



COLORADO

Department of Transportation

Office of Policy and Government Relations

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DATE: February 24, 2019
TO: Transportation Commissioners, Executive Director, Executive Management Team, Branch Managers, and Office Directors
FROM: Andy Karsian, Office of Policy & Government Relations
RE: Legislative Update

The past week was busy and exciting under the dome with some exhaustive policy and political discussions. The Senate and House debated late into the night on controversial topics such as sex education, gun control and the national popular vote. Hundreds came to testify and packed committee rooms for the chance to weigh in on these bills. Besides the drama surrounding the other higher profile issues, there were some new, significant bills impacting CDOT introduced this week.

Legislation

As of today, CDOT is tracking 23 bills for possible direct or indirect impacts to CDOT, its employees, and the state's transportation network. Below are summaries of a few bills introduced or heard this week.

House Bill 19-1199 (Clean Pass Act):

This bill expands and modifies an existing program that allows electric vehicles (EV) to travel in express lanes for free or reduced tolls. The Clean Pass Act increases the number of plug in electric vehicles that can drive in express lanes while getting 50% off tolls. New EV owners may opt in to the program by paying a \$35 fee when they purchase the vehicle. Buyers of used EVs may also opt in with the fee. The EV is eligible for reduced tolls in all express lanes throughout the metro area and along I-70 for one year, then the owner must pay the fee again when the EV is registered. Each vehicle is eligible for three years in the program under one owner. If that vehicle is sold, the new owner may be eligible. The number of vehicles allowed into the program increases annually until a limit of 120,000 vehicles is reached in five years. After the number of vehicles hits the annual limit, then vehicles on the waiting list may join.

Colorado's express lanes are financed and managed in different ways, depending on the corridor. This bill allows CDOT the ability to annually assess the impacts of the program on the express lanes. If the levels of service for transit are impacted, or it becomes difficult or impossible to finance the debt on the express lanes, then the department may alter or stop the program. Furthermore, CDOT will report to the legislature annually on the number of vehicles in the program and the revenue impacts on the express lanes.

House Bill 19-1207 (Winter Conditions and Traction Control Requirements):

Every winter travel along I-70 into the mountains presents unique difficulties for Coloradans who live in the mountains and for those who visit their resorts. Snow storms blow in quickly at high elevations, temperatures drop fast and vehicles with poor tire tread spin out and the ensuing crashes cause highway closures and in worst case scenarios, fatalities. One way to prevent this is to require passenger vehicles travelling along the I-70 mountain corridor to have adequate tire treads, and carry traction control devices. The most familiar traction control device are metal chain links that wrap around the tires, however, there are also cables, auto-socks, and other devices that can be used.

Passenger vehicles are required to have tires with treads at least 3/16 of an inch and are imprinted with the manufacturer mountain-snowflake rating (M&S, M/S, or M+S), or are rated all weather tires with adequate tread. Without an adequate tread or manufacture rating, then the vehicle will need chains or other traction control device when travelling in the mountains. When the winter storms are bad enough and the department declares 'chain law' then every vehicle on the road needs to have a traction control device on their tires when driving on the highway.

