

Final
STAFF SUMMARY OF MEETING

TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 09/12/2013

ATTENDANCE

Time: **09:00 AM to 10:29 AM**

Baumgardner

Place: Garfield County Administration
Building

Buck

Coram

This Meeting was called to order by
Representative Tyler

Everett

Fischer

Jones

King

This Report was prepared by
Jonathan Senft

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 Glenwood Springs	-

09:00 AM -- TLRC Field Hearing Glenwood Springs

Representative Tyler called the meeting to order. No roll call was taken. The members of the committee introduced themselves and gave a brief overview of their district representation and committee membership. Committee staff also introduced themselves. Representative Tyler encouraged the panelists to describe their transportation priorities.

09:02 AM

Tom Jankovsky, Garfield County Commissioner, and Andrew Gorgey, Garfield County Manager, introduced themselves to the committee. Mr. Gorgey spoke about the strong relationship the county has with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and cooperation within the Transportation Planning Region (TPR). Commissioner Jankovsky said that a current priority is the replacement of the Grand Avenue bridge, which spans the Colorado River and railroad lines. He noted the current debate over the bridge's construction, and recognized the differing points of view regarding how the project should proceed. He concluded that it was his personal belief that there is overwhelming support for the project. Commissioner Jankovsky specified his concern over the length of time that the bridge would need to be closed for construction, which is estimated at 60 days. He said that the bridge connects the north section of Glenwood Springs to the south section, and is a key thoroughfare to cities to the south, such as Aspen. He suggested that the extended closure could impact tourism, which is a concern for the entire Roaring Fork Valley. He said the closure could also lead to traffic congestion on I-70, and noted that congestion between Vail and Denver also disrupts tourism.

Senator Todd asked Commissioner Jankovsky about proposed length of the detour around the bridge while it is under construction. Commissioner Jankovsky responded that the detour is likely to be approximately two miles.

09:06 AM

Leo McKinney, Glenwood Springs Mayor and Councilor, and Matt Steckler, Glenwood Springs Councilor, introduced themselves to the committee. Mayor McKinney provided the city council's position for the Grand Avenue bridge reconstruction. He stated his concerns about the proposed detour, and the length of closure, which he referred to as mitigation. He said he expects the closure to impact tourism, local businesses, and the overall local economy. The city council is currently engaging upper valley communities, which may find it harder to get deliveries of food and other goods and services during the bridge's closure. He estimated that 26,000 cars per day are proposed to detour on to Midland Avenue, and that Midland Avenue is not intended for heavy truck use.

Representative Mitsch Bush asked the panel to approximate when the detour would occur. Mayor McKinney responded that the timeline is still yet to be determined.

Mr. Steckler said that the city expected the closure to last from 30 to 60 days. He said there will be also be limitations on traffic both before and after the bridge is closed. He said he believed that the city of Glenwood Springs would be generally impacted for many months. Mr. McKinney added that I-70 will also have to be closed for short periods during the construction, but was hopeful such closures would take place within the night hours.

09:12 AM

Mr. Steckler described the city's cooperation with CDOT on the bridge project. He characterized the relationship as excellent in terms of the proposals for bridge design, but noted that the two groups are just beginning talks concerning the mitigation. He said that the current mitigation plans appear sufficient, but that there are several issues that the groups are currently working through.

Representative Mitsch Bush asked the panel whether the TPR is aware of these discussions concerning the bridge. Both Mr. Steckler and Mr. McKinney said that the TPR is aware. Representative Tyler told the panel to let the committee know if there is anything the committee can do to assist.

09:16 AM

Mayor McKinney discussed the regional bus system and associated taxes, and noted that the system recently had to cut back service. He stated that he would like to see the transit system develop in the area; however, if a system is not convenient to its passengers, then an expansion of the system will not take place. Mr. Steckler added that the city council supports the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA) and that the city contributes \$1 to \$2 million each year to RFTA. He said support for the authority goes across the political spectrum. Mr. McKinney also noted the city's trail system, and said that biking and walking are growing in popularity.

09:23 AM

Representative Mitsch Bush asked about the viability of the Midland Avenue detour. Mayor McKinney noted difficulties with land acquisition and other issues.

09:25 AM

Mark Dowaliby, Park County Commissioner, introduced himself to the committee. Commissioner Dowaliby came to express support for a bicycle route connecting Breckenridge to Alma. He presented to the committee a large map of the proposed route. He explained that when I-70 closes, Front Range bound drivers reroute to Highway 9 through Alma. He said that due to a shortage of stop signs and traffic signals, the mixture of bikes and trucks creates a dangerous situation. He explained that such a route would be beneficial to tourism, and noted that Wisconsin's bike paths generate approximately \$500,000 per year. He suggested that Colorado's bike system revenue generation would be higher.

Representative Tyler asked Commissioner Dowaliby whether funding changes created by Senate Bill 13-048, which authorizes counties and municipalities to spend revenue that they receive from the Highway Users Tax Fund (HUTF) on transit-related projects, would be useful in constructing the bike route. Commissioner Dowaliby said that there is not enough funding in total, and the manner in which the HUTF funds can be used is a lesser concern. He cited a recent request from the United States Department of Transportation, which asked Park County to complete work on Guanella Pass. He said such a project would expend a large portion of the county's HUTF allocation, and there would be little extra remaining, regardless of what the funds could be spent upon.

Senator King asked about the total cost of bike path. Commissioner Dowaliby said a cost-benefit analysis had been performed, and that it would cost approximately \$20 million to build the bike path from Alma to Breckenridge, but that costs could vary depending on how much of the route would use lane shoulders. He added that the route would also be beneficial to the USA Pro Cycling Challenge, which would provide offsetting revenue.

09:34 AM

Representative Peniston asked if the residents of Park County would support a tax increase to construct the bike route. Mr. Dowaliby explained that he could not be certain of support for increased taxes due to the political preferences among the county's residents.

09:38 AM

Brian Pettet, Pitkin County Public Works Director, introduced himself to the committee. He explained that his purpose in appearing before the committee was to discuss the Grand Avenue bridge, and stated that the route is an artery into the Roaring Fork Valley. He expressed his initial concerns about the proposed detour, but compared the process to a similar project around Snowmass Canyon, which he concluded was successful. He explained that the proposed rerouting on Midland Avenue was slightly different than that around Snowmass, but that similar partnerships between local officials reduced the fear on both projects. He concluded that the Roaring Fork Valley supports bridge replacement.

Representative Primavera asked what the legislature can do to help in the process. Mr. Pettet said that he just wanted the members to understand that there are proponents of the project, in the event they hear opposition.

09:43 AM

Representative Fischer asked Mr. Pettet to discuss the congestion on State Highway 82. He asked whether the bus service, RFTA, was reducing traffic congestion, especially in the area around the Aspen - Pitkin County airport. Mr. Pettet said that he believed the area congestion would be greater without RFTA. He noted that the system is second largest in the state.

Mr. Pettet explained that the county is currently researching transit options to interface with the airport. He said that tourism is a major part of the economy, and the airport is lifeline for this. He said that Delta Airlines is expanding into the airport, and it is vital resource.

09:45 AM

Mark Miller, Vail Fire Chief, and Jill Ryan, Eagle County Commissioner, introduced themselves to the committee. Chief Miller explained the limits of his fire jurisdiction as it relates to I-70. He said that the area between mile markers 182 to 190 is a "no man's land" for fire protection. He explained that the area is out of his jurisdiction and within federal land. He continued that his fire department still responds to emergency calls within this section. Chief Miller said these responses drain resources, and cost the town about \$140,000 per year. He explained the majority of these calls are related to vehicles catching fire. He said that he would appreciate any funding from a variety of sources, including the state. He added that his department would continue responding in the absence of outside funding, but the responses drain his organization, and that the elected officials of Vail wanted him to convey this message. Commissioner Ryan supported Chief Miller's comments.

Commissioner Ryan described a strong and amicable relationship between CDOT and Eagle County, and noted the county's recent application for Responsible Acceleration of Maintenance and Partnerships (RAMP) funding. She said the county's residents are particularly interested in multi-modal transportation. She described the county's sales tax that supports its trail system, which is collected in the Eagle River watershed of Eagle County.

Representative Scott asked if there had been any assistance from the state concerning the section along I-70 mentioned earlier. Chief Miller responded that there is no direct state funding, and the emergency responses were taxing on his department. He explained that the responses have required his department to purchase four-wheel drive fire engines that are equipped with higher horsepower in order to travel up Vail Pass.

Senator King asked if there had been any federal assistance regarding this section I-70. Commissioner Ryan explained that the county had contacted the state's congressional leadership, although she was unsure of the response. Senator King suggested that CDOT take the lead on finding a solution to the funding problem, and offered that he would be willing to speak to U.S. Representative Scott Tipton about the issue. Kurt Morrison, CDOT Legislative Liaison, mentioned that CDOT had been discussing the issue with Senator Gail Schwartz.

09:54 AM

Representative Mitsch Bush asked Commissioner Ryan about the Eagle County Airport and related transit projects. Commissioner Ryan said the airport is struggling with getting additional flights because airlines are more frequently requiring expensive flight guarantees. She mentioned that Eagle County Regional Transportation Authority (ECO Transit) just started its "spine service," which is a rapid-style route running between Eagle and Vail.

10:04 AM -- Ed Rosenberg, a local resident representing himself, introduced himself to the committee. He stated his concerns regarding the Grand Avenue bridge replacement. He described the noise, congestion and air pollution now occurring along this route, and questioned efforts to increase traffic capacity, which may exacerbate these problems. He said that residents move to Glenwood Springs for calmness, but the noise is now overwhelming the town. He opposes the enlargement of the bridge and ramp, and said the city should be considering a bypass, not a bigger bridge. Mr. Rosenberg also said the city needed to create bus stops that allowed traffic to pass. He said that currently, buses stop and traffic cannot safely go around the stopped bus, and this creates erratic and dangerous passing situations.

10:11 AM -- John Haines, a local resident representing himself, introduced himself to the committee. He said that he believes the people of Glenwood Springs are against the enlargement of the Grand Avenue bridge, and prefer a bypass or an entirely new route. He is not certain the bridge needs to be replaced, and suggested that funds now planned for the bridge should be used to re-route State Highway 82. He said his affiliated organization "Citizens to Save Grand Avenue Bridge" is canvassing popular opinion about the bridge among local residents because the city has refused to do this. Mr. Haines also suggested that future field hearings be held at night to get more input from local citizens, who may have to work during the day.

10:21 AM -- Hal Sundin, a local resident representing himself, introduced himself to the committee. Mr. Sundin also voiced opposition to the Grand Avenue bridge reconstruction because he believes the increased traffic will lead to further problems, such as congestion within the school and public busing systems. Mr. Sundin supported the concept of an additional route to alleviate traffic along Grand Avenue.

10:24 AM

Doug Aden, Transportation Commissioner, and Dave Eller, Region 3 Transportation Director, introduced themselves to the committee. Commissioner Aden discussed plans for the Grand Avenue bridge, and stated that it is structurally deficient, and thus a Bridge Enterprise project. He said Bridge Enterprise funds can only be used for these designated bridges, and diverting the funds for a bypass isn't within the statutory spending authority. He stated that CDOT is concerned about minimizing the time required to close the bridge for construction, and that the mitigation concerns expressed earlier are legitimate. He noted that the commission is very concerned about overall costs, and it had recently contributed an additional \$5 million to study the exact project costs.

10:27 AM

Mr. Eller said that CDOT is very concerned about tourism in connection with the Grand Avenue bridge project, and the department is gathering innovative ideas on design. He said CDOT, along with the TPR, is discussing an alternate to the SH 82 corridor, which may result in an Environmental Impact Study (EIS). He noted that the addition of a climbing lane on Vail Pass is estimated at approximately \$150 million.

10:29 AM

The committee adjourned.