



Statewide MPO Meeting Notes - DRAFT Thursday, September 9, 2021

12:30 PM – 2:30 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

Present:

- **Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs):** Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)- Ron Papsdorf and Todd Cottrell; Grand Valley Metropolitan Planning Region (GVMPO): Dana Brosig and Dean Bressler; North Front Range MPO (NFRMPO) – Becky Karasko and AnnaRose Cunningham; Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG): John Liosatos, Mark Northrop, and William Mast; and Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG): John Adams and Eva Cosyleon
- **CDOT Regions:** Region 1 – Danny Herrmann, Jordan Rudel, JoAnn Mattson, Region 2 – Wendy Pettit, Robert Frei, Region 3 – Mark Rogers, and Region 4 – Josie Hadley, Jan Rowe
- **CDOT Division of Transportation Development (DTD):** Marissa Gaughan, Aaron Willis, Jamie Collins, Keara McLean, Kathleen Collins, Carrie Tremblatt, Annelies van Vonno, Nathan Vander Broek, Nathan Lindquist, Miriam Aranoff, Michelle Scheuerman. Michael Snow, Craig Hurst
- **CDOT Division of Transit & Rail (DTR):** Amber Blake, Julia Wcislo
- **CDOT Performance and Asset Management Branch:** Darius Pakbaz
- **CDOT Chief Engineer's Office:** Marci Gray
- **CDOT Traffic Safety & Engineering:** Jacob Kershner, Erik Stanley
- **CDOT Division of Accounting and Finance:** Paige Castaneda, Eric Erhbar, Julie George
- **CDOT Office of Policy and Government Relations:** Jamie Grim, Andy Karsian
- **CDOT Traffic Safety and Engineering Services:** Jacob Kershner
- **Colorado Division FHWA:** Aaron Bustow
- **Region 8 FTA:** Kristin Kenyon

Division of Transit & Rail (DTR) Introduction – Amber Blake introduced herself as the new Division of Transit & Rail Director.

STIP Visioning Task Order – Jamie Collins, CDOT STIP Manager, briefed the group about the upcoming Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Visioning task order, in partnership with the consultant WSP. The goal of the task order is to learn more about the needs of the STIP customers in order to streamline the STIP process. While the Visioning task order is starting now, implementation will likely not take place until be after Jamie retires next year. Part of the goal of the Vision process will be to help with this transition. The consultant will present on this task order at next month's SW MPO meeting and will seek feedback from



the MPOs about the STIP. Ron Papsdorf congratulated Jamie on her decision to retire and asked if the MPOs could see WSP's Scope of Work in order to prepare and frame their thoughts to prepare for next month's meeting. Kristin Kenyon with FTA asked about the former decoupling effort. Jamie noted that this visioning task order will help with making the decision whether to decouple the STIP from SAP. Currently, the STIP is tied to the budget in SAP and because of how integrated they are, decoupling would be very difficult. Part of the answer is if the CDOT Executive Management Team (EMT) wants to change the software or keep using SAP.

Legislative Update – Jamie Grimm, CDOT Office of Policy and Government Relations, gave a quick legislative update on the federal infrastructure bill.

- The bill is currently in limbo while Congress is in August recess. They will be back on September 20.
- There are two bills that are moving through Congress. First, the reconciliation package, and second, the bipartisan infrastructure bill which passed the Senate known as the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA).
- The IIJA has passed the Senate and is awaiting a vote in the House. It needs to pass the House with the language of the Senate bill, otherwise it must go to a conference committee and might not pass or there will need to be a continuing resolution to reauthorize the FAST Act by October 1.
- The \$3.5 Trillion reconciliation bill which contains many of the Democrat's legislative priorities is being pushed by progressives in Congress who are trying to see it passed before the end of September. In the Senate, moderate Senators Manchin and Sinema want to put a pause on the reconciliation bill, but both Schumer and Pelosi don't want to pause it. On the House side, they are planning to vote on the reconciliation bill on Sept 27.
- Speaker Pelosi and progressives in the House are insisting that the two bills move forward together, but moderates want to vote on IIJA before the reconciliation bill.
- Another legislative issue is the debt ceiling. If the debt ceiling is not raised, the government could shut down. Republicans in Senate don't want to vote to raise the debt ceiling.
- All this needs to be completed by September 30.

FHWA Policies on Cash Management – Eric Ehrbar, CDOT Division of Accounting and Finance (DAF) provided an update on FHWA's cash management procedures and how potential cash management issues might affect CDOT and local agencies.

- 5 Years ago, the National Highway Trust fund (HTF) required a \$90 Billion cash transfer in order to remain solvent.
- Now, the HTF is again forecasting insolvency unless Congress passes funding measures within the next few months to transfer general funds into it.
- If HTF forecasts dip below \$1 Billion and the proposed infrastructure bill doesn't pass, USDOT will meter state billings.
- FHWA is a reimbursable grant program – so it is only able to reimburse expenses after the expenses have been paid.
- Typically, Colorado bills FHWA \$80-100 Million per bimonthly period, or around \$550 Million per year. \$100 Million of that goes to locals as "pass through" payments.



- Once a bill is passed or solvency is addressed, CDOT will be able to catch up on “accrued unbilled” balances, so we won’t lose money, but there may be a delay in reimbursements.
- Due to SB 267 and 260 CDOT currently has significant cash balance. CDOT does not foresee this being a significant risk, unless this goes on for several months, then it might have a cumulative impact.
- Local Impact: Very little. Because local agencies submit their invoices directly to CDOT and are paid out of CDOT’s state cash account, there is little for the local agencies to worry about. After paying the local agencies, CDOT then seeks reimbursement from FHWA. With CDOT’s large cash balance, local agencies shouldn’t face any trouble getting reimbursements. CDOT does not anticipate this being a concern for locals unless it goes on for several months.
- Project Impacts: If CDOT is unable to fully bill FHWA for all projects, CDOT will need to determine which projects to bill and which to “hold” for a following period. Projects can’t be officially close until FHWA has reimbursed us for them. CDOT will work to prioritize federal billing of projects that are nearest to closure, with the goal of not impacting project closure metrics or practices.

National Performance Measures Target Setting Update – Darius Pakbaz, CDOT Performance and Asset Management Branch discussed next steps in setting up targets for the second performance period. Performance metrics include:

- Infrastructure Condition
 - Pavement
 - Bridges
- System Performance
 - Interstate And Non-Interstate System Performance
 - Freight Movement on the Interstate
 - CMAQ – Traffic Congestion
 - CMAQ – On-Road Mobile Source Emissions

Darius then gave a brief overview of the timeline for setting the targets for the second performance period. Target setting activities have already kicked off and will continue through October 2022.

Revitalizing Main Streets (RMS) Listening Tour – Nathan Lindquist, CDOT Land Use Planner/Analyst presented on the Revitalizing Main Streets Program listening tour. Now that the RMS program is permanent, Lindquist has been working with communities around the state to determine how the program should be structured in the future. Highlights from the listening tour include:

- Director Lew and staff visited 20 communities around the state in May and June of 2021 to hear about downtown opportunities and challenges and determine how the RMS program can integrate CDOT multimodal investments with local downtown visions.
- What We Heard:
 - Enthusiasm for the program is high! Downtown revitalization continues to be a major focus for communities and individual communities are doing impressive work.



- RMS grants can assist with downtown visions through funding temporary or permanent pedestrian and outdoor dining spaces, basic bike/ped improvements, and multimodal infrastructure.
- State highways serving as Main Streets are a rising focus area and need to balance freight and through-traffic with downtown housing and pedestrian-oriented businesses.
- Growth pressures and housing shortages are a major factor across the state. Citizens are wary of the speed of change.
- Case studies: Throughout his report, Nathan Lindquist mentioned several case studies from around the state highlighting some of the work local communities are doing, as well as current needs. Communities highlighted included: Pueblo, Broomfield, Wellington, Alamosa, Grand Junction, Centennial, Colorado Springs, Glenwood Springs.
- Possibilities moving forward:
 - Learn to institutionalize innovations that work
 - Convene partners to collaboratively develop the next round of large grant criteria
 - Work with DOLA and CEO to align criteria for transportation, housing, and infrastructure programs
 - Convene conversations with locals interested in regional collaboration,
 - Investigate the link between the transportation systems' fiscal sustainability and downtown success.
- Questions & Discussion:
 - Kathleen Collins asked about the status of projects that weren't selected for the first round and if there's any news about the second round. Nathan said the application should be out in the next few weeks with a deadline in late October.
 - Dean Bressler (GVMPO) asked Nathan how much money would be available in the next round of Safer Main Streets grants. Nathan responded that it would be about \$22 M but a good chunk of it will be federal funds. In the future, it will go back to being state funds. Dean Bressler also asked if communities that did not receive grants could reach out and get feedback on how to improve their applications. Nathan said yes. Dean also asked if the next round would be for opportunity 1 or 2. Nathan said it would be the larger grants of up to \$2 Million. There will still be smaller grants while there's still money for them.
 - Mark Rogers asked if DRCOG would be limited or if there would be a set distribution for this round. Nathan responded there was no distribution allocation for this grant program yet. The goal is to encourage everyone to resubmit so they can fund more projects. The scoring criteria has been tweaked a bit, but not majorly.

Multimodal Transportation & Mitigation Options Fund (MMOF) Update – Michael Snow, CDOT Transportation Planning Specialist, discussed the MMOF Updates. While he said that most of the discussion would take place tomorrow at STAC and there was nothing specific for the MPOs at the moment, he opened the floor up to questions.

- Ron Papsdorf asked for clarification on slide 7 of the STAC packet on the distribution formula. Michael clarified that the years listed on that slide are the years for the data included in the formula, not the years the distribution formula was adopted.



- Ron Papsdorf also asked if new distribution numbers have been run using the new proposed criteria. Michael said no, they are still digging up the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) indicators and do some GIS analysis to summarize the data at the Transportation Planning Region (TPR) level. Ron added they'd had challenges at DRCOG to parse out census and American Community Survey (ACS) data to determine disproportionately impacted communities.
- Ron also asked if there's been discussion of factoring in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by TPR as part of the distribution formula in light of the expansion of MMOF to include GHG mitigation measures. Michael said no, but that is something that might need to have some thought and discussion around that.
- Becky Karasko asked if with the expansion of this program, and the experience last time that contracts took up to a year to finalize, she asked if additional staff would be hired to help with contracting issues. Michael said there is a broad plan to add additional staff. Jeff Sudmeier will speak to staffing plans tomorrow at STAC. Michael noted that the Department is aware of these issues.
- Dana Brosig asked if the project selection would change. Michael said no, the MPOs and TPRs will still make their own project selections like they did before. The only difference will be that CDOT staff may take the opportunity to advise the MPOs and TPRs on scoping, cost estimates or feasibility issues in the proposed projects or to identify cost savings opportunities, but to do that without slowing the pace of TPR and MPO project selection processes and without weighing in on the general merit of any particular projects.
- John Liosatos asked for clarification on the project selection level. While the TPRs and MPOs select the projects, doesn't the TC have the final say? Michael said no, the only thing the TC has a say in was the reduction in approved match requirements. It's purely up to MPOs and TPRs to make the project selection. Michael said CDOT would weigh in if projects don't meet funding requirements or project eligibility, but otherwise it's totally up to MPOs/TPRs to make official award selections.
- Ron Papsdorf asked for clarification on CDOT's role in the project selection process- CDOT is already heavily involved in the process. Is this a new additional role for CDOT in the regional planning process? Michael Snow made it clear that the intention is not to weigh in on value or merit of projects, but to identify places where the project might not be able to be completed for the proposed cost, or if the project isn't shovel ready, has right-of-way (ROW) issues for instance, or if there are cost savings opportunities in conjunction with other CDOT projects. The only weighing in CDOT will do is to make informal suggestions on how to improve the projects, to the benefit of both CDOT and the Local Agency.

Other Business

- COVID-19 Impacts / Updates - Masks will once again be required at CDOT HQ for STAC meetings and other events.
- CDOT Staffing Updates – DTD is hiring a grant specialist to replace Molly Bly. They should have someone identified and announce that in the next month or so.
- Other Updates: John Liosatos let everyone know that Katherine Wenger has left PPACG. He requested people to send materials and other info to him.

