



COLORADO

Department of Transportation

Office of Policy and Government Relations

DATE: March 9, 2018
TO: Transportation Commissioners, Executive Director, Executive Management Team, Branch Managers, and Office Directors
FROM: Andy Karsian, Office of Policy & Government Relations
RE: Legislative Update

Overview

This was a quieter week under the dome for transportation policy. Legislators continue to introduce bills as the budget bill, known as the Long Bill gets closer. Economists and policy makers are also eagerly awaiting the State's latest economic forecast, coming on March 19th. Legislators use this forecast to determine how much funding is available for legislation that have fiscal impacts. A perfect example is SB1, the transportation funding bill. It went through three committees and is now on the calendar for the whole Senate to debate; however, it is unlikely the members will debate it until the economic forecast is released because the Senators want to have an accurate assessment of how much money would be available to divert to transportation and bond payments.

Legislation

As of today, CDOT is tracking 28 bills for possible direct or indirect impacts on CDOT, its employees, or the state's transportation network. Below are summaries of a few bills introduced or heard this week.

Senate Bill 18-200 (PERA Modifications): The Public Employee Retirement Association provides retirement and other benefits to employees of the school districts, state, local governments, and other public entities across the state. The pension faces a shortfall in paying out benefits to future state retirees. This bill is one attempt at eliminating the unfunded liability within the next 30 years; the Governor and other parties may introduce their versions of PERA reform in the coming weeks.

This bill changes a variety of PERA policies. Some of the more dramatic changes in the bill include an increase of the employee contribution to 11% over two years (currently at 8%) and raises the retirement age for full benefits to 40 years of service or 65 years of age for employees hired after 2020. The cost of living allowance for retirees would be reduced from 2% to zero, and PERA members could now choose to place their money into a 401(k) type of plan instead of the traditional PERA pension plan. The bill is scheduled to be heard in the Finance committee next Tuesday.

Senate Bill 18-196 (Repeal FASTER Late Fee): This is an annual piece of legislation that some legislators introduce to repeal the statutory late charges on the FASTER vehicle registration fee. The late charges are \$25 a month with a cap of \$100. Over the last few years CDOT's portion of the collected late charges totaled around \$10M a year. CDOT will oppose this bill as it reduces critical funding for essential safety projects statewide.

Senate Bill 18-167 (Agricultural Motor Vehicle Port of Entry): Every heavy-duty truck is required to stop at the state ports of entry to be weighted and have their manifests inspected. This bill exempts heavy-trucks carrying agricultural products from stopping at a ports of entry station for inspection. This would present a variety of challenges for the state including questions on how to enforce weight limits on primary and secondary roads, how to ensure safe agricultural products are entering and exiting the state, as well as possible FHWA funds withheld because the state is not adequately enforcing size and weight limits on the highways. CDOT and State Patrol will continue to work with sponsors on this bill as it creates uncertainty and provides a very big enforcement loophole for truckers carrying agricultural products.

