



Local Agency Process Reevaluation Meetings

June 18, 2010

Region 5 Durango Maintenance 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 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 informed the group that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Local Agency program and the experiences of the Local Agencies in applying and going through the project process. All attendees were invited to stay and participate or if they had other issues they could contact David Valentinelli, CDOT Region 5 for information. Andrea then 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

- James Dickhoff, City of Pagosa Springs, appreciated CDOT holding this meeting. Pagosa Springs has a good relationship with CDOT and wants to see how the program can be streamlined to be more efficient.
- Mike Davis, Davis Engineering/City of Pagosa Springs, is interested in reducing the time it takes to get through the process as the local entities can do the work in less time without all of the added steps. Because CDOT processes are very time intensive, allowing Local Agencies to use their own processes where applicable can create time savings and reduce administrative costs.
- Scott McClain, City of Durango, is interested in seeing the time, costs, and overall administration reduced since these all add costs to the project. Perhaps there could be a way to find balance between CDOT processes and Local Agency processes.
- Aaron McKelvey, La Plata County, would like to streamline processes and reduce the time it takes to go through the overall process.
- Ralph Campano, CDOT R5 ROW, attended to listen to Local Agency comments and provide input for improving the overall process.
- Bruce Honisch, Goff Engineering, interested in streamlining the process. Smaller projects are impacted more with administrative costs that could be better spent on the projects if the administrative costs were reduced by making the process requirements proportionate to the scope of the projects.
- Ken Torres, City of Cortez would like to see more training opportunities for Local Agencies within the region. He also noted that the Local Agency Manual and the project finals process can both be improved.
- Laurie Blanz, CDOT R5 Planner, was interested in hearing Local Agency input for improving the process.
- Karen Kohake, Archuleta County, would like more training opportunities so that other employees in Archuleta County can be trained to understand the CDOT process.
- Peter Tregillus, SUCAP, was interested in improving safety for transit riders that access transit locations along state highways.



Issues, Objectives, and Concerns (continued)

- Kevin Hall, City of Durango, was interested in seeing if the administrative process can be less cumbersome for smaller projects. Why are there differences between the CDOT administered Transportation Enhancement grant process and the federal enhancement grants that they pursue with other Federal Grants, including State Trails which encompasses the Recreational Trails Program & the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/index.htm>,
<http://parks.state.co.us/Trails/LWCF/Pages/LWCFHome.aspx>,
<http://parks.state.co.us/Trails/Pages/TrailsProgramHome.aspx>
- Amber Blake, City of Durango, was interested in streamlining processes, especially administrative processes on CDOT enhancement projects. The City of Durango feels that when working with federal requirements with other federal agencies the other processes are more streamlined than working with CDOT's requirements. Looking to find overall balance between both processes to reduce costs.
- Ryan Mahoney, Town of Dolores, was looking to reduce administrative costs by making the process more efficient. This program is a challenge for smaller communities that do not have a lot of funding and staff resources. The processes could be made easier and more efficient. He was also attending the meeting to understand process better.
- David Valentinelli, CDOT Region 5 Local Agency Coordinator, was here to listen to everyone's comments and to help out Local Agencies with streamlining processes.
- Joe Duran, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) wants to hear everyone's concerns and to understand ideas about what changes could be made to some of the procedures to improve the program for the Local Agencies.

Neil introduced Federal Aid Highway Program Stewardship Agreement and talked about federal, state, and local relationship for Local Agency projects. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss how to improve the program. The group was then asked to provide input regarding the process. The discussion notes are below.

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

- The City of Durango was very appreciative of CDOT's help with initial scoping process which they feel has been exceptional. It appreciated working with local staff, David Valentinelli, CDOT -R5, as positive and beneficial in getting started in the right direction. CDOT has been very helpful with walking through checklists with Local Agencies on processes – they help with paperwork and forms.



Project Initiation Process (continued)

- Karin Kohake, Archuleta County, would like to see more specific dates and deadlines on process after award granted and have parties involved commit to working towards those dates to keep the project on track. The specific dates would include review times, approvals, and other defined actions. She suggested working with CDOT to develop detailed schedule after the award at the start of the initiation of the IGA process.
- Local Agencies discussed proposing changes to the TPR funding cycle for the grant process. It is difficult for Local Agencies to budget for more than 1 year and to make assumptions on grant applications is challenging. Some local agencies are not aware of the funding cycle and how long the funding estimate would need to consider contingencies etc. to cover design, administrative, and construction costs if the project is selected. Suggest that CDOT address the funding cycles for the TPR's and MPO's and have this information accessible to Local Agencies.
- Laurie Blanz explained the TPR's in Region 5: San Luis Valley TPR is on a 2 year funding cycle and Gunnison Valley is on a 3 year funding cycle. Amber Blake suggested that with the 2 year application process the 1st year could be a defined project costs and the 2nd year could be used to update the costs previously submitted in year 1. Local politicians need to understand the funding cycle as they approve projects and the anticipated timing for project completion. Laurie Blanz would bring this issue up to discuss the TPR funding cycle at the next TPR meeting.
- Local Agencies are looking for projects that can easily be completed without a significant level of impacts (those that do not involve ROW, lengthy environmental clearances). They are reluctant to pursue projects that require ROW and other clearances as these processes take time, as well as increase costs to complete work and administration by Local Agency. Need to look for ways for phasing of projects so that Local Agencies can break up projects into logical funding packages to administer.
- Local Agencies suggested looking at overall planning and execution of project in a flowchart approach with timelines. Local Agencies need approval from City Councils/County Commissioners and need to consider the review and approval turnaround times in the project schedule process to avoid delays. CDOT and Local Agencies should look at project timeline at the time of grant award to include all of the processes (project design, review, approval, etc.) to know what is proposed and information shared among stakeholders to keep them informed of the project progress.
- Local Agencies are looking for assistance from C DOT with their knowledge on the process and meeting requirements particularly on small projects so that they can stay within budget and meet schedule once CDOT has approved everything. Suggest Local Agencies work closely with CDOT at time of application and to review project scope and budget.
- A more defined step-by-step process in Local Agency Manual to help with processes would be helpful.



Project Initiation Process (continued)

- Local Agencies looking for more training opportunities provided by CDOT. Turnover at CDOT, Local Agencies need to know who to contact for information and getting their concerns addressed. David Valentinelli prefers the one-on-one approach to guide the Local Agencies through the process so that the information is retained. CDOT Region 5 will look into the potential for holding training sessions such as ROW etc. where Local Agencies can serve as a resource for each other based on their previous experiences. Local Agencies also looking for web based training or that CDOT video tape training sessions that can be viewed on their own.

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

- Local Agencies feel that engineering consultants are not familiar with the transportation enhancement program and suggest that a cheat sheet with anticipated process timelines, to provide clearer expectations for the proposed work. David Valentinelli suggested including references to CDOT Manuals so that consultants understand what requirements are needed on CDOT's processes. Suggested that references be included in RFP for available manuals, forms, or checklist and other materials to assist with understanding the process requirements.

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

- Local Agencies asked if CDOT processes for Concurrence to advertise and Concurrence to Award could be reduced as this adds 4-6 weeks. CDOT should look to see what approvals can be sent electronically to reduce delays due to mail and Local Agencies should look at what they can do in parallel while waiting for CDOT approvals. Suggested that e-mailing concurrence would insure delivery to the proper person.
- Local Agencies in locations with short construction seasons have difficulty completing projects in one construction season due to timing of release of funds. Need to look at timing of funding to see if following project process even for smaller projects is realistic to complete in time for a Local Agency to construct the project the next season and complete construction that same season. Can CDOT Regions prioritize those projects in areas of short construction seasons to obtain timely approvals to assist in being ready to go to construction when weather permits?
- David Valentinelli stated that for Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) projects that the award money arrives late so need to start these projects sooner or delay these projects. The state fiscal year schedules and school schedules are different and projects are best constructed when students are not in school. State trails program tells applicants to wait for the next construction season. Need to look at giving guidance for applicants so that they can understand the length of the process and anticipate at the time of application when construction is likely to begin.



Award of Project/Construction (continued)

- Local Agencies asked if there could be changes in the process to be able to start projects prior to the IGA and then get reimbursed later for those costs once the IGA has been executed. David Valentinelli stated that if looking for reimbursement need to wait until once IGA in place per FHWA, can then go ahead and spend the money on project.
- Local Agencies asked question regarding information requested for Concurrence to Award process by CDOT. Different information is being requested in CDOT Concurrence to Award letter than what is referenced in the Local Agency Manual. Need to update the Local Agency Manual to reference what information is needed on processes for Local Agencies.

Award of Project/Construction (continued)

- The Task Force should review the current change order process to see where it could be revised so that Local Agencies do not have to wait on CDOT for approval on change orders? It was suggested that a dollar amount threshold for Local Agencies to approve and move ahead on their own. If federal funds are not being spent on the change order and Local Agencies are expending their own funds why does CDOT need to approve?
- Joe Duran, FHWA, described the lifespan of funds and that ear-marked funds and discretionary funds may have set timelines for when the funds have to be expended by, other funds can go over into the next fiscal year. Laurie Blanz stated it is important to make sure the funds are obligated because unobligated federal funds can be rescinded. CDOT should inform the applicants at the time of application
- The group inquired about CMO cost justifications for small amounts and the time spent by Local Agencies on the justification for the costs. Can there be a dollar threshold for Local Agencies if not using a standard CDOT pay item as to when a Force Account Analysis is not required?
- Local Agencies stated that the Finals process is cumbersome for tracking smaller items on CDOT Form 250. This takes time and costs money. Can the items be dealt with all at once or just be able to look at the major items. Suggested that the smaller items be approved by the Local Agencies and no paperwork submitted and provide the required documentation for the major items.
- Local Agencies asked questions about not being able to use warranties on federal-aid projects. David Valentinelli provided the explanation as discussed in the CDOT Design Bulletin that can't do "general" or "all work" warranties per federal regulations. The warranties on federal-aid funded projects have to have specific criteria for requiring corrective work included in special provisions.
- Neil Lacey briefly explained the specification review process and that Local Agencies can submit their specifications for review in advance of their projects.



Other issues: Identify key issues and recommendations

- Local Agencies would like change order processes streamlined – the CDOT approval process is good but Local Agencies are spending a lot of time with writing the change order and the documentation. Is there a balance for the required documentation based on the amount of the change order? The assistance provided by David Valentinelli to Local Agencies with change orders is very helpful.
- Laurie Blanz raised the issue of needing to update the CDOT Transportation Enhancement Guidelines along with revising the Local Agency Manual.

Other issues (continued)

- A significant improvement that can be made that this group (in addition to other groups) suggested is in need is for CDOT to provide as many resources through its website as possible so that Local Agencies have access to web based resources that are easy to understand and accessible
- The group expressed its thanks for holding the meeting and indicated that Regional sub-meetings such as this one would be helpful to have more of so that the Local Agencies can learn from each other's best practices for administering projects and have more interaction with CDOT and the Local Agency Coordinator.

Next Steps

The participants expressed thanks to having these meetings in order to be able to share their concerns with CDOT.

Andrea outlined the creation of the upcoming Task Force meetings and encouraged everyone to either go to the website and add additional questions/concerns or to fill out a comment card in the meeting. Andrea mentioned that the meeting notes will be posted on the website.

PARKING LOT

No Items



ATTENDEES:

Joe Duran	FHWA
David Valentinelli	CDOT R5
Ken Torres	City of Cortez
Karin Kohake	Archuleta County
Aaron McKelvey	La Plata County
Peter Tregillus	SUCAP/Rand Russo Transit
Amber Blake	City of Durango
Benjamin Grazda	Intern for US Senator Michael Bennett
Ralph Campano	CDOT R5 ROW
Scott McClain	City of Durango
Kevin Hall	City of Durango
Bruce Honisch	Goff Engineering
Laurie Blanz	CDOT R5
Mike Davis	Davis Engineering
James Dickhoff	Town of Pagosa Springs
Ryan Mahoney	Town of Dolores
Neil Lacey	CDOT HQ, Project Development Branch
Tobilynn Erosky	CDOT HQ, Project Development Branch
Andrea Meneghel	CDR Associates