

# **South Central TPR Meeting Notes Orientation to Transportation Planning and Preparation for 2050 RTP Development Meeting #3**

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**Thursday, January 23rd, 2025  
9:30 am - 12:00 pm**

## **South Central TPR Regional Planning Commission (RPC) Membership**

**Formal Members:** Huerfano County, City of Trinidad, City of Walsenburg, Town of Aguilar, Town of Kim, Town of Branson, Town of Cokedale, and Town of LaVeta

**Non-Members:** Las Animas County and Town of Starkville

## **Attendance:**

### **RPC Roll Call:**

Las Animas County: Felix Lopez, Robert Lucero, Tony Hass

Huerfano County: Mitchell Wardell, Karl Sporleder, Ray Garcia

City of Trinidad: Aaron Williamson, Nick Mason

City of Walsenburg: Gary Vezzani, Nick Vigil

Town of Aguilar representative

Town of Kim: Bud Broce

Town of Branson: Absent

Town of Cokedale: Absent

Town of LaVeta: Heather Hills

SCCOG: Brian Blasi and Donna Sue Torres

### **CDOT Roll Call:**

Division Transportation Development (DTD): Kathleen Collins, Aaron Willis, Isabella Smith, Michael Snow, Darius Pakbaz, Erik Sabina

Division of Transit and Rail (DTR): George Gromke

Office of Policy and Government Relations (OPGR): Crystal Armendariz

Region 2: Shane Ferguson, Jennifer Sparks, Rob Frei, Geoff Guthrie, Scott Skinner, and

Transportation Commissioner: Terry Hart

## **Other:**

Blair Stutzman, Mike Valentine, Joe Richards, Jeni Jackson, and Bob Just

## **Quorum Establishment**

Brian Blasi, SCCOG Executive Director, established that a quorum of the SCTPR RPC was present.

## **Legislative Update**

### **Status of Decision on South Central TPR and Southeast TPR Merge and Intermountain TPR (IMTPR) to split into two TPRs**

- The HB 23-1101 TPR Study proposed the split of IMTPR into two TPRs, and the merge of SCTPR and SETPR. The merge of SCTPR and SETPR would be necessary to comply with state statute that only allows for 15 TPRs in Colorado.
- The final decision for TPR boundary changes lies with the Transportation Commission (TC), whereas the number of TPRs is based on state statute overseen by the state legislature. It is understood that the TC does not desire to make any TPR boundary changes that would require the merge of the SCTPR and SETPR at this time.

**Update:** HB 25-1046 was introduced on January 28, 2025 to increase the number of TPRs to 16, to allow for IMTPR to split into two without requiring SCTPR and SETPR to merge. This Bill did not pass the initial legislative committee to allow it to move forward. However, as noted above, it is understood the TC does not plan to make any TPR boundary changes at this time.

**Other legislative Updates Provided by Crystal Armendariz, Region 2 Liaison CDOT Office of Policy and Government Relations - See attached pdf dated 1/24/2025.**

## **SCTPR Orientation - Aaron Willis**

The purpose of this presentation is to get new members and newly elected officials up to speed on Region Planning Commission roles and responsibilities, the SCCOG roles and responsibilities, the statewide and regional transportation planning processes, and current status of 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) development, before the third 2050 RTP Development meeting in February where projects for SCTPR will be prioritized.

## **Roles of the South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG) vs. Roles of the South Central Regional Planning Commission (SCRPC) - Kathleen Collins**

- The distinction between an RPC - the governing body of individuals who make decisions for the transportation in coordination with CDOT in the two-county boundary (Huerfano and Las Animas Counties) of the South Central Transportation Planning Region (SCTPR) was explained. The RPC are the decision making people, and the SCTPR is the boundary for which decisions are made.
- The SCCOG thought they established the RPC back in 1993, but the proper paperwork was not processed to formalize RPC membership.
- The RPC was formed by local communities signing an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) in 2017.
- Brian Blasi found, after doing an extensive records search, the IGA to form the RPC in 2017. Only members who signed the IGA have formal authority to vote on transportation decisions. The two entities who did not sign were Las Animas County and the town of Starkville. Brian Blasi is working to get the signatures on file to formalize their RPC membership.
- The plan is to conduct a roll call for RPC representatives at each TPR meeting moving forward. The meeting notes will include, as shown above in these meeting notes, the results of the RPC member roll call, along with the current status of RPC membership for both members and non-members.
- Las Animas County initially did not sign due to concerns with levying fees for membership (they did not want to have to pay for another membership beyond the SCCOG), and concerns with liability taken on by being a member. CDOT explained that RPCs in Colorado could decide to levy membership fees, but to date no TPR has decided to levy membership fees at this time. RPC members participate without any fees. In addition, the state statute that forms RPCs, notes that individuals serving are free from any liability of actions taken by the TPR Regional Planning Commissions.

### **Discussion:**

- Las Animas County Commissioner, Felix Lopez, noted that he would work with the County to get the required signature(s) on file.

## **Draft SCTPR RPC Bylaws Review - Kathleen Collins**

- Brian Blasi also found a copy of SCTPR RPC bylaws from 2017.

- Since 2017, the HB 23-1101 requires each Colorado RPC to include a transit representative.
- CDOT provided a draft set of bylaws for RPC members to review that complies with HB 23-1101, adding text regarding including a transit representative.
- Other text provided addresses the potential for virtual voting and attending meetings virtually.
- In addition, text was provided to allow the RPC to conduct their business if a traditional quorum is not met - RPC members who do not attend more than three TPR meetings consecutively, will not be counted against the quorum.

## **2050 RTP Planning Process and Status - Kathleen Collins and Aaron Willis**

- This presentation provided an overview of the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) development process and status, and included:
  - Required planning factors from State and Federal legislation,
  - CDOT Policy Directive 14 - Statewide Planning goal areas of:
    - Safety
    - Fixing our roads
    - Access to alternative modes of transportation
  - Integration of other transportation modal and topic plans
  - Project timeline - wrap up anticipated in summer 2025
- This meeting is preparation for the third SCTPR 2050 RTP Development meeting scheduled for February 20, 2025, where project priorities for the SCTPR will be discussed in detail.
- All of the 2050 RTPs for all the TPRs will roll up into the 2050 Statewide Transportation Plan (SWP).
- At the fourth and final meeting, CDOT intends to bring a draft SCTPR 2050 RTP for review, allowing a quick transition into the development of the new 10 Year Plan for FY2027 to FY2036, where funds will be identified for CDOT's priority projects, to occur in fall/winter of 2025, after the adoption of the 2050 SWP, in August 2025.

### **Discussion:**

- Las Animas County Commissioner, Felix Lopez, asked how the projects on the 10 Year Plan may be impacted caused by budget changes under the new Federal Administration. CDOT DTD Director, Darius Pakbaz, confirmed the uncertainty. but could not comment on the total fiscal

picture until the annual budget is passed by the Transportation Commission and the State Legislature anticipated to occur on May 8.

- Las Animas County Commissioner Felix Lopez also brought up State Bill SB 21-260, which established a dedicated revenue source from rideshare fees and delivery fees that is to be put back onto the roads, and asked how much of that revenue has been realized and if it is designed to supplant the federal or state funding obligations. It was explained that the revenues outlined in SB 21-260 served to even out CDOT's revenues to create a consistent revenue stream for the department, rather than providing a substantial jump in revenue.
  - Budget items will be discussed in detail at the March or April STAC meeting. Commissioner Lopez was encouraged to attend the STAC meeting covering this topic so he can ask questions and receive more detailed information to get answers.

**Update:** A report posted on the CDOT website noting preliminary revenues from SB 21-260 and how to reduce funds to balance the state budget is available here: [FY 2025-2026 Draft Budget Allocation Plan](#)  
Please see page 19 that discusses SB 21-260 revenues.

### **SCTPR Vision:**

The Vision Statement was changed slightly from the 2045 RTP to include a phrase expressing support for other modes of transportation.

See the vision with proposed changes bolded:

The South Central TPR will provide a safe, reliable, cost-effective, and accessible, multimodal transportation system that **supports other modes of transportation and** accommodates and enhances the Region's high quality of life while preserving the environments that make Huerfano and Las Animas Counties great places to live, work, and visit.

### **Discussion:**

- A representative from the Town of Aguilar asked about any collaboration between CDOT and Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) to manage wildlife crashes. The response from CDOT was that there is a committee, with representatives from both organizations, that meets on a quarterly basis to discuss wildlife-related transportation issues.
  - This committee performed two prioritization studies, an East Slope Study and a West Slope Study, to identify priority projects. These studies identified a project in Las Animas County, for which

a grant was applied for but unfortunately was not won. Another application may be considered in the future. CPW does not have sufficient funding to undertake most projects, so they must look to the state to supplement. However, there is generally only a few million dollars in funding to be allocated across the state, which doesn't go very far. Las Animas County had \$3 million of 10 Year Plan funding identified as a match for the lost grant. For wildlife-related transportation matters, the East Slope Prioritization Study is currently the guiding document.

## **2050 RTP Goal Areas Overview:**

### **Discussion:**

- Las Animas County Commissioner Felix Lopez inquired about the potential methodology for supporting Goal #8, which relates to attracting new passengers for multimodal services. This means increasing accessibility and services that capture a wider market, such as increasing Bustang Outrider services. There are also advertising and marketing efforts underway for the region's On-Demand Service and the creation of partnerships with community organizations, such as the Trinidad State College, can help support increased accessibility.
- Mr. Ray Garcia pointed to the high proportion of through traffic in this part of the state, which places strain on the roadway without contributing to its maintenance. In a similar vein, electric vehicles do not pay as much in gas taxes, but degrade the road as much or more than gas-powered vehicles. CDOT Region 2 staff pointed out that in order to get closer for electric vehicles to pay their fair share, legislation was passed that substantially increased the registration fees for electric vehicles.
- There were some potential modifications to the list of goals that were identified. It was suggested that goals #1 and #4, which both mention multimodal transportation, could be combined. After discussion, this suggestion shifted to tightening up the wording on goal #1 to focus on maintaining current assets and folding all multimodal topics into goal #4. Additionally, goals #2 and #3, which both talk about wildlife and habitat, could be combined. There was a general consensus across all goal areas to clean up the wording of each goal.
- Goal #6 was also discussed, and questions about the airport system in the area were raised. There is not a robust airport system in place, but the existing services are integral to regional training programs and overnight carriers. As the number of flights and fuel sales are increasing,

the region is dedicated to maintaining its existing airport facilities and looking to attract more flights. However, the current capacity of the system is unknown. There is an opportunity for communities to promote their airspace.

- CDOT agreed to revise the goals based on the comments raised above and bring them to the next meeting for further review and discussion prior to finalizing them for inclusion in the draft 2050 RTP.

### **Focus Areas Overview:**

#### **Discussion:**

- The impact of rail and freight services was brought up, and how much jurisdiction CDOT has with influencing rail and freight improvements.
  - CDOT maintains an element of influence over rail/state highway crossing improvements.
  - Identification of statewide freight corridors through an analysis of inflows and outflows of freight.
  - CDOT also works to identify and improve intermodal locations where freight is transferred from trucks to rail and vice versa.
  - Additionally, there is the opportunity for the Front Range Passenger Rail to extend down into this area, so these rail considerations in the RTP are important.
- Ray Garcia noted that CO 69 is a problem area that is experiencing increased wear due to semi-truck use, even though they are not technically allowed along this road. Mr. Garcia asked how much money has been invested on CO 69 recently.

**Update:** CDOT plans to run a report to provide information to answer Mr. Garcia's question. That information will be shared when it is ready.

- The resiliency focus area was explained that it means resiliency from natural disasters, as identified in the Statewide Resiliency Plan. The resiliency of a corridor is dependent upon how the entire system can adapt if a damaging event occurs closing roadways or roadway segments. The solution is to identify alternate routes, if possible, in advance of roadway closures, by providing roadway redundancy.

### **2050 RTP Project Prioritization Overview and Status**

- CDOT provided a table of projects from the 2045 RTP that has been updated to add two columns - project status (where in some instances, the projects are completed), and CDOT Region 2 project priority

recommendations. These are for SCTPR stakeholders to review and consider.

- The issue of not having project costs on the list was raised to inform the prioritization process. CDOT explained that the current process is to identify needs and desires of the TPR stakeholders, and the later in the process, during the process to update the 10 Year Plan in fall 2025, fiscal constraint will be considered on a statewide level, considering all TPR priorities together.
- In addition, it was explained that if a project is not in the 10 Year Plan, it doesn't mean it has no chance for funding, as other sources of funding outside of the 10 Year Plan are available to cover project costs in some instances.

**Adjourned at 11:58 am**