond that, such as Detroit, Milwaukee and Madison (Wis.). The next group of corridors—including going west to Kansas City—will put many more cities in our region within a matter of a few hours of travel time.”
Why is it important for Missouri to work with other states in the Midwest to foster high-speed rail plans?

“Missouri and the other states have been working in a coordinated fashion for more than a decade to develop high-speed rail corridors between cities in our states. As a group, our states are more prepared than any other group of states to proceed with high-speed; in fact, the state of Illinois has already completed the environmental impact study for the Chicago-St. Louis corridor. We also are encouraged by statements from Karen Rae of the Federal Railroad Administration praising the coordinated efforts of our states.”

How important is the federal stimulus funding for high-speed rail to jumpstart projects in Missouri and other Midwestern states? Is it enough?

“The $8 billion in Recovery Act funding specifically set aside by the federal government for the development of high-speed rail represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to get these projects going. While other funding sources will factor in to the development of the Midwest rail corridors, we cannot pass up this chance for the ARRA funding.”

As governor, why have you decided to get behind this effort, particularly in partnering with neighboring Illinois on high-speed rail initiatives?

“By working together with the other states, especially Illinois, we have our best opportunity to develop not only the corridor between St. Louis and Chicago, but eventually the important cross-state corridor between St. Louis and Kansas City. These projects will not only help move our traveling citizens in an expedient and efficient manner, it can help create thousands of jobs, both during construction and then during operation of these lines.”

In partnering with other states in high-speed rail efforts, what are the lessons learned so far in preparing the plans and applying for stimulus grants?

“Because we have been working together for a decade, much of the planning is already underway—which works to our distinct advantage. The Memorandum of Understanding that I signed with the seven other governors and (Chicago) Mayor (Richard) Daley spells out our continued commitment to coordinate our efforts.”

The first wave of stimulus funding for high-speed rail is more than $8 billion—how will Missouri (along with other Midwestern states) work to get a piece of that pie?

“We have had close communication with our partner states to ensure that our individual applications are coordinated and all focus on the same goal: developing the three primary corridors coming out from the Chicago hub within the next few years, and then branching out with additional lines.”

What’s coming down the tracks? Does the process of building out high-speed rail in Missouri and the Midwest end with the federal stimulus grants?

“As the state’s transportation needs grow, it places a greater strain on our highway infrastructure, particularly routes already heavily traveled, such as Interstate 70. We anticipate moving forward with the primary and secondary corridors over the course of the next decade, using ARRA funding as the springboard.”
Important Meeting Dates

- Hotel Cut-Off Date Oct. 15
- Early Registration Ends Midnight Oct. 22
- Deadline for CSG Resolutions is Oct. 22
- Golf Outing Sunday, Nov. 15, at 10 a.m.

Hotel Accommodations

Meetings and accommodations will be at the La Quinta Resort and Club. CSG has reserved rooms at a special rates of $112 plus 13.20% tax for the public sector based upon availability—please ask for the CSGPD room block; and $199 plus 13.20% tax for the private sector block—please ask for CSG room block at the La Quinta Resort & Club.

Reservations can be made by calling the hotel directly at (800) 598-3828 and asking for either room block to receive the special rates. All reservations must be accompanied by a first night's deposit or guarantee with a major credit card.

In order to receive the CSG special rate, reservations must be made by Oct. 15, 2009; after that date CSG cannot guarantee the special rate.

CSG is bringing together state officials from across the country to exchange innovative practices and share capitol ideas. Join us in La Quinta, Calif., Nov. 12–15, where we will provide you with the tools you need to address the unique challenges facing state government.

Photo courtesy of the Palm Springs Bureau of tourism.
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<th>Conference Highlights</th>
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To view the entire conference agenda, including Expo Hall hours, business meetings and special events, click on "Meetings" at [www.csg.org](http://www.csg.org).
Rural Schools Turn to Distance Learning, Virtual Schools for Rigorous Courses

In many small, rural schools, offering Advanced Placement courses simply isn’t cost-effective. The lack of Advanced Placement courses in nearly half of our nation’s high schools puts many students at a competitive disadvantage in college preparation. States are using online learning to help fill the void and give all students an opportunity to take rigorous AP courses to prepare them for college.

By Tim Weldon

Students at Madison Central High School in Richmond, Ky., get plenty of opportunities to enroll in rigorous Advanced Placement—or AP—classes to help them prepare for college-level coursework and perhaps earn college credits while still enrolled in high school. This year the school offers 13 AP courses, including calculus, music theory, English III and IV, Latin literature, and French and Spanish language.

Travel just 20 miles to the southeast and it’s a different story. Estill County High School, a rural school with 750 students, doesn’t offer any AP courses. But that doesn’t mean Estill County students can’t take AP courses. Those students have access to more than 20 AP courses through the Web-based Kentucky Virtual High School. Christine Powell, Kentucky’s director of virtual learning, said the virtual school levels the playing field for all students, whether they go to a large urban high school, one in a suburb, or a small high school in an isolated part of the state.

“We want to make sure all our kids have access to these courses, no matter where they live in Kentucky; no matter how much money they make, no matter what the color of their skin is, it shouldn’t matter,” she said. “They should all have access to the same courses.”

A 2002 Kentucky law, K.R.S. 160.348, requires high schools to offer students college credit-based courses, including AP classes. Many rural high schools, however, are too small to justify offering an AP class for a few students. Rural school districts also face special challenges recruiting qualified teachers to teach AP courses. Consequently, the law permits AP courses to be offered through the Kentucky Virtual High School or other online alternatives.

Distance Learning Bug Spreads

Kentucky’s Estill County is far from being alone in the lack of teacher-led AP courses. More than 40 percent of all high schools in the U.S. fail to offer any of these rigorous courses, according to the U.S. Department of Education. So many school districts are relying on online AP courses taught through so-called distance learning.

Distance learning is used at all levels, from K-12 to postsecondary for a variety of courses. Distance learning is a bit unusual because students and teachers never see each other like they do...
in a traditional classroom. They communicate entirely via the computer.

All AP programs, including those offered through distance learning, must be certified by The College Board, which administers the AP program. Trevor Packer, The College Board’s vice-president for Advanced Placement, said the quality of AP courses taught through online programs is often superior to those in traditional teacher-led classes.

“These organizations that create online courses typically have the cream of the crop in terms of the teachers they select,” Packer explained. “These organizations, in order to be successful, go after very reputable and distinguished teachers.”

Nationally, the number of distance learning AP programs has been increasing, although they still account for a small percentage of the total number of AP courses taught. Nationally, more than 17,000 high school students reported taking AP exams after taking distance learning AP courses. That’s just 1.1 percent of the total number of AP exams in 2008, according to College Board data.

Susan Patrick, president and CEO of the International Association of K-12 Online Learning, said only 32 states offer “significant supplemental online learning programs that offer a state virtual school or online courses purchased through private vendors.” In the remaining states, individual districts may make arrangements for students to take online AP courses through private vendors or the students may register for them on their own. Still, more than one-third of the states lack a comprehensive system to deliver students AP courses through distance learning.

Florida Weighs Virtual and Face-to-Face
Florida’s Virtual School is the nation’s largest supplemental online program, and it’s on track to become even larger. House Bill
7067, enacted by the legislature in 2008, requires every school district in Florida to offer online learning programs by this school year. The bill is included in the 2010 volume of *Suggested State Legislation* from The Council of State Governments.

Sharon Johnston used to teach AP English literature in Florida. Now she’s the senior associate for the AP program offered through the state’s virtual school. In 2008, more than 2,500 students enrolled in 10 AP courses offered through the school, which was founded in 1997 by two Florida school districts. Today Florida’s Virtual School operates under the guidance of a board of trustees, created by the Florida legislature in 2000. The governor appoints the board’s seven members.

In addition to overseeing the system’s virtual teachers, each of whom works with an average of at least 100 students, Johnston also works part-time as one of the distance learning AP teachers, a radical departure from days when she typically taught 30 students in a single AP class.

“I like both mediums. They both work,” Johnston says. “What I like about the online (instruction) is the individualized approach. I can work with students one student at a time and see where that student’s learning is.”

Johnston said last year students in Florida were more likely to pass the AP exam after taking an AP course through the virtual school than through a traditional class. The percentage of Florida students receiving passing AP scores (3 or higher out of a possible 5 points) was 55.3 percent for students enrolled in a virtual school AP course, compared to 42.5 percent in traditional AP classes.

But only slightly more than half of the 2,527 students enrolled in online AP courses in Florida actually took the AP exam. Consequently, earlier this year, Florida’s Virtual School implemented a new policy that all students who enroll in AP courses through distance learning must take the AP exam.

The number of students taking AP courses through Florida’s Virtual School has been increasing, more than doubling between 2003 and 2006. Florida appropriates per-pupil funding, based on students completing the AP course. Florida’s Virtual School is funded based on the number of students enrolled and contingent upon successful completion of the course. Last year, Florida’s legislature budgeted approximately $1.1 million to Florida’s Virtual School, or $440 per course taken. Schools pay nothing for their students to enroll in AP courses offered by Florida’s Virtual School. Johnston said it’s a much more economical system than for a school district to pay an AP teacher for a course with a small number of students.

Virtual Virginia

Distance learning is also nothing new in Virginia. Students in rural Virginia schools had access to it as early as 1987, when the General Assembly authorized the Electronic Classroom Program. At that time, the courses were broadcast on television. Only in the past three years has Virginia turned to Internet-based AP courses. With the new technology, Virtual Virginia, a program within the Virginia Department of Education, was created, and last year provided more than 1,500 students in the state with 23 AP courses, plus foreign language and some elective courses.

As with most distance learning programs, students learn through a combination of text lessons, video segments and online discussions. Schools are urged to give students time during the school day to take their online AP courses, rather than expect them to complete the courses after school and on weekends, according to Elmer Steward, instructional supervisor for Virtual Virginia.

Schools provide a mentor, a study area and a computer as well as textbooks, lab materials and software for the student. The state legislature provides Virtual Virginia with a flat appropriation regardless of the number of students enrolled. Schools also pay Virtual Virginia a floating fee based on the school system’s ability to pay. Districts typically pay between $75 and $300 for each AP course taken online. Additionally, students who qualify as Early College Scholars may take online AP courses free of charge for the district.

“… (Distance learning) can be really useful for particular purposes, but it’s not going to … replace having the traditional teacher-student interaction course.”

—Matthew Irvin, distance learning project director

*National Research Center on Rural Education Support*
Teachers communicate with students online both one-on-one and in small groups. Students also work independently with course materials and complete assignments made by the teacher. “And the teacher’s role is to see that the students understand the material, to give the students feedback on the work that they’re doing, to facilitate the students’ understanding of the course material,” Steward explained.

The average AP score for students taking AP exams through Virtual Virginia courses was slightly lower than the state’s average in 2008. While the state’s AP average score was 2.78, the average among Virtual Virginia students was 2.71.

No One Right Answer for Every State

One thing experts in distance learning seem to agree on is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to distance learning. “Everybody makes the assumption that all online instruction is the same, and it’s not,” Steward said. He suggests policymakers interested in developing AP distance learning programs look at various models, determine which ones provide the best quality instruction and build a program that encourages the best procedures.

But while research suggests students taking AP courses online score as well as those taking AP classes in a teacher-led classroom, some experts contend that distance learning should not always be considered a reliable replacement for a traditional AP class.

Matthew Irvin is the distance learning project director for the National Research Center on Rural Education Support, based at the University of North Carolina. While he applauds the use of distance learning programs, he said they have limitations. “I think people recognize that it’s not a panacea. The distance between the kids and the teachers can be problematic at times,” Irvin said. “So I think we realize that (distance learning) can be really useful for particular purposes, but it’s not going to ... replace having the traditional teacher-student interaction course.”

Rural states typically have fewer students taking AP courses than more populated ones. For example, more than 35 percent of students in New York and Maryland took at least one AP course in 2007, while fewer than 6 percent of students in Louisiana and only slightly more than 10 percent of students in North Dakota, Alabama and Mississippi took one, according to The College Board.

—Tim Weldon is an education policy analyst for The Council of State Governments.

When Clay Baker attended Mediapolis High School in southeastern Iowa, his 2005 graduating class had only 60 students. With so few students, the school was unable to offer any AP courses. So Baker took AP U.S. history and AP macro and micro economics through distance learning.

“I think it takes a student who’s a little more of a self-starter who can learn independently,” said Baker, who today is employed at the Belin and Blank Center for Gifted Education and Talented Development, which operates the state’s Advanced Placement Academy at the University of Iowa. “While I didn’t have a classroom teacher, I had the online teacher who was always available by e-mail.” he said.

Baker may not have realized it at the time, but the teacher at the other end of the computer didn’t work for the state of Iowa, but for Apex Learning, a Washington-based provider of distance learning curriculum used by schools in Iowa to provide AP courses. As a private vendor, Apex has provided digital instruction to more than 600,000 students in 4,500 school districts in the U.S. and 71 other countries since 1999.

Iowa chose Apex Learning to deliver AP courses in 2001. Since that time, the Iowa Online AP Academy program received a $1.6 million state technology grant and another $7 million in federal funds for the program, according to Clar Baldus, project administrator for the online academy. Schools pay nothing for students to enroll in online AP courses. Baldus said contracting with a private vendor to provide AP courses through distance learning was cheaper than building a program from scratch in 2001.

“The thing about Apex is that they are always updating things, technology-wise, College Board-wise,” Baldus said. “And that saves us a lot of time and energy and money.”

As in other states in which Apex provides online AP courses, the model in Iowa involves a number of people: instructors, hired by Apex but certified to teach in Iowa; site coordinators, who register school personnel and handle logistics such as registering students for AP exams and communicating with parents and the support team; and mentors, school personnel who meet with students and correspond with instructors.

Baldus attributes the high student success rate to the relationships with schools and the mentors in each school. Almost every high school in Iowa has registered to work with the online AP Academy, although fewer than half the state’s 386 high schools had a student take one or more AP courses through distance learning last year.

—Tim Weldon
The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act is investing $7.2 billion in expanding broadband access in the U.S. But whether the projects built with those funds will draw customers is still up in the air, primarily because the monthly charges to sustain the service may be out of reach for many in rural areas.

By Mary Branham
xpanding broadband service to the most rural parts of the country is kind of like the Kevin Costner move, *Field of Dreams*, only with a question: If states build it, will customers come?

It’s that question many states are focusing on as they seek broadband grants in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. For the most part, states are leaving the infrastructure portions of the grant applications to telecom providers and instead are focusing on building the interest and, perhaps, future sustainability of the service.

Mississippi, for instance, is proposing a computing center to educate people in rural areas about what’s available on the Internet in an effort to stoke interest.

“In my state, if we put broadband and fiber out all across this state to residential customers, the majority of them don’t have a computer, the majority of them don’t know what they can access, so they’re not going to be interested,” said Gary Rawson, e-rate coordinator for the Strategic Services Division in the Mississippi Department of Information Technology.

That interest must be there for any broadband project to be sustainable, according to Nancy Bochat, president of The National Association of State Technology Directors, an affiliate of The Council of State Governments.

“The states’ major concern is the sustainability of projects associated with broadband stimulus funding,” Bochat said. “Most states have projects for which broadband grants and loans are suitable; the challenge lies in maintaining those projects once the stimulus funds are spent.”

In other words, in order to keep the service, someone has to pay for it. Usually, that means the customers.

Even with the $7.2 billion federal investment to build the service, the monthly cost of broadband may prohibit many residential customers from gaining access. The Pew Internet and American Life Project found last year that availability and price accounted for one-third of the adults without broadband service at home. They just couldn’t afford it even if it was available.

That dilemma has many in the information technology field pushing for changes to the federal Universal Service Fund, which supplements the costs of telecommunications services in a number of different ways. They’d like to see changes that would help get broadband service to people who are low-income or live in high cost areas—primarily rural areas where building infrastructure for broadband would be expensive. But any changes are likely to be controversial.

“Universal Service could be part of the solution in providing lower-rated recurring charges to a residential customer for broadband access,” said Rawson, who chairs the State E-rate Coordinators Alliance, a group of state e-rate coordinators who work with schools and libraries eligible for assistance for telecommunications and Internet access services.

But first, states are making sure people know about the benefits of broadband—including getting the fast Internet service to the places that need it the most.

**Building Demand for Broadband**

The first step to sustainability of broadband deployment is developing an interest in the service. In fact, a Pew Charitable Trusts’ Internet and American Life survey last year found that two-thirds of adults without high-speed Internet access cited a lack of relevance or interest.

State officials, though, believe education can help spark that interest from consumers and businesses that could profit from broadband access.

“Where there is not broadband, that definitely has an impact on options for economic development,” said Claire Bailey, Arkansas’ chief technology officer and director of the state’s Department of Information System.

She shares the example of a piece of pottery produced in small town Dumas, Ark. Broadband access broadens that small company’s marketplace across the globe, she said.

“Having that broadband ability everywhere is critical to our state so that each area of our state can prosper,” she said.

Arkansas is a rural state with lots of farmland, much of it without broadband access, Bailey said. “Those families and communities that don’t have access to broadband are really being left out of an important part of the global economy,” she said.

Connect Arkansas, a private nonprofit company, works to educate Arkansans about the role broadband can have in their lives, according to John Ahlen, president of the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority, which works with technology economic development.

“The people in these rural communities understand what it means to have access to global information and they want it,” Ahlen said. “They want it for economic development, for business opportunities and for information for things like health care.”

Mississippi is still working on building that demand. Rawson, the e-rate coordinator, said that’s the purpose behind the computing center his state is proposing. “What’s the incentive for people that can’t afford broadband, can’t afford computers or any costs associated with it?” he said.

The center, he said, will show them just how big a role the Internet and the quick access afforded by broadband can play in their lives.

“It can educate those people what is available through the Internet,” he said. “On WebMD, where they could go and self-diagnose their ailments to keep them from going to the comparable to those in urban areas. Eligible carriers that serve those areas are able to recover some of their operating costs from the Universal Service Fund, according to the FCC.

**The Low-Income program** offers discounts on telephone installation and monthly telephone service to qualifying customers. Additional discounts are available to qualified subscribers living on tribal lands, according to FCC.

**The Schools and Libraries program**, commonly referred to as E-rate, provides affordable telecommunications services to eligible schools and libraries, especially those in rural and economically
doctor or to be better informed when they do go to the doctor. Or (they can go) on job sites where they can go to search for jobs or get online training to better themselves.

“It’s going to be a resource for their livelihood and hopefully a better way of life for them,” Rawson said.

He believes once people go to the computing centers and get a taste of all that is offered, they’ll want to have that fast access at home.

Access Where it’s Needed

Some interest in broadband access at home has been built through student use of Internet services at schools and patron use at libraries. But some states haven’t had even that luxury of broadband service.

In Wisconsin, unlike other states, not all school districts and public libraries have access to broadband—80 percent of public libraries and 20 percent of the state’s schools lack access to fiber, according to Robert Bocher, the e-rate coordinator there. While residential access is important, the need is critical in Wisconsin’s public schools and libraries, Bocher said. Those school districts, he said, are generally smaller and rural.

Bocher admits that the fiber for broadband may not be a critical issue now, but it could become one in just a few short years. “We view the availability of these (stimulus grant) funds as a great investment in the future,” he said.

In Alaska, the needs are also pronounced. Rich Greenfield, who’s worked with Alaska’s program for several years, said sustainability is important there too, but adds that 70 percent of his state’s public libraries get Internet over satellite, an expensive proposition that is really not the preferred form.

There’s a lag time and things like streaming video doesn’t work as well over satellite, he said. But Alaska, like other states, is in the process of moving its Internet service from satellite-based to land-based. The stimulus grant fund is a start, Greenfield said, but more is needed.

“We sort of view this stimulus bill program as almost a flash in the pan,” said Greenfield. “Our top concern is Universal Service reform.”

Revamping Universal Service

The Universal Service Fund was established in the 1996 Telecommunications Act. Among the program’s goals are promoting availability of services at affordable rates for all consumers, including those in rural and high cost areas. It includes four programs, two of which—high cost and low-income—are devoted solely to voice communications such as telephone service. The others—schools and libraries, commonly referred to as E-rate, and the rural health care program—include data transmission such as Internet service.

The fund draws its dollars from assessments—or extra charges—to telecommunications providers on their interstate and international revenues, according to the Federal Communications Commission Web site.

While the discussion to make changes to the fund is drawing attention from many sectors, there seems to be little consensus on just what those changes should be.

For instance, the Recovery Act is pushing for broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas—many of them rural. When a Congressional subcommittee held a hearing on the Universal Service Fund in March, Free Press, a national nonpartisan group that includes universal access to communications among its goals in working to reform the media, supported changes to the fund that made broadband a priority.

That would mean money from the Universal Service Fund would be used to support broadband in rural areas.

Free Press Research Director S. Derek Turner advocated fixing the fund—which Free Press believes is “deeply flawed”—by transitioning from telephone service to broadband infrastructure. Free Press believes that process can begin with the broadband grants included in the Recovery Act, according to a press release from the organization.

In fact, the House Communications, Technology and Internet Subcommittee discussed reforming the “high cost” portion of the Universal Service Fund to underwrite the broadband build-out. It’s that portion of the fund that ensures people in rural areas pay the same for telephone service as those people in urban areas. If applied to broadband access, people in rural areas would presumably pay the same for broadband service as people in urban areas.

But some say there are problems with that approach.

A group of broadband experts said during a panel discussion sponsored by the Technology Policy Institute in July that the Universal Service Fund should direct more of its funding to low-income areas and away from exclusively focusing on rural high-cost areas.

AT&T, one of the nation’s largest telecom providers, in June said the FCC cannot get serious about a national broadband plan until it fixes the Universal Service Fund. AT&T argues fewer people will be paying those fees because of the move from landlines to wireless and Internet phones.

AT&T has long supported reform of the Universal Service Fund.

“… The existing universal service and intercarrier compensation system was conceived for the voice-centric wonders of the black rotary phone, and is not conducive to the dynamic world of broadband,” Robert Quinn, AT&T’s senior vice president of federal regulatory, said in a statement in April. “Failure to revamp these rules will endanger the future growth of broadband, and the affordability of today’s broadband services.

Any reform of the Universal Service Fund will affect the states, according to Bochat of NASTD. “All states contribute to the fund and receive benefits from one or more of the funds,” she said.

There are no easy answers, said Arkansas’ Bailey.

“As a nation, what we have to look at—and we have to look at this carefully—is as technology changes, how do we utilize the Universal Service Fund to ensure we are still promoting that level of access,” she said.

—Mary Branham is managing editor for State News magazine.
President Obama highlighted the important role of community colleges in the nation’s economic recovery by announcing a plan to invest $12 billion for two-year institutions to prepare Americans for what he calls “jobs of the future.” At the same time, these colleges face tough budget times and some are capping enrollment.

By Mary Branham
Robert Keys has been a community college president for 22 years, but this fall he was contemplating heading back to the classroom just to fill some gaps.

Keys, president of Rockingham Community College in rural Wentworth, N.C., said uncertainty and tight budgets might force him back into the classroom after his college lost three faculty members just weeks before the fall semester started. One of them taught math, Keys’ academic area.

“I can deal with reduced funding. Just tell me what it is and I’ll deal with it,” he said. The uncertainty budget cuts have created for community colleges nationwide is another matter. Keys believe the three staff members who left were drawn to more certain positions.

North Carolina Gov. Bev Perdue issued another executive order freezing nonessential positions in state government. That also hits community colleges, even if it might leave classroom positions open.

Keys, for one, can fill some of the open positions with part-time or adjunct staff. But critical areas such as nursing and science and mathematics will take a little innovation. He’s asked some faculty to increase their class load, with no increase in pay, and some administrative staff have returned to the classroom, again with no extra pay.

“I’ll do everything I possibly can to serve the needs of the student, particularly in the classroom,” he said.

As of the last two years, Rockingham Community College and other similar institutions around the country have even more students to serve. With record enrollments across the country, community colleges are also getting attention from the very top: President Barack Obama recognized their role in revamping the economy and proposed a $12 billion investment in the schools over the next 10 years.

Like Charles Dickens’ A Tale of Two Cities, it’s the best of times and the worst of times for community colleges.

The Best of Times

Obama outlined his American Graduation Initiative at McComb Community College in Michigan and highlighted the importance of the nation’s two-year institutions in helping prepare people for “jobs for the future.” Schools could qualify for grants under the program to try new programs or expand training and counseling.

“It’s time to reform our community colleges so that they can provide Americans of all ages a chance to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to compete for the jobs of the future,” Obama wrote in a July 12 op-ed piece in The Washington Post.

Obama’s proposal represents the single largest federal investments in community colleges in their history, said George Boggs, president and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges based in Washington, D.C. That attention from the top will help community colleges get the respect they deserve, said Eduardo J. Padrón, president of Miami Dade College, the nation’s largest community college with 167,000 students.

“We are celebrating President Obama’s announcement in terms of allocation of significant dollars to community colleges,” Padrón said. “More than the money, what I am celebrating is the fact that the president has validated our work.”

And judging by the increased interest in pursuing education at the community college levels, millions of Americans have recognized the role of these two-year schools.

Enrollments are surging at colleges across the country. Miami Dade College has seen its enrollment soar 15 percent to 20 percent over the past few years; Rockingham Community College is expecting close to a 20 percent enrollment increase, the college presidents said.

In Virginia, about 23,000 new students enrolled at the state’s community colleges over the past two years, and enrollment at the colleges was up 10 percent this summer over last summer, according to Glenn DuBois, chancellor of Virginia’s community colleges.

“The recent surge has been unprecedented in my near 30-year career,” DuBois said.

Part of that surge comes from the role community colleges have traditionally played in the communities they serve.

Take Rockingham Community College in North Carolina, for example. The college sits in a county that has the highest unemployment rate in the Piedmont Triad area. The economy in the rural community relied heavily on textiles, tobacco and furniture—three industries that have fallen on hard times and been transferred overseas.

“People in the area are coming back to the community college to acquire new job skills, upgrade their basic skills and prepare them for second careers or just jobs for survival,” said Keys, the college’s president.

New jobs coming to the area won’t be in manufacturing and people need those new skills, he said, so they return to school.

That’s typical in economic downturns, and college presidents are used to seeing their numbers increase when the economy sours.

“I think education and retraining are seen as part of the solution to any economic downturn,” said Boggs. “People can go back to school and get the skills they need to either remain employed or to get re-employed.”

But the dramatic enrollment increases across the country aren’t just coming from people seeking retraining; they’re also being affected by a large number of students going to community college right out of high school.
“We are celebrating President Obama’s announcement in terms of allocation of significant dollars to community colleges. More than the money, what I am celebrating is the fact that the president has validated our work.”
—Eduardo J. Padrón, president Miami Dade College

“These students may have gone on to a university in a different time but because of the economic downturn, their parents may not have the resources they once had,” Boggs said.

In fact, Virginia has made an effort to draw those students. DuBois said the Virginia Community College System has a staff member in half the state’s 380 high schools to encourage young people to seek postsecondary education.

“The results have been stunning,” DuBois said, “particularly on postsecondary participation and dramatically on students who tell us they are unsure of their career goals.”

And while enticing high school students to continue their education is a goal many states are pursuing, it does have its downside.

“I can guarantee folks can get in,” said DuBois. “I can’t guarantee folks will get the classes they need.”

The Worst of Times
Therein lays the problem.

“Access for community colleges is our whole mission,” said Norma Kent, vice president of communications for the American Association of Community Colleges. “At the same time the demand has gone through the roof, the resources have decreased.”

She said the California community college system, for instance, is likely to turn away more than 200,000 students this fall simply because they lack capacity.

Turning away students is a last resort for many states.

“Some state leaders in the community college sector are talking about limiting enrollment,” said DuBois. “We think that is wrong-headed. If we don’t let them in, who will?”

But many community college systems have to be creative to be able to serve their growing population of students at a time when budgets are being whacked.

In Florida, for instance, the community college system faced cuts of about $124 million—or 10 percent of its budget—while experiencing a 10.8 percent increase in enrollment, said Judith Bilsky, vice chancellor of the state’s community college system. To deal with that funding gap, colleges curtailed or eliminated athletic programs, put facilities upgrades on hold, and cut library and counseling staff hours, Bilsky said. They’ve also taken an inventory of program enrollment.

“If a program is not showing high demand, in some cases, those programs have been eliminated or pulled back,” said Bilsky.

Florida’s colleges are also looking at scheduling to ensure
core classes are available, by “tracking the time of day when courses are being taught and pushing those required classes into less utilized periods of times,” said John Holdnak, vice chancellor for financial policy for Florida’s community college system.

Florida, like many other states, has also filled vacancies with adjunct or part-time instructors to deal with budget cuts. And those classes are likely to be a little larger, Holdnak said.

“We don’t worry about the academic quality; that’s not going to change,” said Bilsky. “We don’t want students to get discouraged because they may not be able to get all the classes they need.”

And that may lengthen the time for them to earn their degree, she said.

“I think it would be absolutely unrealistic to say we can offer the same level of service as we did before,” said Holdnak. “Tight budgets preclude that, he said.

“It’s very difficult for the colleges,” Boggs said. “There’s only so much they can do. A lot of colleges have gone through their budgets with a fine tooth comb and cut out everything they think might be discretionary.”

The declining investment from state governments in community colleges has been a trend for the last five to 10 years, Kent said. Policymakers often have more pressing demands, including K-12 education, prisons and Medicaid.

“Sometimes higher education is seen as more discretionary because they can raise tuition,” she said. “But that would be a last hope for community colleges, because every time the tuition goes up, it means someone would not have as good (of) access.”

Looking to the Future

That will be a challenge as the U.S. moves forward with the Obama plan to increase the number of college graduates over the next few years. And that’s a reason behind his college initiative. The proposal calls for community colleges graduating 5 million more students by 2020.

Community colleges educate nearly half of all graduates, according to Boggs. Like others, Boggs is thrilled with the attention and potential investment in community colleges. But he cautions that the proposal is just the start; it still has to make its way through Congress facing some pretty stiff opposition.

Nevertheless, “community college leaders are elated by this because for the first time in history, we have the potential for a large federal investment and a president saying that he believes community colleges are important enough to help meet the educational goals he set for this country,” Boggs.

And community college officials recognize their role in keeping America competitive.

“This country needs to do everything we can to get more people into postsecondary education because internationally, we’re falling behind,” said DuBois of Virginia.

Along with the federal investment, college officials hope the states recognize the role they play in funding. Kent said it’s critical that states don’t see the funding from the federal government as a replacement for state funds.

“(State policymakers) need to look at the long term because the dollars they invest in educating students at a community college has a tremendous return on investment,” she said.

—Mary Branham is managing editor for State News magazine.
The relationship between America’s 50 states and the European Union’s 27 member states stands on a deeply integrated transatlantic economy that accounts for more than $2 billion in bilateral trade per day and supports 14 million American and European jobs. U.S.-EU trade accounts for 40 percent of world trade.

The current global economic crisis underscores the importance of taking an interest in each other’s ability to weather the storm, but a closer relationship can yield much more for state governments, according to Catherine Bray, director of International Programs for The Council of State Governments. European countries face similar domestic challenges to the U.S. and opportunities to learn from each other are many, particularly in the delivery of key services, health care, education, energy and transportation.

As part of a new CSG international initiative to raise the level of state engagement in the transatlantic relationship and to increase the level of policy exchange, David Adkins, CSG’s executive director, chief executive officer, traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with John Bruton, former prime minister of Ireland and the current EU ambassador to the United States. Bruton recognizes the important role states can play in official U.S.-EU dialogues.

It’s a partnership that will offer dedicated staff and dedicated opportunities for state officials to tackle cross-border issues with the help of key players from the federal government.

The Council of State Governments, which administers the U.S.–Mexico State Alliance Partnership, entered into agreements with Arizona State University’s North America Center for Transborder Studies and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Mexico Institute in Washington, D.C. The partnership is aimed at strengthening legislative research capabilities and state-federal legislative relations. Both agreements are supported by grant funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development/Mexico and will provide an opportunity to take advantage of unique multi-lateral synergies and partnerships of each entity.

CSG will work with Arizona State University and its partners to identify concrete, state-led policy actions to better manage waste tires and other common environmental concerns along the U.S.-Mexico border region, for example. The partnership boasts better legislative research capabili-
Midwestern Legislators ‘BILLD’ Leadership Qualities

Thirty-six lawmakers from 11 Midwestern states and three Canadian provinces successfully completed the 15th annual Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development, nicknamed BILLD, in July.

The five-day program, held in Madison, Wis., is produced by the Midwestern Legislative Conference in partnership with the University of Wisconsin’s Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs. The agenda included policy sessions on the regional economy, the cost of health care, the economic potential of the green economy and corrections reform. In addition, fellows participated in a series of professional development sessions on topics such as time management, effective communications and consensus building and negotiation skills.

Each year, fellowships are awarded to Midwestern legislators through a competitive, nonpartisan selection process overseen by the MLC’s BILLD Steering Committee. Next year’s Bowhay Institute is set for July 9–13. Applications will be available in December.

Northwestern States Discuss Hydropower, Stimulus Water Projects

Hydropower on the Columbia River and the status of stimulus water projects are issues on the agenda for Northwestern states when The Council of State Governments-WEST convenes a meeting with lawmakers from four Northwestern states Sept. 14–15 in Spokane, Wash., to discuss Columbia River Basin issues. The meeting will include the Legislative Council on River Governance, a cooperative association of legislators from Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. CSG-WEST has served as convener for the group since 1999.

Council members and staff will discuss and hear updates on the Columbia River Treaty, regional water banking and leasing, aquifer management, water pollution loads and other water quality efforts in the basin.

Discussions on federal legislation aimed at modifying the Clean Water Act and the use of hydropower on the Columbia River as part of renewable energy plans will be on the agenda as well.

Members will provide reports from their respective states on the use of federal stimulus funds for water projects along the Columbia River Basin. States will share information about water policy legislation from 2009 legislative sessions.

For more information, contact CSG-WEST Deputy Director Edgar Ruiz at (916) 553-4423.
This calendar lists meetings as designated by CSG’s Annual Meeting Committee. For details of a meeting, call the number listed. “CSG/” denotes affiliate organizations of CSG. Visit www.csg.org for updates and more extensive listings.

› September 2009

Sept. 12–17
2009 Henry Toll Fellows Leadership Conference—Lexington, KY—Hyatt, Downtown. Contact Krista Rinehart at (859) 244-8249 or krinehart@csg.org.

Sept. 13–17
CSG/ERC Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy—Philadelphia, PA—The Inn at Penn. Contact Michelle Shiwamber at (646) 385-5728 or mshiwamber@csg.org.

› October 2009

Oct. 3–7
CSG/Southern Legislative Conference 2009 Center for the Advancement of Leadership Skills (CALS)—Morgantown, WV. Contact Lori Jones-Rucker at (404) 633-1866 or visit www.sclatlanta.org for more information.

Oct. 5–8
CSG-WEST Annual Meeting—Santa Fe, NM. Contact Cheryl Duvauchelle or Kristy Blivens at (916) 533-4423 or csgw@csg.org.

Oct. 6–7
Midwestern Governors Association Jobs and Energy Summit—Detroit, MI—MotorCity Hotel. Contact Daniel Stenberg at (292) 624-5460 or dstenberg@csg.org.

Oct. 10–13
National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) Annual Conference—Columbus, OH—Hyatt Regency Columbus. Contact Karen Cobuluis at (859) 244-8143 or kcobuluis@csg.org. Visit www.nemaweb.org.

› November 2009

Nov. 2–9
Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS) Annual Business Meeting—Reno, NV—Grand Sierra Hotel. Contact Barno Saturday at (859) 244-8235 or bsaturday@interstatecompact.org.

Nov. 4–7
20th Border Legislative Conference/2nd Annual Americas 2020 Summit—San Antonio, TX. Contact Edgar Ruiz or Martha Castañeda at (916) 553-4423 or eruiz@csg.org or mccastaneda@csg.org.

Nov. 12–15
The Council of State Governments 2009 Annual Conference—La Quinta, CA—La Quinta Resort & Club. Contact registration at (800) 800-1910 or registration@csg.org.

Nov. 16–18
Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission 2nd Annual Meeting—La Quinta, CA—La Quinta Resort & Club. Contact Crady deGolian at (859) 244-8068 or cdegolian@csg.org.

Nov. 19–22
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL)—Santa Monica, CA—Lowes Santa Monica Beach Hotel. Contact Rhina Villatoro at (202) 434-8070 or rhina@nhcsl.org.

Nov. 29–Dec. 1
National Association of State Treasurers (NAST) Issues Conference—New York, NY—The Barclay InterContinental Hotel. Contact Adnée Hamilton at (859) 244-8174 or ahamilton@csg.org.

› December 2009

Dec. 1–3
Interstate Commission for Juveniles 2nd Annual Meeting—Albuquerque, NM—Hyatt Tamaya Resort & Spa. Contact Crady deGolian at (859) 244-8068 or cdegolian@csg.org.

› January 2010

Jan. 29–31
National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE)—Washington, D.C.—Dupont Hotel. For state executive HR directors and deputies only. Contact Jessica Ruble at (859) 244-8179 or jruble@csg.org.

Jan. 31–Feb. 3
CSG/American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) Winter Training Institute—Austin, TX—Hilton Austin. Contact Kris Chappell at (859) 244-8204 or kchappell@csg.org.

› March 2010

March 6–9

› July 2010

July 31–Aug. 4
CSG/Southern Legislative Conference—64th Annual Meeting—Charleston, SC. Contact Elizabeth Lewis at (404) 633-1866 or elewis@csg.org.

› August 2010

Aug. 8–11
CSG/Midwestern Legislative Conference—65th Annual Meeting—Toronto, ON, Canada. Contact Cindy Andrews at (630) 925-1922 or candrews@csg.org. Visit http://www.csgmidwest.org for more information.

Aug. 15–18
CSG/American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) 35th Annual Training Institute—Washington, D.C.—Hilton Washington. Contact Kris Chappell at (859) 244-8204 or kchappell@csg.org.
Although the federal government tends to get more attention, state officials are often on the front lines of cutting-edge trends and issues. On the other hand, sometimes in the community of state governments, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

In print since 1958, State News (formerly State Government News) has chronicled many of the changes … and continuities. Here’s what we reported on:

› 40 years ago—September 1969
State Aid to Private Schools

Several states in 1969 were considering the issue of state aid to private or parochial schools. Three states—Connecticut, Ohio and Rhode Island—approved such aid with some restrictions. Under the Connecticut plan, the state would pay 20 percent of the salary of teachers of secular subjects and allow $10 to $15 for nonreligious textbooks, according to the September 1969 State Government News. Ohio’s General Assembly approved nearly $36 million in state aid to nonpublic schools for the biennium. And Rhode Island authorized $375,000 in state salary supplements for teachers in parochial schools, but it required those teachers receive at least $4,000 in salary and teach only secular subjects.

Update: State aid to private schools is still being debated across the country. In 2000, private school advocates argued that since they help shoulder the responsibility of educating Maryland’s schoolchildren, the state should provide $6 million in state aid to help buy textbooks, according to a Washington Post article from February, 2000. In 2005, the Florida Supreme Court heard arguments on whether a state program that gave parents of students in failing public schools the choice to move to better-performing schools—including religious schools—violated the state constitution, according to the San Diego Union Tribune.

› 25 years ago—September 1984
A Woman’s Place … In the Capitol

As the nation pondered the possibility of electing the first female vice-president in 1984—Geraldine Ferraro on the ticket with presidential candidate Walter Mondale—State Government News featured an article about the women in state government around the country. At the time, Kentucky’s Martha Layne Collins was the nation’s only female governor. Collins was only the third woman to be elected governor in her own right, and only the sixth woman ever elected governor at the time. In 1984, women held only 39 of the top statewide elective offices in 28 states, according to State Government News.

Update: The second woman to run for vice-president of the U.S. was former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin in 2008. Palin was one of seven female governors this year before her resignation in July. Two other governors—Kathleen Sebelius of Kansas and Janet Napolitano of Arizona—left their state offices to join the Obama administration in Washington, D.C. The Arizona governor’s office was filled by another woman, Jan Brewer. That leaves five women governors currently in office.

› 10 years ago—September 1999
The Toll Fellows

The September 1999 State Government News featured the 1999 Toll Fellows, and gave reasons why experience is important in statehouses from four members of that class. Among their words of wisdom:

- **Secrets to successful leadership:** Have clear and transparent goals, said then-Alaska Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer. “Never having to guess at a leader’s priorities is a hallmark of a good leader.”
- **Learning leadership skills:** “Leadership skills can be learned by observing leaders in action, by reading history and by understanding the principles on which this nation was founded,” said then-Virginia Attorney General Mark Earley.
- **Qualities of a leader:** “They’re thoughtful and care deeply about the system,” said then-Nebraska House Speaker Doug Kristensen. “Good leaders also possess a sound fundamental knowledge of what they are doing.”
- **Improving public perceptions of government:** “Do what you say you are going to do,” said then-Delaware Secretary of Labor Lisa Blunt-Bradley. “Having a strategic plan and knowing where you are going and measuring it demonstrates that you are doing a good job.”

Update: The 24th class of the Henry Toll Fellows program is meeting this month in Lexington, Ky. The program is the only one of its kind that serves all three branches of state government across the country. The program serves to equip talented state leaders with the skills and strategies to meet the challenges ahead. The class, featured in the August State News, includes 40 of the nation’s emerging state leaders—10 from each of CSG’s four regions.

To learn more about the Toll Fellows program, visit the CSG Web site at www.csg.org.
Spencer Wells, Ph.D.
Friday, Nov. 13

The National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence has dedicated much of his career to studying humankind’s family tree and closing the gaps in knowledge about human migration. He leads National Geographic’s Genographic Project.

Jon Meacham
Saturday, Nov. 14

The Newsweek editor won a Pulitzer Prize for American Lion, a biography of Andrew Jackson. At Newsweek, he supervised coverage of politics, international affairs and breaking news as managing editor.

Ben Self
Saturday, Nov. 14

The founding partner of Blue State Digital and new media guru served as the Democratic National Committee technology director and supervised the technology of projects of the national party during the 2008 election.

For complete information, click on "Meetings" at www.csg.org.