



Local Agency Process Reevaluation Meetings

June 17, 2010

CDOT Region 5

Alamosa Shop Conference Room

Meeting Notes

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the meeting is to solicit input from local governments to improve the administration of the Local Agency Program.

Meeting Agenda

- Opening Remarks and Introductions
- Meeting Guidelines, Existing Roles, and Agenda Review, Process overview
- Solicitation of issues, ideas and concerns regarding Local Agency Process
 - **Project Initiation Process**
 - **Project Design/Advertisement**
 - **Award of Project/Construction**
- Next Steps

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Neil Lacey, Project Development Branch, CDOT Headquarters, opened the meeting and explained that the purpose of the meeting was for CDOT to receive feedback from Local Agencies based on their experiences with administration of projects through the Local Agency program. Neil gave an overview of expectations of the meeting and described elements that relate to the local agency processes. Neil introduced Tobilynn Erosky, meeting logistics and note taker, with CDOT and Andrea Meneghel, meeting facilitator, with CDR Associates. Andrea asked the group to introduce themselves and share one objective for the meeting or identify the most important issue to address during the meeting. The group stated the following:



Issues, Objectives, and Concerns

- Don Koskelin, City of Alamosa, stated that he was unclear about the purpose of meeting and would have appreciated additional information ahead of time so that he could prepare accordingly. He noted that the last time the City of Alamosa did an enhancement project was 6 years ago. He feels there is a breakdown of communication between the TPR and CDOT Region 5. Also, because there seems to be a lot of turnover at CDOT, he stated it would be helpful to have contact information for the appropriate CDOT Region 5 Engineering contacts for Local Agency projects. Neil Lacey stated that he would e-mail this information to him.
- Alisha Reis, Town of Monte Vista, would like to see a more coherent, user-friendly and understandable process for Local Agencies to follow that don't have engineering staffs and/or prior expertise administering a project. Also, she indicated that it is frustrating for Local Agencies to receive feedback from CDOT about processes that are missed after the fact, when if guidance can be provided before a phase, then it can be done correctly eliminating the need to go back and re-do certain steps; this adds costs and creates delays.
- Jean Butler, Town of Blanca, agreed with points raised by Monte Vista. She feels it is difficult for small communities with small staffs and few resources to deal with all the Local Agency process requirements and the amount of paperwork required. She indicated that an important issue to discuss is that the CDOT reimbursement process is very long; Local Agencies having to wait for a canceled check from the contractor to provide with an invoice. This takes too long and creates cash flow issues. The Town of Blanca has had to wait 2-4 months for reimbursements.
- State Representative Edward Vigil, House District 62, attended to discuss two projects of interest to him for two locations on state highways in his District. He suggested collaboration between CDOT and Rio Grande County be considered to share resources and save money. He noted that additional clarity and communication from CDOT is needed to explain what programs and funding opportunities are available. He is very interested in improving the working relationship between CDOT and the Local Agencies.
- Robert Rael, San Luis Valley Transit, was interested in finding out what is relevant from the Local Agency program that can enhance transit in San Luis Valley.
- Patrick Sullivan, Rio Grande County, stated that considerable amount of resources go to the Front Range based on the population, and not to the San Luis Valley. Greater funding opportunities for the San Luis Valley TPR in particular as well as the Region are needed. He suggested CDOT look for ways to pool resources and suggested that another tier for small communities and small budgets be made available. He would like CDOT to work hand-in-hand with small towns.
- Robert Hagedorn, Rio Grande County, has spent 30 years working on turn lanes for an intersection project with CDOT. Frustrated by being put off year after year.



Issues, Objectives, and Concerns (continued)

- Joe Duran, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), expressed support for CDOT's Local Agency program and wanted to hear everyone's ideas for improving it. He emphasized that all perspectives and interests are important to FHWA regardless of the size of the community.
- Charlotte Bobicki, Office of US Senator Michael Bennett, attended to discuss transportation issues for San Luis Valley. She had received calls from many people on community concerns and wanted to find out contact information as people do not understand where to go for answers. Project selection needs to be based on more than just population; there should be criteria established with weighted priorities
- David Valentinelli, CDOT Region 5 Local Agency Coordinator, was interested in hearing from everyone on suggested improvements to Local Agency program that will benefit both the Local Agencies and CDOT.
- Doug Davie, Rio Grande County, stated that transportation enhancement funds have strict requirements that create greater costs for communities when taking on these projects. He stated that there's a perception that CDOT doesn't listen to Local Agencies and administers projects to solely meet its needs. He expressed concern about several locations on state highways in need of attention for improvements where he feels nothing is getting done. There needs to be improved communication between CDOT and Local Agencies to avoid wasting of funds and to jointly work together to identify transportation priorities.

Several of the attendees at the meeting came prepared to discuss transportation issues and concerns with CDOT that were unrelated to the Local Agency Program such as greater funding opportunities for the region, improved transit options, the need for traffic signals at specific locations, or the need for acceleration/deceleration lanes for specific locations on a state highway.

It was explained to the attendees after the brief overview of the meeting and introductions that the purpose of the meeting was to receive input regarding the Local Agency program. Everyone was invited to stay and participate but that dealing directly with specific concerns was unrelated to the meeting and would be best served by contacting the appropriate persons within CDOT Region 5 such as Dale Martinez, Resident Engineer Alamosa, Keith Powers, Program Engineer in Durango, or Richard Reynolds, Region Transportation Director. Neil Lacey provided his phone number in case those in attendance needed additional assistance in contacting the appropriate persons within CDOT who can work with them to address their concerns.

Neil provided background about the Local Agency program and described the federal, state, and local relationship for Local Agency projects. The group was then asked to provide input regarding the process.

David Valentinelli provided a summary of the 5 funding programs that Local Agencies can submit applications for funding: Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS); Off-System Bridge, Transportation Enhancement, Hazard Elimination, and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) for the two air quality non-attainment areas in Region 5.



Project Initiation Process: Identify key issues and recommendations – Local Agency Manual – Chapters 1-4

- Local Agencies expressed a need for additional training in how to administer Local Agency projects and the process.
- Local Agencies requested CDOT support and expressed a need for up-front coordination with CDOT during the project initiation phase to make sure they are able to initiate projects correctly and are aware of everything that will be required to meet specific project needs. Local Agencies need better front end planning ahead of pre-application phase with a single point of contact at CDOT to help with knowledge of requirements and processes. It was suggested that CDOT contact others regarding ongoing projects to promote consistency with other engineers working on projects. Monte Vista applied for a Transportation Enhancement project to be designed concurrently with a corridor improvement project. When the corridor improvement design project was held up the enhancement project stalled as well and both projects did not move forward. David Valentinelli can serve as that CDOT Region 5 contact person.
- Local Agencies need assistance from CDOT at the pre-application stage to make sure the cost estimate addresses contingencies for “unknown” costs since the projects are not likely to be approved for funding for 1 to 2 years based on the funding cycle of the TPR. CDOT needs to do a better job on turnaround time of providing comments on items submitted for review to respect the project schedules and administration of their projects.
- Additional clarity is needed about who Local Agencies should contact at CDOT to get concerns addressed. The Town of Blanca submitted an application for a project, that was designed, funded, and implemented all but the final restriping. CDOT made decision to not fully implement the full project due to engineering concerns. The Town of Blanca needed better coordination with CDOT during the preliminary stage with point-of-contact ahead of time from engineers on upcoming CDOT projects.
- Local Agencies are not fully aware of the requirements that need to be carried out when making application for federal funds. Even after attending local agency trainings, it is still confusing what the process requirements are. There is frustration with steps in trying to get FHWA funding grant projects. It was suggested to provide training or additional coordination with prior to pre-application to review project concept and cost estimate. Blanca also suggested the need for a different set of requirements for smaller size projects where the paperwork is reduced and more streamlined.
- Often used CDOT acronyms cause a lot of confusion for those not experienced working with CDOT.



Project Initiation Process (continued)

- State Representative Vigil asked about the process to initiate a project involving the need for Acceleration/Deceleration lanes for the school access to a state highway. The school is having difficulty getting an occupancy permit due to the coordination of the acceleration/deceleration lanes. Neil Lacey encouraged Representative Vigil to contact Dale Martinez CDOT Resident Engineer to discuss this issue further as this was more of a Region 5 transportation issue than it was a Local Agency project process concern.
- Local Agencies are lacking the information about all of the requirements that need to be met, how to estimate the total project costs and arranging for materials testing services. Suggest that pre-application meeting along with checklist be developed to insure that project is sufficiently funded and properly scoped prior to submittal of application.
- Communities find it difficult to understand all of the processes and requirements that are tied to funding projects. These funds are very expensive as the grant may be for \$100,000 but it will cost the Local Agency \$40,000. A pre-scoping meeting prior to the submittal of the application will make a big difference towards the Local Agencies being successful in understanding the required processes and procedures. They will still need help from CDOT to assist and stay involved with the Local Agencies throughout the project.
- Local Agencies asked if CDOT offers training workshops for Local Agencies and can training be in different tiers say for smaller projects and larger projects and on different steps of processes. David Valentinelli what could work best is to assist the Local Agencies one-on-one during the project processes so that the training and experience can go hand in hand together to provide the best hands on learning experience.

Project Design/Advertisement: Identify key issues and recommendations – Local Agency Manual Chapters 5-7

- The Town of Blanca indicated that a requirement it would like to see revised is being able to select consultant engineers based on qualifications where cost is also a factor in the selection process. Some Local Agencies don't have expertise to know how to hire a proper engineer and at times have hired an engineer that has caused several problems and added a considerable amount of added costs to a project. Would like to be able to do cost estimates with engineers going forward on projects. Also need better guidance or flexibility from CDOT on what is required for historical clearances involving State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) clearances so that costs are minimized.



Project Design/Advertisement (continued)

- Local Agencies need a better understanding at the pre-application stage if Davis Bacon wages will be required on the project based on what part of the Federal-aid system the project is on. CDOT Local Agency Coordinators know that the CDOT HQ Labor Compliance Specialist is available to work with the CDOT Regions and Local Agencies in making this determination. Town of Blanca states that inclusion of Davis Bacon wages adds 20% to cost of projects.

Award of Project/Construction: Identify key issues and recommendations – Local Agency Manual Chapters 8-11

- CDOT's processes of reimbursing Local Agencies should be improved so cash flow to smaller Local Agencies can happen in an expedient fashion. The Town of Blanca cited an example where it has taken several months to receive reimbursement checks. Local Agencies do not like the process of having to wait for copy of canceled check to be submitted with invoice for billing as this delays the reimbursement process. Are there other methods that CDOT can implement which support the proof that the Contractor was paid but take less time? Department of Local Assistance (DOLA) takes 7 days to process payments and does not require canceled checks. No consistency in CDOT reimbursement process, sometimes 3 weeks and other times 2-4 months. What is CDOT commitment to provide timely reimbursement
- Paperwork and documentation requirements are overwhelming to Local Agencies. Can CDOT look to see if there can be a distinction between smaller projects and other projects and have the paperwork on smaller projects be less?

Other issues: Identify key issues and recommendations

- Local Agencies especially those new to the process don't understand the acronyms and the form terminology. It was suggested that CDOT approach the materials developed for Local Agencies be developed from their point of view so that acronyms and processes are fully explained with references for additional assistance if they still have questions.
- Jean Butler and Robert Rael had additional questions related to accidents at intersections and gathering accident data. These questions were not part of the Local Agency process discussion and they were told to contact CDOT Region 5 staff to address their questions and concerns. The CDOT staff at the meeting was not able to answer their questions as we did not have the background information nor a full understanding of the issues being asked.
- Local Agencies are experiencing problems getting questions addressed related to state highway concerns from CDOT personnel. David Valentinelli offered to serve as the point of contact to provide customer service and make sure the information gets to those involved in resolving the issue.



Next Steps

The audience expressed appreciation to CDOT for holding this meeting. Andrea outlined the creation of the upcoming Task Force meetings and encouraged everyone to either go to the website and add additional questions/concerns. Andrea mentioned that the meeting notes will be posted on the website.

PARKING LOT

- Local Agencies need workshop training courses
- There needs to be changes with required cancelled check process

ATTENDEES:

Joe Duran	FHWA
David Valentinelli	CDOT R5
Jean Butler	Town of Blanca
Alisha Reis	City of Monte Vista
Robert Rael	SLV Transit Agency
Edward Vigil	State Representative House District 62
Charlotte Bobicki	U.S. Senator Michael Bennet representative
Robert Hagedorn	Rio Grande County
Patrick Sullivan	Rio Grande County
Don Koskelin	City of Alamosa
Doug Davie	Rio Grande County
Neil Lacey	CDOT HQ, Project Development Branch
Tobilynn Erosky	CDOT HQ, Project Development Branch
Andrea Meneghel	CDR Associates