TOGETHER WE BUILD:
How Federal Infrastructure Investments Can Put Coloradans Back To Work

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COLORADO INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
A PROJECT OF
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FOREWORD

Colorado, like the rest of the nation, faces a long and uncertain climb out of the COVID-19 recession. We are grateful to leaders from both major parties for acting swiftly in recent months to save as many jobs and businesses as possible. But even under the best of conditions, it will take years to recover what was lost.

As the impact of short-term stimulus fades, we need a long-term strategy for economic recovery. Something that inspires confidence in workers, business owners, consumers and investors. Confidence that our economy will do more than just reopen—that it will come back strong and keep getting stronger over the months and years ahead.

We believe now is the time for major federal investments in infrastructure, to put people back to work and to help recover from decades of underinvestment in the arteries of commerce and gateways to opportunity that make prosperity possible. Colorado suffers more than other states from this underinvestment, because historically we have received far less infrastructure funding from the federal government than we are due based on our share of the population.

We are members of the nonpartisan Colorado Infrastructure Committee, a group formed in April 2020 during the depths of our state’s COVID-19 shutdown. Our coalition includes business and civic leaders, non-profit organizations, local government officials and state legislative leaders from throughout Colorado. After careful review and deliberation, we developed a series of recommendations for Colorado infrastructure projects and policies should the federal government decide to move ahead with a national infrastructure program.

As of this moment, the size and scope of a federal program remains to be seen. Continued inaction is also a possibility, of course, if our national leaders cannot put their differences aside and find a way to work together. But the fact remains: Long before COVID-19, leaders of both major parties acknowledged the need for greater infrastructure investment and expressed support for proposals ranging between $1 trillion and $2 trillion. The case for a national infrastructure program was strong then and remains strong now. But the economic impacts of the pandemic have added a sense of urgency, without doubt.

With this in mind, we have developed a series of immediate, enduring and equitable investments in Colorado infrastructure that will help pull our state out of the current recession and make our economy much stronger and more resilient in the years and decades to come.

These recommended federal investments total **$16.95 billion to $20.25 billion** and are broken out across five categories:
Roads, Rail, Aviation and Mass Transit ($7.68 billion - $10.98 billion)
The Colorado economy depends heavily on trade and tourism, which means the efficient movement of people and goods is paramount. But every year, this becomes increasingly difficult due to poor infrastructure. Working with state and local officials and users of the transportation network, we have developed a high-impact inventory of projects that will benefit motorists, transit riders, cyclists, airport travelers and business owners – starting with full funding of the Colorado Department of Transportation’s 10-year plan.

Water Infrastructure ($3 billion)
The responsible use of Colorado’s water resources will be critical to economic growth and our standard of living in the decades to come. And yet, our investments in water infrastructure consistently lag behind our needs. Our recommended projects and programs will take major strides towards solving this problem, by prioritizing community needs for drinking water, water treatment, agricultural infrastructure upgrades, recycled water, green infrastructure, and river health.

Energy and Environment ($3.6 billion)
Colorado’s natural environment is a critical economic engine, fueling investment and employment in our tourism and outdoor industries. We recommend projects and programs that will tackle the backlog of infrastructure projects on federal and state lands across Colorado, expand our state park system, make unprecedented progress in addressing the threat of wildfires in our state, and help communities prepare for the expansion of clean energy on the power grid.

Local Commerce and Communications ($770 million)
Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, uneven access to broadband internet was a major issue in Colorado. Today, the need for a solution is even more urgent. Remote learning, telehealth, public safety, telecommuting, e-commerce and entertainment all depend on the ability to send and retrieve data securely at high speeds. Working with Colorado’s existing Broadband Fund, we believe the federal government can help to close the digital divide for unserved and underserved households and businesses, both in rural Colorado and in cities that lack fast, affordable and reliable service.

Education Infrastructure ($1.85 billion)
After COVID-19, we should all have a new appreciation for our schools and universities. And yet, these public institutions are some of the hardest hit by the pandemic. We are proposing a major program of construction debt relief, investments in remote learning equipment and teacher training, and new construction and renovation projects across K-12 public schools and the higher education sector. We also believe Colorado’s network of community colleges, universities and training centers will play a critical role helping workers obtain the technical and management skills that will be sorely needed during the rollout of large-scale infrastructure programs.
Investments like these are badly needed in Colorado. Our growing population deserves better infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of people in our state need jobs and the training to perform those jobs—now and over the long haul. And infrastructure is a wise investment. According to the Business Roundtable, infrastructure “pays for itself several times over” by increasing the efficiency of the economy and helping it grow faster.

Imagine how many more families, businesses and communities can prosper in Colorado if we have infrastructure that promotes innovation and growth across the economy, instead of blocking it. For too many years, we have fallen short of our potential as a state. Now, if the federal government is prepared to be a willing partner, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reach our potential.

Together we can build—in every sense of that word—a stronger future for our state.

Jandel Allen-Davis, MD  
President and CEO, Craig Hospital

The Honorable John Suthers  
Mayor, City of Colorado Springs

Gail Klapper  
Member and President, Colorado Forum

The Honorable Mike Kopp  
President and CEO, Colorado Concern
ABOUT THE COLORADO INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

The COVID-19 emergency has thrown our country, and our state, into an unprecedented economic decline. While drastic public health measures have been necessary to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus, these measures triggered a near-total shutdown of the economy. Once the immediate public health crisis has passed, congressional leaders and White House officials have signaled that federal infrastructure spending will be a major priority.

President Trump and Speaker Pelosi have both expressed support for $2 trillion in infrastructure spending. For Colorado, this presents a historic opportunity—and an urgent need—to identify key projects for consideration by Congress and the White House in any future infrastructure program.

To address this need, Colorado Concern organized a coalition of business and civic leaders, non-profit organizations, local government officials and state legislative leaders to provide federal policymakers with the guidance and support they need to maximize the impact of a national infrastructure program in Colorado.

OUR MISSION

Putting Colorado back to work and bringing the communities of our state closer together through immediate, enduring and equitable investments in infrastructure. We will convene bipartisan groups of public officials and private-sector leaders from across Colorado to build a strong, prosperous and resilient future for our state.

In identifying projects, we agreed that, as much as practicable, they be...

⚠️ **IMMEDIATE**: Work should begin quickly, because Coloradans need jobs.

🔗 **ENDURING**: Projects that provide long-term value should be our priority. Even if they take years to complete, work can start now, and a multi-year pipeline of projects will provide certainty and stability to the state’s economic outlook.

<<< **EQUITABLE**: While not every community can—or should—receive exactly the same level or kind of investment, we will strive to make our recommendations fair in terms of geographic, socioeconomic, racial, cultural and other factors.
CO-CHAIRS

Jandel Allen-Davis, MD
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The Honorable Bob Rankin
State Senator

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INTRODUCTION

WHY INFRASTRUCTURE?

The COVID-19 crisis has caused serious harm to our country, and not just in terms of public health. The lockdown of the economy, which slowed the spread of the virus, put tens of millions of Americans out of work, forced millions of businesses to severely curtail operations or completely close down, and decimated the budgets of state and local governments, higher education institutions and school districts across the country.

In Colorado, more than 400,000 people—or 16 percent of the state’s workforce—filed for unemployment benefits during a two-month period between mid-March and mid-May. While shocking and unprecedented, the official unemployment statistics “understate the scale of the economic catastrophe,” state officials recently warned.¹

The federal government has taken unprecedented action—in the form of trillions of dollars of aid—to preserve as much of the economy as possible during the lockdown. Leaders of both major parties deserve credit for the speed and scale of this action, which will certainly help our economy rebound. But even under the best of conditions, the road to recovery will be long. It may take years, not months, to regain what was lost.

People need jobs. Businesses need customers. But most of all, the workers and employers of this country need confidence. Confidence that the economy will do more than just reopen. Confidence it will come back strong, and keep getting stronger, in the months and years ahead. Confidence that their government has a long-term strategy for repairing the damage caused by the COVID-19 lockdown—and will see it through until the end.

For this reason, federal policymakers are considering a national infrastructure program as part of a long-term economic recovery strategy. After decades of neglect, the arteries of commerce in America are struggling to keep up with the economy of the 21st Century economy, including changes to our transportation and energy sectors and changes in the ways we work, live and learn.

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, bipartisan leaders in Washington, D.C., agreed on the necessity of a major federal infrastructure package, with total investments of up to $2 trillion proposed.² As the American Society of Civil Engineers has warned: “Deteriorating U.S. infrastructure is impeding our ability to compete in the thriving global economy, and improvements are necessary to ensure our country is built for the future.”³

Today, the discussion around infrastructure has taken on a new urgency, as policymakers consider a range of measures to return the U.S. economy to growth and put tens of millions of people back to work. To be sure: A major infrastructure program is not a silver bullet. But it can speed the pace of the recovery both in the short term and over the long haul, reinforcing and maximizing the impact of other positive actions in the public and private sectors.

For example, a 2019 study from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce estimated 11.4 million jobs would be created across the economy under a $1 trillion infrastructure package—or roughly half the total investment in more recent proposals. The Georgetown study also found a major infrastructure program could “revitalize the blue-collar economy” because about 55% of the jobs would go to workers with a high school diploma or less.⁴

And when the work is done, even greater job growth and wage increases will be possible, because our infrastructure will finally support innovation and

¹ Governor’s Office of State Planning and Budgeting. May 12, 2020. Colorado Economic and Fiscal Outlook.
³ American Society of Civil Engineers. Making the Grade.
improved productivity across the U.S. economy, instead of hindering it.

“The most compelling rationale for infrastructure investment ... is long-term economic growth driven by productivity,” the Business Roundtable concluded in a 2019 study. “These gains are broadly distributed, meaningful in scale and build over time—increasing economic efficiency and prosperity nationwide.”

Under a $737 billion infrastructure proposal—almost two-thirds smaller than the $2 trillion package under discussion—the average U.S. household would see a $1,400 increase in real disposable income every year for 20 years, the study found.

Based on household income and other economic indicators, the Business Roundtable further concluded: “Investing in infrastructure pays for itself several times over. Every additional $1 invested in infrastructure delivers roughly $3.70 in additional economic growth over 20 years.”

For this reason, even as federal policymakers have been justifiably focused on the immediate demands of the COVID-19 crisis, the level of interest in a national infrastructure program remains strong. Because when tens of millions of Americans are out of work, investments with a lasting impact—creating jobs in the short term, medium term and long term—just make good sense.

This is not a time for half measures or coming up short.

As Govs. Andrew Cuomo, D-NY, and Larry Hogan, R-MD, recently stated: “This is not a red state or blue state crisis. This is a red white and blue pandemic. The coronavirus is apolitical.”

THE URGENT NEED IN COLORADO

A national infrastructure program would have a tremendously positive impact in Colorado. In addition to the immediate economic damage caused by the COVID-19 lockdown, the nation’s infrastructure crisis is acutely felt here. We are a fast-growing, trade-oriented state with a thriving tourism and outdoor recreation sector. Our economic growth depends on the efficient movement of people and goods, which becomes increasingly difficult every year as our infrastructure fails to keep up with demand. And even before COVID-19, too many Colorado communities struggled to fully participate in the 21st century economy due to poor or non-existent broadband internet access—a problem that became increasingly visible and urgent amidst stay-at-home orders.

By one critical measure—apportionments and allocations from the Highway Trust Fund—federal funding for Colorado’s transportation infrastructure has persistently fallen behind our growing share of the U.S. population.

In fact, over a 20-year period, Colorado’s share of national highway funding exceeded our share of the national population only once—in 2014. Every other year, the apportionment and allocation of funding from the federal Highway Trust Fund to the State of Colorado was far less than we should have received based on population.

Likewise, because our state is more than one-third federal land, our economy suffers more than most from the $21 billion maintenance backlog on public

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lands managed by the U.S. Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). In Colorado, the combined maintenance backlog for lands managed by the USFS and National Parks Service (NPS) exceeds $574 million, according to publicly available 2018 data. Notably, this total does not include lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, which oversees an area 10 times larger than all the national parks in Colorado. Even so, a partial view of the problem is instructive.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation Infrastructure</td>
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<td>$357.6 Million</td>
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Sources: U.S. Department of Interior, Pew Charitable Trusts, National Association of Forest Service Retirees

Taken together, the deferred maintenance backlogs of the NPS and USFS in Colorado constitute a major statewide infrastructure challenge in their own right. Roughly one-third of the overdue maintenance work applies to hiking trails, campground, visitor centers and other amenities that allow people to enjoy their public lands. But almost two-thirds of the maintenance backlog comes from transportation infrastructure—the roads, bridges, tunnels and parking lots that allow people to visit public lands in the first place.

This is an urgent problem for Colorado, which heavily depends on tourism and outdoor recreation to create jobs, support businesses and generate tax revenues. Outdated or worn-out infrastructure limits access to public lands and diminishes the experience of visitors, artificially constraining the number of people who will visit nearby communities on their way to national parks and forests. In Colorado, public lands are not decorative or aesthetic—they are critical pieces of economic infrastructure and essential to our growth.

To be clear: The federal government has tried to catch up on the nation’s infrastructure needs before. The most visible example was the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, passed in response to the Great Recession of 2007-2009. But the $831 billion Recovery Act did not provide a long-term fix for Colorado’s infrastructure problems. Our state’s share of the 2009 stimulus was $7.2 billion—roughly 0.87 percent of the national total.

For scale, 0.87 percent was roughly half Colorado’s share of the national population at the time—meaning our state was short-changed again. On top of that, despite the public’s perception of the Recovery Act as an infrastructure package, only a fraction of the bill was actually devoted to infrastructure. In practical terms, rather than catching up on the state’s infrastructure needs, the Recovery Act left us standing still.

Since 2010, Colorado’s population has grown by more than 750,000, or roughly 15%. But according to the ACSE, our infrastructure 10 years ago was inadequate and has barely improved since then. We are stuck in the poor-to-mediocre category, and unless there is a surge of infrastructure investment

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soon, things won’t get better and could get worse. Not only do we have to catch up with the unmet infrastructure needs of Colorado’s current population of roughly 5.7 million. After we reach that milestone, we have to keep on building, because our population growth is expected to continue at a similar rate through 2030. Therefore, any infrastructure investments in Colorado must deal with the fact that a population of 6.7 million people is just around the corner.

This is not just about jobs created during the engineering and construction phase of an infrastructure program, as important as those jobs are. It’s also about the jobs and wage increases that become possible when infrastructure supports innovation and improved productivity across our economy, instead of hindering it.

As we recover from the economic shutdown caused by COVID-19, new jobs and higher household incomes will be critical, not just for the private sector, but for the tax revenues that fund state government, school districts, counties, municipalities and so many other essential public services.

AN INVENTORY OF HIGH-IMPACT PROJECTS

Our bipartisan coalition of Colorado business, civic and political leaders has developed a detailed inventory of infrastructure needs to support the work of our Governor, state legislature and congressional delegation. We believe this inventory will serve as a critical reference for policymakers in Colorado and in the nation’s capital as they map out future infrastructure investments, either in a single legislative package or a series of smaller actions in Congress or through executive branch agencies.

In developing these recommendations, we focused on three core principles for federal infrastructure investment in Colorado: Immediate, enduring and equitable.

Immediate: Work should begin quickly, because Coloradans need jobs.

Enduring: Projects that provide long-term value should be our priority. Even if they take years to complete, work can start now, and a multi-year pipeline of projects will provide certainty and stability to the state’s economic outlook.

Equitable: While not every community can—or should—receive exactly the same level or kind of investment, we will strive to make our recommendations fair in terms of geographic, socioeconomic, racial, cultural and other factors.

Taken together, our coalition has identified $16.95 billion to $20.25 billion in infrastructure needs in Colorado that should be prioritized in a federal infrastructure program. The size and scope of this inventory reflects the persistent and structural underfunding of infrastructure in Colorado. The inventory is organized across five broad categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Investment Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roads, Rail, Aviation &amp; Mass Transit</td>
<td>$7.68 - $10.98 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Infrastructure</td>
<td>$3.00 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy &amp; the Environment</td>
<td>$3.65 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Commerce &amp; Communications</td>
<td>$0.77 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Infrastructure</td>
<td>$1.85 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total investment</strong></td>
<td><strong>$16.95 - $20.25 billion</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To be clear: No sector of the economy exists in a vacuum, including the construction sector. If states do not have the right mix of skilled workers and specialized businesses to support the physical rollout of major infrastructure projects, the firms selected to build these projects will be unable to hit the ground running.

We urge policymakers to prioritize the workforce development needs of infrastructure in addition to
the infrastructure projects themselves. State and federal leaders are strongly encouraged to give substantial consideration—and adequate funding—to training and education programs that will allow displaced workers to benefit from a national infrastructure program and minimize the very real risk of delays in project commencement due to labor shortages. Where possible, training should take place on site or nearby the location of the infrastructure projects themselves to get people to work faster.

Colorado is fortunate to have a network of community colleges, universities and training centers—and a job training grant program overseen by the Office of Economic Development and International Trade—where workers can gain the technical and management skills that will be sorely needed during the rollout of a large-scale infrastructure program. Investing in these institutions will be critical for some people—such as those in parts of the service industry—who may find themselves indefinitely out of work as new patterns of consumer behavior and business investment take shape as the economy reopens and recovers from the COVID-19 shock.

After helping people acquire the skills they need to participate in a national infrastructure program, policymakers should also pay close attention to changes in housing demand that may follow, especially in areas where there is an influx of new workers. Housing affordability is a serious challenge confronting our state and the nation as a whole, along with decimated healthcare systems and massive budget shortfalls across state and local government, among other direct impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. We strongly support efforts to address housing issues tied to the pandemic, such as existing and future rounds of stimulus that will provide direct financial aid for workers and businesses and fiscal support for state and local governments. While these efforts are occurring on a separate track from the discussion over infrastructure, they should not be overlooked.

A national infrastructure program can make a major contribution to the new jobs and higher incomes that we desperately need, while at the same time building—a stronger future for our state. Colorado’s business community, non-profit groups and the leaders of our public institutions are ready and willing to partner with the federal government to make this stronger future a reality.
The facts are clear: As every year passes, it gets harder for people and goods to move unimpeded across our state.

Improving the safety and efficiency of our road system is a major transportation priority, but it isn’t the only one. When the American Society of Civil Engineers issued infrastructure grades to Colorado, it took a multi-modal approach to transportation, and found that improvement was needed on all fronts:

For motorists, the cost of congestion, accidents and additional wear-and-tear from driving on rough roads totaled $7.1 billion in 2018, according to TRIP, a national transportation research group. The research group’s report on Colorado transportation infrastructure also made the following recommendation:

To accommodate population and economic growth, maintain its level of economic competitiveness and achieve further economic growth, Colorado will need to maintain and modernize its roads, highways and bridges by improving the physical condition of its transportation network and enhancing the system’s ability to provide efficient, reliable and safe mobility for residents, visitors and businesses. Making needed improvements to Colorado’s roads, highways, bridges and transit systems could also provide a significant boost to the state’s economy by creating jobs in the short term and stimulating long-term economic growth as a result of enhanced mobility and access.

To make long overdue improvements to transportation infrastructure in Colorado, we recommend the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>ASCE Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridges</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aviation</td>
<td>B</td>
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### INVESTMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statewide CDOT Priorities</td>
<td>$5.50 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County and Municipal Priorities</td>
<td>$1.00 – $4.00 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aviation Priorities</td>
<td>$0.60 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation of Commercial/Non-Commercial Traffic</td>
<td>$0.30 - $0.60 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Priorities</td>
<td>$0.28 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Investment</strong></td>
<td><strong>$7.68-$10.98 billion</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Statewide CDOT Priorities

Colorado’s statewide transportation system has suffered from a chronic lack of funds for years. Despite the best efforts of the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), state budget limits have prevented major new construction and even full maintenance on existing highways and road systems, especially in rural areas. And as our population has grown, we have received inequitable allocations of federal highway funds, causing us to fall even further behind. Meanwhile, deterioration of assets and an expanding population have resulted in severe consequences.

The unnecessary time and resources wasted on congestion creates real costs. In addition to economic losses, the costs of congestion include contributing to air pollution and climate change (28 percent of Colorado’s greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector) and lost time (the average commuter in Colorado spends the equivalent of about two days sitting in traffic per year).

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* Numbers may not add up due to rounding
8 TRIP. 2018. *Colorado Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility*. 
Therefore, CDOT has created a list of the most important transportation projects that need to be completed. This 10-year, $5.5 billion plan was based on a robust public process which included meeting with every county, with stakeholders across the state, and hearing from the people who travel our roads every day. According to CDOT officials, this effort was the most expansive outreach process in the history of the department. CDOT worked in close collaboration with local partners to assess public input and determine priorities, relying specifically on the expertise of metropolitan planning organizations and rural transportation planning regions. CDOT’s plan will complement local plans established by these regional governance bodies, according to the department.

Before the COVID-19 economic shutdown, CDOT’s $5.5 billion plan was only partially funded, and plummeting tax revenues have put a further cloud over the future of the 10-year plan. Therefore, we recommend that a federal infrastructure program ensure full funding for CDOT’s $5.5 billion project pipeline. Fully funding this inventory of projects would deliver major benefits to Colorado communities, including:

- **The Largest Investment in Rural Roads In Recent History.** CDOT’s 10-year plan would start with 41 rural road projects totaling over $330 million to improve the drivability of more than 500 miles of rural roads. This near-term list of projects represents the largest rural road investment in modern Colorado history. Over the full 10-year plan, one quarter of total funds would be invested in rural roads. Notably, the median age of the last time many of these roads received an upgrade was 1997—more than 20 years ago.

- **A Major Focus on Transit Projects.** CDOT’s 10-year plan has a substantial focus on transit, proposing $480 million in projects across all five of the department’s engineering regions—Central (Region 1), Southeast (Region 2), Northwest (Region 3), Northeast (Region 4) and Southwest (Region 5). According to CDOT, some of the largest transit projects planned for each region include:
  - Region 1: Regionwide Arterial Transit Improvements ($70 million)
  - Region 2: Bustang Mobility Hub in Fountain ($8.2 million)
  - Region 3: Arterial Transit and Bike/Pedestrian Improvements on I-70 Business/US 6 Corridor ($1.5 million)
  - Region 4: Transit Service between Loveland and Greeley ($13.2 million)
  - Region 5: Alamosa Transit Center ($2.8 million)

- **Focus Expansion On Key Strategic Corridors.** CDOT’s 10-year project pipeline includes a significant focus on modernization of I-25, which directly serves roughly 85% of the state’s population. The plan also prioritizes projects that will improve freight corridors which are so critical to Colorado’s economy, as well as major arteries such as I-270 and choke points on I-70 like Floyd Hill and Vail Pass.

- **Electric Vehicle Infrastructure.** Alongside the 10-year project pipeline, transportation and energy officials are also planning new infrastructure to support the rising use of electric vehicles on Colorado roads. Between 2017 and 2020, the number of electric vehicles (EVs) registered in Colorado increased from more than 11,000 to more than 28,000—or roughly 150 percent—and the State of Colorado recently updated its plan to support continued growth in this sector through 2030. The plan is built around the following goals:
  1. Increasing the number of light-duty EVs (LDVs) to 940,000 by 2030;
  2. Developing plans for transitioning medium-duty (MDV), heavy-duty (HDV) and transit vehicles to ZEVs;
  3. Developing an EV infrastructure goal by undertaking a gap analysis to identify the type and number of charging stations needed across the state to meet 2030 LDV, MDV and HDV goals;
  4. State government agencies meeting directives and goals related to EVs from the updated Greening State Government Executive Order; and

9 For a complete overview of CDOT’s 10-year project pipeline, please see Appendix 1.1.
5. Developing a roadmap to full electrification of the light-duty vehicle fleet in Colorado.

The Colorado Infrastructure Committee spent considerable time discussing the need for electric vehicle infrastructure in Colorado, and there is total support for use and expansion of electric vehicles. In addition, Governor Jared Polis recently sent a letter to Colorado’s Congressional delegation asking for a major federal investment in building EV charging infrastructure, loans for continued research and development work on vehicle electrification during the downturn, and to support the freight industry through a transition to cleaner trucking.

The details for Colorado’s needs and efforts by the Governor are dynamic, and we continue to work toward consensus on them. This is an important and evolving discussion—understanding the important role EVs will play both in our economic recovery and our transportation future. In supporting those efforts, we would reiterate that projects be equitable across the state, with particular attention given to ensuring early electrification infrastructure efforts are inclusive of rural areas.

- **Fixing The Basics.** Overall, CDOT has an extensive list of quick-delivery projects that would tackle long-deferred maintenance on our roads, bridges, and tunnels. Across our state, we need to clear this backlog and take care of what we have.

- **Improve Safety And Mobility For Key Urban Arterials.** The plan initiates a new program focused on improving safety for all users and multimodal mobility along roads like Colfax, Federal, and Sheridan in the Denver area. This initiative was developed in partnership with the Denver Regional Council of Governments. The plan also includes specific projects that will enhance important urban routes through measures such as safety improvements and the addition of bus rapid transit to Highway 119 in Boulder and enhancing I-70B in Grand Junction.

**County and Municipal Transportation Priorities**

In the summer of 2018, Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI) conducted a survey of its members about local-level transportation needs. Based on the responses received, CCI estimates a minimum of roughly $1 billion in unmet county-level transportation needs, including both maintenance and improvements to existing infrastructure.

County responses are important to review separately from other needs because they frequently bridge the gap between statewide projects and municipal projects, particularly in unincorporated areas, where the county serves as the direct local government for that area.

Similarly, the Colorado Municipal League conducted a survey of their members in 2018 about municipal infrastructure challenges and priorities and received responses from 134 local governments across the state.

The survey was notable both for its scope in determining a portion of the revenue shortfall faced by Colorado municipalities, and for its collection of granular and detailed information on the critical projects and maintenance that cash-strapped local governments have been forced to put on hold.

Based on the response to the survey, CML has estimated a municipal-level need of more than $3 billion.

In addition to road infrastructure, roughly 10 percent—some $300 million—in unmet transportation needs were transit-related. Buses and transit centers, bicycle lanes, adding sidewalks and trails, pedestrian bridges, adding shuttle capacity (particularly in rural areas), improving crosswalks and non-automotive safety, and rail construction were all cited as funding needs. Local governments face an imperative to improve safety for all, including vulnerable road users like cyclists and pedestrians, where improvements can be made to turn local streets into far safer and more welcoming spaces.

Examples of funding priorities include Montrose’s need to create pedestrian and bicycle bridges,
to Evans’ desire to expand bus service, Boulder’s expansion of multimodal corridors, and Fort Collins’ extension of the Surface Creek Trail. These are vital projects that would dramatically expand the capacity of Colorado’s transportation system and allow residents better choices, particularly in both rural and lower-income areas where multimodal transportation options may be severely limited.

An emergency infusion of funds would allow bridges, roads, sidewalks, bike paths and other transportation infrastructure across the state to be improved at the local level, by the people who use these resources the most and know their own needs better than anyone else. Therefore, we recommend that a national infrastructure program invest $1 billion to $4 billion in county and municipal level transportation projects in Colorado.

Aviation Priorities

Colorado is home to 74 regional airports, which funnel 8 million passengers annually and support $36.7 billion in economic activity every year. These airports support a substantial portion of the movement of goods and services across Colorado and around the country. But these airports, like the rest of our state infrastructure, require maintenance and upkeep, and there is a substantial funding gap—only made worse by the sudden drop in revenues triggered by the COVID-19 shutdown and its impact on travel.

As the below chart illustrates, the bulk of funding is needed for airfield runway pavement projects which need to be maintained and/or repaved on a regular basis. The second main need is airport terminal construction. Because of limits on FAA funding for terminal construction, regional airports typically have a difficult time finding adequate funds.

We recommend that a national infrastructure program invest $600 million in commercial and general aviation infrastructure to ensure Colorado’s airports are well-positioned when air traffic and passenger levels rebound from the COVID-19 shutdown. A full list of projects can be found in Appendix 1.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Commercial Service Airports (13 total, not including DIA)</th>
<th>General Aviation Airports</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Needs</td>
<td>$73,130,306</td>
<td>$4,122,273</td>
<td>$77,252,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airfield Pavement Maintenance</td>
<td>$4,138,056</td>
<td>$14,077,485</td>
<td>$18,215,541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airfield Pavement Rehab, Reconstruct, or New</td>
<td>$294,120,320</td>
<td>$132,673,562</td>
<td>$426,793,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airfield Equipment</td>
<td>$7,852,145</td>
<td>$3,647,300</td>
<td>$11,499,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARFF/SRE Buildings</td>
<td>$3,117,688</td>
<td>$2,655,556</td>
<td>$5,773,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Projects</td>
<td>$18,713,541</td>
<td>$10,700,367</td>
<td>$29,413,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Projects</td>
<td>$2,527,777</td>
<td>$1,914,999</td>
<td>$4,442,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landside Projects</td>
<td>$2,830,500</td>
<td>$766,666</td>
<td>$3,597,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Acquisition</td>
<td>$470,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$470,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$1,244,880</td>
<td>$1,455,500</td>
<td>$2,700,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel facilities</td>
<td>$555,556</td>
<td>$1,819,130</td>
<td>$2,374,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$408,700,769</strong></td>
<td><strong>$173,832,838</strong></td>
<td><strong>$582,533,607</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Airfield Equipment includes snow removal equipment (SRE), aircraft rescue and firefighting (ARFF) vehicles, large mowers, and other airfield equipment. Safety Projects include wildlife fencing, navaid upgrades/installation, weather reporting, airfield lighting, etc. Landside projects include parking lots, access roads, lighting, etc.
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Separation of Commercial/Non-Commercial Traffic

The goal of reducing congestion can be assisted with projects that divert freight traffic away from lanes primarily used for commuting and personal travel, such as the Front Range section of I-25. A substantial portion of regional congestion is due to intra-metro travel requiring large commercial trucks to use narrow and older roads, causing slowdowns and collisions. This section proposes a collection of projects that will widen and improve roads as well as redirect intra-metro freight to reduce heavy commercial truck traffic. This would benefit commuters in personal vehicles and the trucking industry alike, as congestion is reduced.

While there may be some overlap with the ultimate implementation of CDOT’s 10-year plan, we believe these following projects and initiatives deserve to be examined individually and potentially pursued under a federal infrastructure program. We believe an investment of between $300 million to $600 million across these projects and initiatives will yield major benefits for Colorado motorists and the businesses that depend on the efficient transportation of goods across our state:

### PROJECTS FOR IMPROVING COMMERCIAL AND NON-COMMERICAL VEHICLE CONGESTION ACROSS COLORADO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Improvement or Action</th>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-270 Widening between I-70 and I-76</td>
<td>Highly congested corridor located near industrial locations and terminals. New lane capacity, roadway widening, ramp improvements, and shoulders</td>
<td>Major bottleneck for heavy freight corridor and commuter traffic route. Widening is critical to alleviate congestion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower-Johnson Tunnel upgrades and improvements</td>
<td>Receive and review CDOT safety analysis currently in process; assess collaborative effort with CDOT to address safety concerns once study is complete.</td>
<td>The study assesses the fire safety improvements that may be needed to improve the safety of the tunnel as commercial and non-commercial usage of this route increases over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US 34/US 85 Interchange Reconfiguration</td>
<td>Improvements to the safety and capacity of the interchange and corridor</td>
<td>Improvements are important toward enhancing safety and reducing congestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnham Yards for I-25 realignment / Front Range Rail and RTD; $50 Million</td>
<td>Burnham Yard is located between Alameda and 6th Avenue along I-25. Until the COVID-19 crisis, RTD had committed to making the acquisition. Union Pacific is actively trying to sell the property</td>
<td>If this property is not publicly acquired, Colorado’s long-range transportation objectives will not be met. The acquisition of Burnham Yard would provide an opportunity to solve multiple transportation challenges. First, the heavily used Consolidated Main Line, the major north-south rail line used by both BNSF Railway and Union Pacific Railroad through the Denver area, and which constricts any expansion of I-25 in the area, could be relocated into the Burnham yard property. This relocation would also provide relief for two of the most dangerous at-grade crossings in the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designation of the Ports-to-Plains corridor as a future Interstate Highway</td>
<td>This action would open up a review and funding process that could create a new north-south corridor along the Eastern Plains</td>
<td>Colorado has one major north-south route (I-25) dissecting the state. I-25 is extremely congested and a future interstate along the existing Ports to Plains corridor could shift some freight traffic to the east, alleviating congestion and opening up opportunities for eastern Colorado for economic development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chambers Road Grade RTD A Line at Crossing near Smith Road—Alternate Route because grade separation is too expensive</td>
<td>Enhancement of Roadways including Smith Road, Airport Blvd and ramp/accel lane to I-70 from Airport Blvd to Serve as Alternate Route for hazmat trucks accessing and departing Magellan Pipeline</td>
<td>Identified as one of the most hazardous grade crossings in the country as up to 1,000 hazardous material trucks cross at grade with the RTD A Line trains carrying up to 200 people per train at Chambers Road.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TOGETHER WE BUILD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Improvement or Action</th>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UP at 96th Avenue Grade Crossing near US-85</td>
<td>Grade Separation</td>
<td>Many freight and industrial companies have located along this roadway and it has also seen additional commuter traffic. Delays associated with freight trains may last 30 minutes or more backing up traffic for miles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNSF at 96th Avenue Grade Crossing near SH-2 and Havana St.</td>
<td>Grade Separation</td>
<td>Many freight and industrial companies have located along this roadway and it has also seen additional commuter traffic. Delays associated with freight trains may last 30 minutes or more backing up traffic for miles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow Colorado to Harmonize Interstate Highway Weight Limit to Match Weight Limit on Non-Interstate</td>
<td>Colorado has had a weight limit of 85,000 lbs on the non-interstate since the 1950s while the Interstate through Colorado is limited to 80,000 lbs.</td>
<td>Allow within measure Colorado to increase the weight on the Interstate Highway System to 85,000 lbs to allow for uniform truck weight on all roadways in the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US 85 Commercial Vehicle Signal Priority Implementing along U.S. 85 from I-76 to Weld County Road 100</td>
<td>Commercial Vehicle Signal Priority at 21 intersections that would detect and prioritize commercial vehicles to smooth traffic flow.</td>
<td>Heavy truck corridor that has experienced numerous truck accidents over the years. This project would improve safety, mobility and reliability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Development</td>
<td>Invest in workforce development programs for transportation careers and provide individuals the skills to meet the current and future needs of our transportation system.</td>
<td>All modes of transportation are experiencing a shortage of drivers, train engineers, technicians, and other key people who are critical to keeping goods and products moving in our country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designation of Univ. of Denver as Univ. Transp. Center under DOT - Focusing on Urban Freight Movement and Mitigation</td>
<td>The University of Denver Transportation Institute would be designated by the US DOT as a University Transportation Center to conduct specific research. DU would focus its efforts on urban freight movement and mitigation of impacts.</td>
<td>Denver and other major cities are facing major problems with freight movement into and out of urban areas. The Center would act as a public-private lab for exploring technologies/concepts toward improving efficiency of freight delivery, reduced emissions and improved safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runaway Truck Prevention and Mitigation Project (i.e. Mountain Rules Program)</td>
<td>Development and deployment of technologies and strategies to reduce runaway trucks and mitigate problems resulting from them.</td>
<td>Runaway trucks have been rising across the country as truck volumes increase and there are more inexperienced drivers. These crashes in many cases may prove fatal to the driver and those in other vehicles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rail Priorities

Investments in multi-modal transportation can help Colorado residents avoid—and reduce—traffic when they choose, supporting other initiatives to reduce congestion across the transportation network. For this reason, the level of interest in Colorado for expanding passenger rail service is high.

The biggest proposed expansion of passenger rail in our state involves two related initiatives: The Front Range Passenger Rail project and the extension of Amtrak’s Southwest Chief service to Pueblo and Colorado Springs.

In 2017, the Colorado Southwest Chief Commission was reorganized into the Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission, which includes representatives from the South Central Council of Governments, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, Denver Regional Council of Governments and the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization, along with officials from the major freight railroads, Amtrak, the Regional Transportation District and other stakeholders.

The commission is currently developing preliminary service and environmental plans for Front Range passenger rail, which would connect Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Denver and Fort Collins. A $30 million investment from a national infrastructure program can help carry this process through to completion.
In the nearer term, a proposed Southwest Chief through-car service connecting Pueblo and Colorado Springs would both expand passenger rail in Southern Colorado and lay significant groundwork for the larger Front Range passenger rail concept. As proposed, the through-car service would connect Colorado Springs to Amtrak’s existing Southwest Chief service, which runs between Los Angeles and Chicago and currently has three stops in southeast Colorado—Trinidad, La Junta and Lamar.

State, federal and railroad officials are currently studying the infrastructure improvements that would be needed for the Pueblo to Colorado Springs through-car service, which would create a spur line along an existing freight railroad corridor to connect the two cities to Amtrak’s Los Angeles to Chicago route. A $250 million investment from a national infrastructure program will help make this proposal a reality.

**POLICY CHANGES**

**Electric School and Transit Buses**

In 2019, CDOT announced $14 million in grants—funded with proceeds from the Volkswagen Clean Air Act settlement—for alternative-fueled buses. These grants helped four transit agencies—Boulder County, the City Colorado Springs, Eagle County, the City of Fort Collins and the Regional Transportation District—fund the replacement of almost 30 aging diesel-powered buses with all-electric models.

In addition to the grant program, CDOT has joined with the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies to provide training and support for the increased utilization of electric bus fleets. The electrification and maintenance training aims to increase interest and eligibility in future rounds of grants as electric buses become more commonplace.

There was broad but not total support for investments from a federal infrastructure package to build on this foundation and accelerate the deployment of electric buses across transit agencies in Colorado.

**Timely Permitting and Review for Projects**

For infrastructure investments to put Coloradans back to work as quickly as possible, and ensure they meet all relevant environmental requirements, there must be a swift and thorough process for permitting and review.

In many cases, projects have already completed their environmental reviews or are far along in the process. While each project is different, requiring a different mix of local, state and federal approvals, we encourage officials at all levels of government to prioritize the completion of these reviews as quickly as possible in order to allow construction work—and job creation—to proceed without unnecessary delays.
CHAPTER 2: Water Infrastructure

The responsible use of Colorado’s water resources will be critical to economic growth and our standard of living in the decades to come. And yet, our investments in water infrastructure consistently lag behind our needs. The Colorado Water Plan, completed in 2015, identified $20 billion in needs across water supply, infrastructure, recreation and the environment over the next 30 years. However, the water plan also noted that only one-tenth of one percent of the state budget goes towards water projects. The water infrastructure grades issued by the American Society of Civil Engineers reflect this reality.

After a detailed examination of the state’s water infrastructure, we recommend that a federal infrastructure package should prioritize community needs for drinking water, water treatment, agricultural infrastructure upgrades, recycled water, green infrastructure, and river health.

Many specific project proposals fit inside existing federal programs, while others are projects planned as part of Colorado’s Water Plan implementation.

To make long overdue improvements to water infrastructure in Colorado, we recommend the following:

## INVESTMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>ASCE Grade</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dams</td>
<td></td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water</td>
<td></td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levees</td>
<td></td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wastewater</td>
<td></td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drinking Water Revolving Fund/Water Pollution Revolving Loan Funds: $2.36 billion
Colorado Water Plan Projects: $0.10 billion
WaterSMART: $0.09 billion
NRCS/Department of Ag Programs: $0.09 billion
Re-use Investments (primarily metro): $0.10 billion
Dam Repair and Dredging: $0.15 billion
Federal Programs: $0.10 billion
Total Investment: $3.00 billion*

* Numbers may not add up due to rounding

**10** For a comprehensive list of projects, please see the Drinking Water Revolving Fund Loan Program 2020 Intended Use Plan - Project Eligibility List in Appendix 2.1

Drinking Water Revolving Fund

The Colorado Drinking Water Revolving Fund helps publicly owned and non-profit public water systems invest in infrastructure improvements that will help ensure compliance with federal safe drinking water requirements and improve public and environmental health overall. The investment needs of these public water systems, which are responsible for providing safe drinking water to their communities, far exceed the amount of funding typically available for infrastructure improvements.

Currently, the inventory of eligible drinking water fund projects in Colorado totals more than $7.6 billion. Discussions with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment indicate more than 30 percent of the total is comprised of high-priority projects. Priority projects are meant to address risks to public health, disadvantaged communities and compliance with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

We believe investment from a national infrastructure package will dramatically strengthen Colorado’s drinking water fund and the assistance it can provide water systems across the state. It will not fund every need, or even every high-priority need, but it will drastically accelerate construction and maintenance work, such as repairing pipes and water leaks, on the systems we rely upon to deliver safe and clean water to our communities.
Water Pollution Control Revolving Loan Fund

The Colorado Water Pollution Control Revolving Loan Fund helps publicly owned agencies invest in wastewater treatment infrastructure and other projects that improve public health and the environment. Just as the drinking water revolving fund supports the supply of safe drinking water to communities across Colorado, the water pollution control fund supports the treatment of wastewater and other efforts to keep our water supplies and our environment clean.

Currently, the inventory of eligible water pollution control fund projects in Colorado totals roughly $10 billion. Discussions with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment indicate approximately 29 percent of the total is comprised of high-priority projects.

We believe investment from a national infrastructure package will dramatically strengthen Colorado’s water pollution control fund and the infrastructure support it can provide. This amount will not fund every eligible project, or every high-priority priority, but it will accelerate the pace of construction and repair work across wastewater treatment facilities and other critical infrastructure in this sector. Upgrades should include wastewater treatment systems, green infrastructure, and stormwater infrastructure that supports filtration. For example, filtration devices placed in storm drain inlets will capture trash, debris and toxic pollutants that are washing off sidewalks and streets, preventing this pollution from contaminating our waterways.

Colorado Water Plan Projects

By 2050, Colorado is projected to have a gap of 560,000 acre-feet between the available water supply and demand from municipal and industrial sources. The Colorado Water Plan aims to close this gap, in a way that maintains the Colorado we know and love, through improvements to the state’s water infrastructure and other strategies.

Funding for the Colorado Water Plan is overseen by the Colorado Water Conservation Board. According to the board, Colorado Water Plan funding categories include:

- **Water Storage and Supply Projects** – Projects that facilitate the development of additional storage, artificial recharge into aquifers, and dredging existing reservoirs to restore the reservoirs’ full decreed storage capacity, multi-beneficial projects, and those projects identified in basin implementation plans to address the water supply and demand gap.

- **Conservation & Land Use Projects** – Activities that implement long-term strategies for conservation, land use, and drought planning.

- **Engagement & Innovation Activities** – Activities that support water education, outreach, and innovation efforts.

- **Agricultural Projects** – Projects that provide technical assistance or improve agricultural efficiency.

- **Environmental & Recreation Projects** – Projects that promote watershed health, environmental health, and recreation.

While Colorado voters recently approved a dedicated funding source for the Colorado Water Plan, the economic impacts of COVID-19 have dramatically cut revenues of all kinds across state and local government, which will dramatically slow the pace of investment in the state’s water infrastructure. We believe investment from a national infrastructure package can jumpstart this essential work.

WaterSMART

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s WaterSMART program aims to “work cooperatively with states, tribes, and local entities as they plan for and implement actions to increase water supply through investments to modernize existing infrastructure and attention to local water conflicts.” It includes a wide range of initiatives to address drought, water efficiency, and watershed management, which could help Colorado make its water infrastructure more resilient in the face of climate change, especially if the Bureau of
Reclamation prioritizes projects with multiple benefits, as the SECURE Water Act allows.
In Colorado, recent investments include water and energy efficiency grants to the cities of Cities of Aspen, Grand Junction, Greeley, Longmont and Thornton, which resulted in a greater than $20 million investment in advanced metering infrastructure.
We believe new funding for WaterSMART from a national infrastructure package will quickly result in similar infrastructure investments at the community level.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Projects

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service provides grants to help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. In rural Colorado, projects supported by NRCS grants represent critical improvements in the water infrastructure that supports the agricultural economy of our state.

Greater federal investment in the NRCS would allow for significant initiatives in rural Colorado, such as flood control and erosion control projects, building out and repairing stream gauges, watershed restoration work, drought resiliency projects, salt removal projects and others. These upgrades to the state’s water infrastructure would benefit local farmers, ranchers and businesses in the tourism and recreation sector, in addition to supporting the state’s fish and wildlife.

We believe a national infrastructure package that provides new funding for NRCS will allow Colorado’s rural communities to make critical upgrades to the water systems that underpin the state’s agricultural economy, along with other sectors that play a growing role in the rural economy, such as recreation and tourism.

Reuse Investments

To strengthen Colorado’s water infrastructure, we also need to invest in water reuse projects. The need for investment in water reuse technologies is widely recognized, not just in Colorado but as a national priority. In early 2020, for example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a national action plan on water reuse. EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler noted there is a clear “business case” for water reuse infrastructure because it provides “a viable and growing means of supporting our economy and improving the freshwater portfolio of farmers, industry, communities, and ecosystems.”

Making the most of water, including reuse, will be a critical investment for the long-term health and viability of Colorado communities. Several construction projects and upgrades can begin immediately to deploy infrastructure making the reuse of water possible at scale. For example, the redevelopment of the National Western Center can incorporate a significant water reuse capability, and Denver Water currently has a facility that could expand its water reuse capacity more than five times—to 30 million gallons per day—with construction of the right infrastructure.

These infrastructure investments could be overseen by the Colorado Water Conservation Board or a new Regional Recycling Fund could be established. We believe funding from a national infrastructure package can quickly scale up the development of water reuse projects in Colorado.

Dam Repair and Reservoir Dredging

One of the fastest ways to increase water storage in Colorado is through infrastructure repairs and capacity expansions at existing dams and reservoirs. According to the Association of State Dam Safety Officials, more than 450 dams across the state are considered to have “high hazard” conditions. This limits the amount of water they can safely store, which in turn limits Colorado’s overall water storage capacity.

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At the same time, there is the related challenge of sedimentation. Dams and reservoirs collect rocks, soil and other sediment over time, and the accumulation of this material reduces how much water they can store. This is a widely recognized problem, with one 2018 study of large reservoirs in the central U.S. finding an average 17 percent loss in storage capacity—and losses as large as 45 percent at some facilities.\(^\text{14}\)

Infrastructure repairs to the state’s dams and reservoirs, along with dredging projects to increase their capacity, can deliver important public safety and water storage benefits to Colorado. State officials have identified an annual need of $100 million to boost the resilience of these critical pieces of water infrastructure—but these investments are highly challenged under current budget conditions.

Therefore, we believe funding from a national infrastructure package—roughly equal to 18 months of full funding of the state’s proposed program—can jumpstart these critical construction and repair projects.

**Federal Programs**

There are a number of existing federal programs or projects that have already been authorized by Congress that can have immediate impact here in Colorado. Specifically:

- **Endangered Species Recovery Program:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service uses a range of conservation tools to “recover” endangered and threatened species—to ensure that they are able to survive on their own in the wild. These tools include restoring and acquiring habitat, removing invasive species, conducting surveys, monitoring individual populations, and breeding species in captivity to release them into their historic range. Example: The multi-stakeholder Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program works to prevent extinction of native fish in major Colorado River tributaries, assists water users with water efficiency upgrades, and provide ESA coverage for thousands of water users on the West Slope and Front Range. We believe additional funding to these existing federal programs in a national infrastructure package will deliver swift and important benefits to Colorado communities.

- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers CAPS Program:** Congress has provided the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with a number of standing authorities to study and build water resource projects for various purposes and with specified limits on how much federal money can be spent for each project. The Continuing Authorities Program is a collection of these nine authorities established to allow for expedited project development and approval, resulting in a decrease in the amount of time it takes to get smaller, less complex projects constructed. Colorado’s current requests are listed below, and while the status of each project varies, for a relatively small investment, these projects can show immediate benefits. We recommend full funding of the four CAPS projects currently pending in Colorado:
  - Emergency Streambank and Shoreline Protection, Fountain Creek (Colorado Springs and Pueblo)
  - Flood Risk Management, St. Vrain River (Longmont)
  - Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration, Cache La Poudre River (Greeley)
  - Ecosystem Restoration, South Platte River (Denver)

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POLICY CHANGES

Changing loan programs to grant programs

To speed the pace of work, we believe some structural reforms will be necessary in addition to funding for individual infrastructure projects and programs. In particular, a number of federal initiatives are structured as low-interest loan programs or require some level of state or local match.

The economic impact of the COVID-19 lockdown requires these structures to be reformed on a temporary basis. Taking on additional debt or providing matching funds is something that publicly owned and non-profit public water systems, state agencies, local governments and other stakeholders will find almost impossible in the current climate.

Therefore, we recommend that Congress and the executive branch adopt a temporary policy of changing loan programs to grant programs for projects and programs that are approved under a national infrastructure package.
CHAPTER 3: Energy & the Environment

Colorado’s natural environment is a critical economic engine, fueling investment and employment in our tourism and outdoor industries. At the same time, we are a leading energy producing state, both in traditional and renewable sources.

National and state parks not only help to preserve the natural beauty of our state—they also provide the essential infrastructure that allows residents and tourists to access and enjoy the natural environment. In turn, Colorado’s national and state parks, along with other public lands, are a critical source of economic activity and employment in nearby communities that cater to visitors from inside and outside our state.

When the American Society of Civil Engineers examined the condition of Colorado’s national and state parks, it found many programs that invest in park infrastructure, but “funding is not keeping up with increases in usage.” Looking ahead, the ASCE also found that the number of acres available for recreation per capita will fall by more than a third—from 5 acres per person to 3.5 acres per person—by 2050 if new recreation areas are not made available in response to anticipated population growth.

The ASCE also examined the challenge of forest health and combating wildfires. Due to climate change and population growth, funding for forest management must be increased to reduce the risk of wildfires, which can harm water supplies in addition to being an obvious public safety concern. The need in Colorado is pressing, because according to the Insurance Information Institute, Colorado is the third most wildfire-prone state in the country, both in the absolute number of properties at risk and the percentage of properties at risk.\(^\text{15}\)

According to the ASCE, wildfires also “threaten the integrity of all infrastructure,” including the power lines that make up the state’s electricity grid. Electric utilities face increased pressure to protect and upgrade power lines against this threat, while they are also making investments to maintain the overall stability and security of the grid.

When examining Colorado’s energy sector, the ASCE raised concerns about the electricity sector’s transmission and distribution system, which is most visibly represented by power lines. Our existing system “was not designed to accommodate renewable energy as the largest source,” according to ASCE, and updates will be needed to avoid brownouts or blackouts in the future. At the same time, ASCE noted that Colorado’s energy infrastructure is “largely funded by the private sector,” with major investment decisions overseen by the state’s Public Utilities Commission—which is responsible for maintaining electricity rates as low as possible consistent with minimum standards of service, safety, economic viability, and the environment.

The ASCE’s grades for energy and parks in Colorado reflect these challenges. To improve Colorado’s energy and environmental infrastructure, we recommend the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>ASCE Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks</td>
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### 2019: TOP 5 STATES AT HIGH TO EXTREME WILDFIRE RISK (TOTAL PROPERTIES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Estimated number of properties at risk</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>2,019,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Texas</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Idaho</td>
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### 2019: TOP 5 STATES AT HIGH TO EXTREME WILDFIRE RISK (% OF PROPERTIES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>State</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Insurance Information Institute, Verisk Wildfire Risk Analytics

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Forest Health, Wildfire Mitigation, and Watershed Protection

Almost half of Colorado’s residents live in the wildland urban interface, placing them at risk of wildfire. Topography, forest fuel and weather contribute to high risk as does limited fire rescue staffing, a decrease in fire volunteers and little or no state and local resources for mitigation.

Therefore, we recommend fully funding the 2020 Forest Action Plan. This plan, developed under the leadership of the Colorado State Forest Service, identifies strategies and targets for improving forest health, wildfire mitigation, and watershed protection for approximately 10 percent of Colorado’s highest priority forests over the next 10 years. Colorado’s Forest Action Plan is a strategic framework to guide these efforts across political, jurisdictional, and ecological boundaries in urban and rural communities.

The Action Plan identifies more than 2.3 million acres of high priority forests for treatment. At an average cost of treatment $1,616 per acre, the total funding needed for the first three years is approximately $1.5 billion dollars. The cost of treatment in the wildland urban interface, or WUI, is always higher. The 2020 Forest Action Plan reflects the U.S. Forest Service priority of Shared Stewardship by focusing work on the right place at the right scale.

In making this recommendation, the Colorado Infrastructure Committee is encouraged by the level of support in Congress for investing in wildfire mitigation. For example, a recent proposal introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate includes $4 billion for landscape restoration and forest health projects that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires, alongside other investments in infrastructure, workforce development and financial support for

INVESTMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest Health, Wildfire Mitigation, and Watershed Protection</th>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power Line Vegetation Management Grant Program</td>
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<tr>
<th>Investment in Outdoor Recreation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal Parks Maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Outdoors Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restoration and Stewardship of Outdoor Resources and Environment Colorado Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado Youth Corps Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Fishers Peak in Trinidad, Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Park Acquisitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing State Parks Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Park Maintenance and Upgrades</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildlife Corridor Projects on I-70</td>
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<th>Preparing for our Renewable Energy Future</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Colorado Renewable and Clean Energy Challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinstall the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Community Block Grant Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased Funding for Weatherization Assistance Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased Funding for Appliance and Insulation Rebate Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensuring Energy Security and Resilience</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Investment</th>
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* Numbers may not add up due to rounding
local economies that rely on public lands, outdoor recreation and tourism and have been hit hard by the COVID-19 shutdown. A national infrastructure program can build upon and accelerate this important work.

In order to further mitigate the risk of wildfires, we also believe Colorado’s electric utilities need additional funding to clear rights-of-way and property adjacent to their rights-of-way on public and private property. In addition to funding, utilities need more streamlined processes related to gaining access to public and private property to conduct vegetation management activities.

Therefore, we recommend establishing a grant program for vegetation management of power lines that can be used by rural electric cooperatives and utilities to proactively prevent wildfires across the state. We estimate the first year of funding for the program to be $10 million per year and recommend grants to be overseen by the Colorado Department of Public Safety.

Investment in Outdoor Recreation

The outdoor recreation economy generates $37 billion in consumer spending annually and contributes 511,000 direct jobs, according to Colorado’s Office of Economic Development and International Trade. Outdoor recreation opportunities also contribute to increased quality of life, economic prosperity for the state, and the health of communities and residents. Therefore, we recommend the following investments from a national infrastructure program, totaling $1.21 billion:

- Federal Parks Maintenance: More than one-third of Colorado’s land mass is owned by the federal government. For lands overseen by the National Parks Service and the U.S. Forest Service, the combined backlog of deferred infrastructure maintenance is approximately $574 million, according to data compiled by U.S. Department of Interior, Pew Charitable Trusts, and the National Association of Forest Service Retirees.

  This restricts the ability of Coloradans to enjoy the outdoors and negatively affects our tourism economy. Colorado is not alone, and through measures like the Great American Outdoors Act, members of Congress are paying closer attention to the growing infrastructure backlog on federal lands. We welcome and support those efforts. Investments from a national infrastructure program can accelerate this work and address the complete infrastructure maintenance backlog in Colorado’s national parks and national forests.

- Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO): The GOCO grant program invests in the state’s parks, trails, wildlife, rivers, and open spaces expanding access to the outdoors for all Coloradans. This investment would help meet the unmet demand this successful grant program has for projects across the state. Each of these projects brings an average of a 1:1 match of funding from local communities, nonprofits, and other matching resources. We recommend an investment of $153 million from a national infrastructure program to continue and expand the number of these valuable projects, because historically the number of worthy projects has been much greater than the amount of available funding. Successful projects should be vetted and prioritized in order to deliver the highest quality projects to communities as quickly as possible.

- Restoration and Stewardship of Outdoor Resources and Environment Colorado Program: Managed by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, this program which focuses on the restoration and enhancement of wildlife habitat throughout the state. It was launched in 2020 and received more applications than could be funded. We recommend a significant investment which would more than double capacity for future granting cycles. Grants are awarded to support river corridors, Eastern Colorado grasslands, the sagebrush ecosystem, big game range and migration routes, and forestland projects. An investment of $16 million would help meet the unmet demand for projects across the state. 17

16  For a list of these projects, please see Appendix 3.1.
17  For a list of these projects, please see Appendix 3.2.
• **Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA):** The CYCA program enhances and maintains Colorado’s natural beauty while boosting employment opportunities for youth. With a $10 million investment from a national infrastructure program, the youth corps can help ensure there is a ready workforce to execute other trail priorities across the state.

• **Development of Fishers Peak in Trinidad, Colorado:** Fishers Peak is Colorado’s newest state park. The 19,200-acre property was acquired by Colorado Parks and Wildlife in April 2020, but before it can open to the public, investment is needed to create a visitors center, bathrooms, and to build out a robust trail system to ensure that this resource can be enjoyed by visitors. A $4 million investment from a national infrastructure package can help Colorado Parks and Wildlife open Fishers Peak to visitors as quickly as possible, providing a boost to the economy of Trinidad and southern Colorado.

• **State Park Acquisitions:** As noted by the ASCE, the number of acres available for recreation per capita in Colorado will be reduced by more than one-third by 2050 if current trends persist. This will not just impact the quality of life in Colorado—it will also hamstring the tourism and outdoor recreation sectors, which play a critical role in our economy. Therefore, we recommend a national infrastructure program invests $250 million for the voluntary acquisition of 10 new state parks. This would be based on the successful process used for Fishers Peak, which was an acquisition valued at $25 million.

• **Bringing State Parks Online:** As seen with the acquisition of Fisher’s Peak, new state parks cannot be opened to the public without the kind of infrastructure that allows safe access to the public. Therefore, we recommend a $60 million investment from a national infrastructure program to support the development of roads, parking lots, trailheads and other kinds of infrastructure needed to bring new state parks online.

• **State Park Maintenance and Upgrades:** The public cannot access and enjoy state parks without supporting infrastructure, such as trails, pedestrian bridges, shelters and access roads. However, the maintenance of this existing infrastructure has not kept up with demand. We recommend a federal infrastructure program invest $40 million for maintenance work at existing state parks, which would eliminate the existing backlog reported by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and allow for some new upgrades of infrastructure that has reached the point of replacement instead of repair.

• **Wildlife Corridor Projects on I-70:** After speeding and inattentive driving, motor vehicle accidents involving wildlife are the third leading cause of car wrecks, according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife. For this reason, in 2016, wildlife and transportation officials in Colorado pioneered a new kind of wildlife crossing technology along an 11-mile stretch of Colorado Highway 9 in Summit and Grand counties. Underpasses, overpasses and other structures were built to allow wildlife to roam on either side of Highway 9 and follow-up studies show a 90 percent reduction in wildlife-vehicle collision rates. This technology is now ready for implementation along I-70, to improve traffic safety and give wildlife the ability to safely cross back and forth between the state’s northern half and southern half. We recommend an investment of $100 million from a federal infrastructure program to reduce the risk of car wrecks along I-70 and reconnect important wildlife habitats that would otherwise remain cut off from one another.

### Preparing for our Renewable Energy Future

Getting our state ready for a renewable energy future will require a multipronged approach. This committee recommends investment in the following categories to ensure that Colorado remains a leader in clean energy: developing new technologies, promoting energy efficiency and ensuring energy security and resilience.

**Developing New Technology:** At the federal and state level, new innovation policies should be developed to advance zero-carbon, dispatchable technologies. Priority technology areas should include: advanced, dispatchable renewables (e.g.,...
superhot deep geothermal); zero-carbon fuels, such as hydrogen or ammonia, produced from a variety of sources; advanced nuclear energy (both advanced light water and non-light water fission, and fusion); carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration; and demand efficiency, including long-duration storage and demand response. This investment is critical to our national security and overall competitiveness as an international leader in clean energy.

In this area, we recommend two investments from a national infrastructure package totaling $371 million:

- **The Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy (ARPA-E) program:** There is a strong connection between ARPA-E and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in Golden, Colorado. Therefore, we recommend a $366 million investment from a federal infrastructure program to restore ARPA-E and return NREL funding to 2018 levels.

- **The Colorado Renewable and Clean Energy Challenge:** This program is managed by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. A $5 million investment from a federal infrastructure program will allow this program, launched in 2019, to continue to help Colorado reach its clean energy goals.

**Promoting Energy Efficiency:** We recommend that a federal infrastructure program invest $262.5 million to increase investment in energy efficiency in homes and businesses. Investments in energy efficiency will provide jobs for those installing and selling energy efficient materials and equipment. Increased energy efficiency will also lower energy bills which will provide additional economic stimulus. Finally, increased energy efficiency will reduce air and carbon pollution providing benefits to public health and the environment. Energy efficiency projects can be undertaken immediately and will provide enduring benefits since many energy efficiency measures have lifetimes of a decade or more. Energy efficiency stimulus funds can be targeted so they are equitably distributed across geographies and socioeconomic groups.

These energy efficiency priorities can be accomplished by the following actions:

- **Reinstate the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Community Block Grant Program:** This program is housed within the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. We recommend that funding be expanded to support renewable energy investment and a focus on low income households and small businesses. These grants reduce fossil fuel emissions and total energy use while creating jobs by working directly with cities, counties, states, and tribes. For Colorado projects, we recommend an $87.5 million investment from a larger $5 billion total nationwide.

- **Increase Funding for Weatherization Assistance Programs:** These programs, housed within the U.S. Department of Energy, support jobs in construction and are especially helpful for low income residents. For Colorado projects, we recommend an $87.5 million investment from a larger $5 billion total nationwide.

- **Increased Funding for Appliance and Insulation Rebate Programs:** Overseen by the U.S. Department of Energy, this rebate program allows states to administer energy efficiency incentives. Specifically, this program helps low-income households and small businesses make investments in insulation and in high efficiency appliances and other equipment replacement. For Colorado projects, we recommend an $87.5 million investment from a larger $5 billion total nationwide.

**Ensuring Energy Security and Resilience:** The Colorado economy, like the U.S. economy, cannot function without the electricity grid. As technology evolves and more variable generation resources (i.e., wind and solar) are added to electrical grids, grid operators are taking deliberate measures to ensure the system’s reliability and flexibility continues to support the Nation’s needs.

Moreover, our digital economy, and our critical infrastructure systems, are increasingly interdependent. This interdependency increases the risk of a “cascading effect” during an extreme event. Many grid edge technologies already exist that can, and do, make a difference in enhancing electric system reliability and resilience, thus
minimizing the worst potential impacts of a major weather event or a cybersecurity-related threat.

We recommend that a federal infrastructure program invest $300 million in a competitive grant program, administered by the Colorado Energy Office, for utilities in our state to address the following priorities:

- Strengthening rural electric system cybersecurity;
- Increasing resilience of communities;
- Expanding visibility, communications, and operations of utility grid systems.
CHAPTER 4: Local Commerce & Communications

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, uneven access to broadband internet was a major issue in Colorado. Today, the need to find a solution to this problem is even more urgent. Broadband internet access is absolutely critical to support local commerce and communications. In particular, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of remote learning, telehealth, public safety, telecommuting, e-commerce and entertainment—and all depend on the ability to send and retrieve data securely at high speeds.

Making broadband internet available and accessible throughout the state has been challenging. Distance, density, terrain and the unique needs of different communities all work against a one-size-fits-all solution. On top of that, the State of Colorado has limited resources to fund broadband infrastructure in areas where private investment is more challenging—and that was before the impact of COVID-19 on state and local tax revenues.

In 2018, the State of Colorado set in motion a $115 million plan to expand broadband internet access to all rural households. Early on, the plan made quick progress, reducing the percentage of rural households without broadband from 17 percent in October 2018 to 13 percent in October 2019. However, more recently, lowering the percentage further has proven more challenging and progress has slowed, according to the Colorado Broadband Office.

This reflects the enormity of the task. Expanding broadband internet access to every rural household is a much bigger task than $115 million can accomplish. Therefore, a national infrastructure program can provide the opportunity to close the gap, especially in the new budget reality confronting Colorado and states across the country, i.e. years of declining tax revenues and budget shortfalls.

After a review of Colorado’s broadband deployment program, as well as the experience of other states, we believe an additional $770 million in funding will be necessary to expedite additional deployment for the hardest to reach unserved and underserved communities in Colorado. Building on Colorado’s existing framework for making broadband investments, funding should be targeted to unserved and underserved households to ensure that those with no broadband service available to them have service, and that subsidized new infrastructure does not overbuild privately funded existing networks, except in cases where it is deemed necessary to help increase reliability, speed, and access.

We recommend Colorado’s Broadband Fund should be used to distribute this additional funding, per state statute. The Fund is overseen by a board of state, local and industry members, appointed by the Governor and legislature, with well-established criteria for awarding grants.

We also urge policymakers to use increased funding or block grants to close gaps in broadband accessibility in our cities. While gaps in broadband access are smaller in cities, they still exist, and they disproportionately impact low-income households and people of color. “Among white households with...
school-age children, 88% have broadband at home, compared to 72% of African American households and 72% of Hispanic households,” concluded a 2019 analysis of broadband access conducted by the think-tank Third Way.

Weeks before the COVID-19 crisis effectively shut down our state and national economy, Governor Jared Polis told the National Governors Association: “As we know in the 21st century, broadband is absolutely critical infrastructure that absolutely everyone needs. It’s also about a better education for young people. It gives rural businesses connectivity they need to compete in a global economy. It’s about telecommuting opportunities for people who can have location-independent employment.”

What was true before the COVID-19 shutdown is doubly true today. Rather than attacking this problem in a piecemeal fashion, however, a national infrastructure program can swiftly make broadband internet access for every community—urban or rural—a reality. There is simply no justification for further delay.

**PERCENTAGE OF U.S. HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS AT HOME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>White Households</th>
<th>African American Households</th>
<th>Hispanic Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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</table>

**GRANT REQUIREMENTS FOR COLORADO BROADBAND FUND**

- The area lies outside of municipal boundaries or is a city with a population of fewer than 7,500 inhabitants; and consists of households that lack access to at least one provider of a broadband network that uses satellite technology and at least one provider of a broadband network that uses non-satellite technology. Note: The Board uses the broadband definition of 25 Mbs download and 3 Mbs upload for grant-making purposes.

- The project for which funding is requested must be a new project, and not a project in progress already. A “project in progress” means one in which construction of infrastructure has started. Phased projects may be considered a new project if the phase for which funding is being requested would not otherwise be completed without funding from the Broadband Fund.

- Grant funds shall be used for infrastructure deployment only, and not for on-going operating costs.

- The project provides access to a broadband network. Note: The Board uses the broadband definition of 25 Mbs download and 3 Mbs upload for grant-making purposes.

- The applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Board an ability to deliver on the proposed project within established timelines and within budget.

- The project shall be completed within two years from the date in which the grant award contract is executed.

- The applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Board the ability to operate the network as proposed for a minimum of 5 years following project completion.

- The project does not conflict with, or duplicate, federal or state sources of high-cost support or broadband grants and programs.

- The applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Board that the proposed network meets industry reliability standards.

- The applicant shall provide last mile service, which is defined as the portion of the broadband service that delivers an internet connection to an end user. Proposed projects may include middle mile or other infrastructure necessary to expand broadband networks into unserved areas.

- The applicant shall provide independent matching funds of at least 25% of the total cost of the proposed project. The Board may only consider in-kind matches for the purposes of infrastructure deployment. In-kind matching contributions shall not include consulting, planning or operational fees or costs. The applicant shall provide an appraisal of all in-kind matching contributions, sufficient to enable the Board to determine the fair market value of the in-kind matching funds.

- The project does not conflict with, or duplicate, federal or state sources of high-cost support or broadband grants and programs.

- The applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Board that the proposed network meets industry reliability standards.

- The applicant agrees to all award contract terms required by the Board and State of Colorado including but not limited to reporting and accountability requirements.

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20 Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies. [Who Qualifies for a Broadband Fund Grant?](#)
CHAPTER 5: Education Infrastructure

After the COVID-19 pandemic, we may never look at our schools and universities—or even the way we learn—in quite the same way. Social-distancing measures closed physical classrooms and campuses, forcing students of all ages to continue their classwork and instruction online at home. Students, parents and teachers had to improvise new methods of remote learning with no warning and limited support. For too many families, their ability to learn from home was limited by their ability to afford broadband internet access, computers, tablets and other essential tools.

A major national infrastructure program should reflect our newfound appreciation for the places where students go to learn. At the same time, it should invest in the technologies and systems that will make remote learning less disruptive in the event that social-distancing measures return due to COVID-19 or another public health emergency in the future.

Here in Colorado, the need is great. When the American Society of Civil Engineers assessed our state’s school infrastructure, we received an embarrassingly low grade.

All across our state, there is a huge construction and maintenance backlog as K-12 schools and universities compete for limited funding for capital projects. And due to chronically low investments from the State General Fund, many colleges and universities have been forced to take on debt to fund many academic buildings across the state.

Independent bond rating agencies have put the higher education sector on negative outlook, due to falling revenues. Future action to lower the debt ratings of universities and colleges are expected, which will raise the cost of capital for these institutions and increase the fiscal pressure they are already under. At least one public university in Colorado has already been downgraded since the COVID outbreak, in fact. Without assistance, these sudden COVID-19 related financial pressures will necessitate a combination of draconian budget cuts and increased costs to students.

The COVID-19 crisis also created an urgent need for remote-learning capabilities, both from school districts and from the families of students. Unfortunately, it quickly became clear that more investment will be needed to ensure effective and accessible online learning platforms and technologies are available across all school districts and all families, regardless of income or other socio-economic factors.

Therefore, to bring Colorado’s education infrastructure closer to the level that families, students and teachers deserve, we recommend the following:

INVESTMENTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>PK-12 Hardware, Broadband and Professional Development</td>
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<td>CDC Higher Ed List</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEST Grants</td>
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<td><strong>$1.85 billion</strong></td>
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* Numbers may not add up due to rounding
Higher education bond relief

In 2019, Colorado public colleges and universities served over 195,000 full-time equivalent students, with over 80% being Colorado residents. Beyond serving students and preparing tomorrow’s workforce, colleges and universities across Colorado are major economic engines generating billions of dollars in economic impact each year.

However, colleges and universities in Colorado are facing multiple budget challenges in the wake of COVID-19. One of those challenges—the cost of servicing construction-related debt for academic buildings—can and should be addressed in a national infrastructure package.

A targeted relief package of $500 million to defease roughly half of the existing debt on academic facilities would provide immediate cash flow relief for every governing board in the State of Colorado. We estimate the annual savings, which could be used to reduce upward pressure on tuition and minimize layoffs, at almost $21 million per year.

Cutting the debt load of these colleges and universities for academic buildings only can help prevent draconian budget cuts on campuses and minimize costs and debt for students. The positive impacts of such an initiative would be felt statewide, but particularly in rural Colorado.

PK-12 Hardware, Broadband and Professional Development

Despite the best efforts of educators, students and families during the COVID-19 crisis, it is clear that remote learning infrastructure still has a long way to go. School districts need help developing online learning platforms and training resources for teachers and staff, but like many other public entities at the state and local level, they are facing steep declines in revenue due to the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 crisis also clearly demonstrated that access to technology is a major barrier for many students. According to the Colorado Futures Center at Colorado State University, more than 54,000 school-age children in Colorado have no internet access at home—that is approximately one in every 20 students. “The children in households without internet are disproportionally Hispanic, younger, and from lower income households,” the Colorado Futures Center found. Lack of internet access is especially concentrated among elementary school students who have parents working in an industry deemed essential under social-distancing policies in Colorado.21

This analysis only focused on internet access, but the authors acknowledged that many students with

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**COLORADO PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION BOND DEBT (ACADEMIC ONLY)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Estimated Cost to Defease Academic Debt</th>
<th>Est. Annual Avg Debt Savings @51% Defeased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams State University</td>
<td>$21,480,000</td>
<td>$642,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Community College System</td>
<td>$62,634,000</td>
<td>$1,493,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State University</td>
<td>$193,062,000</td>
<td>$4,484,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Mesa University</td>
<td>$83,286,000</td>
<td>$2,194,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado School of Mines</td>
<td>$63,786,000</td>
<td>$1,852,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lewis College</td>
<td>$1,056,000</td>
<td>$42,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan State University of Denver</td>
<td>$54,042,000</td>
<td>$1,409,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado</td>
<td>$479,958,000</td>
<td>$8,853,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Northern Colorado</td>
<td>$24,852,000</td>
<td>$732,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western State Colorado University</td>
<td>$5,226,000</td>
<td>$206,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$989,382,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$21,910,965</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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21 Colorado Futures Center. April 2020. [Who are Colorado’s School-Age Children Without Access to Internet?](https://www.coloradofuturescenter.org)
internet access still did not have laptops, tablets or other appropriate devices which could be used for remote learning. Ever since COVID-19 forced the closure of physical classrooms and campuses, school districts with available resources have tried to close this gap through the provision of suitable electronic devices to students and families in need. But for many school districts, if not most, this would be financially challenging at the best of times, let alone where things stand today.

As Ed Smith, superintendent for Pueblo County School District 70, recently explained: “It’s a one-two gut punch right now: districts are being told to prepare for extensive state budget decreases, and we also have been told to have plans in place to continue remote learning in the fall should schools remain closed.”

Any investment in remote learning infrastructure must also be accompanied by appropriate training for the educators who will be required to make use of it. This could include 18 hours of up-front training before school starts and 12 hours of ongoing support throughout the school year, with local districts structuring and overseeing the process.

School districts can make use of best-practice resources for planning, teaching, and assessing under remote-learning conditions, and ongoing support may take the form of coaching during the school day or out of school hours. The use of federal funds should be aligned with the National Standards for Professional Learning, including a) learning communities, b) training facilitators, c) providing resources, d) ensuring equity for all children, e) using data to make decisions, and f) ensuring better outcomes for students.

Funding should go through the Colorado Department of Education where best practices for professional learning are already in place. Quick deployment of funds to school districts will be important, however, and therefore utilizing already established guidelines through CDE is recommended.

Clearly, remote learning infrastructure will not build itself in the months and years ahead. Therefore, we believe significant investments in remote learning platforms, training and technology must be part of any national infrastructure package.

**CDC Higher Ed List**

Due to funding limitations, there is a major backlog of construction and renovation projects at public universities and colleges in Colorado. Each year, higher education projects are submitted to the Capital Development Committee, which reviews them alongside construction funding requests from state agencies, such as the Department of Personnel and Administration and the Department of Corrections.

While some higher education construction projects secure funding through this process, many worthy projects do not. But even those projects approved for funding may have to be put on hold due to the severe budget cuts brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Delaying these projects, potentially for years, would impose immediate harm on the state economy because they represent a major source of construction jobs. At the same time, if a lack of funding prevents these projects from proceeding, it will pose a major setback to the urgent task of upgrading Colorado’s education infrastructure for the needs of the 21st Century.

A national infrastructure package could be pivotal in making sure projects that have already been recommended for funding, and those awaiting such a recommendation, proceed as planned. Therefore, we recommend that sufficient funds be devoted to construction work in Colorado’s higher education sector to clear this backlog of overdue infrastructure investment.
## Higher Education Construction Projects in FY2020-21 Capital Development Committee Funding Cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Recommended for Funding by Capital Development Committee in FY2020-21?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lewis College</td>
<td>Health Sciences Center</td>
<td>$29,524,323</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams State University</td>
<td>Plachy Hall HVAC Upgrade and Replacement (Capital Renewal)</td>
<td>$2,819,630</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado - Anschutz</td>
<td>Anschutz Health Sciences Building</td>
<td>$21,859,241</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State University</td>
<td>Shepardson Building Renovation and Addition</td>
<td>$17,051,200</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Northern Colorado</td>
<td>Heating Plant Boiler #3 Replacement (Capital Renewal)</td>
<td>$3,826,172</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Mesa University</td>
<td>Health Sciences, PA/PT/OT Center</td>
<td>$10,695,107</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado School of Mines</td>
<td>Subsurface Frontiers Building</td>
<td>$128,774,241</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College of Aurora</td>
<td>Diesel and Support Services Building</td>
<td>$9,236,927</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auraria Higher Education Campus</td>
<td>Critical Campus-Wide HVAC Infrastructure Replacement (Capital Renewal)</td>
<td>$2,476,760</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapahoe Community College</td>
<td>Health Programs Integration and Annex Building Renovation</td>
<td>$11,152,093</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan State University</td>
<td>Health Institute</td>
<td>$8,475,758</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Colorado University</td>
<td>Savage Library Renovation</td>
<td>$12,992,409</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auraria Higher Education Campus</td>
<td>Critical Campus-Wide HVAC Infrastructure Replacement (Capital Renewal)</td>
<td>$17,281,851</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State University</td>
<td>Anatomy/Zoology East Wing Revitalization (Capital Renewal)</td>
<td>$17,636,612</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams State University</td>
<td>Central Technology Building Renovation and Addition</td>
<td>$6,204,268</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Mesa University</td>
<td>Kinesiology Renovation and Expansion</td>
<td>$23,707,528</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan State University</td>
<td>Health Institute</td>
<td>$8,475,758</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado School of Mines</td>
<td>Arthur Lakes Library Renovation</td>
<td>$13,000,000</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Northern Colorado</td>
<td>Gray Hall Mechanical Systems Improvements (Capital Renewal)</td>
<td>$3,555,934</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State University</td>
<td>Chemistry B and C Wing Renovation (Capital Renewal)</td>
<td>$27,851,316</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Mesa University</td>
<td>Electrical and Computer Engineering Building</td>
<td>$23,851,365</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams State University</td>
<td>Facility Services Center Replacement</td>
<td>$15,437,985</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado - Anschutz</td>
<td>College of Nursing and Student Services Renovation</td>
<td>$18,507,838</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State University - Pueblo</td>
<td>Technology Building Renovation and Addition</td>
<td>$16,583,000</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pikes Peak Community College</td>
<td>FREE Complex</td>
<td>$29,094,132</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Mesa University</td>
<td>Student Parking Garage</td>
<td>$25,444,242</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Mesa University</td>
<td>Energy Independence at CMU</td>
<td>$7,609,132</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamar Community College</td>
<td>Freudenthal Library Renovation</td>
<td>$1,979,866</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BEST Grants

More than a decade ago, the Colorado Department of Education completed an inventory of 8,000 school facilities representing more than 123 million square feet of building area. According to this inventory, the capital construction needs of Colorado’s K-12 education system were an astonishing $13.9 billion.

More than any other initiative, the State of Colorado’s Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program is charged with closing this massive gap in education infrastructure. As of 2019, the BEST program has generated $2.1 billion in construction projects and created more than 30,000 construction jobs, according to state officials.

The program’s largest source of funding is lease revenue from Colorado State Land Board, followed by marijuana excise taxes and state lottery proceeds. However, the demand for these construction funds is much greater than the supply. In the 2019-20 grant cycle, for example, more than a dozen worthy projects with a combined value of more than $370 million were turned down for funding.

Therefore, we believe a national infrastructure package should include a level of funding for school construction projects that matches the size of the backlog in the BEST program. This funding can maintain the program’s momentum through highly uncertain state budget deliberations over the next year, both to benefit students and the construction workers who rely on these construction projects as a source of employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Recommended for Funding by Capital Development Committee in FY2020-21?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad State Junior College</td>
<td>Fourth Floor Remodel, Berg Building</td>
<td>$1,691,355</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Community College System</td>
<td>North Quad Remodel</td>
<td>$1,968,471</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pueblo Community College</td>
<td>Health Science Consolidation</td>
<td>$6,300,000</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$525,064,514</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workforce Development

In developing a national infrastructure program, federal policymakers should not overlook the significant demands such a program will create for education and training. No sector of the economy exists in a vacuum, including the construction sector. If states do not have the right mix of skilled workers and specialized businesses to support the physical rollout of major infrastructure projects, the firms selected to build these projects will be unable to hit the ground running.

We urge policymakers to prioritize the workforce development needs of infrastructure in addition to the infrastructure projects themselves. State and federal leaders are strongly encouraged to give strong consideration—and adequate funding—to training and education programs that will allow displaced workers to benefit from a national infrastructure program and minimize the very real risk of delays in project commencement due to labor shortages.

Colorado is fortunate to have a network of community colleges, universities and training centers where workers can gain the technical and management skills that will be sorely needed during the rollout of a large-scale infrastructure program. Investing in these institutions will be critical for some people—such as those in parts of the service industry—who may find themselves indefinitely out of work as new patterns of consumer behavior and business investment take shape as the economy reopens and recovers from the COVID-19 shock.
CONCLUSION

The recession triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has put hundreds of thousands of Coloradans out of work, suddenly and without warning. At the same time, the COVID-19 recession has also renewed the federal government’s interest in finally addressing the nation’s overdue infrastructure needs. Those needs are especially acute in Colorado, because historically we have received less infrastructure investment from the federal government than we should receive based on our share of the national population. Not only that, the federal government—which manages more than one third of all the land in Colorado—has not kept up with the maintenance needs of its own infrastructure in national parks, national forests and other public lands.

Major federal infrastructure investments can accomplish two things at once in Colorado—put people back to work and finally deliver the kind of infrastructure that the people of Colorado deserve. Building better infrastructure of all kinds will help families, businesses and communities recover more quickly from the current crisis and prosper in the years and decades to come. If we encourage, rather than hinder, the movement of people, goods, services, information and ideas across Colorado, we will be able to innovate and grow as a state like never before.

Our nonpartisan coalition is ready to work with federal policymakers and state leaders to maximize the impact of these investments and deliver immediate, enduring and equitable results to communities across Colorado. Working together, we can build a better future for our state—and for the nation as a whole.
TOGETHER WE BUILD:
COLORADO INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE