

Final
STAFF SUMMARY OF MEETING

TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 09/23/2015

ATTENDANCE

Time: **01:08 PM to 03:00 PM**

Becker J. E
Buck E
Carver E

Place: Adams State University
Richardson Hall

This Meeting was called to order by
Representative Tyler

Cooke X
Coram X
Esgar X
Garcia E

This Report was prepared by
Jessika Shipley

Kraft-Tharp X
Melton X
Mitsch Bush X
Moreno X
Neville P. E
Nordberg E
Scott *
Todd E
Winter E
Baumgardner X
Tyler X

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

Bills Addressed:	Action Taken:
Call to Order	Committee Discussion Only
Welcoming Remarks	Witness Testimony and/or Committee Discussion Only
Briefing from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)	Witness Testimony and/or Committee Discussion Only
Briefing from CDOT Region 5	Witness Testimony and/or Committee Discussion Only
Briefing from the San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region	Witness Testimony and/or Committee Discussion Only
Briefing from the City of Alamosa	Witness Testimony and/or Committee Discussion Only
Briefing from Alamosa County	Witness Testimony and/or Committee Discussion Only
Public Comment and Committee Discussion	Witness Testimony and/or Committee Discussion Only

01:08 PM -- Call to Order

Representative Tyler asked the committee to introduce themselves. Each member provided information about their districts and their committee assignments. Staff also introduced themselves. Senator Crowder joined the committee as a guest.

01:15 PM -- Welcoming Remarks

Dr. Beverlee McClure, President, Adams State University, welcomed the committee to the university. She spoke generally about the facility and discussed demographic information about students attending the university.

01:18 PM -- Briefing from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)

Shailen Bhatt, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), spoke about the mission of CDOT and introduced his staff. He praised the people who work for CDOT. Senator Scott arrived and introduced himself.

01:22 PM -- Briefing from CDOT Region 5

Kerrie Neet, Regional Transportation Director, CDOT Region 5, introduced herself and spoke about the transportation infrastructure in Region 5, which includes the counties of Alamosa, Archuleta, Chaffee, Conejos, Costilla, Dolores, La Plata, Mineral, Montezuma, Montrose (approximately 50 percent), Ouray, Rio Grande, Saguache, San Juan, and San Miguel. She discussed the importance of state highways in south central Colorado. She commented that there is no reliable, moderately priced air service in south central and southwestern Colorado. She discussed the unique physical and economic features of the San Luis Valley (SLV), which is roughly the size of Connecticut. She commented about SLV transportation planning.

01:29 PM

According to Ms. Neet, key issues that affect transportation in the SLV are agriculture and tourism. The agriculture industry employs approximately one-third of the SLV population. Potatoes, hay, and barley are the most prevalent crops. The Great Sand Dunes Monument and the Arkansas River both drive tourism. Ms. Neet moved on to a discussion of transportation needs in the SLV. These include rural congestion involving recreational and agricultural vehicles that occurs on two-lane mountain roads. This type of congestion often leads to dangerous conditions. Ms. Neet spoke to transportation asset management involving preventative maintenance like chip sealing. She responded to questions from Senator Baumgardner about the durability of chip sealing.

01:36 PM

Ms. Neet discussed the difficulties in keeping high mountain roads open in the winter. Winter driving conditions increase the danger of fatal accidents. Passing lanes can alleviate congestion and driver frustration, both of which also increase the danger of accidents. Ms. Neet spoke about the integration of the highway with the "main street" concept. This integration involves putting buffers between the street and parking spots, as well as adding bicycle lanes. Senator Crowder praised the efforts of CDOT to create new passing lanes in the area. He asked about plans for new passing lanes. Ms. Neet commented about studies CDOT has completed regarding the safety of State Highway (SH) 285 south of Alamosa.

01:44 PM

Representative Moreno asked about the lifespan of a road. Ms. Neet and Mr. Bhatt discussed the variables that affect the lifespan. Senator Crowder and Ms. Neet talked about widening SH 17 north of Alamosa. Representative Tyler asked for information about community desire for bicycle paths in the SLV. Mr. Bhatt discussed funding mechanisms for bicycle paths and commented about local involvement in the planning process. Senator Baumgardner asked for more information about Highway Users Tax Fund (HUTF) money and federal pass-through funding. Mr. Bhatt spoke about FASTER money and new construction. Senator Baumgardner expressed his opinion that transportation funding should be better targeted to the needs of the state.

01:53 PM

Mr. Bhatt commented about the best use for available funding and about the decisions made by the state transportation commission. Ms. Neet discussed the trend toward narrowing existing lanes in order to increase safety. The space gained could be used for bicycle lanes. Representative Mitsch Bush discussed her experience with transportation planning efforts and talked about various funding sources for transportation projects, including the Regional Priority Program (RPP) fund and Transportation Commission (TC) Contingency fund. Committee discussion with Mr. Bhatt on this issue ensued.

02:03 PM

Representative Coram discussed the safety problems associated with bicyclists on roads with no shoulders. Mr. Bhatt expressed his support for the creation of a dedicated revenue stream connected to bicycling that could be used for road improvements. Senator Crowder asked whether the TC contingency money could be dedicated to a grant program for counties to make up the 30 percent local share for Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grants for the creation of bicycle paths. Discussion ensued. Representative Moreno asked about local projects funding with FASTER money. Ms. Neet listed a number of such projects.

02:10 PM -- Briefing from the San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region

George Wilkerson, Chairman of the SLV Transportation Planning Region (TPR), discussed various transportation projects in south central and southwestern Colorado, including those that have not received adequate funding to complete them. He spoke at length about the transportation needs of the area. He raised concerns about the condition of SH 50 and SH 285 and about the cost of deferred maintenance. Senator Baumgardner asked whether adding shoulders to state highways would be more beneficial than doing things like chip sealing or other patching measures. Ms. Neet commented that Region 5 really only has adequate funding to maintain the roads and that funding does not exist to build out the roads and to add shoulders. Mr. Wilkerson continued to talk about the transportation needs of the SLV.

02:20 PM

Senator Crowder asked if federal funding for roads has decreased in recent years. Mr. Wilkerson continued to express concerns about roads in rural Colorado. Senator Scott asked for Mr. Wilkerson's opinion regarding the future of transportation funding for the area. Mr. Bhatt discussed the Governor's plan to divert hospital provider fee funding to roads.

02:27 PM -- Briefing from the City of Alamosa

Heather Brooks, City Manager, City of Alamosa, spoke about barriers to economic development that makes the SLV even more reliant on existing roads. She stated that the major areas of concern for the SLV are transportation and higher education, and spoke about the percentage of funding for transportation that is allocated to urban areas. She expressed her opinion that most voters in the area would be unlikely to vote to increase taxes or fees. She discussed the way highway standards are applied. Committee discussion ensued about the potential for increasing the gas tax.

02:36 PM -- Briefing from Alamosa County

Gigi Dennis, County Administrator for Alamosa County, came to the table and discussed the condition of the roads in Alamosa County and the lack of adequate funding for paving the roads into national parks, which continue to see increasing traffic. She spoke about paving standards. Alamosa County Commissioner Darius Allen talked about the history of collaboration and partnerships between Alamosa County and CDOT and suggested further collaboration. Ms. Dennis stated that Alamosa County has applied for grants to pave roads and create bike paths. Representative Kraft-Tharp asked about Alamosa County support for increases in sales or gas tax.

02:48 PM -- Public Comment and Committee Discussion

Don Spencer, Town Manager of South Fork, spoke about the erosion of SH 160 over Wolf Creek Pass. He discussed tourism in South Fork and the increase in ATV traffic. He asked for cooperation for connecting trails with county and state roads. He explained about a new town ordinance that allows ATV users to drive on town roads in order to connect trails and raises revenue for improving those roads. He asked about state law that does not allow for crossing highways at a right angle. He brought up other state law issues that are making things more complicated for South Fork. Discussion ensued.

03:00 PM

The committee adjourned.