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Colorado Developing New Pollution Reduction Planning Standards to Address Climate Change and Air Quality

DENVER - The Colorado Transportation Commission today proposed bold new transportation pollution reduction planning standards that will reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, improve air quality, reduce smog and provide more travel options for Coloradans.

This proposal will shape how state and local governments will make plans for future projects to make sure Coloradans have more travel options and that the infrastructure we build supports cleaner air and helps us fight climate change.

The [proposed rule](#) focuses on transportation planning – the process for how CDOT and the state’s largest metropolitan regions select future transportation projects. Long before a transportation project is built, it is first identified in plans developed with local public input. These plans often include a decade or more of projects and thus represent a short- and medium-term vision for coming changes. CDOT’s current 10-year plan [can be found here](#).

The draft standard would require CDOT and the state’s five Metropolitan Planning Organizations to determine the total pollution and greenhouse gas emission increase or decrease expected from future transportation projects and take steps to ensure that greenhouse gas emission levels do not exceed set reduction amounts. This approach will also streamline the planning and delivery of innovations that have proven successful in improving quality of life and air quality, like adding sidewalks, improving downtowns for active transportation with “complete streets,” improving local and intercity transit and first-and-last-mile connectivity to transit facilities, and adding bike-shares. This policy recognizes that the transportation projects we build have an impact on how Coloradans travel and encourages choices for travelers across the state.

“Between the recent smoke-filled air and the extreme weather that caused devastating mudslides in Glenwood Canyon, Colorado has received powerful reminders of the importance of taking bold climate action as it continues to threaten our economy and Colorado way of life,” said Gov. Jared Polis. “Transportation is our largest source of air pollutants, and this standard will help ensure that Coloradans have every possible ability to make a difference.”

The proposed Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Planning Standard builds on the state’s efforts to rapidly expand electric vehicles by also addressing the transportation infrastructure itself to better support clean transportation. This two-pronged strategy delivers on a commitment in the [Greenhouse Gas Roadmap](#) and implements a key provision of the state’s landmark transportation legislation, SB-260, which requires a number of steps to embed air quality and equity analysis and goals into transportation planning.

“What we build matters. It matters for safety, for our economy, for resiliency and for our ability to reduce air pollution and improve the quality of places where Coloradans across the state live and thrive,” said Shoshana Lew, executive director of the Colorado Department of Transportation. “From smoke-filled air to a confluence of fire and 500-year flooding in Glenwood Canyon, we are reminded that we have no time to waste in fighting climate change in the transportation sector, and this policy will be an important step. This draft standard wouldn’t be possible without the hundreds of hours of input we’ve received over the last few months, and I look forward to hearing from all stakeholders on this draft.”

CDOT has been reaching out to Coloradans across the state for their feedback for months and has worked continuously with groups including metropolitan planning organization staff and board members, environmental groups, contractors, equity organizations that represent disproportionately impacted communities, local governments, members of the Transportation Commission and other key stakeholders. The department convened a Greenhouse Gas Advisory Group consisting of transportation stakeholders from across the state to inform this standard and has held 11 public regional meetings and five joint state listening sessions with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and has held or presented at over 60 smaller meetings with stakeholders.

“The Transportation Commission is pleased to take this important step today to lead Colorado’s transition to a more sustainable transportation system, which will promote efficiency, equity and economic vitality while preserving our Colorado way of life,” said Transportation Commission Chair Kathy Hall.

Publication of the draft standard begins a 60-day public review period. During this time, CDOT will host public hearings in Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, Fort Collins, the Denver metropolitan area, Colorado Springs, Durango and Limon. The hearings will have a virtual option so that any interested stakeholders can participate without attending in person. You may also submit a written comment during the 60-day comment period from Aug. 13 to Oct. 15. Sign up to become a stakeholder and receive updates [here](#).

The Transportation Commission is expected to consider the proposed standard in November, and if adopted at that time, the standard will take effect in January of next year.

For more information, read CDOT's [fact sheet](#) on the greenhouse gas standard process.

ADDITIONAL QUOTES FROM ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

“As the Mayor of Westminster, and a long-time Colorado resident, I am excited to see the Colorado Department of Transportation move forward with a new rulemaking to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions from the transportation sector. The outcome of the rulemaking should help address the largest source of GHG pollution in Colorado by encouraging a future transportation system that improves transit, biking and walking options which could make a fundamental change to our transportation system. With the release of the rulemaking, CDOT begins the 60-day statewide public outreach and comment period to shape the final recommendations of the rule. The City of Westminster looks forward to being one of many voices helping to shape the final GHG rule, committing CDOT and others to the steps necessary for dramatic reductions in climate pollution.”

- **Mayor Anita Seitz, City of Westminster**

“While we believe the draft rule has several issues that need to be addressed during the Transportation Commission rulemaking process, CDOT staff did a yeoman’s job of conducting an inclusive process with a diverse group of stakeholders to develop a draft to start the conversation.”

- **Andrew Gunning, Executive Director, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG)**

“The need to take urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector could not be clearer. Just last week, the Northern Front Range broke records for the number of ozone action alerts issued in a single year. Transportation is the single largest emitter of greenhouse gases in Colorado and CDOT’s proposed greenhouse gas reduction rule is a necessary step in the right direction. We look forward to reviewing the proposed rule closely to ensure it protects the health of our residents and reduces climate impacts.” -

-**Claire Levy, Boulder County Commissioner**

“Local governments and local communities across the state appreciate CDOT’s proposal. From Salida to Superior and Gilpin County to Glenwood Springs, the impacts of climate change have become intensely and dangerously real. We look forward to this rulemaking process and are hopeful that the Transportation Commission will adopt a forward-leaning, enforceable plan that substantially and urgently reduces climate pollution across Colorado.”

- **Jacob Smith, Executive Director, Colorado Communities for Climate Action, a coalition of 38 counties, cities and towns across the state advocating for stronger statewide climate policy.**

"It isn't possible to tackle an issue like this without hearing from different voices. CDOT not only took the time to listen to a range of viewpoints in crafting this rule, they reached out and made sure we were at the table."

- Phillips County Commissioner Terry Hofmeister

"Glenwood Springs is the poster child community for climate change. We have had three major fires over the last 25 years, the latest being the Grizzly Creek Fire last year. These fires have destroyed major infrastructure, homes, and cost lives. We are also seeing other effects of climate change with the recent 500-year rain event two weeks ago that shut down I-70 and paralyzed the region's transportation network. While we have switched our electrical grid over to 100% renewable energy, changed building codes and fortified our domestic water, we need partners throughout the state, country, and planet to join us in addressing this crisis at its source. Doing anything less is simply treating the symptoms instead of the disease. That's why I'm excited to see CDOT take this step to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. I encourage residents across the western slope to engage with CDOT and provide input on this important work."

- Glenwood Springs Mayor Jonathan Godes

"Recently, Denver residents experienced first-hand the direct impact of a changing climate as wildfire smoke clouded our skyline and created some of the most polluted air in the world at the time. Now, more than ever, we need bold policies like those CDOT is proposing with the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Planning rule. Denver applauds CDOT for taking these steps and is committed to continuing to do our part to create a sustainable transportation system."

**- Grace Rink, Executive Director, City and County of Denver
Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency**

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