

OPINION > OPINION COLUMNISTS

Guest Commentary: Lawmakers delayed asking voters for more transportation funding so CDOT can learn what Coloradans really need



Anya Semenoff, The Denver Post

In this 2016 file photo cars drive northbound on Interstate 25 with a new express toll lane, indicated by the double white line in Northglenn.

By **SHOSHANA LEW** | Guest Commentary

PUBLISHED: May 15, 2019 at 5:08 pm | UPDATED: May 15, 2019 at 6:36 pm



THE DENVER POST ✕

Unlimited Digital Access for
only 99 cents!

SUBSCRIBE

the Top 150 places
in Colorado

CLICK HERE TO READ THEIR STORIES

As this year's legislative session came to a close, I was proud of the progress Gov. Jared Polis' administration has made to improve Coloradans' lives and our economy, like universal, free full-day kindergarten; landmark measures to reduce health care costs; embracing our renewable energy future; and investing in Colorado's transportation system.

I know that citizens are concerned about longer commutes, crumbling infrastructure, and road safety, which is why Polis signed a budget that adds \$100 million for transportation for a total of over \$750 million in additional state transportation funding.

It's why the Colorado Department of Transportation is racing to keep up with looming challenges like the growth up-and-down the Interstate 25 corridor, the "spine" of our system that is home to 85 percent of Colorado's population. We are expanding capacity up and down I-25, between Mead and Fort Collins, near Denver, and working to close the precariously narrow "gap" near Colorado Springs.

It's why the Colorado Department of Transportation and the legislatively established "Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission" are also studying multimodal alternatives along that same corridor since we know we can't just build our way out of worsening congestion on the road and in the air.

And it's why we're investing in a new approach to safety called "Whole System, Whole Safety," that is focused on taking system-wide action to make our infrastructure itself safer — common-sense measures like painting clearer stripes on roads, building better shoulders and passing lanes in our rural areas, and talking candidly about creating a culture of safe behavior when traveling.

Going forward, this state faces the challenge of improving the transportation system it has right now, while planning for a dynamic future. Colorado's strong economy has brought jobs, innovation, and population, making our state one of the fastest-growing places in the country. Our transportation system will be judged on how we respond to this unprecedented growth while maintaining our health, our safety, our way of life, and our environment.



THE DENVER POST



Unlimited Digital Access for
only 99 cents!

SUBSCRIBE



Coloradans deserve a thoughtful strategy to confront these challenges, and our legislature has just given us an opportunity to develop one. Wisely, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle led by Democratic Sen. Rachel Zenzinger and Republican Sen. Bob Rankin championed the delay of a \$2.3 billion transportation ballot measure that had been required by statute, and that would have been similar to ones rejected by voters in last year's election. This step accepts the feedback of voters from last year's ballot measures and allows us to think broadly and boldly about how to try something new.

To make the most of this opportunity, the Colorado Department of Transportation will soon start discussions to take a fresh look at our transportation investment priorities — asking communities across the state what matters to their lives and how infrastructure can help get them there. When complete, this plan will be, as its name suggests: “Your Transportation Plan: Connections. Choice. Colorado for All.”

Instead of starting with the question “how do we pay for more infrastructure?” — too often the opening salvo of debates about transportation policy in Colorado and nationwide — we'll start with the question “what challenges do we face as a community and what infrastructure investments will help solve them?”

This bottom-up approach to transportation planning will produce smarter investment priorities based on what Coloradans need — driven by what our neighbors tell us about their challenges and aspirations. This strategy will guide how the state spends the dollars it has, and paint a picture of what is needed in the future, reflecting the collective wisdom of Coloradans.

As a steward of public dollars, I believe that residents deserve a plan in which they can see their needs reflected. The voters sent their message at the ballot box last year. Let's learn from it and make a more compelling case, to ourselves and each other, for exactly what transportation investments make sense and are worthy of our collective investment.

Shoshana Lew is the executive director of the Colorado Department of Transportation.

To send a letter to the editor about this article, submit [online](#) or check out [how to submit by email or mail](#).

THE DENVER POST



Unlimited Digital Access for
only 99 cents!

SUBSCRIBE



Sponsored



BRONCOS STADIUM DEVELOPMENT —...

Jeff Miller

13h

How many home games do the Bronc...



TAGS: **BALLOT MEASURES, BOB RANKIN, FUNDING, INFRASTRUCTURE, INTERSTATE 25, JARED POLIS, ROAD SAFETY, TRANSPORTATION, TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**



SPONSORED CONTENT

Medicare Part D: Why Your 65th Birthday Is so Important

By Walgreens



Deciding when to enroll in a Medicare

prescription drug plan is a big decision and we can help.



THE DENVER POST



Unlimited Digital Access for only 99 cents!

SUBSCRIBE

