



PUEBLO AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

2035 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

January 24, 2008

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ES.1 THE CONTEXT OF THIS 2035 PLAN

If this 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) – an update and extension of the 2030 LRTP – had to be summarized in a single word, that single word would be *“uncertainty.”* Although some level of uncertainty is always present in forecasts and plans for the future, there are a number of factors that emerged during the research, analysis, and preparation of the 2035 LRTP to increase the amount of uncertainty to an extremely high level. Several of these factors are discussed in the next sections.

ES1.1 Uncertain Policy Factors

The development and adoption of the 2030 LRTP in 2004 met the MPO planning standards from the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) as implemented by FHWA policy guidance and CDOT planning guidelines. In August 2005, a new federal transportation authorization law took effect: the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The new law added several new “planning factors” to be addressed in LRTPs, including safety, (homeland) security, transportation operations, economic development, and, critically, environmental and land use interactions with existing and future transportation networks. Subsequent policy guidance from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) helped to clarify the requirements, but did not address many of the institutional constraints faced by a small MPO such as PACOG.

Much, if not all, of the responsibility for planning for some of these added factors already rests with other independent agencies or established inter-governmental coordination committees outside the structure of the PACOG MPO/TPR. For example, the Pueblo Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO), while partially local tax-supported has a considerable amount of independence in pursuing major economic recruitment and employment opportunities. Most of the negotiations with private firms are thereby very sensitive and require a substantial amount of confidentiality until final contracts are signed. While PEDCO has a designated representative on the PACOG Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC), its input to the process is necessarily very general. Since specific economic development plans and strategies are typically not available, the MPO -- through the use of the Transportation and Economic Land Use Model (TELUM) – considers only general impacts on development, employment, and growth patterns in the region.

A somewhat similar situation exists with respect to the MPO’s involvement in security planning, especially for homeland security issues. This sensitive



planning is conducted under the auspices of a County-wide Emergency Planning Committee composed primarily of agencies with public safety (law enforcement, fire protection, disaster protection, etc.) responsibilities. A representative of the MPO serves on this Committee and provides requested transportation planning input for the other agencies -- jointly and separately -- but also recognizes the need for substantial confidentiality for plans and strategies developed cooperatively by the public safety agencies. This necessary level of confidentiality also may extend into the security plans and programs for public transportation providers and common carriers in the region.

ES1.2 Uncertain Financial Factors

The primary purpose of modern transportation planning is to provide a means for MPOs and their members to develop improvement programs and projects consistent with “known and reasonably expected” revenues forecast to be available during the planning horizon. CDOT has the primary responsibility, in cooperation with MPOs, for developing the statewide Revenue Forecast and Resource Allocation (RF/RA) for federal and state funds and allocating the funds to the CDOT Regions for each program and investment category. In this plan, for the first time, CDOT has also provided a non-binding formula for the approximate programmatic RF/RA for the PACOG MPO/TPR area. The formula is based on 15% of Region 2 program allocations or 3% of statewide programs. The below tables from Chapter 9 show the Region 2 totals for 2008-2035 for each of CDOT’s highway investment categories and the PACOG approximate share.

Table 9.1A: Roadways (Constant 2008 Dollars)

CDOT INVESTMENT CATEGORY	CDOT REGION 2 TOTAL 2008-2035	PACOG PLANNING ESTIMATE 2008-2035
Strategic Projects	\$ 1,356,371,000	*\$ 81,893,000
System Quality	1,254,322,000	188,148,000
Mobility	533,112,000	33,054,000
Safety	343,986,000	51,598,000
Program Delivery	160,051,000	24,008,000
Regional Priority	121,823,000	**20,709,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 3,769,665,000	\$ 399,410,000



Table 9.1B: Roadways (Year-Of-Expenditure Dollars)

CDOT INVESTMENT CATEGORY	CDOT REGION 2 TOTAL 2008-2035	PACOG PLANNING ESTIMATE 2008-2035
Strategic Projects	\$ 2,499,393,000	*\$ 219,522,000
System Quality	1,992,313,000	298,847,000
Mobility	719,584,000	44,596,000
Safety	451,546,000	67,732,000
Program Delivery	209,996,000	35,194,000
Regional Priority	150,626,000	**25,051,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 6,023,458,000	\$ 690,941,000

*Assumes new Strategic Projects (“8th Pot”) funding in 2025-2035.

**Includes \$4,280,000 federal earmark for Dillon Overpass project.

While these revenue forecasts are based on reasonable assumptions, they remain very uncertain since both federal and state revenue sources are currently being reviewed. The SAFETEA-LU authorization bill expires at the end of FY 2009 and future revenue sources and amounts will be fully reviewed by Congress for the next transportation re-authorization law. Part of the input to that process will be the recommendations of two independent panels established by SAFETEA-LU to consider the problems associated with the current motor fuel tax system and the Highway Trust Fund. Both have been diminishing in recent years because of greater vehicle fuel efficiency, higher fuel prices resulting in lower demand for petroleum-based fuels, and the emergence of alternative fuels or power sources. In addition, several natural disasters in the past few years have increased federal transportation funds for emergency relief in the affected areas and some offsets to other areas through increases in the federal “obligation limitation” and rescission of funds which have not been obligated for actual expenditures. With the depletion of the Highway Trust Fund in 2008-2009, the near-term estimates for the obligation limitation range from 60% to 90% and will depend on Congressional appropriations decisions. If a 60% limitation is imposed, federal funds to Colorado would be reduced by as much as \$250 million (approximately 25% of the annual CDOT budget).

Concurrent with the reduction in fuel tax revenues at the federal level, the same factors have combined to cause the fuel tax contributions to the State Highway Users Trust Fund (HUTF) to level off or decline in recent years. The attenuation of this source resulted in the appointment by the Governor of a *Blue Ribbon*



Panel on Transportation Finance and Implementation. After a nine-month series of meetings in all areas of the State, the Panel concluded that additional revenues of \$1.5 Billion per year are needed to maintain the existing system adequately and provide for some – although certainly not all that were identified - strategic improvements between now and 2035. Because many of the potential revenue sources to support such an increase in funding are tax increases, TABOR will require that any such proposals be submitted to the voters of the state. The outcome of any such election for increases in fuel or sales taxes, especially in the face of all-time high and increasing motor fuel prices, is extremely uncertain.

Another possible source of revenue for local transportation improvements would be the creation, under state law, of a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) with the ability to levy up to 1% in general sales tax and up to \$10 per non-exempt licensed vehicle. The establishment of such an RTA requires the participation through Intergovernmental Agreements of local government units and approval by the voters. Again, it is extremely uncertain what the outcome of such an election would be in the Pueblo area, especially in light of the recent failure of two different approaches to creating such an RTA in the Fort Collins-Loveland-Greeley area. While there was a successful creation of an RTA in El Paso county three years ago, the election was held before the more recent rapid increases in fuel prices and was the culmination of two years of concerted efforts from both the private and public sectors. In addition, the levels of congestion in that area were considerably higher than those existing in Pueblo and most of the voters who approved the RTA cited the prospect of reducing congestion and travel delay as primary reasons for their support.

With the completion of this LRTP, one of the major work efforts for the MPO in the coming year will be an in-depth study of the possibility of establishing an RTA in the PACOG region.

ES.2 THE CONTENTS OF THIS 2035 PLAN

ES2.1 Previous PACOG LRTPs depended heavily or exclusively on the work of external consulting firms and in some cases there seemed to be little continuity in the transportation planning processes used. For the 2035 Plan, no consultants were employed, and a very concentrated effort was made to create databases and analyses to serve as a basis for future LRTPs and other transportation planning efforts in the PACOG region. These databases were designed, insofar as possible, to be shared in electronic formats at no additional cost to interested parties.

ES2.2 The nine Chapters of the LRTP can be summarized as follows.

Chapter 1 is an overview of the laws, regulations, policies, and issues involved in creating a new LRTP under SAFETEA-LU. Extending from the 2030 Plan,



the Regional Vision is presented along with the results of the Public Participation Process used to identify regional and local transportation issues and needs and a discussion of possible Environmental Justice issues in the region.

Chapter 2 describes the existing transportation system and its primary elements:

Roadways, including special routing needs, pavement condition and operations;

Freight and Rail Systems including discussions of potential future commuter rail, freight needs, and bus rapid transit;

Non-motorized Transportation with recommendations for corridor locations, safety considerations, and recommended design standards; and

Aviation with a discussion of the current plans for Pueblo Memorial Airport, commercial air carriers, hangar development, military aviation, and air freight.

Chapter 3 provides significant analysis of the integration of Environmental factors into the transportation planning process; the development of a regional comprehensive environmental database and mapping system; the FHWA “linking planning and NEPA” initiative; environmental constraints such as water; and the role of existing and future land uses in the PACOG transportation planning process.

Chapter 4 is an in-depth socio-economic and demographic profile of the region and a description of major regional developments that affect transportation and potential growth. Combining these into a Transportation Economic and Land Use Model (TELUM) provides detailed forecasts for 2035 population, households, employment, and income at the regional, census tract, and transportation analysis zone (TAZ) levels.

Chapter 5 serves as both the Transit Element of the LRTP and the Human Services Coordination Plan required to establish eligibility for several new or expanded federal transit programs. It contains an inventory of existing transit providers; identifies gaps between transit needs and transit availability; identifies potential service improvements to close gaps; and discusses the amounts and potential uses of funding from federal, state, and local (including user fees) sources.

Chapter 6 is an extensive Mobility Demand Analysis that identifies the classification of the regional roadway network, congestion on existing facilities, forecast congestion levels in 2035, and a range of potential alternatives to address congested corridors. The major congested corridors (I-25, US 50, SH 45, SH 96, and SH 47) are discussed in more detail with identification of alternatives in each corridor. The demand for transit and non-motorized transportation facilities is



discussed along with the methodology for evaluating multi-modal project priorities.

Chapter 7 and its detailed appendix provide specific information on the major roadway corridors in the region, the vision for their eventual transportation uses, and the CDOT investment categories most applicable to each corridor.

Chapter 8 develops the recommended Roadway Corridor Preservation Plan and Preferred Plan of improvements for 2035 with detailed project locations, estimated improvement costs for each Quadrant (NW, NE, SW, SE) and the total system. The improvement costs are based on the future total development of the facilities in the corridors without prescribing any particular timing or phasing of potential construction. The total cost of the Preferred Plan would exceed an unattainable level of \$5.6 Billion, so a Corridor Vision Plan is developed to identify only the highest priority corridors for future improvement. The cost of the Corridor Vision Plan, including seven off-system corridors, is approximately \$2.1 Billion. Similar analyses are provided for system-wide transit and non-motorized facilities.

Chapter 9 presents the state (including federal) and local Revenue Forecast and Resource Allocation (by CDOT program). There is very little “known or reasonably expected revenue” over the 2008-2035 period, so the six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is developed and presented as the fiscally constrained implementation plan until such time as more is known about possible long-term revenues and timing. Priorities for long-term improvements are shown with a small allocation of funds as “place-holders” for projects if or when unexpected roadway revenues become available. Similar plans are provided for transit and non-motorized programs or projects.

The following tables summarize the Fiscally Constrained Plan (TIP plus long range priority corridors).



Short-term (TIP) funding for Roadways is based on the following priorities:

1. **Complete the 4th Street (SH 96) Bridge Project:** Funding for this project was secured in previous years, but will be expended during the 2008-2011 timeframe.
2. **Complete the I-25 Pueblo EIS:** Completion of the I-25 Environmental Impact Statement will provide an assessment of design alternatives for I-25 through Pueblo and funds for some preliminary design work.
3. **Complete the Dillon Flyover 1601 Study, EA, and P/E.** These funds are a Congressional earmark for the project and are available only for a limited time so must be obligated along with the 20% local matching funds.
4. **Complete the Defense Access Road to the Pueblo Depot:** On-going demilitarization work at the Chemical Depot will be served by finishing all of the safety and access improvements to this corridor using an additional \$6,000,000 in DAR funding.
5. **US50 West Corridor Improvements:** Congestion relief along the US50 Corridor between Purcell Blvd in Pueblo West and I-25, especially on the segment west of Pueblo Blvd (SH 45). (See also the West Pueblo Connector off-system priority project.)

Long-term funding priority for Roadways in the LRTP Corridor Vision Plan.

(After adjusting for RPP funds in the TIP, the RPP program has a total remaining balance of approximately \$3,929,000 in 2008 dollars or \$8,299,000 in YOE dollars. While this is a very small amount, projects should be established in priority selection, based on any future funds which become available, in the following corridors.)

1. **I-25 Corridor.** \$500,000 for studies or improvements.
2. **US50 Corridor.** \$500,000 for studies or improvements.
3. **SH47 Corridor.** \$500,000 for studies or improvements.
4. **SH45 (Pueblo Blvd.) Corridor.** \$500,000 for studies or improvements.
5. **SH96 Corridor.** \$500,000 for studies or improvements.
6. **SH227 (Joplin/Erie) Corridor.** \$500,000 for studies or improvements.
7. **SH78 Corridor.** \$329,000 for studies or improvements.
8. **SH233 (Baxter Road) Corridor.** \$300,000 for studies or improvements.
9. **SH231 (36th Lane) Corridor.** \$300,000 for studies or improvements.