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# Baylor to request aid from stimulus package for 2 projects

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Baylor Health Care System plans to ask for some of the state's federal economic stimulus money for two of its multimillion-dollar projects.

Baylor representatives were scheduled to meet Tuesday in Austin with Rep. Myra Crownover, R-Denton, head of the House appropriations subcommittee on the stimulus money. But Crownover was not able to make the meeting because of legislative business, said Kevin Crusier, her chief of staff. No other date has been set.

"We will be happy to meet with them," Crusier said.

Baylor is seeking money for a cancer center to be built near downtown Dallas and a diabetes center in South Dallas. Baylor would not say how much it intends to request.

A request for stimulus money could raise eyebrows because Baylor has said it has enough money for the projects. The stimulus money, if granted, would be used to hire more people from within the community, said Kristi Sherrill, Baylor's vice president of government affairs.

Talmadge Heflin, director of the Center for Fiscal Policy at the Texas Public Policy Foundation in Austin, said his organization believes that stimulus money should be used for one-time projects.

Some Texas communities are still recovering from Hurricane Ike last September, Heflin said, and they need money for costs that the Federal Emergency Management Agency won't cover.

Heflin would not comment on Baylor's request but said applicants should be cautious about their requests.

"We believe they should not use the money in a way that would create an ongoing obligation for the state," Heflin said. "And we don't believe the money should be spent just because you can get it."

Sherrill said the request is justified.

"Any additional funding granted to these two projects, both already under way, would be used to directly help patients fight two of the biggest health issues affecting North Texans," cancer and diabetes, said Sherrill.

Baylor has a \$15 million, three-year project to transform the Juanita J. Craft Recreation Center into a diabetes center with an onsite physician and various kinds of assistance.

Baylor has asked the city of Dallas for \$2 million toward construction costs, repairs and park maintenance.

The other project is a \$350 million outpatient cancer center and cancer hospital set to open near Baylor University Medical Center in three to five years. Baylor has said that an estimated \$150 million would come from tenants and it hopes to raise \$40 million through philanthropic contributions.

Regardless of what economic stimulus money it receives, Baylor appears to have the money and creditworthiness to complete its projects, Standard & Poor's rating service said. The rating service has an AA-rating on the hospital system's outstanding debt and "solid" operational liquidity.