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Legislative Look

There will be some very interesting conversations around transportation during the 2018 legislative session. As lawmakers prepare to meet in January we have broken down the transportation-related issues that we know legislators will be looking at when they meet for the 2nd Regular Session of the 71st General Assembly.

Funding: Transportation funding will be first and foremost again this year. Already, there are plenty of conversations swirling about how to fund Colorado's roads and bridges. Many legislators are calling for dedicated general funds to be used annually for transportation bonds. Their argument is that no general fund money is dedicated directly to transportation projects and it should be a priority for the state budget. Other legislators advocate that there must be a voter-approved dedicated tax increase to pay for roads, as this is the only way to ensure a stable and secure funding source for state infrastructure needs.



Staircase at Colorado State Capitol

Hands-Free: Traffic safety will also be a major topic of debate next session. Building off of last session's success in raising fines for distracted driving, a bill to be introduced in 2018 will ask that all drivers use hands-free devices if using a phone while driving such as a vehicle's Bluetooth capabilities, or some kind of similar hands-free device.

CDOT Legislative Agenda Items: CDOT will be running three department bills as well. One bill clarifies that CDOT will be able to use data collected from vehicle to infrastructure projects in the future. There exists statutory language that prohibits state agencies from using electronic devices (i.e. cell phones) as location devices without a warrant. This bill does not change that protection but clarifies that when connected vehicles are on the road, they are not included in the definition of electronic devices.

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The Heat Is On This Holiday Season

From November 17-27, during the Thanksgiving holiday period, law enforcement officers arrested 613 drivers in Colorado for impaired driving, an increase from the 522 drivers arrested during the same period last year. As we begin the busy holiday season, we would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone to stay safe and to drive sober. The Highway Safety Office at the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) provides funding to Colorado law enforcement for impaired driving enforcement, education and awareness campaigns. The Heat Is On campaign runs throughout the year with 14 specific, high-visibility impaired driving enforcement periods centered on national holidays and large public events. Enforcement periods can include sobriety checkpoints, saturation patrols and additional law enforcement on duty dedicated to impaired driving enforcement. More details about the campaign, including impaired driving enforcement plans, arrest totals, and safety tips can be found at HeatIsOnColorado.com.

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Another two-part bill the department will pursue asks the legislature to allow real estate appraisers to participate in the waiver valuation process for acquiring right of ways under \$25,000. This process is a less expensive, more efficient valuation process. The second part of this bill will raise the waiver valuation limit to the federal level of \$25,000 when CDOT disposes of ROWs.

The third bill CDOT would like is permission to continue an award by review program. This program allows CDOT to award contracts that received less than three bids. The original bill creating the program included a repeal date, and the current bill will take that away allowing the program to continue indefinitely.

For more information on legislative matters contact Andy Karsian, CDOT Legislative Liaison at (303-757-9703).

Project Successes

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has recently completed a couple major projects on-time and on-budget.

The reconstructed I-25 Cimarron interchange in Colorado Springs has created an improved highway alignment for better traffic flow, as well as improved ramps, acceleration/deceleration lanes, and shoulders. The project reconstructed wider bridges over I-25 and enhanced sight distances. A new connection between 8th Street and US 24 now provides up to 40% improvement in traffic capacity, and better bike/ped trail connections and aesthetic enhancements were added. This is the largest project since the completion of the COSMIX project (reconstruction of I-25 thru the heart of Colorado Springs) in 2007, a decade ago.



The new Cimarron interchange



*Grand Ave Bridge
Ribbon Cutting*

The Grand Avenue Bridge in Glenwood Springs is the largest infrastructure project on the Western Slope in 25 years and replaced a 64-year-old bridge over the interstate, the Colorado River, and Union Pacific Railroad tracks. A substantial detour that started in August and was completed 2 weeks ahead of schedule much to the relief of the local community, who turned up 3,000 strong for the ribbon cutting in early November. Funding for the bridge was accelerated due to FASTER funding. The \$125 M bridge replacement project also provide several multi-modal improvements including the new and improved pedestrian bridge that connects the south downtown core to to the north historic hot springs district as well as a pedestrian tunnel that provides a safe route through the north side of town at the main Glenwood Springs exit from the I-70 interchange.