Final

STAFF SUMMARY OF MEETING

TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 08/19/2013

Time: **03:30 PM** to **05:34 PM**

Place: Otero Junior College, La Junta, Colorado

This Meeting was called to order by
Representative Tyler

This Report was prepared by
Kristen Johnson

ATTENDANCE

Baumgardner	
Buck	
Coram	
Everett	
Fischer	
Jones	
King	
Kraft-Tharp	
Lawrence	
Lee	
Mitsch Bush	
Moreno	
Peniston	
Primavera	
Scott	
Todd	
Heath	
Tyler	

X = Present, E = Excused, A = Absent, * = Present after roll call

Bills Addressed:	Action Taken:
TLRC Field Hearing - La Junta	Witness Testimony and/or Committee Discussion Only

03:30 PM -- TLRC Field Hearing - La Junta

Representative Tyler, chair, called the meeting to order and discussed the purpose of the committee's visit. No roll call was taken. The committee members introduced themselves and stated the area of Colorado that they represent and the committees on which they serve. The legislative staff introduced themselves. Senator Crowder, state senator for Senate District 35, introduced himself and stated that the highways in the La Junta region are in terrible shape.

03:40 PM

Commissioner Bill Thiebaut, Colorado Transportation Commission, Mr. Tom Wrona, Regional Transportation Director for Region 2, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and Mr. Kurt Morrison, State and Federal Liaison, CDOT, came to the table to brief the committee. Commissioner Thiebaut thanked the committee and stated that he was sworn into the Colorado Transportation Commission on August 15, 2013. Senator Heath asked Commissioner Thiebaut to discuss his involvement in the state legislature. Commissioner Thiebaut stated that he served seven years in the Colorado House of Representatives and was majority leader for two years.

Mr. Wrona stated that he has been a CDOT employee for 30 years. He said that there are three main priority corridors in CDOT Region 2: I-25, U.S. 50, and U.S. 287. He stated that Region 2 includes the 10 southeast counties of Colorado. He discussed ongoing projects in the region, and stated that nearly 200 miles of repaving and reconstruction has taken place on U.S. 287, and that bridge projects along I-25 are also being addressed. He explained that the highest, unfunded priority in the region at this time is U.S. 50. He said the goal of the project is to create a 4-lane highway from La Junta to the Kansas state border, but that the project is estimated to cost $4 billion. He discussed improvements to U.S. 287, which include putting in place an alternate truck route that will cost about $175 million to complete. He said it will cost about $50 million to add passing lanes to U.S. 287.

03:50 PM

Mr. Wrona commented that putting in shoulders and expanding the roadways on U.S. 350, U.S. 160, and state highway 96 are priorities as well, and that those projects can be completed for $60 million. He said that it costs roughly $10 million per mile to add shoulders to the highways. He stated that the projects discussed can be phased or done in increments, and that any additional money that is available will be put to good use. Representative Tyler asked about the repaving of U.S. 287. Mr. Wrona responded that the road was repaved using 10-12 inch thick concrete, so it is basically a new highway.

Mr. Kurt Morrison stated that the projects Mr. Wrona described amount to more than CDOT's total annual budget. Senator Crowder commented that U.S. 350 has not been repaved in the last 60 years, and that there are several safety issues along the highway. He said that a large amount of commerce from New Mexico comes through the area via U.S. 350 and that repaving this highway is a priority.

03:58 PM

Representative Scott asked what the top project would be if only one could be completed. Mr. Wrona stated that such a response is difficult, but that he has heard a lot about U.S. 50 in his recent meetings and that there is much interest in businesses wanting to set up in that area. Representative Tyler asked about installing passing lanes and if those lanes could be used to expand to a fourth lane in the future. Mr. Wrona responded that most of the work done on a passing lane would be thrown away if the highway was being expanded to four lanes.

Senator Heath asked about land acquisition for a fourth lane. Mr. Wrona stated that CDOT already owns some of the land, but that some would have to be purchased.

04:00 PM

Commissioner Keith Goodwin, Otero County Commissioner District 1, Commissioner Kevin Karney, Otero County Commissioner District 2, and Commissioner Jim Baldwin, Otero County Commissioner District 3, came to the table to brief the committee. Commissioner Goodwin began by discussing the agricultural industry in the region, and stated that U.S. 350 is the main route by which products reach market. He stated that the region is working on heritage and agricultural tourism, but that it is hard to get tourists to the area when the roads are not safe to travel. He said that many people travel U.S. 350 from La Junta to Trinidad and that the highway has safety issues. He discussed Responsible Acceleration of Maintenance and Partnerships (RAMP) grants and how he has been discouraged from applying for the grant because there is not money available to meet the matching requirement.

Representative Kraft-Tharpe asked if the revitalization of Fort Lyon has transportation implications. Commissioner Goodwin stated that Fort Lyon is important to the region and that many of the employees of Fort Lyon come from Otero County.

04:12 PM

Commissioner Karney stated that he has been a commissioner for 15 years, and over that time, he has seen a lot of patching on U.S. 350, but that there is still cracking taking place on the surface. He discussed U.S. 50, saying that $12 million was granted by the federal government for safety enhancements between Pueblo and La Junta and that the improvements at Fowler are due to those monies. He stated that the commission is working with CDOT on the rest of the funds. He discussed mowing weeds along highways. Senator Baumgardner asked how CDOT handles mowing. Commissioner Karney responded that CDOT has one or two mowers, so when the other counties are completed, they come to Otero County.

04:21 PM

Commissioner Baldwin stated that he once dreamt of a four-lane U.S. 50 highway, but that now he just hopes the roads are maintained and snow plowed on secondary roads. Commissioner Karney continued, stating that a county bridge fund used to exist that the state would contribute to, but that the fund is no longer in place. He asked that the fund be returned. Representative Peniston asked about the use of Funding Advancement for Surface Transportation and Economic Recovery (FASTER) monies. Commissioner Karney responded that there has been some increase in funding, but that as accessed valuation grows slowly in the region, small increases in funding only really go to cover inflation.

Representative Tyler asked what the panel would tell the committee about state funding for transportation. Commissioner Karney responded that he thinks the area is getting its fair share, proportionally, but that there are more needs than there are dollars. Senator Crowder commented that U.S. 350 is in worse shape than any of the county roads and that this doesn't say much for the state when the county roads are in better shape. Representative Kraft-Tharpe asked if the commissioners had considered the use of rubberized asphalt. Commissioner Karney responded that the capacity to manufacture rubberized asphalt does not exist with current equipment.

Commissioner Baldwin described how roads are repaired using a chip-and-seal method. Representative Coram asked for the life expectancy of a chip-and-seal project. Commissioner Baldwin stated that they last about seven years before it has to be re-done. Representative Coram asked about the substructure, and Commissioner Baldwin responded that some of the roads are in need of a new substructure. Commissioner Karney added that in the future, some of the chip-and-seal projects may have to be returned to gravel roads. He added that there is no oil or gas production in Otero County.

04:28 PM

Commissioner Karney continued. He stated that the commissioners have had several conversations with CDOT and that communication between the groups has improved. He said that there must be an increase in transportation funding in the future. Senator Heath asked if the average citizen agrees that transportation funding needs to be increased. Commissioner Karney stated that he thinks the educated citizens agree, and added that the corridors must be in place in order to get products to market.

04:32 PM

Mr. Dan Eveatt, City Engineer and Airport Manager, City of La Junta, Mr. Rick Klein, City Manager, City of La Junta, and Mr. Ron Davis, Director of Economic Development, City of La Junta, came to the table to brief the committee. Mr. Eveatt began by explaining that CDOT is more than just roads and bridges, and asked the committee to protect aviation grant funding. He said that even though aviation is a small portion of local transportation in the area, it is important in supporting Flight for Life. He stated that the airport makes the community accessible for larger corporations and that they see a lot of helicopters coming from one base to another base.

Mr. Klein continued the discussion by talking about U.S. 50, and stated that if the highway were four lanes, then bigger companies would come to the area. He gave the example of the Target distribution center that went to Pueblo. He stated that CDOT has done a lot and that the people in the region appreciate their work. Mr. Klein discussed passenger rail in the area and stated that Amtrak serves as an economic source. He described the impact of the Southwest Chief rail route, which runs from Chicago, through La Junta, and on to Los Angeles. Discussion regarding the Amtrak route through La Junta ensued.

The following members of the public testified:

04:55 PM -- Mr. Joe Kiely, representing Ports-to-Plains, came to the table to testify. He provided a handout to the committee members (Attachment A). He walked the committee through his handout and stated that CDOT views the Ports-to-Plains project as a way to reduce congestion. He stated that federal earmarks don't take place any more, so it is up to the state to determine where the federal monies will be spent. He discussed improvements on the state highway 71 connector. He discussed the role of trucks and their movement along I-25, saying that many of the trucks heading north and south don't need to be on I-25 and don't need to go through Denver. Representative Tyler asked about the revival of short rail lines to get products from farm to market. Mr. Kiely stated that he is interested in this idea, but that there is very little true north and south movement of goods that takes place by rail these days.

05:02 PM -- Ms. Velma Simpson, representing herself as a citizen of the City of La Junta, came to the table to testify. Ms. Simpson said that she commuted into Denver from La Junta for the first four years that she and her husband lived in the area. She said that she has also traveled the roads between La Junta and northern Colorado for several years. She stated that she avoids I-25 and uses I-71 instead. She said that she is a strong supporter of Amtrak being in the area, and that it gives the community viability and connection. She discussed her travels along U.S. 350 this summer with her family and noted that traveling with their travel trailer on the highway was scary. She said that the highway is very hazardous and that there are times when the weeds cover up where the road is, and other times there is cattle on the roadway. She said that safety is a big deal along the highway.

05:09 PM -- Ms. Beverly Babb, representing herself as a citizen of the City of La Junta, came to the table to testify. Ms. Babb shared a story of her daughter traveling U.S. 350 from Santa Fe, New Mexico to La Junta, Colorado. She said that her daughter told her that she encountered eight deer trying to cross the road and that it is scary in areas where weeds have not been trimmed back from the road. She said that U.S. 350 is a very dangerous, narrow highway. She discussed her involvement as a Rails to Trails volunteer and how she makes presentations to thousands of Amtrak riders throughout the summer. She asked for the committee's help to keep Amtrak in Colorado.

05:13 PM -- Mr. Stephen Simpson, representing himself as a citizen of La Junta, came to the table to testify. Mr. Simpson discussed Amtrak and the valuable resource that it is to the students of Otero Junior College, where he is an instructor. He said that Amtrak allows the college to bring in special speakers without having to spend 8 hours driving to and from Denver International Airport. Representative Peniston asked how much influence the state of Colorado has over Amtrak. Mr. Simpson responded that Colorado can join in the efforts that Mr. Klein discussed.

Senator Crowder introduced Mr. Jim Rizzuto, President of Otero Junior College. Mr. Rizzuto addressed the committee and thanked them for visiting. Senator Todd thanked the witnesses.

05:26 PM

Senator Heath asked Mr. Wrona and Mr. Morrison to come back to the table. Senator Heath asked about the mowing operations that take place under CDOT's purview. Mr. Wrona stated that he does not have a definitive answer on the mowing frequency, but knows that it is tied up by budget limitations. He stated that this is the first he has heard of this situation on U.S. 350. Mr. Morrison stated that CDOT is trying to come up with innovative ways to address the mowing. He suggested for instance that a farmer may be able to mow the weeds and then use what he cuts.

Representative Tyler asked about the waves in U.S. 350. Mr. Wrona responded that if a road gets to that point, it likely has base problems such as having water present and draining issues. He said that U.S. 350 is at the top of the southcentral planning region's priorities. Mr. Morrison addressed Representative Peniston's question about legal authority over Amtrak, and said that the state does not have much control over Amtrak from a legal standpoint and that Amtrak is more of an appendage to the federal government.

05:34 PM

The committee adjourned.

PORTS-TO-PLAINS

ALLIANCE

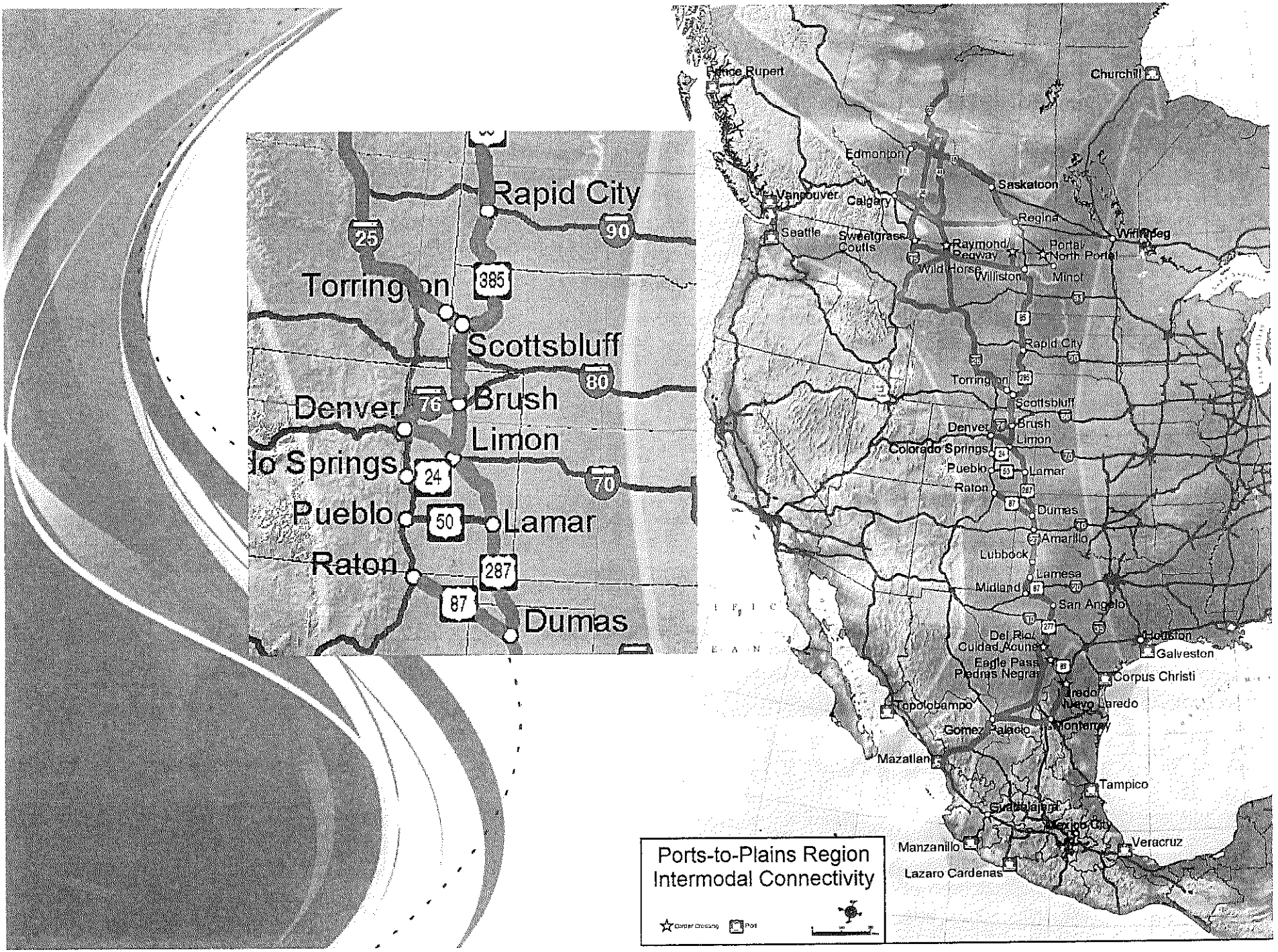
Securing the Benefits of Commerce to
North America's Energy & Agricultural Heartland

STILL A VIABLE OPTION TO INTERSTATE 25

Joe Kiely, Ports-to-Plains Alliance

August 19, 2013

Attachment A


Rapid City
Torrington
Scottsbluff
Denver
Brush
Limon
Pueblo
Lamar
Raton
Dumas
Prince Rupert
Churchill
Edmonton
Saskatoon
Vancouver
Calgary
Regina
Seattle
Sweetgrass
Coutts
Raymond
Regway
Portal
North Portal
Wild Horse
Williston
Minot
Colorado Springs
Amarillo
Lubbock
Lamesa
Midland
San Angelo
Del Rio
Ciudad Acuna
Eagle Pass
Piedras Negras
Houston
Galveston
Corpus Christi
Laredo
Nuevo Laredo
Monterrey
Tepotolobampo
Gomez Palacio
Mazatlan
Tampico
Guadalajara
Mexico City
Veracruz
Manzanillo
Lazaro Cardenas
Ports-to-Plains Region
Intermodal Connectivity
Border Crossing
Port

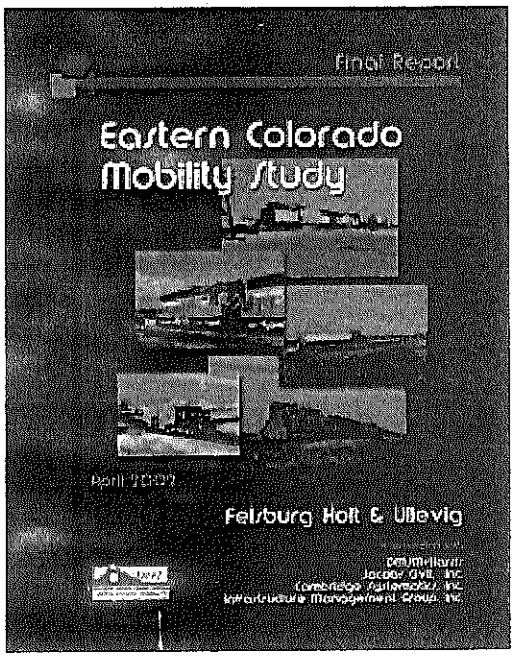
Ports-to-Plains and Heartland Expressway: High Priority Corridors on the National Highway System

The Transportation Commission's Resolution TC-796 states: "CDOT is committed to diverting traffic from congested segments of I-25 through infrastructure improvement in eastern Colorado and views the Ports to Plains Program as an opportunity to pursue such goals."

"To better understand this scenario, an additional analysis that considered only improvements to the US 64 or New Mexico branch was completed. The results of this analysis showed that if only improvements to the US 64 New Mexico branch are made, then the shifting from US 64 to US 287 as previously explained would not occur, and traffic would in fact be attracted to the 4-lane US 64 roadway."

CDMP, Dec, 2004 Pages 10-11

2008 Eastern Colorado Mobility Study:



"Improvement of the SH 71 connector, for example, would result in the greatest diversions in the segment of I-25 between Colorado Springs and Denver and the segment north of Denver."

132 miles... One urbanized area – Brush

Eastern Colorado Mobility Study:

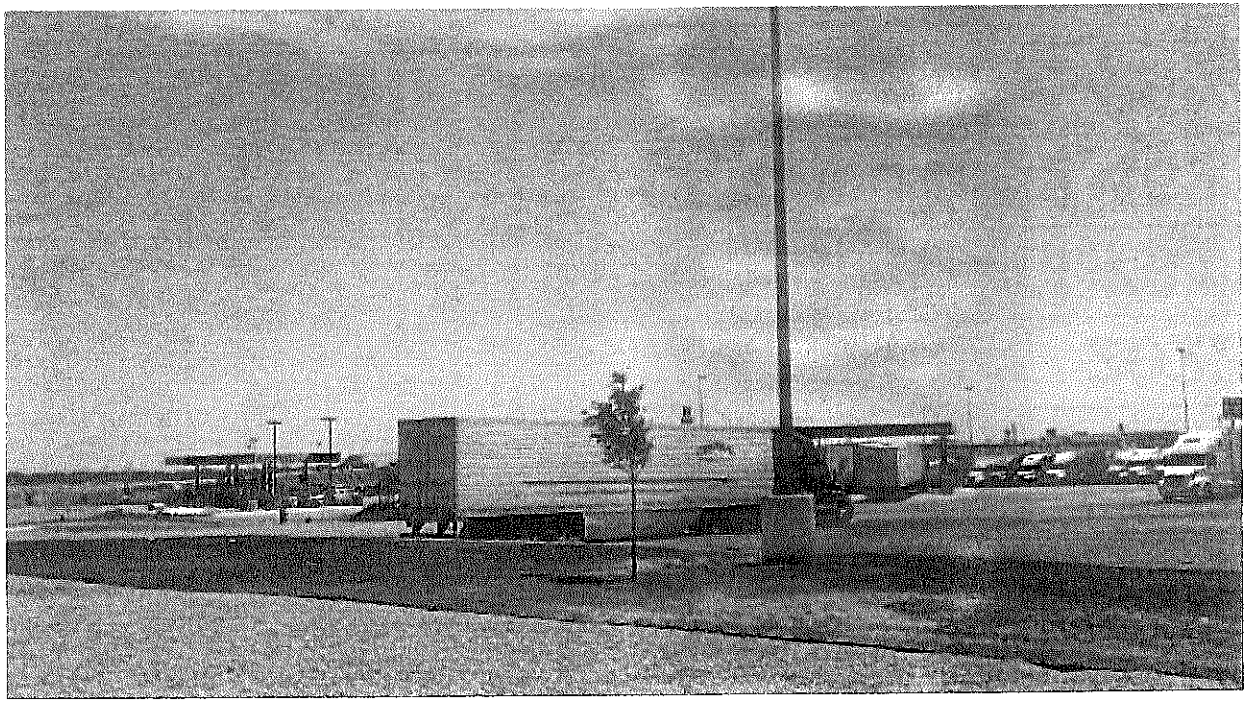
SH 71 connector are the least costly, ranging from approximately $280 to $340 million.

Heartland EXPRESSWAY

CDOT has reconstructed 24 segments of U.S. 40/287 between the Oklahoma border and Limon since 1991. Those reconstructions, in most instances, have consisted of removing the existing asphalt roadway, replacing it with concrete, and upgrading it to a "super-two" configuration – a wider two-lane highway, with occasional passing lanes and wider shoulders.

Ports-to-Plains US 40/287		
	2012	2022
AADT	2,900	3,248
Trucks	1,240	1,389
% Trucks	43%	43%

Ports-to-Plains I-70		
	2012	2022
AADT	9,900	11,781
Trucks	2,910	3,463
% Trucks	29%	29%



Heartland Expressway		
	2012	2022
AADT	1,700	2,329
Trucks	360	593
% Trucks	21%	25%

The Result: Additional Trucks on Interstate 25 North of Denver

An Expanding Statewide Transportation System

Role of Trucks

- Filling your Favorite Store Shelves
- Getting That Product Just in Time
- Exporting that Manufactured Good
- Moving Components for Energy: Traditional and Renewable
- Transporting the Agriculture Economy
- Bringing Tourists and Hunters into Colorado

An Expanding Statewide Transportation System

Role of Trucks

Transportation and Logistics
2012

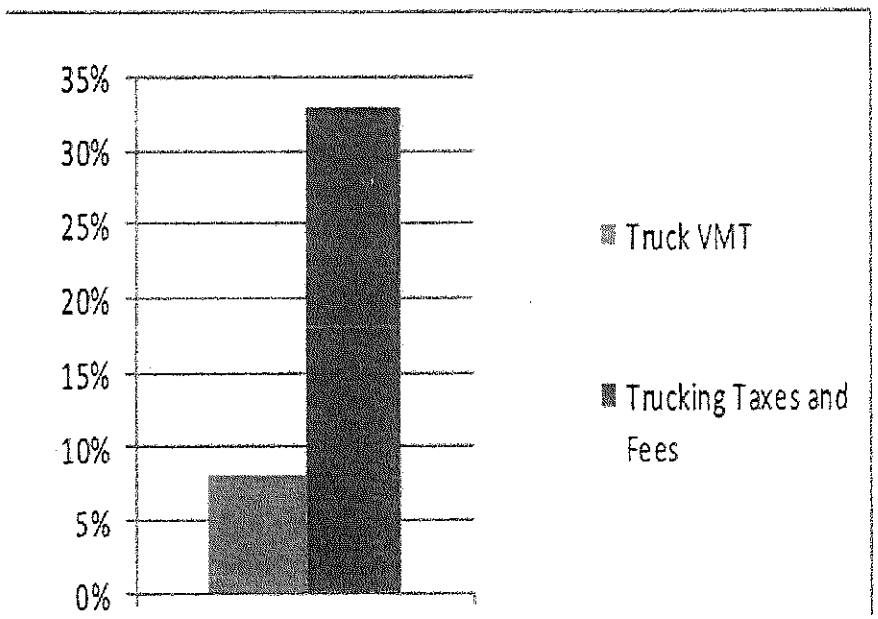
- 188,644 Employees
- $65,875 Average Wage
- 16,346 Companies

An Expanding Statewide Transportation System

Role of Trucks

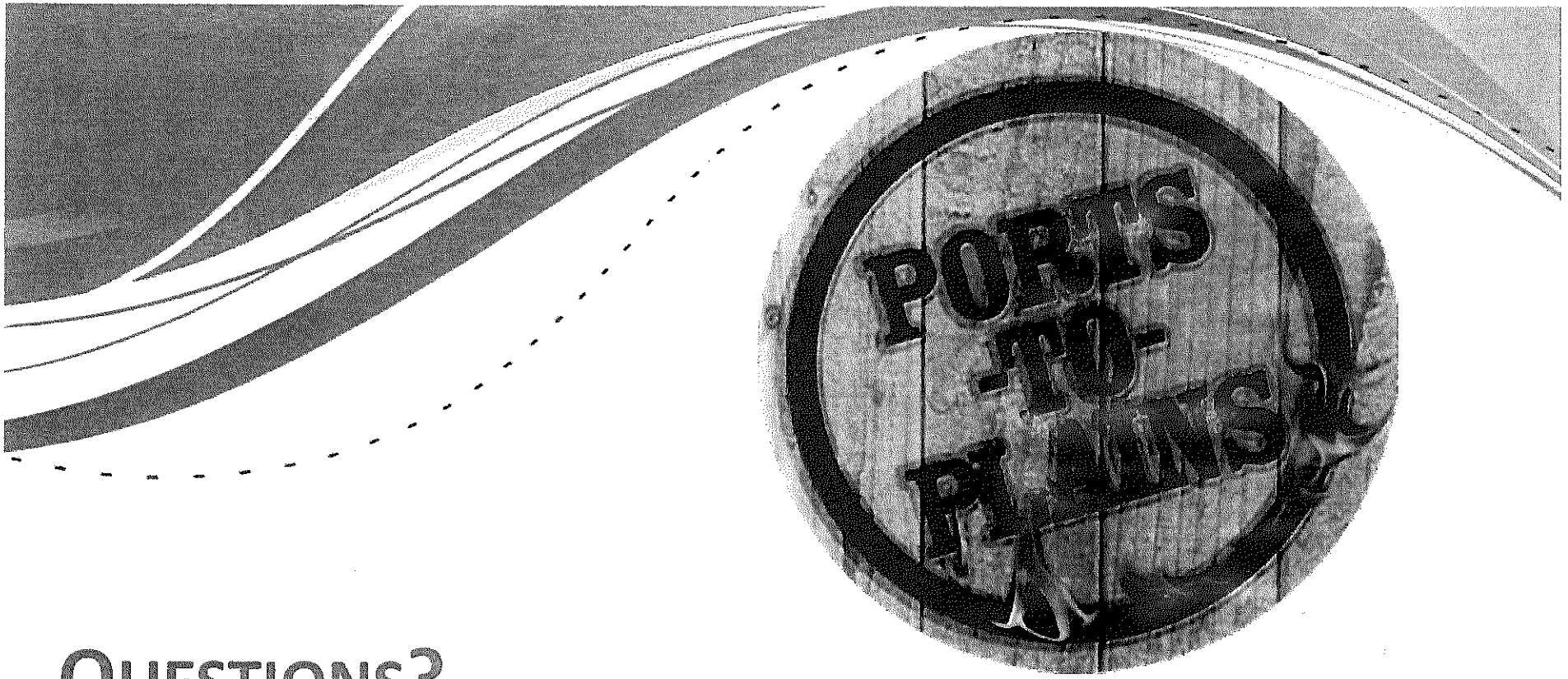
- Trucking employed almost 92,000 people in 2011
- 1 out of 20 workers work in trucking related businesses
- Trucking pays almost $4.3 billion in wages
- There are 9,240 trucking companies located in Colorado, most of them small, locally owned businesses. (most have less than 10 employees)

An Expanding Statewide Transportation System



Role of Trucks

- Trucking industry pays $443 million or 33% of Colorado's federal and state roadway taxes and fees.
- Trucking only represents 8% of vehicle miles traveled in Colorado.



QUESTIONS?

PORTS-TO-PLAINS

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