

## **Summary Notes of Elbert County Transportation Master Plan Public Meeting of October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

Richard Miller, Elbert County Planning Director introduced members of his staff who were in attendance: Carolyn Parkinson and Curtis Carlson from the planning department.

Scott Jones, a transportation planner and Karen Stuart, a county services specialist, were there from Carter and Burgess.

This meeting was the third of three meetings scheduled throughout the county to solicit public input on challenges, issues and action strategies for the transportation master plan for Elbert County. The first meeting was held August 16, 2007 in Kiowa, the second meeting was held in Elizabeth on September 17, 2007 and this meeting was held at the Rattlesnake Fire Protection District Station #51 in the NW corner of Elbert County. There were about 15 people in attendance, a significant decrease from the previous two meetings.

The agenda was:

- Goals of the Transportation Action Model
- Overview of the Public Process to Date
- Overview of the Challenges Identified by the public (First Meeting):
  1. Funding
  2. Road Connections
  3. Road Base and Infrastructure Improvements
  4. Policy Issues
- Overview of the Citizen Vision for 2035 (Second Meeting)
- Overview of Action Strategies to attain Transportation Vision (Third Meeting)

In addition to this overview, the following maps were displayed for discussion and comment:

- Map of Study area of West Elbert County in relation to Denver Metro Area
- Map of Existing Roads classified by unpaved, paved, County and State Road networks
- Map of Approved Subdivisions and Proposed Subdivisions within study area
- “Issues” Map (area map with specific transportation problem areas as defined by public input designated on it).

Attendees at this public input meeting were given an overview of the work done by the four issues committees in recommending goals and strategic action (policies) to be incorporated into the Transportation Master Plan.

## Goals and Policies for the Transportation System of Elbert County

*Goal 1: Creation of a long range plan to determine funding needs and opportunities for transportation projects that include existing road network expansion, road surface improvements, maintenance, connectivity, safety improvements, transit, pedestrian and bike trails, and a planning toolbox for new subdivision approvals.*

### **Rational:**

Elbert County has a population of approximately 25,000 with an expected population of 60,000 in 2035. Elbert County is approximately 1,800 square miles and is one of the least populated counties adjacent to the Denver Metro area. The county budget is \$31 million, with much of that amount encumbered. Funding for transportation needs has historically been inadequate and much needed maintenance has been deferred year after year.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

1. Keep all transportation revenue funds for transportation operations and maintenance
2. Increase transportation impact fees
3. Explore alternative franchise opportunities
4. Enhance economic development outreach
5. Consider funding options from CDOT SH86 Corridor Optimization Plan and the Governor's Transportation Task Force recommendations
6. **Support Sales Tax Initiative dedicated to transportation funding**
7. Pursue grant funds and provide a dedicated budget line for matching funds
8. Review and revise transportation budget format presentation for easier understanding of revenues and expenditures to facilitate better citizen comprehension of needs
9. Pursue federal funding
10. Encourage citizens to attend annual budget hearing

*Goal 2: Creation of a long range plan that addresses connectivity, and road networks, and identifies and prioritizes the types of road categories for improvements based on trip origin destinations that exist in Elbert County.*

### **Rational:**

In the past thirty years, Elbert County has experienced the challenges of large subdivisions approved without connecting road networks, increased traffic, issues of private land ownership, inefficient land planning and inadequate funding that has resulted in significant gaps in the roadway network. Inefficient traffic flow, unsafe driving conditions and the degradation of quality of life have all been related concerns voiced by Elbert County residents.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

1. Provide a policy for, and designate major corridors on a long range plan
2. Identify road networks based on land use and vehicle miles traveled

3. Design road networks for sensible mobility
4. Design road networks that provide best practices for improvements and safety (shoulders, access, guardrails, etc.)
5. Require county standards ROW dedication ( that includes utility placement within the ROW) of all new development
6. Prioritize road extensions based on traffic volume
7. Provide incentives to land owners to facilitate needed connections

***Goal 3: Make all roads in Elbert County safe and efficient to travel. Establish standards for roads in new subdivisions. Create a maintenance plan based on written criteria, and establish guidelines for road classifications related to traffic volumes.***

**Rational:**

Many roads in Elbert County are substandard with road base put down more than twenty years ago. Many of these roads are now only bladed. No true gravel is available in Elbert County. Blading tears up the road base and weather conditions and flooding further erode the base. There are over 2000 culverts in Elbert County and many of those are inadequate or damaged. Roads in older subdivisions were built without accepted engineering standards. There has been an increased volume of traffic without funding increases for operations and maintenance.

**Policy Recommendations:**

1. Realizing there is a significant funding cost to this, PUBLIC SAFETY in Elbert County is the top transportation priority
2. Require new development to provide adequate ROW
3. Require compliance with county standards for road design
4. Keep Road and Bridge revenues for transportation maintenance and capital improvement projects
5. Require utilities be placed in dedicated easements on all new roads
6. Outsource some maintenance
7. Support the sales/use tax initiate for transportation funding
8. Pursue grants and set up escrow account in budget for required matching funds
9. Establish a citizen transportation advisory committee
10. Establish thresholds for road surface improvements

***Goal 4: Consider policies that promote transportation planning in coordination with land use planning. Proactively work with adjacent jurisdictions and regional and state agencies to encourage regional roadways that have adequate capacity for traffic.***

**Rational:**

Land use and transportation planning must be coordinated. A strong transportation system that provides good access and traffic flow is a key to good economic development and community vitality. The design of the transportation network should also support the community's character and image.

Regional transportation efforts are critical to good transportation planning that often requires regional, state or federal funds. Regional collaboration provides access to information about the priorities of neighboring jurisdictions and facilitates opportunities for timely coordination.

**Policy recommendations:**

1. Review and revise transportation impact fees and secure an appropriate trust fund for deposit of these fees
2. Any changes to the adopted plan will require an adequately posted public hearing before any amendments or revisions are made
3. The Transportation Master Plan should be consistent and not in conflict with the updated comprehensive master plan (land use plan)
4. Review and revise if necessary current IGAs to call out consistent use of best practices where roads cross jurisdictions
5. Encourage transportation sub-area plans to provide consistency through-out the county
6. “Density Bonuses” should no longer be considered as a planning tool.

After discussion of these goals and policies, several speakers made additional suggestions as the process moves ahead. It was suggested that continuing communication to citizens via email and internet is critical to having a citizen endorsed plan. Having the Elbert County website host the draft document or link to the draft document is important. Having an interactive site for comment and feedback would be ideal.

It was suggested that before the draft document of the plan goes to the BOC for comment that a presentation be made to the participants on the subcommittees for comment. Then an advocacy group could attend the BOC meeting in support of the plan and be available to answer any questions members of the BOC might have.

It was agreed that citizen input is crucial when the annual county budget is up for approval. There was strong support for a night BOC meeting for that budget meeting in order to accommodate people who would like to attend but work during the day.

**NEXT STEPS**

The transportation master plan is expected to be written and produced in draft form by the second week in December. Every effort will be made to provide internet links to the document and the physical document will be available in several locations (library, county administration building, etc.). After a 45 day comment period, the completed plan will be presented to the BOC for adoption.