

Update on Lobbying Effort to Get Money to Widen I-25

March 31, 2016

The initiative to 'Fix North I-25' was created by the Fort Collins, Greeley and Loveland Chambers of Commerce and Upstate Colorado Economic Development through the Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance. In essence, the business community in the two-county Larimer-Weld region has come together to aggressively and proactively advocate for improvements to I-25 north of Longmont.

The goal is to secure enough money to widen 26 miles of I-25 to 3 lanes each way between Highway 14 in Fort Collins and Highway 66 north of Longmont by 2025. This option costs ~\$1.2 billion. The widening is necessary because of congestion due to not keeping up in the past with capacity improvements. The situation will become dramatically worse, if not addressed, as Larimer-Weld is the fastest growing part of Colorado.

The Fix North I-25 Business Alliance (www.FixNorthI-25.com) has a strategy for the 2016 session of the Colorado General Assembly that focuses on a) identifying transportation funding sources, and b) putting a financing mechanism in place to accelerate the construction of projects in Colorado, including North I-25. The one-two punch looks like this:



FixNorthI25.com

**2016 Legislative Agenda to
Fund and Finance Highway Projects
and Current Status of Each Part of Agenda**

<p align="center">Funding <i>(i.e. actual source of the money)</i></p>	<p align="center">Financing <i>(i.e. financing tools to accelerate projects)</i></p>
<p align="center">Restore General Fund commitment to highways for 2016-17</p> <p><u>Status:</u> So far so good this legislative session. The Budget for FY 16-17 finalized by the Legislature's Joint Budget Committee (JBC) in the 3rd week of March includes a <u>guarantee of \$158.25M</u> in funds for transportation. This is up from \$0 every year since 2008. Our job during the budget debate is assuring the \$158.25M holds.</p>	<p align="center">Legislature refer a measure to the November ballot to renew the successful TRANS bonds program. It would allow bonding up to \$3.5 billion</p> <p><u>Status:</u> Legislative leaders are generally supportive of referring a measure to the ballot asking voters to approve transportation bonding. We have drafted a piece of legislation called the "Fix Colorado Roads Act." Assuming this is done, a campaign would be mounted to pass the measure at the ballot box.</p>
<p align="center">Create a permanent transportation funding source for Colorado's highways</p> <p><u>Status:</u> As noted above, Colorado has committed no general fund money to transportation since 2008. Fix North I-25 is proposing fixing or replacing SB 09-228. This bill was passed in 2009 to replace a transportation funding tool known as SB 1. In essence, SB 228 was an annual promise of \$200 million for 5 years for transportation. This \$1 billion has never materialized since the triggers built into the bill were not reached. At best SB 228 will generate \$300 million. Details and mechanisms are being finalized on a measure to replace SB 228.</p>	

In addition to the legislative initiatives above, Fix North I-25 has been talking with **CDOT about continuing to commit money from its budget for bond debt service.** Issuing transportation construction bonds requires steady funding sources. In addition to a commitment of General Fund money for transportation, as noted above, Fix North I-25 is asking CDOT to commit part of its budget to bond debt service. While CDOT has made no commitment on this, yet, CDOT leaders are amenable to the idea.

Since starting the Fix North I-25 Business Alliance, here are some of the more noteworthy accomplishments and developments:

- **North I-25 has become a top state priority.** Two years ago it was all about I-70 through Denver and I-70 in the mountains. Our efforts have changed that with I-25 often getting first mention by state and CDOT officials as the top transportation priority.
- **The Berthoud Hill chokepoint will be fixed this summer.** A 3-mile stretch of south-bound I-25 will be widened this summer with the addition of a 'climbing lane' on the hill south of Berthoud. This money came from local communities and counties in Northern Colorado giving up federal dollars for local streets.
- **The Crossroads intersection will be rebuilt over the next two construction seasons.** We lobbied for state transportation reserve dollars (called 'RAMP') which will be used to rebuild the intersection primarily by widening the interstate bridges that pass over the interchange. This work needs to be done in preparation to accommodate two additional lanes of interstate.
- **Congress passed a long-term highway bill.** We supported the work of our Congressional delegation to pass the first 'long-term' highway bill in many years. The bill was written in a way that qualifies North I-25 for federal freight corridor grants and for low-interest loans.
- **We are helping develop a plan to get the interstate between Fort Collins and Loveland widened to 3 lanes within the next 3 years.** A plan has been developed to add an additional lane each way in the existing median on the 14-mile stretch from Highway 14 in Fort Collins to just past 402 south of Loveland (what CDOT calls Segments 8 & 7).
- **We have drafted a bill called the 'Fix Colorado Roads Act.'** The legislation would have the Legislature refer a measure to Colorado voters this fall to approve up to \$3.5 billion of transportation construction bonds. This matters to North I-25 because it would make funding available sooner rather than later. We have two months left in the session and still have significant political obstacles to overcome.
- **We have been working on a deal to get the Legislature to recommit to budgeting money for transportation from the state's General Fund.** Since 2009 the Legislature has allocated no money for transportation. We are working with them on two specific proposals: 1) Protect money in a bill called SB 228 that was passed in 2009 for transportation but has not generated revenue until now. It has been the target of numerous special interests wanting to 'repurpose' the money for their non-transportation causes. 2) Budget \$100 million to \$200 million from the General Fund for transportation. We have the support of a majority of the Joint Budget Committee for this.
- **We created a statewide transportation advocacy coalition of local business organizations called Fix Colorado Roads**

(www.FixColoradoRoads.com). I-25 is our priority, but we reached the conclusion that to get what we want (money to widen North I-25) we have to help the state address its transportation funding problem. By building a network of local business organizations, we have more clout with bills like the legislation cited above.

- **We have built an adequate funding base for our effort.** Through the Chamber's *Moving Fort Collins Forward!* campaign 52 companies donated \$106,000, two media companies donated \$25,000 of in-kind support (ads, public service announcements), the Loveland Chamber has raised \$20,000, the Greeley Chamber has donated \$10,000 and the cities of Fort Collins, Loveland and Greeley have contributed \$30,000, \$20,000 and \$10,000, respectively. Total cash support is \$196,000 and total support (with media in-kinds) is \$221,000. We have used this money to hire lobbyists, media consultants and conduct public opinion polling. We plan to raise more to ramp up full-blown media and social media campaigns.
- **We are talking to the public.** Not only are the websites FixNorthI2-5.com and FixColoradoRoads.com live, but we are also running radio ads on Clear Channel.
- **We have done statewide polling.** Last year we did statewide polling to gauge voter support for various transportation funding options. We recently finished another poll to test public support for the bonding proposal and two tax increase options. There is strong public support for bonding.

The number of presentations, conversations and meeting held regarding North I-25 are too numerous to list, but here's a recent sampling from the last couple of weeks:

- The Fix North I-25 Committee members collaborate with and provide support to the local governments entities called the I-25 Coalition.
- Fix North I-25 Committee members Sandra Solin and Tom Norton met to brief Senator John Kefalas; and Norton and Sarah MacQuiddy met with Transportation Commissioner Kathy Gilliland
- Fix North I-25 Committee member David May lauded Fort Collins City Council during public comment portion of the State of the City event, especially Mayor Pro Tem Gerry Horak, for leadership on I-25
- Fix North I-25 Committee member David May spoke during public comment part of Larimer County Commission meeting March 1 to thank them for their leadership on I-25, especially Commissioner Tom Donnelly
- Presented to Board of Realtors Affiliates March 1
- Fix North I-25 Committee member David May on panel in Denver for state chamber's Chamber Day March 3 – pressed for legislature to address state transportation funding needs

- Presented evening of March 3 to Q Commons, members of the Fort Collins faith community
- Fix North I-25 Committee members Barb Koelzer / David May presented to Leadership Northern Colorado class March 22
- March 2 -- I-25 Interim Solutions - Pros & Cons Meeting convened by Larimer County attended by 4 reps from the Fix North I-25 Business Alliance
- Fix North I-25 Committee members Carl Maxey / Sandra Solin met with the Colorado Motor Carriers Association
- Ongoing conversations with the Colorado Contractors Association
- March 3 – monthly meeting of 13 local government entities, I-25 Coalition
- March 11 - I-25 Funding Subcommittee, convened by Terri Blackmore, Metropolitan Planning Organization; attended by local elected officials, key CDOT officials from Region 4 and Denver and Fix North I-25 Business Alliance; discussed in detail the \$230 million option to build lanes between Fort Collins and Loveland over next 3 years
- March 12 – 4 representatives from Fix North I-25 attended a forum by area legislators Kefalas, Arndt and Ginal to discuss I-25
- March 28 – Dinner in Denver with area legislative delegation
- March 29 – Channel 9 Listens session in Fort Collins. Representatives of Fix North I-25, the Fort Collins, Greeley and Loveland Chambers discussed I-25
- We've presented the concept of Fix Colorado Roads to the following groups:
 - Club 20
 - Jefferson County Economic Development Corporation
 - Grand Junction Chamber
 - North Area Transportation Alliance
 - Adams County Economic Development Corporation
 - Colorado Counties, Inc.
 - Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry (CACI)
 - I-70 Coalition

Upcoming:

April 6 – Brief City of Fort Collins Executive Lead Team

April 13 – Brief Windsor Chamber Board of Directors