



**Public Works Committee
Meeting Summary**

Date: July 25, 2007 **Time:** 10:30 a.m. **Location:** Room 391

Members Present: Johnson, Brown, Lehmann, Robb

Members Absent: Montero

Other Members Present: Boigon, Nevitt

1. 2008-13 State Transportation Improvement Plan – County Hearing

Summary

- Colorado Department of Transportation forecasts declining revenues over the next few years, especially in the Highway Users Tax Fund.
- DRCOG identified regional transportation system needs totaling \$3 billion. Available revenue is \$2.2 billion.
- While none of Denver's projects were removed from the regional TIP, no new requests could be accommodated.
- FasTracks is challenged by increasing energy and construction costs at the same time that sales tax revenue is declining.

Summary of Discussion

Councilwoman Johnson welcomed the following people to the table:

- Henry Sobanet, Colorado Transportation Commission, Denver representative
- Randy Jensen, Colorado Dept. of Transportation, Region 6 Director
- Steve Rudy, Denver Regional Council of Governments
- Lesley Thomas, Denver Public Works
- Steve Gordon, Denver Community Planning & Development

A notebook was distributed to the Council members present, and copies have been provided to all other Council members. The notebook contains information discussed at this meeting, contacts at the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and various maps.

Henry Sobanet explained that every two years, CDOT meets with each of the counties to discuss the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), particularly:

- the transportation improvement needs of the county, region, state, and in the Denver area, the Regional Transportation District (RTD);
- status of state projects in the area;
- planning for future projects; and
- the outlook for funding availability.

The goal of this meeting was to gain a common understanding of the transportation improvement needs of the City & County of Denver, the entire Denver metro region, including RTD, and the state.

Most transportation system improvements depend at least to some extent on federal funding channeled through the state and the regional planning authority. Local jurisdictions must get their desired projects into the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to be considered for federal funding. The RTP further identifies the system and service improvements that can be accomplished with "reasonably expected" revenues, referred to as the Fiscally Constrained RTP.

The Fiscally Constrained RTP will be the basis for the 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a 6-year program of capital projects to be funded.

Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), metropolitan Denver's regional transportation planning agency, is currently updating Metro Vision 2030, the umbrella plan document, to a 2035 planning horizon. A draft will be released in August, and it is anticipated that Metro Vision 2035 will be adopted by the DRCOG Board in December 2007.

A draft of the 2035 RTP will be distributed in October with adoption anticipated in December. The 2008-2013 TIP will be distributed for review in October with adoption anticipated in March 2008.

DRCOG identified regional transportation system needs totaling \$3 billion. Available revenue is \$2.2 billion. None of Denver's projects were removed from the TIP, but no new requests could be added.

DRCOG modeled growth in various scenarios to measure the impacts against a set of criteria, such as congestion. The first was a compact growth pattern, consistent with Metro Vision 2030 and the current Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). The second allowed for 70 square miles of growth beyond the UGB. This model did much worse on the measurements. The third scenario added \$8 billion in highway improvements to the second scenario. This resulted in some improvement in only one of 12 criteria: there was somewhat less congestion.

Denver's Strategic Transportation Plan (STP) fits within DRCOG's planning. This is the analysis of needs and options in distinct "travel sheds". The full report will be completed in September. STP assumes the land use changes of Blueprint Denver as well as DRCOG's basic assumptions about growth. There assumptions are that by 2030, the region will experience the following:

- 30% increase in households;
- 37% increase in employment;
- 23% increase in population;
- 35% increase in person trips (5.4 million/day in Denver);
- 59% of those trips will be external to Denver (trips into and out of Denver).

Traffic congestion will increase. Delay is one way to describe congestion. Models indicate that delay will continue to increase even after full implementation of FasTracks in 2015. By 2030, delay increases along with housing and employment.

Denver's current priorities for Interstate & State Highway improvements

I-70 East (Brighton Blvd. to Tower Road)

- Central Park Blvd/I-70 interchange at Stapleton

- No funding for I-70 EIS preferred alternative
- Only partial funding (25%) in DRCOG RTP for viaduct replacement through 2030
- Viaduct replacement in near term could impact selection of the Realignment Alternative

Quebec Street/SH 35 (SH 83 to Stapleton)

- Connections to I-70 and SH 2
- Lowry, Stapleton and Commerce City Prairie Gateway

56th Ave (Quebec to Peña)

- Major reliever for I-70 and alternate access to DIA
- Homeland Security Route
- Federal earmark

Valley Highway (I-25 & US 6)

- Broadway: I-25 Interchange
- Phase 1 Improvements:
 - I-25 – bridges at Santa Fe/I-25 & Alameda/I-25
 - US 6 – US 6/Federal interchange & closure of partial interchange at Bryant/US 6
- Grade separation: CML/Santa Fe/Kalamath- future funding?

Federal (SH 88/US 287)

- Implementing 1991 plan for entire corridor
- Reconstruction of the south end
- Alameda to 10th Ave (including US 6/Federal bridge land balancing)
- FasTracks: West Corridor/Federal Blvd bridge

US 83/Leetsdale (Alameda to Mississippi)

- CDOT widening Parker & US 83 to the south

Other Denver priorities for state highways:

- “Complete Streets” – enhanced transit & pedestrian access & amenities
- Infrastructure maintenance:
 - US 285 (Hampden) - Laneage & grade separations
 - SH 95 (Sheridan) - FasTracks West Corridor grade separation at the gulch
 - US 40 (Colfax) – Main Street zoning
 - SH 2 (Colorado)

Council members asked that “pedestrian safety issues” be added under Hampden.

They also noted the importance of enabling, encouraging and educating residents about travel behavioral changes, such as using bus and rail systems.

Blueprint Denver identifies “areas of change”, the growth areas; areas of stability, and areas of reinvestment within these. Areas of change are where development/redevelopment are beneficial and often encompass areas with existing or planned multi-modal transportation opportunities. These include the 40 FasTracks stations in Denver; I-25 & Broadway; I-25 & Colorado; and others. Blueprint also adopted a “multi-modal streets” concept, which combines the functional classification with the adjacent land use type.

Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel

Governor Ritter appointed a panel to study funding transportation projects, and specifically to identify all possible revenue sources.

The largest component of CDOT revenue is the Highway Users Tax Fund (a per gallon tax on gasoline and diesel fuel). This revenue is projected at \$782.4 million for Fiscal Year 2008. The State Legislature makes appropriations from the HUTF prior to distribution to CDOT, counties and municipalities. CDOT revenue has been decreasing annually. CDOT's budget is fast becoming a maintenance-only budget. It is now clear that fuel tax is not an adequate source to fund the needed transportation system.

Additionally, the federal government has over-promised funding around the country. Colorado is at risk of not receiving what has been promised by the federal government. Only one-half billion dollars in federal funding is expected this year.

The panel has been meeting this summer, and it is to finish its work by late fall and report to Governor Ritter. It is critical that new revenue sources be identified. Another challenge will be to convince voters statewide to approve any proposal.

Other CDOT issues

Council members identified the following issues with CDOT:

- Difficult communications between RTD and CDOT;
- Plowing snow onto sidewalks and blocking bus stops/shelters; and
- Maintenance along state highways.

Regional Transportation District

RTD's capital projects in Denver are:

Stapleton Transfer Facility

- \$3.5 million construction funds from RTD
- \$3.2 million in grant funding

Broadway/I-25 Park-N-Ride redesign & redevelopment

- \$1.5 million project
- redesign to accommodate viaduct relocation to be completed fall 2007
- remaining funds available for Gates/Cherokee parking redevelopment

T-REX/Southeast Corridor

- opened Nov. 2006
- projected system-wide rail average daily ridership = 54,000
- actual system-wide rail average daily ridership = 61,000

FasTracks faces challenges associated with increasing energy and construction costs as sales tax revenue is declining. Highlights presented for three corridors (see Tab 8 of notebook for more):

East Corridor

- RTD staff recommended electrical motor units on this corridor (and on the Gold Line)
- Draft EIS scheduled for early 2008
- May be eligible for a public/private partnership pilot program

North Metro Corridor

- Original plan was for its own track coming out of Denver Union Station (DUS)
- Current design shares track with East Corridor from DUS to 40th/40th station
- No decision on technology

West Corridor

- Utility relocation is underway
- Final design progressing
- RTD intends to construct the corridor as originally planned
- Plan to open in 2012, one year ahead of original schedule

Gretchen Williams

08-06-07

S:committees/public works/summary