



# TRANSPORTATION NEWSLETTER

**DATE: APRIL 2019**

**Vince Rogalski, Chairman**

**Gunnison Valley TPR**

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## Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Alliance

**DATE:** March 22, 2019

**TO:** Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Tony Cady, Region Planning and Environmental Manager, CDOT Region 5

**SUBJECT:** Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Alliance, and the West Slope Wildlife Prioritization Study

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this memo is to provide STAC with information regarding the Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Alliance, and the recently completed West Slope Wildlife Prioritization Study.

### **Action**

Informational only - no action is required.

### **Background and Details**

Over the past four years the state has seen a rise in the number of reported wildlife-related collisions. State agencies track reported collisions with all types of wildlife, from raccoons and skunks to moose and elk. However, the most significant number of wildlife vehicle collisions (WVC) occur with deer. Last year, agencies reported more than 4,600 deer killed on Colorado highways. The Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Alliance is a collaborative effort of over a dozen agencies with the aim of improving human safety, while integrating wildlife movement needs into Colorado's transportation system. This includes measures that institutionalize wildlife considerations into transportation projects, and builds partnerships to protect wildlife movements across landscapes, with the goal of reducing WVCs while maintaining wildlife populations.

Several concurrent efforts are occurring, both nationally and within the state. One such effort is the West Slope Wildlife Prioritization Study (WSWPS). This research project emerged from a commitment to increased collaboration between CDOT and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to address wildlife conflicts on roads, with the objective of identifying wildlife-highway conflict areas where targeted mitigation could have the greatest impact on reducing WVCs. Fewer WVCs translate to fewer human injuries and fatalities, fewer wildlife mortalities, healthier wildlife populations, and a cost savings for CDOT, individual motorists, insurance companies, and society at large.

### **Next Steps**

The Alliance was created in direct response to Action Items identified in the statewide Colorado Transportation and Wildlife Summit, which was held in the summer of 2017. The Alliance would like to begin the process of planning, funding and scheduling a follow-up Summit for the summer/fall of 2019. STAC support and assistance in this process would be helpful.

## Planning Reset – Rebecca White (Division of Transportation Development)

- a) The next Statewide Transportation Plan (SWP) will continue as planned, but with a new focus and strategic vision. CDOT hopes to touch all 64 counties through this process.
- b) CDOT develops a number of plans, many driven by federal requirements, but in doing so has lost the opportunity to look at multiple modes and topic areas holistically and in a deliberate fashion.
  - i) In the past, CDOT may have visited the same stakeholders several times in close succession to discuss each distinct mode or topic area - an inefficient approach.
- c) The new goal is to bring multiple planning efforts together and express a statewide vision for what transportation should accomplish, then refine these conversations to develop a 10-year statewide strategic pipeline of projects.
  - i) This will require an evolution of the STIP to include 4 fiscally-constrained years and 6 illustrative years.
  - ii) Improved data and tools, including the new Statewide Travel Model, will allow for a meaningful comparison between different project types. The model can address the interplay of transportation and land use, changing traveler preferences, new technologies, and more over the course of the next 10-25 years.
- d) CDOT will work closely with MPOs, TPRs, Counties, and Cities to understand their challenges, identify and consider a range of solutions, and finally develop project selection tools that fairly weights the benefits and costs of all types of projects.
- e) STAC Discussion: Representatives discussed the transition from a 4-year to 10-year STIP, expressed concern about the potential for new project selection tools to pit rural needs versus urban needs, and reiterated their desire for individual TPRs to retain their own local priorities, projects, and selection processes rather than adopting a single, statewide approach. Other representatives emphasized the importance of integrating freight needs into regional plans, relying on local expertise to understand economic and community priorities, and allowing sufficient time for a meaningful planning process to play out. CDOT staff emphasized their intent to make the entirety of the process transparent and efficient for the public to engage with.

## Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) – James Herlyck (Federal Highway Administration)

- a) The Office of Federal Lands Highway at FHWA does not own any roads, but rather is a project manager-centric organization that administers several programs with federal, state, local, and tribal partners.
- b) FLAP distributes roughly \$15-\$16 million per year in Colorado and has worked with over 20 local agency partners in recent years. Its purpose is to improve facilities that provide access to federal lands with an emphasis on high-use recreational areas and large economic generators.
  - i) The Programming Decisions Committee for Colorado consists of one representative from FHWA, one from CDOT, and one from the STAC.
- c) The current call for projects will close on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and will make \$40-\$50 million available in Colorado for fiscal years 2023-2025.
  - i) A webinar for potential applicants on March 26<sup>th</sup> will provide additional information on project eligibility and the application process.
- d) STAC Discussion: Representatives discussed the eligibility of military bases, clarified the required local match level of 17.21%, and thanked the presenter for his office's support for past projects at the Great Sand Dunes National Park and on Cottonwood Pass.

# State Legislative Report – Herman Stockinger & Andy Karsian (Office of Policy & Government Relations)

## a) State:

- i) HB 19-1207 would require passenger vehicles to have enhanced traction control (chains, snow tires, etc.) during winter travel and has passed the House. Currently debate in the Senate revolves around enforcement, potential public confusion, and other details.
- ii) There is also an effort underway to propose a “De-Brucing” measure for voter approval in November, which would allow the state to retain tax revenues collected over the TABOR limit and dedicate 1/3 of those dollars to transportation.
  - (1) Currently 2 separate bills - one to put the measure on the ballot and a second to allocated the funds if the measure passes.
- iii) Last year’s SB 1 legislation included a provision to put forward a \$2.3 billion transportation ballot measure in 2019 if both of the 2018 measures failed. However, legislators are now discussing the possibility of forgoing this measure and making an annual \$50 million general fund transfer for transportation instead.

b) STAC Discussion: Representatives inquired about another bill that would increase apprenticeship requirements for contractors and potentially limit the overall contractor pool as an unintended result.

## CDOT Goals and Priorities (Shoshana Lew, Executive Director)

**Purpose:** Each year, staff develops performance goals with their supervisors as part of the performance planning process. Similarly, each State Executive Director develops annual goals with the Governor. As CDOT Director Shoshana Lew works with the Governor’s office and CDOT staff on the development of the department’s goals, she wants to share those draft goals with the Transportation Commission.

**Action:** No action necessary at this time.

**Next Steps:** Finalize and sign the goals in June.

**Discussion:**

New CDOT Director Shoshana Lew shared these thoughts about CDOT goals and priorities:

- Safety will continue to be a priority. With the death of CDOT highway maintenance worker Eric Hill fresh in our minds, it must continue as a priority. We must also acknowledge that many vehicle crashes are the result of human error, and place more emphasis on public education campaigns.
- CDOT will continue with data-driven assessment of transportation needs while recognizing the need to ensure equitable implementation.
- The planning process will get a fresh look. CDOT should make transportation investments with the outcomes in mind.
- The focus will be on multimodal solutions to transportation problems. CDOT and the Rail Commission will need to work together closely. Newly elected Gov. Jared Polis also is focusing on multimodal solutions, not just rail.
- Other challenges facing CDOT are improving the environmental impacts of transportation projects and improving transportation connectivity.

## Safety Workshop & Operations Reorganization Status Report (Kyle Lester)

**Purpose:** To update the Commission on division re-organization process and provide an overview of ways to refocus safety efforts as they relate to infrastructure needs, operations, and technology. CDOT Staff is recommending actions focused in three focus areas that will better align the organization with the goal of improving safety on Colorado's highway system: taking more of a systematic statewide safety approach to our infrastructure and physical assets, human/policy factors, and organizational adjustments to better support real time operations.

**GOAL:** Improve the safety of Colorado's transportation network by reducing the rate and severity of crashes and improving safety conditions for those traveling via all transportation modes.

**Infrastructure and Physical Assets:**

- Increase driver awareness through deploying improved pavement markings and utilizing centerline and edge rumble strips in locations with high run off the road and centerline cross-over accidents.
- Install 6-inch striping and rumble strips on key corridors based on safety and speed data (e.g. 65 and 75 mph corridors).
- Pilot variable speed limits on critical corridors with a goal of reducing crash rates and incidents during weather events and during high pedestrian zones and times.
- Identify and implement a program that results in bottleneck reduction and thus congestion resulting in reduced driver frustration and crashes.

**Human/Policy Factors:**

- Work with recipients of CDOT funding to deploy best practices for safety across the roadway systems that they manage.
- Collaborate with the Department of Motor Vehicles to improve driver's education for new drivers and continuing education to help current drivers adapt to changes in technology and driving conditions.

**Organizational:**

- Integrate maintenance and operations to streamline incident command for incident response by April 15, 2019.
  - Utilize available technology to quickly identify incident detection and communicate with staff who can deploy resources.
  - Utilize available technology and existing CDOT Operations Center resources for accident and incident detection along congested corridors. Utilize photo, video, and data for early detection of accidents and incidents. Communicate quickly with Maintenance staff to deploy resources that mitigate the hazards to the traveling public.
- Work to reduce secondary accidents statewide by rapidly deploying CDOT resources focused on quick clearance: CDOT Maintenance Crews and debris crews along with our heavy tow assets and Courtesy Patrol partners. CDOT's resources are to be incorporated into the corridor Standing Program Management Teams be led by Colorado State Patrol.
- Develop a comprehensive weather forecasting network and response planning that includes state and local resources. Response planning focuses on resources allocation and coordination from the 72-hour mark through storm clean up.
- Increase staffing levels of snowplow operators to maximize CDOT's equipment resources during response to weather incidents statewide

**Next Steps:** Identify funding sources to support more short-term delivery projects that improve safety immediately, continue staff work and analysis, and work with CDOT Regions to implement safety projects and organizational changes.

**Discussion:**

- Commissioner Gilliland said she is a firm believer in rumble strips alerting people about when they are driving too close to the edge or centerline of highways; however, if CDOT widens a road or shifts it to a different alignment, sometimes the old rumble strips are not very well ground out and covered up.

- Commissioner Thiebaut said he would like to see more regional involvement in deciding where rumble strips should go. He also would like CDOT to be more diligent about preventing accidents.
  - Charles Meyer, manager of State Traffic and Safety Branch, said CDOT starts with the data about where and what type of crashes are taking place, and how to prevent them.
  - Mike McVaugh, Region 5 regional transportation director (RTD), said CDOT would like to implement more proactive safety projects, but funding is limited.
- Division of Maintenance and Operations (DMO) Director, Kyle Lester, said CDOT is trying to do more “quick hit” projects, and that everything that the division does is coordinated with the CDOT Engineering Regions. The Division of Maintenance and Operations provides central staff oversight, but the Regions implement safety and maintenance projects.
- Commissioner Thiebaut said he has some reservations about the Highway Maintenance Division using Regional Priority Program (RPP) funds for some of the maintenance/safety projects. The rural TPRs need flexibility in using the funds. When he mentioned CDOT using more proactive measures, what he had in mind were sharp curves on SH 96 that could cause drivers to go off the road if they are not paying attention, particularly at night.
- Commissioner Scott said a good safety measure would be to encircle some stop signs with LED lights. Another would be to push a primary seatbelt law.
  - Kyle Lester said he looks to the Transportation Commission to advocate for a primary seatbelt law in the Legislature. CDOT DMO needs to focus on what he can influence directly.
- Commissioner Connell said a lack of shoulders in her area is a safety problem.
  - Executive Director Lew suggested Commissioner Connell start the conversation about highway shoulders with her local constituents.
- Regarding combining maintenance and operations, Commissioner Thiebaut asked if CDOT needs statutory changes to combine the two. Kathy Young of the Attorney General’s Office said she would check.

## **NEXT MEETING NOTICE TPR meeting June 13, 2019**

**Place: Region 10 Offices 10:00 to 2:00pm**