

MINUTES

PUEBLO AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

A meeting of the Pueblo Area Council of Governments was held on Thursday, September 24, 2020, at the Pueblo County Department of Emergency Management, 101 West 10th Street, 1st Floor Conference Room. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Chris Wiseman, PACOG Chairman, at 12:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Those members present were:

Mark Aliff
Larry Atencio
Ed Brown
Mike Cafasso
Barbara Clementi

Greg Collins
Dennis Flores
Terry Hart
Garrison Ortiz
Chris Wiseman

Those members absent were:

Ray Aguilera
Staphanie Cordova-Catalano
Ted Lopez

Doug Proal
Bob Schilling
Lori Winner

Also present were:

John Adams
Sabina Genesio
Carmen Howard

Nick Gradisar
Dan Kogovsek
Louella Salazar

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Citizen Comments)

There were no public comments.

CONSENT ITEMS:

Ms. Carmen Howard, PACOG Manager, reported there were two items listed on the agenda under the Consent Items. She summarized the Consent Items for PACOG.

Chairman Wiseman asked if there were any other additions or amendments to the Consent Items or if any of the members or audience would like an item removed or discussed that was on the Consent agenda. There were no other additions or amendments.

It was moved by Dennis Flores, seconded by Larry Atencio, and passed unanimously to approve the two Consent Items listed below:

- Minutes of August 27, 2020 Meeting; and
- Treasurer's Report (Receive and file August 2020 Financial Report).

REGULAR ITEMS:

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:

(A) Lunch Appreciation

Chairman Wiseman thanked the Pueblo City Council for providing lunch for today's meeting.

MANAGER'S REPORT

(A) ADA Advisory Committee Minutes

Ms. Howard reported the minutes from the August 6, 2020 ADA Advisory Committee meeting was mailed in the members' packets.

This being an information item, no formal action was required.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONER/CDOT REGION 2 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

There was no report from Mr. Bill Thiebaut, Region 10 Transportation Commissioner.

Mr. Richard Zamora, CDOT Region 2 Director, reported the State's financial situation is in flux. The State will be placing all its employees on mandatory furloughs due to pandemic-related budget cuts. The number of days is based on an employee's annual salary with the exemption for those necessary for the COVID-19 response, assisting Coloradans in finding jobs, and protecting public safety and roads, as well as workers earning \$50,000 a year or less. He noted CDOT will still be conducting its normal business operations going forward.

Mr. Zamora stated that Senate Bill 267 still is up in the air. They are committed to deliver on its 10-year plan. He stated it might be possible that the 10-year plan would probably go beyond the 10 years, noting there is still a solid plan to deliver.

Mr. Zamora stated the State Transportation Commission has reserved \$2.5 million for pre-construction activities for the New Pueblo Freeway and State Highway 50B. It's not all the money that is needed for right-of-way acquisition, but it is the first step in bringing a project to reality.

Mr. Zamora stated there are a few staff changes at the CDOT headquarters. The changes include Ms. Shelby Shulman and Mr. Tim Kirby have left CDOT; Mr. Eric Richardson has left, and Ms. Julie George is replacing him; and Mr. Wayne Trujillo has retired.

STATE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC) UPDATE

Mr. Terry Hart, PACOG STAC representative, reported the last STAC meeting was held on September 11, 2020. An update was done on how the fires throughout the State have impacted CDOT. Additionally, there was a report from the Transportation Commission, which included information on the reduction in the revenue funds as they relate to the State budget, and how CDOT has been working to absorb this. He observed that CDOT has been doing a spectacular job in shifting resources and holding together the different projects.

Mr. Hart stated STAC received a report that the 2045 Statewide Transportation Plan has been approved by the Transportation Commission. STAC also received a report on the mobility efforts being done throughout the State. The Federal report was also received. Congress is pushing through the continuing resolution, which keeps all the agencies functioning, noting the bad side is there are several pending elements being posed for 2021-2022 budget that are not in the resolution.

Mr. Hart stated a State report was received on the number of bills that are being worked on for introduction next year. One is dealing with the money that will be necessary for transportation next year and how it balances into the State budget. There was discussion on the greenhouse gas emissions reduction bill and carrying on efforts that happened in the 2019 session. There was discussion on potential bills dealing with contingent funding for the Front Range Passenger Rail System, noting he would report on it later in the meeting. Discussion occurred on various renewable energy efforts that are going to be associated with the transportation system.

Mr. Hart stated there was a report on the greenhouse gas road map. Transportation has now moved up to the point of being the largest contributor of greenhouse gases in Colorado, which was not the case in the past. Because Colorado has been doing a lot of work to control the amount of pollution coming off electric utilities, transportation now has the dubious distinction of being the number one issue. Governor Polis is working on this. It will also be worked on Statewide in the next few years. STAC talked about the 16 bills that passed during the 2019 Legislative Session dealing with these specific issues and how those various bills interact with each other. STAC talked about Governor Polis's plan to achieve 100% renewable energy by the year 2040.

Mr. Hart reported there was discussion about the State Aviation System Plan, which connects the aviation system into the Statewide transportation discussion.

Mr. Hart stated there was inhouse work done on revising the bylaws and how the officers are selected.

Mr. Hart stated there was a report on the National Highway Freight Program.

Mr. Hart stated following the STAC meeting, there was a Zoom meeting held directly with CDOT on the northside Pinon Rest Stop. There are a lot of challenges at the rest stop mostly dealing with the sewage treatment system. There are a lot of people who insist on flushing clothes, trash, etc. down the various toilets and it has been a huge cost for CDOT to keep it maintained. The question was asked if it was unique to our rest stop or does this happen at other rest stops across the State. CDOT was not able to answer the question but said they would get back to them with an answer. CDOT is saying that the cost of maintaining the north and south Pinon rest stops is large. With limited budget, it is assumed that the rest stops will be closed. He stated CDOT asked for feedback. He felt the State of Colorado over the last two decades has done a horrible job of maintaining their rest stops, noting the rest stops are not showcased as is done in other states. He felt this needs to be fixed. He stated the group felt that instead of CDOT simply closing them that alternative sites be looked at that are closer to the City of Pueblo's sewage treatment system, noting then it could be dealt with as any other government business activity rather than dealing with a unique septic system. He stated we need to make it clear to CDOT that the rest stops are necessary.

Mr. Hart stated the next STAC meeting is scheduled on Friday, October 9th.

STATUS ON SOUTHWEST CHIEF PASSENGER RAIL

Mr. Terry Hart, PACOG's representative on the Southwest Chief Passenger Rail Commission, reported the last meeting was held on August 28, 2020 and the next meeting is tomorrow. An update was given on the various grants received, i.e., TIGER and CRISI grants. They are putting together various contracts to continue to improve the Southwest Chief line through Southern Colorado and into New Mexico. They are putting together a Positive Train Track Control (PTC) system, which is a Federal requirement. The effort under that grant is moving forward.

Mr. Hart stated there was a report on the contract PACOG and Pueblo County has in place for siting the potential train station, which has been narrowed down to two sites. This will be going forward for final recommendation in the near future.

Mr. Hart stated there was a report on the Front Range Passenger Rail, which was exciting. Amtrak reported the dismal news of what has been happening to their ridership and income due to COVID. They suffered about a 98% reduction in passenger travel during the months of March, April, and May. This is after they had shown a 5- to 6-year significant increase, where they were backing away from having Federal subsidies. They were looking in 2020 of breaking even and going into the profit mode. With the economy opening, Amtrak is back up 20% of their normal ridership. They got a big boost under the Federal CARES Act, which is allowing them to hold everything together. They will need to have the economy turn around in order to get going. The exciting news is they put in a significant budget request for FY 2021-2022 to not only maintain their existing systems but to expand into new corridors, noting there are four new corridors they want to expand. One of those corridors is the Front Range Corridor. The House passed their budget proposal, which is over \$10 billion for the general operation of Amtrak and an additional \$25 billion over a five-year period, which is designed to develop those new routes. The Commission was told there would be over \$2 billion provided for the State of Colorado for development of the Front Range Rail system. In a webinar they had yesterday, they indicated they also have money not only to design and build the system but also money to get it started for the first five years. Amtrak indicated of the four new corridors that the one which is furthest ahead and most exciting and likely to happen is the Front Range Corridor. This is happening because of the level of attention that the route is being given and the attention to the Southwest Chief. He stated all the efforts which have happened locally, at the State, and up and down the Front Range have been successful. Amtrak has taken notice of our efforts. The bad news is that it is stuck in the Senate. He stated he heard the resolution will not contain the money, but it is hoped the effort will be continued through the lame duck session at the end of this year or into the new Congress which will be seated in January.

Mr. Hart stated they received the various plan updates of the work being done. The survey results are continuing to show an extremely high support of the citizens up and down the Front Range.

Mr. Hart stated there was a report on a new technology that CDOT is using to help them do 3-D tunnel modeling. The Commission looked at the tunneling, which is being done around the Monument Hill, which would reduce the grade of the railroad and make it a lot easier to get through the area. It also contains information on ridership and modeling, noting it shows a significant report and modeling will do a good job of maintaining the system.

MPO STAFF REPORT

(A) New Pueblo Freeway Overview - CDOT Region 2

Mr. Rob Frei, CDOT, presented a PowerPoint presentation. He reported I-25 through Pueblo was constructed from 1949 through 1959. There have been relatively few improvements along the corridor. It was designed for that timeframe, noting it hasn't been kept up to current standards. In 2000, CDOT initiated a feasibility study. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was initiated in 2003 and completed in 2013. It took ten years because of Pueblo's historic criteria. The Phase I Record of Decision (ROD) was completed in 2014. The purpose of the New Pueblo Freeway was to improve safety by addressing deteriorating roadways and bridges and non-standard road characteristics, as well to improve local and regional mobility within and through Pueblo to meet existing and future travel demands. The highway design practices at the time have led to the following issues, such as higher accident rates, narrow lanes and shoulders that don't meet standards, inadequate ramp spacing, tight curves, etc. I-25 has created a barrier to east and west mobility. When speaking to the public, it was found they use I-25 for local and regional trips. CDOT looked at the possibility of finding alternative north and south routes and insufficient capacity for projected future traffic conditions. From the EIS, CDOT identified a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative looked at widening I-25 to six lanes (3 in each direction). It would straighten I-25 through downtown, noting there is currently a lot of curves. It would relocate I-25 east between Abriendo Avenue and Indiana Avenue to eliminate railroad relocation, noting it is expensive to relocate railroad. It would reconstruct and consolidate interchanges. It would extend Dillon Drive south to U.S. 50B. It would connect Abriendo Avenue to Santa Fe Drive. It would extend Santa Fe Avenue south from Ilex Street to Minnequa Avenue. It would extend Stanton Avenue south over the Arkansas River.

Mr. Frei reported the ROD was phased, noting only a portion of the EIS has been approved to move forward with construction. That portion is the North Area or everything north of the Arkansas River. The reason this was done is because of the fiscal constraint with the Long-Range Transportation Plan. The Central Area has two reasonable alternatives that still need to be considered in the next phase. There are multiple concerns with EVRAZ (railroad, waterline, air quality permit). In discussions with EVRAZ, it was discovered if any of their land was taken from them that they would be in violation of their air quality permit. Instead of trying to unravel this, CDOT decided to defer until they move into the second ROD.

Mr. Joe DeHeart, CDOT, reported the I-25 Ilex project was the first construction project from the NPF EIS/ROD Phase. He stated CDOT took over the maintenance from the contractor yesterday. There was a lot of administrative things done behind the scenes. They are going through a landscape establishment period where the contractor remains on board with CDOT to make sure that the seeds grow, the trees don't die, etc. At the end of April 2021, CDOT will be closing out the project. He stated the curve before the Arkansas River was redone and made at a bigger radius, so it wasn't so tight. The shoulders are 12' instead of being 4' or 6' and narrow. The acceleration lane going from 1st Street (City Center Drive) southbound and "D" Street going northbound have continuous lanes. At one time, CDOT had a funding opportunity for the 13th Street exit, but it went away. There was then funding for 29th Street. He stated as those opportunities come, the priority shifts on the next project.

Mr. DeHeart stated the next project is the Highway 50B interchange, noting it is the interchange which goes to La Junta. This is the next priority because there are Senate Bill 267 dollars identified, noting the amount available fits in line with the amount for this project. Unfortunately,

Senate Bill 267 funds went away, but CDOT had enough money set aside to get the design done. In the meantime, they will be working on getting construction dollars to get it done.

Mr. DeHeart stated the 1st Street (City Center) to 13th Street project is a standalone project and it is considered an independent utility project. There is a lot to build the segment. This section has a new collector distributor road both on the east and west sides. If someone wanted to get off at 1st Street and go to 6th Street, you would go on the collector distributor road and find your way to 6th Street. The EIS had the idea of slip ramps on 6th Street, noting the EIS never proved whether those slip ramps were needed or not from a traffic modeling standpoint. Since the EIS, CDOT has done modeling work or an Interstate Access Request (IAR) to prove what are the access points. The IAR is done and it shows the slip ramps at 6th Street make a significant operational difference, noting these will be part of this project when it is done. The other reason the slip ramps are there is if someone should miss 1st Street exit, then the next exit for a turnaround would be Highway 50B. The 6th Street off ramp would give someone an opportunity to turnaround if they missed the sign to 1st Street.

Mr. DeHeart stated the classic diamond interchange is what is proposed. The interchange spacing will also be done to meet the Federal Highway Administration and Interstate standards. The ramps coming in and off 29th Street will be changed. He stated 29th Street was another project, which was an independent utility. He stated there is not a lot going on at 29th Street, other than a little main alignment and shoulder widths. Because of this, it was decided that Highway 50B would be a better to do first, then 29th Street.

Mr. DeHeart talked about the Dillon Drive extension. He stated the Dillon extension ends behind the Pueblo Mall. This connection helps a lot of southbound traffic exit the highway and use this road instead of going through the 29th Street interchange. He stated there will still be connectivity through the area even after the Highway 50B interchange is done.

Mr. DeHeart stated the Mineral Palace Park mitigation is not a roadway project. There are problems because of the right-of-way impact and widening the lanes and shoulders. The EIS had shown that there was going to be a lot of work done at the Park. CDOT does not have money set aside for mitigation at the Park. The Park will not be encroached upon to do the Highway 50B interchange.

Mr. Flores stated he has had several inquiries regarding utilizing the two plots of vacant land on the east and west sides of the Ilex project for economic development purposes (i.e., hotel). These plots were used by CDOT during the construction of the project. He asked how it would be possible to get the information on the lots, noting the City may be interested in acquiring the lots. Mr. DeHeart replied CDOT knew from the onset that these would be excess parcels. CDOT will be offering the local entities the first chance for the right of refusal on these excess parcels. There have been all types of ideas on the east side parcel such as making it a parking lot for Runyon Field, but it could be developed for anything. The City of Pueblo and Pueblo County will get the first right of refusal to the parcels. This won't happen until after April when everything is done with the contractor.

Mr. Atencio asked if the interchange at I-25 and Highway 50B is to make the transition much easier. Mr. DeHeart responded the original intent of the EIS was to reestablish mobility and safety. The Dillon extension is a component of the mobility piece. Mr. Atencio asked if there would be an exit off Highway 50B going west and extending Dillon to Highway 50B. Mr. DeHeart replied Highway 50B going to the interstate would remain the same. The reason for the reconfiguration is for safety purposes, such as geometry lane problems and shoulder width problems. CDOT is looking for other funding sources such as freight dollars. The bridge at

Highway 50B gets hit a lot because it is so low for large trucks. Mr. Atencio stated that going east of Highway 50B and the eastern gateway where Highway 47/Highway 50B/4th Street meet that he saw an idea over a year ago to connect Highway 50B to Highway 47 contiguously and have off ramps to Highway 50B and 4th Street. He felt this makes sense to connect Highway 50B to Highway 47. Mr. DeHeart stated he has not heard of this project. He stated in order to see any significant improvement there that that must come from PACOG, and funding needs to be found. Ms. Hu, CDOT, stated she thought it was in PACOG's 2045 Plan. Mr. DeHeart stated CDOT has been looking at a bypass in the area where the bigger trucks can use Highway 47 to go to the airport. Mr. Atencio stated since the biggest issue is safety, how do we convince the General Assembly to fund the I-25 projects in a timely manner because we won't get it done for another 25 years. Chairman Wiseman stated there are safety issues up and down the highway. He stated one of the conversations he had with State Transportation Commissioner Thiebaut is that Northern Colorado counties tax themselves, so they are a partner. Those counties get priority because of this. Pueblo does not do this. He felt this is something we might have to consider down the road, creating a transportation taxing area within Pueblo County that could address some of those issues and help us to be more competitive with Northern Colorado.

Mr. Flores stated there is a huge flooding problem at 29th Street under the railroad bridge during a rainstorm, noting the water is so deep that people can't go to the Pueblo Mall. Mr. DeHeart replied the New Pueblo Freeway doesn't have road improvements that extend that far east. He agreed it was a problem. He stated he didn't know if that was a City street or part of CDOT.

Mr. Hart stated Transportation Commissioner Thiebaut came to the Board of County Commissioners over a year ago and spoke about how Pueblo needs to compete for transportation funding. He stated we need to be united and need to figure out a funding mechanism so that we can raise money locally and then match the State and Federal money. He stated this has been successful north of Pueblo in Colorado Springs, Denver, Fort Collins, and Greeley. He stated the Transportation Commission is trying to do the best they can to provide Pueblo its fair share, but when someone up north has money to match that's what gets the attention. He felt a Regional Transportation Authority or something similar needs to happen in Pueblo in order to raise money and prioritize our local projects.

This being information only, no formal action was taken.

(B) The 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update

Mr. Adams reported the Plan is a Federal requirement and needs to be done in order to comply for transportation planning for the Pueblo area. A draft of the Plan will be provided to PACOG at its next meeting. He stated the survey on the Plan is still available until next week. There have been 459 responses to the survey. The Plan will go out for public comment after the next meeting and will be provided to PACOG at its December for final approval.

This being information only, no formal action was taken.

(C) Pueblo Area Station Plan for Passenger Rail Update

Mr. Adams reported the County with its 1A monies is doing a study from La Junta to Pueblo regarding passenger rail service. One of the components of the study is the Pueblo area station, noting PACOG previously agreed to fund this. He noted this is in its final stage and should be out in another week. The two primary spots are "C" Street and Mechanic (City Purchasing building) and the existing Union Station. There is a continuing resolution of the

FAST Act, which funds transportation projects. The House has approved the one-year continuing resolution, and the Senate is expected to approve it.

Mr. Adams reported the Urban Transportation Planning Division received its Consolidated Planning Grant for FY 2021.

This being information only, no formal action was taken.

(D) Other Transportation Matters

Mr. Adams reported Mr. Hart is term limited on the State Transportation Advisory Committee due his term limit on the Board of County Commissioners and, subsequently, PACOG. He serves as PACOG's representative on STAC. A new representative will need to be selected at the next PACOG meeting.

This being information only, no formal action was taken.

OTHER BUSINESS

(A) Municipalization

This item was removed from the agenda.

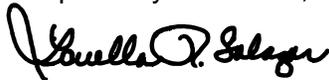
FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no future agenda items provided. Chairman Wiseman stated if anyone should wish to be on a future agenda that they contact Ms. Salazar.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further regular business before PACOG, it was motioned by Dennis Flores, seconded by Larry Atencio, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 1:22 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday, October 22, 2020, at 12:15 p.m., at the Pueblo County Emergency Operations Center, 101 West 10th Street, 1st Floor Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,



Louella R. Salazar
PACOG Recording Secretary

LRS

JOINT CITY COUNCIL AND BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Mr. Dan Kogovsek reported two ballots have been provided to the City Council and Board of County Commissioners members in attendance at the meeting. He asked that they be filled out and given to Ms. Salazar. For those members who are participating remotely, the ballots will be sent to them via email and should be returned to Ms. Salazar.

Following the regular PACOG meeting, there was a joint meeting held between the Pueblo City Council and Board of County Commissioners to appoint one member to the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District Commission and two members to the Community Services Advisory Commission. The following persons were selected:

- Jeff Chostner, Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District Commission. The term expires on January 31, 2022.
- Regina Purcell and Nick Trejo, Community Services Advisory Commission. The terms expire on April 30, 2024.

These appointments will need to be ratified at future meetings of the respective entities.