

TRANSPORTATION

Community Vision – Provide a balanced transportation system that accommodates the movements of residents, tourists, and goods throughout the region using telecommunications, expanded air travel and an enhanced road system.

Transportation corridors are very important to the economic and social well-being of the region. Just about every activity we engage in outside of our homes involves the transportation system. Roads, bridges, tunnels, transit systems, railroads, sidewalks, bike paths and airports are essential to our livelihoods and lifestyles, providing for the delivery of goods to markets, and providing access to recreation. People in our region often commute long distances to take advantage of employment, shopping opportunities, or lower real estate prices. Our five county region has 2,966 miles of local roads (within towns or municipal areas), 498 miles of highways and 2,700 miles of forest roads.

Highways

Federal regulations require state transportation departments to develop a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) at least every four years. The STIP contains capital and non capital projects proposed for funding under Title 23 (Highways), Title 49 (Transit) and those requiring action by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The State of Colorado STIP was submitted for fiscal years 2008-2013. The five counties of southwest Colorado are part of the 14-1/2 counties included in the Colorado Department of Transportation Engineering Region 5. Below is the most recently-approved State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). An intersection study will be completed in 2008 that will prioritize Region 5 intersections for work.

Southwest TPR 2008-2013 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)									
Regional Priority Program									
Highway	Description	County	Phase	Funding					
				FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013
	Region 5 Intersection Improvements	Projects to be decided				\$1,345,575	\$1,345,575	\$1,345,575	\$1,345,575
	Region 5 Engineering Studies and Environmental Compliance			\$299,018		\$149,508	\$149,508	\$149,508	\$149,508
	Passing Lane between Cortez and Towaoc	Montezuma	Preconst. Const.	\$791,000					
	CR222/223 east of Durango	La Plata	Preconst. Const.	\$1,423,983	\$1,073,000	\$1,612,917			
US491	Safety improvements	Archuleta	Preconst. Const.					\$100,000	\$300,000
US160									
			TOTAL	\$2,514,001	\$1,073,000	\$3,108,000	\$1,495,083	\$1,595,083	\$1,795,083

Transportation Funding

The future level of transportation funding is in question. Colorado’s highway infrastructure is aging with lengthy sections of road entering their 4th or 5th decade of service. The gasoline tax, the primary source of transportation funding, has not increased since 1991. Governor Bill Ritter appointed a Blue Ribbon Panel of Transportation Finance in April 2007 to identify long-term sustainable programs and funding sources, and their recommendations were released in November 2007.

Their programs and funding source recommendations include: increased vehicle registration and daily visitor fees, and increased motor fuel, sales and use, and severance taxes as possibilities to raise \$1.5 billion annually. The complete report is available at www.dot.state.co.us/StateWidePlanning/PlansStudies/blueribbon.asp.

That report also lists challenges facing each of the transportation regions. Specifically in SW Colorado, Region 5, the following concerns were listed:

- 30% of highways have a remaining service life of zero
- \$500 million needed to get 60% of highways in Good/Fair condition by 2036
- More than 80% of highways have substandard shoulders and 20% have no shoulders
- Wolf Creek Pass receives the most snow in Colorado
- \$6.2 million was spent clearing roads in winter 2006 (prior to 2007/2008 winter)
- 121 rock fall sites need attention
- More than \$600,000 a year is spent to clear roads after mudslides
- Region has 165 avalanche runs, the most in the state
- Red Mountain Pass has more than 100 avalanche pathways, the most in the United States.

Transit

Transit service is desired in all parts of the region to relieve traffic flow, provide essential links bringing employees to commercial centers, as well as providing transit services to the elderly and those with disabilities. Tourism has also created a need for transit to improve the traffic flow at major recreational areas. The Southwest 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (www.scan.org) cites that 96% of the current transit needs are not being met.

Intercity Bus Service - Intercity bus service is limited in the region. Bus service is provided by TNM&O, a private carrier that serves as an "interline" to Greyhound Bus. TNM&O services La Plata County from Durango, and San Juan County from Silverton. This is part of a daily north/south route along US Highway 550 connecting to Grand Junction and Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Direct comparisons for the number of passengers served by each provider are difficult as some are reporting the number of passenger trips while others report the number of program trips. *Program trips* are generated by transit ridership to and from specific social service programs, while *non-program demand* (i.e. passenger trips) are generated by other mobility needs of elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and the general public, including youth. Examples of non-program trips may include shopping, employment, and medical trips.

The following table lists the major transit providers in our region, but it does not include school transportation systems, private tour operators, lodging shuttle services, and senior care facilities. One private operator of note is the Sky Ute Casino Shuttle, which has a fixed route schedule for workers. Their shuttle does 2 trips a day, four days a week to Pagosa Springs; 4 trips a day, five days a week to Durango; and 3 trips a day, four days a week to Aztec, New Mexico. The Casino also provides demand response transportation within the Ignacio town limits.

Ridership on Roadrunner Transit has increased dramatically over the past few years. Passenger numbers grew 43.9% from 2006 to 2007 after adding routes to Bayfield and Durango. For the remaining providers, vehicle miles and the number of trips have generally increased since 2000. Archuleta County transit services have declined due to the county’s financial situation and employee turnover.

Transit Provider	Year	Days per Week	Annual Veh. Miles	# Trips	# of Vehicles
Aramark Mesa Verde Company (closed)	2004	7	15,000	10,135	10
	2007	0	-	-	0
Archuleta County Senior Services	2004	4	11,804	7,528	2
	2005	4	18,264	7,118	2
	2006	4	20,820	6,409	2
	2007	4	11,547	5,448	2
Archuleta County Mtn. Express	2004	5	69,748	15,748	3
	2005	5	66,765	13,883	3
	2006	6	69,364	14,130	3
	2007	6	63,276	10,136	3
Dolores County Senior Services	2004	3	5,720	2,400	1
	2005	5	26,800	3,022	3
	2006	5	21,893	3,345	3
	2007	5	23,800	3,452	3
Durango Transit	2004	6	344,533	267,019	14
	2005	6	401,955	296,269	*
	2006	6	404,893	278,153	14
	2007	6	410,695	273,345	16
Durango Transportation	2004	7	279,503	16,010	5
	2007	7	*	*	*
Montezuma Senior Services	2004	5	36,301	3,395	5
	2005	5	33,235	6,754	7
La Plata Senior Services	2004	5	*	1,227	2
	2005	5	*	2,454	3
	2006	5	26,362	10,014	3
	2007	5	40,901	6,027	4
San Juan County Seniors Transportation (closed)	2004	5	2,343	*	1
	2007	*	*	*	0
SUCAP-Ignacio Roadrunner	2004	6	45,020	7,669	1
	2005	6	50,100	10,014	1
	2006	6	70,897	10,123	3
	2007	6	105,210	14,170	4
Ute Mtn. Ute Tribe Transit	2004	5	47,000	4,530	1
	2007	*	*	*	*
Ute Mtn. Ute Department of Social Services	2004	5	65,000	2,600	4
	2007	*	*	*	*

Source: The Southwest Local Transit & Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan

Individual service providers

Southern Ute Transit Service Development Plan 2008-2010

* Data not available

Senior Transportation						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Archuleta	6,972	7,061	7,601	6,685	5,292	8,526
Dolores	2,244	2,489	2,797	3,302	3,307	3,396
La Plata	3,552	4,166	4,618	5,238	4,794	6,027
Montezuma	5,021	5,962	5,463	7,560	4,872	5,010
San Juan	43	58	21	0	0	0

Source: Area Agency on Aging

The number of seniors using public transportation is increasing. This is a result of the aging of the “baby boomers”, a nation-wide population trend that is also seen locally.

Air Service

Aviation facilities within the region are limited to three general aviation service facilities and two commercial service facilities. General aviation includes flight instruction, fueling, air taxi/charter, corporate flight and fixed base operators. Commercial facilities provide the bulk of business and passenger activity. The table below shows the regional airport operations. Several airlines have come and gone at the Durango/La Plata County airport over the years and Frontier Airlines began service in March 2008. The Cortez Airport utilizes Great Lakes, though it contracts with United and Frontier for passenger convenience when booking and tracking luggage.

Durango / La Plata County Airport										
America West Express (Mesa)	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total number of travelers	39,338	36,338	33,781	39,499	52,508	58,695	50,508	53,466	45,089	-
Charters										
Total number of travelers						5115	336	800	3978	3694
American Airlines										
Total number of travelers	20,799	19,583	21,372	17,251						
American Eagle										
Total number of travelers				2,428	19,503					
Continental Express										
Total number of travelers				1,491	17,863	5,500				
Mesa (Air Midwest)										
Total number of travelers					716	2,624	3,281	225		
Rio Grande Air										
Total number of travelers			2,935	6,449	2,776					
Delta Airlines										
Total number of travelers									17,998	30,854
U.S. Airways										
Total number of travelers										34,315
United Express (Air Wisconsin, Mesa & Skywest)										
Total number of travelers	97,060	125,804	114,363	99,693	101,067	102,369	115,003	145,930	155,643	161,364
Total	60,137	55,921	58,088	67,118	93,366	71,934	54,125	54,491	67,065	68,863

Sources: Airport manager

Cortez Municipal Airport										
United Express	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total number of travelers	28,143	17,461	19,580	17,844	13,900	15,867				
Air Taxi (boardings only)										
Total number of travelers							77	75	74	125
Great Lakes Airlines										
Total numbers of travelers							18,065	18,468	20,742	22,445

Sources: Airport managers

Multi-modal Alternatives

Because of the recreational nature of our area, bicycle riding is an extremely popular activity and many communities are exploring ways to be more bicycle friendly. Six cities in Colorado, including Durango, have been given the very competitive “Bicycle Friendly” status by the League of American Bicyclists. Two-hundred communities have applied, and only 80 have received bronze, silver, gold, or platinum status. Durango was given Silver status in May 2008.

There are efforts underway by the Safe Roads Coalition (www.saferoadscoalition.org), Trails 2000 (www.trails2000.org), Fort Lewis College Environmental Center (www.envcenter.fortlewis.edu), and other entities to work with area governments to continue to expand and enhance non-motorized travel. These efforts include improving road shoulders so that bicycles and motorized vehicles can co-exist on roads, pedestrian improvements including bridges and safe access to schools, and connecting and/or expanding existing trail systems.

When focusing on motorized travel in addition to transit, area groups are advocating for future Park & Ride locations for commuters. A **ride share program** effort is underway to promote carpooling and a regional website that connects individuals who need rides with individuals willing to share their vehicle, is up and running in southwest Colorado. The program allows anyone in Archuleta, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan and Dolores counties to identify commuters with whom they might share transportation to and from work, school and other activities. The website www.freerideshare.org contains a simple form to fill out for both drivers and riders. The system will match transportation inquiries to potential users. No personal information is made available, other than email addresses.