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I-595 project will create non-traditional highway jobs



By MICHAEL TURNBELL

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Monday, March 23, 2009

Everyone knows about the jobs typically associated with road construction: operating heavy equipment, grinding asphalt and pouring concrete.

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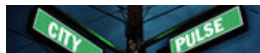
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But what you probably don't think about are the lower-profile jobs that are every bit as important.

Sign makers. Landscapers. Janitors. And yes, even the port-a-potty patrol.

Hey, with more than 30,000 jobs being created or supported by the upcoming \$1.2 billion Interstate 595 reconstruction, nothing is too small.

So the big question is: If you're a small-business owner, how do you get a piece of the action?

The Florida Department of Transportation aims to answer with an informational meeting on Wednesday for prime contractors, consultants, subcontractors, suppliers and vendors interested in working on the I-595 project or other "shovel-ready" stimulus road projects in Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River counties.

The meeting will be at the Signature Grand, 6900 W. State Road 84, in Davie. It is open only to company representatives, not individuals looking for work.

"This is intended to give the companies an idea of what type of work is involved with each project," said Barbara Kelleher, a DOT spokeswoman.

"None of the jobs are advertised yet, so the whole point is that this is an opportunity where smaller companies can network with the larger contractors."

As the owner of a small Davie company that pumps waste out of yachts, Rodney Fulton is eyeing the I-595 project.

"I think it will be a good opportunity for us. We're close to 595 and already running along that route," he said.

I-595 Express, a consortium led by ACS Infrastructure Development of Madrid, won the contract to finance, design and rebuild I-595 over the next five years, then maintain the highway until 2044.

State officials insist most of the jobs created will be local and the consortium will partner with local firms for design and construction. The goal is for companies owned by minorities or women to get at least 8.1 percent of each I-595 contract.

Road work is set to begin this summer, although relocating utilities and building noise walls will get under way this spring.

Kelleher said state officials are awaiting a decision on which projects will receive stimulus funds. The candidates include the extension of the Interstate 95 express lanes from Miami to I-595, the Dixie Highway flyover between Deerfield Beach and Boca Raton, the Indian Street bridge in Martin County and two State Road 70 widening projects in St. Lucie County.

Wednesday's informational meeting will be split into two sessions. From 8:30 to noon, the focus will be on the stimulus projects in the five counties.

From 1 to 4 p.m., the focus will be on the I-595 project, which is receiving no stimulus funds.

Participants must pre-register at www.blackmonroberts.com.

What jobs when?

Contractors and vendors (not work seekers) can learn about the project's jobs at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday at the Signature Grand Hotel, 6900 W. State Road 84, Davie.

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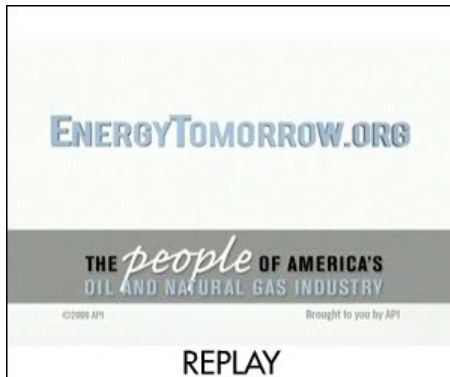
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