



INTERCHANGE

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Under the Golden Dome

As the General Assembly enters the final days of their 120 day session, transportation funding has risen to the forefront. Two proposals have been offered to greatly impact transportation in Colorado.

House Bill 15-1389 was introduced this week and is based off Governor Hickenlooper's proposed five point plan that would free up monies to be transferred to transportation by moving certain fees paid by hospitals into an enterprise fund. This move would mean that constitutionally mandated TABOR refunds would not be triggered and SB 228 funds would be allowed to flow to transportation. These would be new funds of up to \$1 billion that CDOT would use for high priority transportation projects around the state.

There is also a bill that was introduced in the Colorado Senate, Senate Bill 15-272 that would ask voters to issue bonds to pay for a list of priority transportation projects costing approximately \$3.5 billion with a maximum repayment of \$5.5 billion over twenty years. While CDOT appreciates the bills' advocates for trying to advance worthy transportation projects, the bill is problematic for CDOT because no additional revenue is being generated to pay for the bonds. This means that the state's asset management program, used to fund items such as highway resurfacing projects and repairs to tunnels, wall and culverts would have to be reduced by up to \$280 million per year to cover bond payments. The result would be a severe degradation of the existing highway system in Colorado that the Federal Highway Administration already ranks as the 37th worst in the nation.

With just a handful of days till the end of the session there is sure to be a lot of discussion and activity related to these two important transportation proposals. Stay tuned for our June edition of Interchange where we will give you the low down on the outcome of these proposals, the CDOT legislative agenda and any other transportation related measures considered by the Legislature.



Federal Funding Deadline Fast Approaching

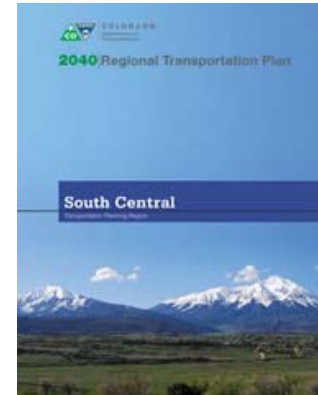
As the May 31st deadline for the federal authorization MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act) authorization approaches, Congress is struggling to find a short term patch to fund transportation through the end of the fiscal year. While members of Congress agree an immediate fix is needed, neither side has been able to come up with a funding source to pay for the remaining portion of this fiscal year. Congress will need an additional \$4 billion to \$6 billion to keep the highway and transit trust funds solvent through September 30th.

While Congress struggles with the short term funding issue, a consensus may be emerging around a longer term transportation bill to be acted on later this year. Should Congress be able to pass a budget, it is anticipated that in the near future Congress will use a budget reconciliation bill to pass some form of a corporate tax reform measure which would allow companies that have earned off-shore profits to bring those profits back into the country at a reduced tax rate. This could bring up to \$1 trillion of added revenue to pay for a variety of federal programs including a six year transportation bill.

If you have further questions regarding federal transportation funding, contact CDOT's Director of Policy & Government Relations Herman Stockinger at herman.stockinger@state.co.us.

Statewide Plan

As part of our ongoing series focusing on the Statewide plan our May edition of *Interchange* focuses on highlights from the South Central Transportation Planning Region (TPR). The South Central TPR is a large region along Colorado's southern border with New Mexico and encompasses Huerfano and Las Animas Counties. Terrain consists of rolling plains, high mountain peaks, and a semi-arid climate with extreme temperatures varying widely from more than 100° F in the summer to sub-zero in the winter. On occasion, the region experiences severe winter storms. On the other hand, the region also experiences an above-average number of days of sunshine throughout the year. The changing and sometimes severe weather creates the potential for road closures due to adverse weather conditions. The region has several recreational opportunities for residents and tourists, including the Highway of Legends, Santa Fe Trail, national grasslands, and others.



Cover of South Central 2040 RTP

The South Central TPR has a relatively high volume of truck traffic on state highways (approximately 17% of daily traffic). This is nearly twice the statewide average of 9% and indicates the important role the South Central TPR plays in a growing freight economy.

Public input indicated the citizens of South Central Colorado are concerned about the distance between communities in the region since many towns are far from each other, resulting in long travel distances for employment, medical services, and shopping. Potential alternate routes tend to be limited and unable to handle heavy truck traffic. As a result, isolation and lengthy detours are concerns, especially in severe winter weather conditions. Snow and ice removal is an essential need in the region so that social and economic activities can continue.

Creating transit connections to the Colorado Springs and Metro Denver areas, as well as to New Mexico, is important to the region. Other multimodal needs and desires of residents in the South Central TPR include investments in local public transit, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian improvements that provide options for local travel; and on-demand van service for elderly, disabled, and other residents to access health care and social opportunities.

The full Statewide Transportation Plan can be found at www.ColoradoTransportationMatters.com. To locate all the regional plans click the Regional Transportation Plans tab. Check back in June when we will feature the Upper Front Range TPR plan.

TIGER VII

On April 16, 2015 the Transportation Commission authorized the Department to submit up to three applications for the federal Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) VII discretionary grant program. In early March the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the application process for this round of TIGER. The program is largely similar to previous TIGER grant rounds, however there is no Planning Grant Program this time around. The three potential projects approved by the Commission are 1) I-70 West Operations Improvements, 2) I-70 Simba Run (Vail) Underpass, and 3) I-25 Bus on Shoulder, US-36 to Downtown Denver.



As in prior TIGER grant rounds, the CDOT Office of Policy & Government Relations will be available during the application process to offer technical assistance and guidance to other Colorado local governments drafting TIGER applications of their own. For questions, please contact Ron Papsdorf at (303) 757-9105 or ron.papsdorf@state.co.us.