



Public Works Committee Summary

May 5, 2009

1:30 p.m.

Conference Room 391

Committee Members: Johnson, Lehmann, Nevitt

Committee Member Absent: López

Agenda: Federal Transportation Act Reauthorization & Denver Project Requests

Federal Transportation Act Reauthorization & Denver Project Requests

Bill Vidal, Manager of Public Works, and Roberto Venegas, Mayor's Office, Policy Advisor, briefed the Committee on the reauthorization of the 2005 Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Act. The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives is currently considering reauthorization of the federal Transportation Act. As part of the process, House members asked the local jurisdictions in their districts for projects they desire to have included in the act as High Priority Projects.

Previous transportation acts included lists of projects that were authorized for federal funding, but still subject to annual appropriation. Often, the actual funding totaled less than the authorized funding. Denver projects to receive funding in the latest cycle were:

- 56th Ave. between Quebec and Havana (\$14.2 M authorized);
- Central Park Blvd/I-70 Interchange (\$7.2 M authorized); and
- Denver Union Station (\$53 M).

Mr. Vidal said the current reauthorization process is characterized by a shift in priorities. More emphasis is being given to:

- stronger federal-state-local partnerships;
- performance-based measures; and
- greater focus on planning, equal access to improved mobility options, energy security, and climate protection.

This shift in priorities indicates the beginnings of an overall vision for transportation and land use policy at the federal level for the first time. These are the ideas behind the Living Streets Initiative and reflected in Denver's Strategic Transportation Plan, which speak to behavioral changes and a more uniform transportation/transit policy rather than just getting money out the door for individual transportation projects (mostly road and bridge construction in years past).

Criteria for project funding under the reauthorization require that projects:

- Must be highways or public transit projects;

- Must have letters of support from Colorado Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration;
- Must be consistent with the region's adopted Fiscally Constrained 2035 Plan; and
- Must have identified sources of 20% of project cost (federal funding only up to 80%).

The projects submitted to Congresswoman DeGette by Denver are shown below.

Project (order does not reflect priority)	Project Cost	Request (less 20% local match)
A. 56 th Ave. - Chambers to Pena	\$17.5 M	\$14.0M
B. I-25/Broadway Interchange	\$14.6 M	\$11.7 M
C. Support Downtown Circulator - 18 th & 19th reconstruction in concrete	\$46.2 M	\$37.0 M
D. Federal - 7 th to Holden	\$25.0 M	\$20.0 M
E. Bike/Ped Bridge - to Colorado Station	\$ 4.0 M	\$ 3.2 M
F. MLK - Havana to Peoria	\$14.5 M	\$11.6 M
G. South Platte Access Improvements	\$ 3.75 M	\$ 3.0 M
Total	\$125.55 M	\$100.5 M

The Committee discussed the formulae used for allocation of federal transportation funds (Colorado annually receives about 1.5% of federal funds, \$300-\$400 M) and the Highway Users Tax Fund (HUTF) moneys (Colorado receives about 60 cents of each dollar contributed). Mr. Vidal said that it is time to recalculate the formulae, due to population shifts. Gas tax revenue is decreasing as vehicles are more fuel efficient and people try to drive less, and this is another reason for a comprehensive look at how we fund transportation improvements.

Mr. Venegas added that several organizations, such as the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, are engaged in a larger policy discussion about the evolution of the current model of the metropolitan planning organization (MPO), such as Denver Regional Council of Governments. Mayor Hickenlooper is actively involved, chairing the Transportation Committee of the Conference of Mayors. Secretary Hood of the U.S. Department of Transportation has signaled an interest in talking about updating the process and allocation formulae.

Mr. Vidal suggested that the recent allocation of the federal stimulus package is a guide to how federal transportation funds may be distributed. That package allocated \$400 M to Colorado Department of Transportation, which designated \$100 M for the MPOs, with DRCOG getting \$55 M. DRCOG in turn allocated \$30 M to Denver.

The U.S. House and then the Senate will take up reauthorization of the federal transportation act, and a bill should be signed by mid-2010. This may be an extension of the current act rather than full reauthorization; however, additional projects might be authorized. Lots of effort is going into lobbying, talking and fretting by organizations representing interests such as environmental protection and sustainability, as well as cities, regional organizations and states.