



## Planning Connections - February 2017

*CDOT planning news you can use.*

### Scenic Byways Strategic Plan Calls for Half-Time CDOT Coordinator



*Byways Scene - The Cache La Poudre Scenic and Historic Byways connecting Fort Collins with Walden is one of 26 designated byways in the state. This photo was captured in North Park. (© Photo by Jamie J. Brown)*

The [Strategic Plan for the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission](#), published in January, lays out a plan for the 26-byway system for the next three years. Among many other things, the plan recommends that the scenic byways coordinator at CDOT become half time due to the lack of designated federal funding for the program. Many of the tasks that the former full-time coordinator, [Lenore Bates](#), did will now be performed by members of the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission or their delegates. Lenore has been assigned to other tasks within the Bicycle/Pedestrian/Scenic Byways Section at CDOT.

The plan prioritizes these three goals for scenic and historic byways:

1. Maintain the Colorado Byways system that is second to none.

2. Elevate the Colorado Byways system to become an important state asset for economic development and livability.
3. Ensure that each local byways is a fully functioning part of an excellent statewide system.

The plan is to guide the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission in its decision-making over the next three years to sustain Colorado Byways as a major state asset. Challenges and their resolution are:

- A home for the program - CDOT continues to administer and complete previously awarded projects and staff the program with federal State Planning and Research funds. The program will continue to be housed at CDOT, but the byways commission will secure additional resources from other state and federal agencies to take the place of dedicated grant funding.
- New directions - Over more than 20 years, the scenic byways program in Colorado has become the largest byways program in the country by number of nationally designated byways. Now, without federal National Scenic Byways Program grants, the byways and the byways commission need to focus on sustaining the system and enlarging its value to the communities the byways serve.

The screenshot shows the FHWA website interface. At the top, it says 'U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration' and 'FHWA Home | Feedback'. The main heading is 'Planning for Operations'. Below this is a navigation bar with links: Home, About, Focus Areas, Resources, Glossary, Links, Sitemap, Contact, and a search box with a 'Go' button. A left sidebar contains a list of categories: Integrating Operations into Planning and Programming, Analysis and Performance Measurement, Regional Collaboration and Coordination, Organizing for Operations, Congestion Management Process (CMP), Regional Concept for Transportation Operations (RCTO), and How Does Planning for Operations Relate To ... The main content area is titled 'E-tool for Business Processes to Improve Travel Time Reliability'. It includes a 'KEY RESOURCES' box with the text: 'SHRP-2 LE-34 e-Tool Download the full zip package consisting of the three different installation versions of the SHRP2 e-tool.' Below this, there is a paragraph describing the tool's development and a section for download instructions.

*Operations Resource - The E-Tool for Business Processes, available on the FHWA website, was among the tools mentioned at the business process mapping workshop that can help state departments of transportation improve travel reliability.*

## A Tale of the Signal and the Plow: Workshop Attenders Get Prepared

Transportation Systems Management & Operations (TSM&O) Division joined Maintenance and the Public Information Office on Feb. 1 in hosting a full-day business process mapping workshop to document the steps in responding to inclement weather and preparing for special events. Questions the workshop helped answer were, among others: How do the variable message boards get updated with roadway and weather information? Who turns on the ramp signals or closes a toll lane for bad weather? How does Maintenance know where and how many plows to deploy? (continued on p. 3)

The workshop focused on discussion of roles and responsibilities among TSM&O, Colorado Traffic Management Center, Emergency Management, the CDOT Regions, Office of Communications, the CDOT Regions, and Maintenance. Time spent in the workshop should pay off in improved communication and the ability to seamlessly work together during all levels of incidents. Improving the reliability of the transportation system, including winter operations readiness, was another workshop topic. Staff were building upon CDOT's recent efforts in implementing Pathfinder, an FHWA Every Day Counts initiative which focuses on providing clear and consistent impact-based messaging to the public.

Participants learned about key decision points, possible communication gaps, and areas of CDOT that provide a high level of service to the traveling public. Next steps will be to prepare a report to document the business process steps and perhaps conduct similar workshops with other local agency stakeholders. The Strategic Highway Research Program 2 (SHRP2) with American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Federal Highways Administration funded the workshop. SHRP2 was created to find strategic solutions to three national transportation challenges: improving highway safety, reducing congestion, and improving methods for renewing roads and bridges. Attendees included staff from CDOT, FHWA, and AASHTO, including former CDOT Chief Engineer Pam Hutton. For more information, contact [Lisa Streisfeld](#).

## DTR Updates Committee on Plans, Ski Train, and Southwest Chief

Planning and new and expanded rail service are only a few rail-related activities of the CDOT Division of Transit and Rail (DTR). In a written update to the CDOT Freight and Rail Committee after the Feb. 3 meeting was cancelled, Sharon Terranova reported that the Freight Rail Plan Working Group for the *2017 State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan* during February is reviewing preliminary economic and employment data and developing goals to support the vision for the rail plan. Another continuing rail plan is the Interregional Connectivity Study's investigation about the ability to operate intercity trains on light-rail train track through Regional Transportation District's Southeast Corridor and the Denver Tech Center to Denver Union Station and on commuter rail track North Metro and East corridors.

The Winter Park Express from Denver Union Station (DUS) to Winter Park began operating weekend service Jan. 7 for skiers and will continue through March 26. The train service allows skiers to leave DUS at 7 a.m. and return to the station at 6:40 p.m. CDOT contributed \$1.5 million match to upgrade the train platform, which is heated and accommodates 10-11 car trains.

For Amtrak's Southwest Chief line, construction to improve the rail line in Colorado and Kansas is mostly complete with the help of pre-award authority the Federal Railroad Administration gave in July 2016. Work on the New Mexico segment will begin in summer 2017. The possibility of a Southwest Chief reroute connecting La Junta to Pueblo is being considered. Amtrak forecasts that the reroute could result in 14,000 annual trips and around \$1.5 million in ticket sales for two operating scenarios: at current speed and at increased speed of 79 mph. And, a proposal in the Colorado Legislature would extend the tenure of the Southwest Chief Commission beyond its expiration date of June 30, 2017, and expand its authority to develop and operate a Front Range Rail System for passenger rail along the I-25 corridor. See the report.



## Updates in Brief

**Federal Grant Funding:** Grants are available from FHWA for the Accelerated Innovation Deployment Demonstration (AID) program. The AID program is intended to encourage implementation of innovative technology for projects that maximize the benefits of infrastructure investments by addressing congestion and improving highway facilities operations. CDOT was awarded \$1 million for the I-25 Managed Motorways project in FY 2016. State DOTs, federal land management agencies, tribal governments, metropolitan planning organizations, and local governments are all eligible to apply. Project awards up to \$1 million are available. Every year CDOT and a local government can each submit one five-page application. The deadline for funding for local projects is Feb. 28, 2017. More information can be found via the following link, which could assist with applying next year: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/grants> for general information and <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/grants/projects> for examples of funded projects. Please contact Lisa Streisfeld at [303-757-9876](tel:303-757-9876) or [Lisa.Streisfeld@state.co.us](mailto:Lisa.Streisfeld@state.co.us) for more information.

**HOV/Express Lanes:** The Express Lanes HOV3+ policy became effective on January 1, 2017. HOV3+ is gaining acceptance among commuters, with more than 110,000 switchable transponders sold to date. Early data and anecdotal information indicate that the HOV/Express Lanes help reduce travel time in major corridor projects. On I-25 North between US 36 to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue (opened in July 2016), the Express Lanes are performing well during the ramp-up phase. The Bustang route from Fort Collins to Denver has noted travel time savings of about 10 minutes. Please visit the Express Lanes webpage at <https://www.codot.gov/programs/expresslanes> to learn more, or contact [Kari Grant](mailto:Kari.Grant@state.co.us) for more information.

## Transportation Commission and STAC

- A [summary](#) of the Transportation Commission's Jan. 18-19, 2017 meeting is posted on the STAC webpage.
- Notes from the Jan. 27, 2017 STAC meeting will be available in the STAC packet for the Feb. 24 meeting, which should be sent via e-mail on Feb. 17. The notes also should be located on the [STAC webpage](#).

*If you have suggestions for topics or updates to submit, please send to [gail.hoffman@state.co.us](mailto:gail.hoffman@state.co.us). Copies of past issues of Planning Connections are available [here](#) under Planning Process.*