



Federal Highway Administration

Rural Transportation Planning Workshops

Colorado Workshop

Including

Arizona

Texas

Utah

FINAL DRAFT

Summer 1999

Dye Management Group, Inc.

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Road mileage data included in this report is from the Federal Highway Administration, 1996, and can be accessed at www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/1996/section5.html.

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Colorado Workshop



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Federal Highway Administration

Rural Transportation Planning Workshops

Colorado Workshop



1.0 Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), assisted by Dye Management Group, Inc., conducted a series of regional rural transportation planning workshops from October 1998 through July 1999. The Colorado Department of Transportation hosted the second regional workshop on November 17-18, in Denver.

These workshops were structured to allow the exchange of success stories and dialogue between neighboring states and their representatives on how to make rural transportation planning effective. In addition, the workshops were used to assemble information on how local elected officials are involved in the statewide transportation planning process. Officials from Arizona, Colorado, Texas, and Utah, including planning representatives, district/county engineers, local elected officials, rural planning organizations, economic development agencies, tribal governments, departments of transportation, and rural transit operators were invited to attend. Representatives from New Mexico were unable to attend. The information gathered at the Colorado workshop is presented for each state individually. Overall workshop findings and conclusions follow the state summaries.

1.1 Objectives

The purpose of the workshops was to foster dialogue and the exchange of ideas, not formal presentations. The objectives of the workshops were to:

- Explore and promote effective ways to involve rural officials in the statewide transportation planning process.
- Enable participants to share experiences in rural transportation planning and programming.
- Build relationships among participants that can form the basis for future cooperation and coordination.
- Identify the most effective roles and responsibilities for rural transportation providers and users.

- Determine rural transportation needs and issues that are being addressed by planning and programming.
- Identify best practice planning techniques used in developing successful rural projects.
- Obtain information for a report to Congress on how responsive state transportation plans and the statewide transportation planning process are to rural concerns and how rural officials are involved in the planning process.

These objectives were achieved by working through an agenda of discussion topics. Workshop participants were asked to come prepared to provide input around specific questions that they were given in advance.

1.2 Discussion Topics

Five principal discussion topics were addressed in the workshop. Knowledgeable individuals from each state, from both the state department of transportation perspective and the local rural perspective, were asked to address these discussion topics. The topics were:

- **The Process and the Outcome: How Planning for Rural Areas Is Conducted**

This topic covered the following questions:

- How is planning for rural areas conducted?
- How are rural transportation needs addressed in the development of the statewide transportation improvement program?
- How are rural officials involved in decision making?
- What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses in your state?

- **Jurisdictional Roles, Responsibilities, and Funding**

This topic covered the following questions:

- What are the jurisdictional roles and responsibilities in your state for planning, programming, and funding improvements in rural areas?
- How are plan decisions funded?

- **Integration/Coordination with Other Plans**

This topic covered the following questions:

- How are local/regional plans coordinated with other plans?

- How are local rural goals balanced against regional/statewide goals and objectives?

- **Success Stories**

This topic covered the following question:

- What success stories do you have of innovative programs and projects that address rural needs?

- **Other Issues**

This topic covered the following question:

- What are the major rural transportation issues facing rural areas in your state, for all modes?

1.3 Participants

State departments of transportation were solicited to host the rural transportation planning workshops. Based upon the response, host states were identified and nearby states were then invited to attend.

Knowledgeable individuals, from both the state department of transportation perspective and the local rural perspective, were invited to attend the workshops. The objective was to have approximately five people from each state, representing a variety of rural transportation stakeholders, actively participate in the workshop forum. Participants included local, state, and federal planning representatives; county engineers and commissioners; local elected officials; councils of governments; regional planning organizations; economic development agencies; tribal governments; and rural transit operators. National organizations represented at the workshops included the:

- Community Transportation Association of America.
- Federal Highway Administration.
- Federal Transit Administration.
- National Association of Counties.
- National Association of County Engineers.
- National Association of Development Organizations.

The local elected officials who participated in the workshops included rural mayors, county commissioners, judges/county executives, public works directors, trustees, and former state legislators.

1.4 Report Structure

The format of this report is based on the workshop objectives and topic areas, as follows:

- The Rural Planning Process.
- Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions.
- Major Planning Issues.
- Identified Strengths and Weaknesses.
- Success Stories.

Each of the participating states are addressed in turn. A list of workshop participants and maps of each of the states are included in the attachments.

2.0 Arizona

Arizona contains 118,005 lane miles of roads, 80,026 lane miles of which are rural, and 6,652 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Fifty percent of rural roads are locally owned. Arizona's rural transportation planning process is considered to be a blend of top-down and bottom-up methods.

2.1 The Rural Planning Process

Arizona has four rural councils of government that encompass 84% of the state's geographic area. Through a contractual Overall Work Program, the rural councils of governments have the responsibility of addressing transportation policy, regional planning goals, project selection, funding and matching requirements, transit coordination, and functional classification definitions. Each council of governments is overseen by a technical advisory committee. County and municipality membership in a council of governments is voluntary, and two counties do not participate in this planning process.

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) provides each council of governments with approximately \$80,000 annually for planning purposes, as well as funding for cost projections, data collection, functional classifications, and other tasks in their overall work program. ADOT offers the planning organizations technical assistance and support, but does not directly provide planning staff. State planning and research funds support rural planning activities.

In addition, there are ten ADOT engineering districts and six transportation board districts. Approximately one-third of projects originate through councils of governments, and the remainder through ADOT. However, certain large projects are brought directly to the attention of district engineers or local elected officials, bypassing the councils of governments and transportation board.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

- Multi-Year Transportation Improvement Program

Each council of governments develops a five-year transportation improvement program (TIP) in coordination with the technical advisory committee and the ADOT transportation planning group. The TIP emphasizes the completion of transportation improvement projects (such as construction, widening, and resurfacing) and not maintenance projects. The TIP is submitted to ADOT in June of each year and is reviewed for consistency with other plans and policies. Three years of the TIP then become part of the statewide transportation improvement program (STIP).

- Regional Transportation Policy Plan

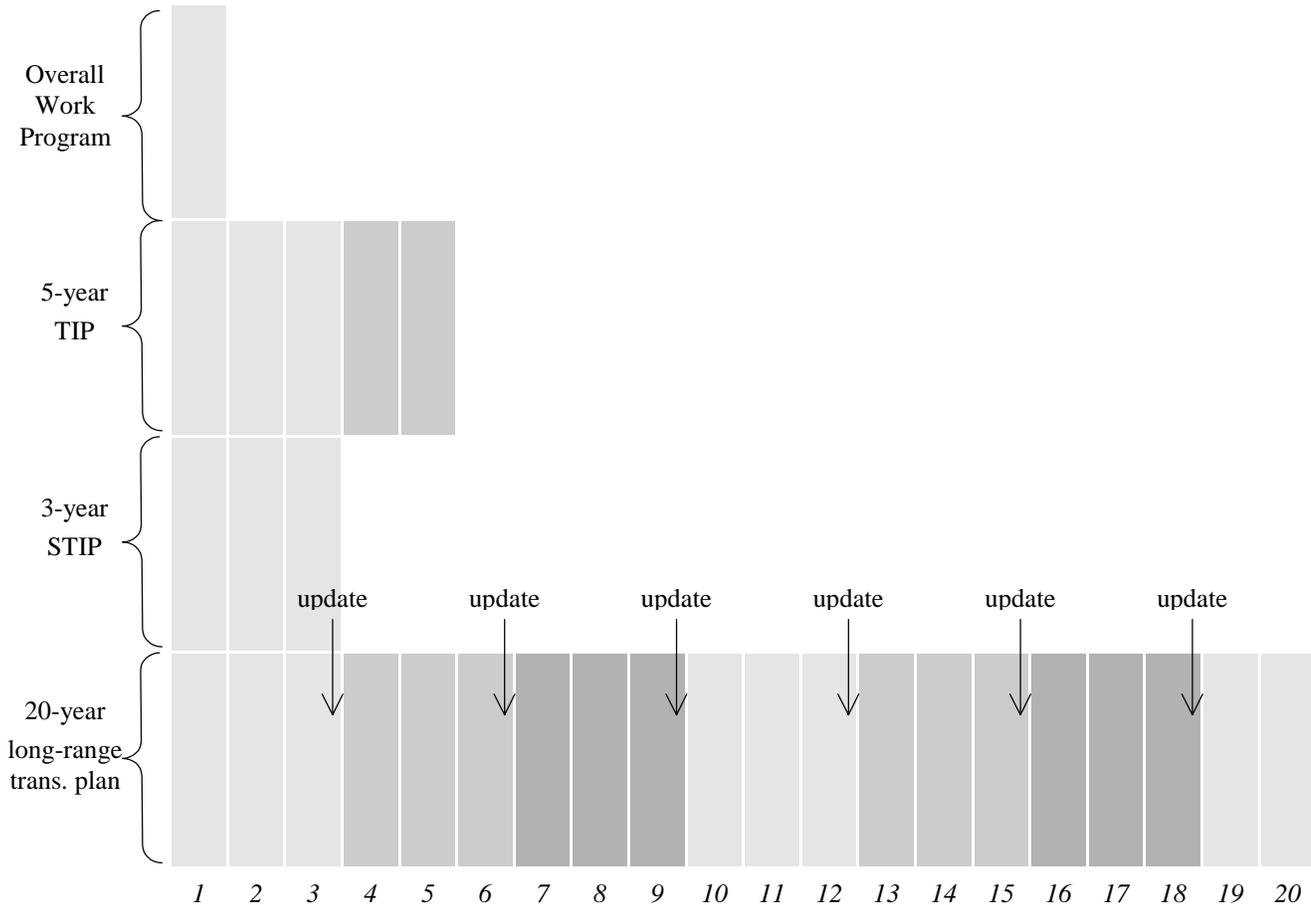
Each rural council of governments develops a regional transportation policy plan that focuses on planning in conjunction with local municipalities and includes policy guidelines to address regional planning goals and objectives, the project selection process, the types of projects encouraged in the region, funding and matching share requirements, and functional classification definitions.

- Regional System Plan

Each council of governments, in conjunction with the technical advisory committee, develops a regional system plan to identify the regional transportation system and important elements of each mode. It may also identify minimum project construction standards. With ADOT technical assistance, the councils of governments also prepare maps to identify off-state system routes eligible for federal aid. The regional system plan is then submitted for ADOT approval.

Exhibit 2a illustrates Arizona’s transportation planning process.

Exhibit 2a: Rural Planning Integration in Arizona



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials may participate in the rural transportation planning process through involvement with their council of governments. Elected officials, such as city managers and public works officials, often belong to the transportation committee that identifies and approves projects before forwarding them to the district engineer. They may also work in conjunction with district engineers, local businesses, and neighboring municipalities to coordinate and support large projects. Local elected officials do not have independent discretion over any funds, only through their council of governments and transportation committee.

2.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

General transportation funding is distributed based on population. Larger entities assume the bulk of the funding, and many small entities receive nothing. Counties can receive project funding without being a member of a council of governments, which has created tension.

ADOT distributes \$1.5 million annually for transit. However, the share for many towns is so small (a few hundred dollars) that it cannot be effectively used for transit purposes.

STIP project funding is administered through an intergovernmental agreement between the project sponsor and ADOT. The councils of governments are involved during the programming and final project review phases. Councils of governments and project sponsors may request to exchange federal aid eligibility in the Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) for certain projects programmed in the TIP. The total amount of HURF money exchanged cannot exceed 90% of the available obligation authority, excluding local off-state system bridge, safety, and enhancement programs.

In addition to STIP project funding, there are two other primary sources of funding: bridge rehabilitation and replacement funds, and safety funds. There is also transportation enhancement money, totaling \$11 million annually. ADOT district engineers receive about \$2 million each year for small projects like signals.

2.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Transit funding can be used for operating and capital expenditures, but as a condition of its use, each project is required to be part of a three-year transit plan.

Since many Arizona counties don't have transit systems, much less transit plans, this state money often goes to highways. ADOT has been trying unsuccessfully to solicit county interest in operating transit services. This transit funding is not "new," but rather a reallocation from other transportation projects and thus a point of contention.

- Numerous roadways are poorly or improperly classified, therefore limiting the amount and flexibility of transportation funding a region receives.

Many regions have been working on reclassifying their roads and, more recently, turning back roads that no longer serve the purpose of statewide travel. Regions then receive credit for the turnbacks and have more discretion over spending.

- ADOT design standards are considered too stringent and costly for low-volume roads to be addressed, when funds should be used to make higher volume roads safer.

A committee chaired by the National Association of County Engineers is evaluating the standards, and some roads are being reclassified.

2.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- Without ADOT’s intervention and distribution methods, councils of governments would receive little or no money.
- Two counties have passed a transportation-only sales tax to supplement their resources.
- There are open lines of communication between ADOT and the councils of governments, and ADOT seriously evaluates all council of governments input. Coordination between regions and plans has also increased, and people recognize common goals and priorities.

Weaknesses

- Organizational boundaries do not coincide with those of other organizations: one council of governments alone encompasses four counties, five engineering districts, and two transportation boards.
- Due to the long project selection, scoping, and design processes, projects often end up far from their original, intended purpose. There is no guarantee that projects will leave the scoping pool, which has been described as a “black hole.” There are also many steps and impediments after project selection and approval – permits, air quality, archeology, geography, etc.
- ADOT is not required to share federal funds with the counties or councils of governments.

- Many communities only qualify for enhancement funds, due to poor road classifications and the inability to match funds.
- Arizona has not yet completed its 20-year transportation plan, leaving the future of some projects uncertain or indefinitely delayed.
- Projects get lost and delayed due to varying fiscal years.
- Regions don't plan well for growth, and development communities often manipulate existing standards.

2.5 Success Stories

Through multi-agency collaboration and intergovernmental agreements, a truck route corridor from Mexico to I-8 in the southwestern corner of Arizona will be created. The corridor successfully received funding and ADOT approval because the local groups have maintained consensus throughout the project steps and have spoken with one voice.

3.0 Colorado

Colorado contains 175,391 lane miles of roads, 144,708 lane miles of which are rural, and 7,469 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Seventy-seven percent of rural roads are locally owned. Colorado's rural transportation planning process is considered to be a blend of top-down and bottom-up methods.

3.1 The Rural Planning Process

Colorado has 15 regional planning commissions, created in 1991, five of which are MPOs and the others are considered to be rural planning organizations (RPOs). Each planning region is comprised of geographically-bound municipalities and counties, and each has a transportation planning commission. The transportation planning commissions act as formal policy boards and identify, analyze, and prioritize transportation needs for all modes of transportation. They also are responsible for adopting the regional transportation plans.

The chairperson of each regional planning commission, or the chairperson's designee, represents them on the Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee, which meets quarterly at a minimum. The Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee provides recommendations to the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the regions on transportation system development. The committee is considered instrumental in supplying guidance and input.

There are six CDOT engineering districts, each with its own regional director, whose boundaries do not coincide with those of the regional planning commissions. CDOT encourages transportation planning commissions with cross-border boundaries to coordinate efforts. State planning and research (SPR) funds support statewide rural transportation planning activities. CDOT is overseen by the Transportation Commission, consisting of 11 representatives appointed by the governor and approved by the senate for four-year terms. Commission districts are different from CDOT engineering districts.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

Each regional transportation plan is updated every six years and can be amended annually. The first six years of the plans is the STIP; the regional transportation plans have two elements:

- Regional Transportation Plan: 20-year Preferred Plan

The Preferred Plan identifies all projects that a transportation planning region believes are necessary to adequately maintain mobility during the next 20 years.

- Regional Transportation Plan: 20-year Financially Constrained Plan

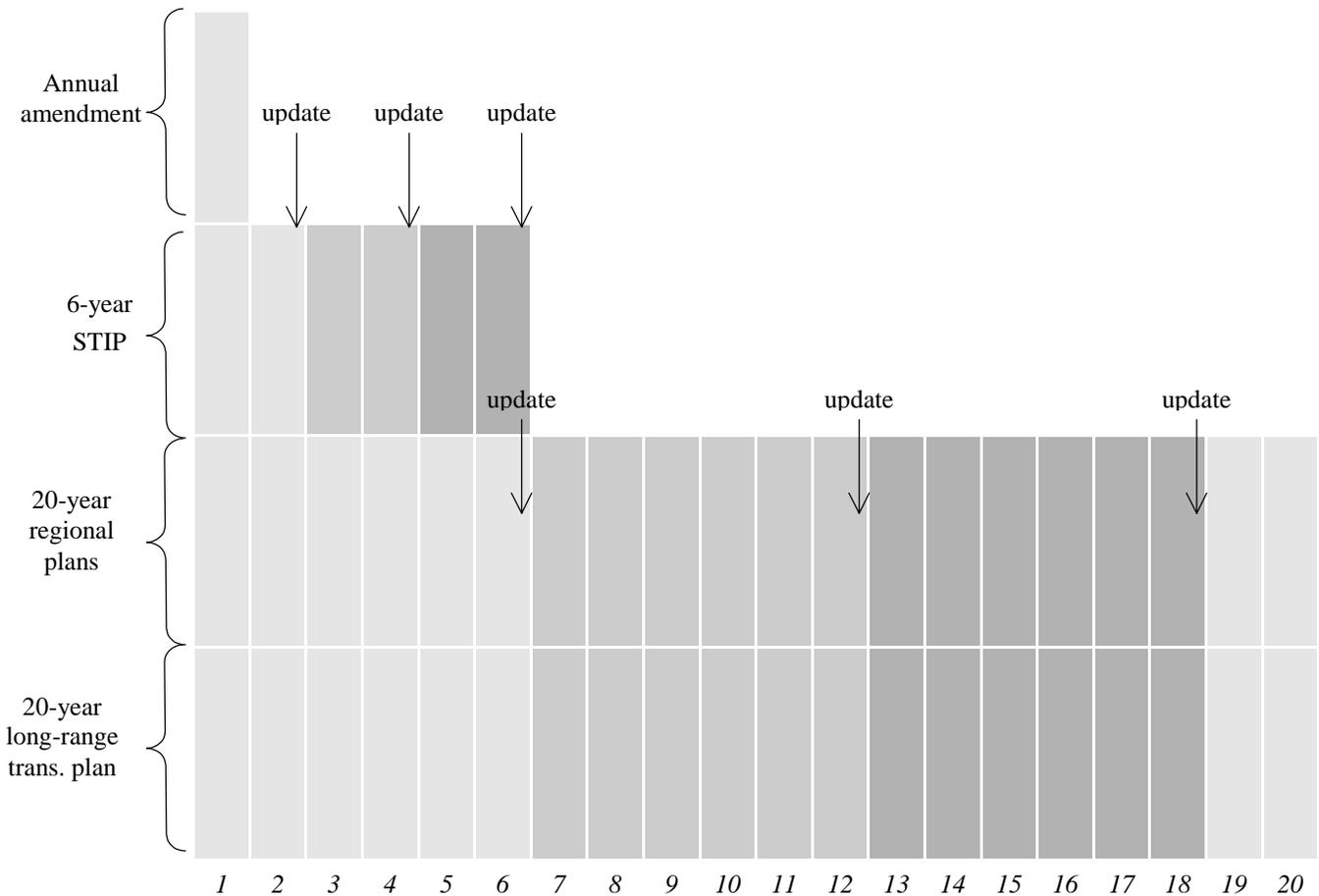
The Financially Constrained Plan identifies only projects that can reasonably expect to receive funding from anticipated revenues during the next 20 years.

- STIP

The STIP contains projects from the 20-year regional and statewide plans that are scheduled for implementation during the next six years. The STIP is updated every two years through the Project Priority Programming Process, and can be amended upon request by a transportation planning region. Transportation planning regions also actively participate in identifying key projects to move forward into the first three years of the STIP.

Exhibit 3a illustrates Colorado’s transportation planning process.

Exhibit 3a: Rural Planning Integration in Colorado



Local Elected Official Involvement

CDOT encourages local elected officials to join the regional planning commission that oversees transportation planning activities in their transportation planning region. The regional planning commission is created through an intergovernmental agreement. Local elected officials do not have independent discretion over funds allocated by the Transportation Commission, but participate with the CDOT region in prioritizing projects. Local officials have the opportunity each year to meet with their respective CDOT regional transportation director and transportation commissioner(s) to discuss transportation issues and needs as part of the Project Priority Programming Process that updates and amends the STIP.

3.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

Federal and state transportation revenues are allocated by the Transportation Commission to three major program areas: Strategic Projects, Other Commission Priorities, and Other Regional Priorities. Approximately 18% goes to cities, 22% to counties, and 60% to the state. The Other Regional Priorities funds are distributed to the six CDOT regions by formula and used to fund the priorities established by the regional planning commissions with their CDOT regional transportation director. Projects under Other Commission Priorities include maintenance, resurfacing, structures, safety, and operations, and are not prioritized through the regional planning process.

To assist with needs prioritization, CDOT created the State Significant Corridors funding system. These corridors must be multimodal, provide critical links for inter-state and inter-regional mobility, and be used to identify high priority projects. CDOT also worked with transportation planning regions to identify 28 strategic state projects that receive separate, preferred funding.

Colorado does not have state funding sources dedicated for transit. Federal transit funds are handled through grant programs and are currently being integrated into the regional planning process. The Transportation Commission is discussing the issue of flexing federal highway dollars to non-highway projects, and considers high priority multimodal projects on a case-by-case basis. Funding for multimodal projects for the next few years has been allocated to Denver's light rail system.

3.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Planning regions have varying agendas and priorities. For example, southeastern Colorado is primarily interested in maintaining its highways, while urban front range regions want congestion relief, bike paths, and transit services. Coordinating plans between neighboring regions is a challenge.

While the Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee tried to mediate conflicting plans, CDOT finally sub-allocated each region its own share to develop its own projects independently.

- Regions battle the perception that mountain residents don't use or need public transit.

Mountain communities have become very multimodal and their transit systems are the fastest growing in Colorado, primarily providing mobility to workers displaced by the high cost of living.

- Colorado residents recently voted for term limits for all elected positions.

It is believed that the more frequent change of elected officials will affect the fluidity of the rural transportation planning process; tenure and time are necessary to build inter-agency relationships. However, there will be increased accountability, and many believe good staff are as vital as elected officials.

3.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- Regional visions and goals are developed.
- There is regional, intergovernmental cooperation.
- Local governments are very entrepreneurial, skillful, and creative in attracting CDOT's attention and funding.
- Regions are able to access and analyze highway facility data.
- The identification of 28 strategic state projects and their separate funding has been beneficial to all regions. Without the extra money oriented to these projects, they would not be completed.
- When approached and asked for assistance regarding land use, land owners are cooperative and often contribute both financially and otherwise.
- CDOT has been very responsive, and is structured to be a foundation for assistance. Regional priorities are generally honored, and any changes made by CDOT are well documented and justified.

Weaknesses

- Multimodal data is unavailable or does not exist; nor are there discussions on intermodal facilities. Regional plans are supposed to be multimodal, but there is no funding to support it. Colorado provides passenger and freight rail plans, but they describe services and identify corridors and don't recommend specific action.
- Data analysis methodologies and cost estimates are inconsistent.
- There is not good documentation of planning process steps and alternative mode considerations.
- The process of financially constraining the regional plans is complicated.
- CDOT district and planning organization boundaries overlap and do not coincide.
- There were more rural transportation options 25 years ago than now. Deregulation of the airlines has made flying prohibitively expensive, and passenger rail is rare.
- CDOT was a highway department until a few years ago, so many policies and plans are still very highway-oriented and not multimodal.

3.5 Success Stories

- The new I-70 mountain corridor was the result of multi-agency collaboration, significant public input, and a democratic process. What used to be a dangerous interstate is now a safe, attractive road built with minimal environmental impact.
- Five municipalities worked together to purchase a rail corridor from Glenwood Springs to Aspen, and are currently conducting a corridor investment study.
- Multimodal transportation to ski areas has increased with the renewal of passenger ski trains, inter-ski resort bus service, and airplane flights to small ski airports, such as Aspen. These efforts were orchestrated entirely outside of government channels.

4.0 Texas

Texas contains 627,311 lane miles of roads, 442,317 lane miles of which are rural, and 27,483 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Sixty-eight percent of rural roads are locally owned. Texas' rural transportation planning process is considered to be a blend of top-down and bottom-up methods.

4.1 The Rural Planning Process

Texas has 24 councils of governments, whose boundaries do not coincide with the 25 Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) engineering districts. Transportation planning for rural areas is primarily undertaken at the regional level. TxDOT districts work with local elected officials to identify needs, establish plans, and prioritize projects. The planning and project system is decentralized for all projects except those on the National Highway System. These are prioritized statewide.

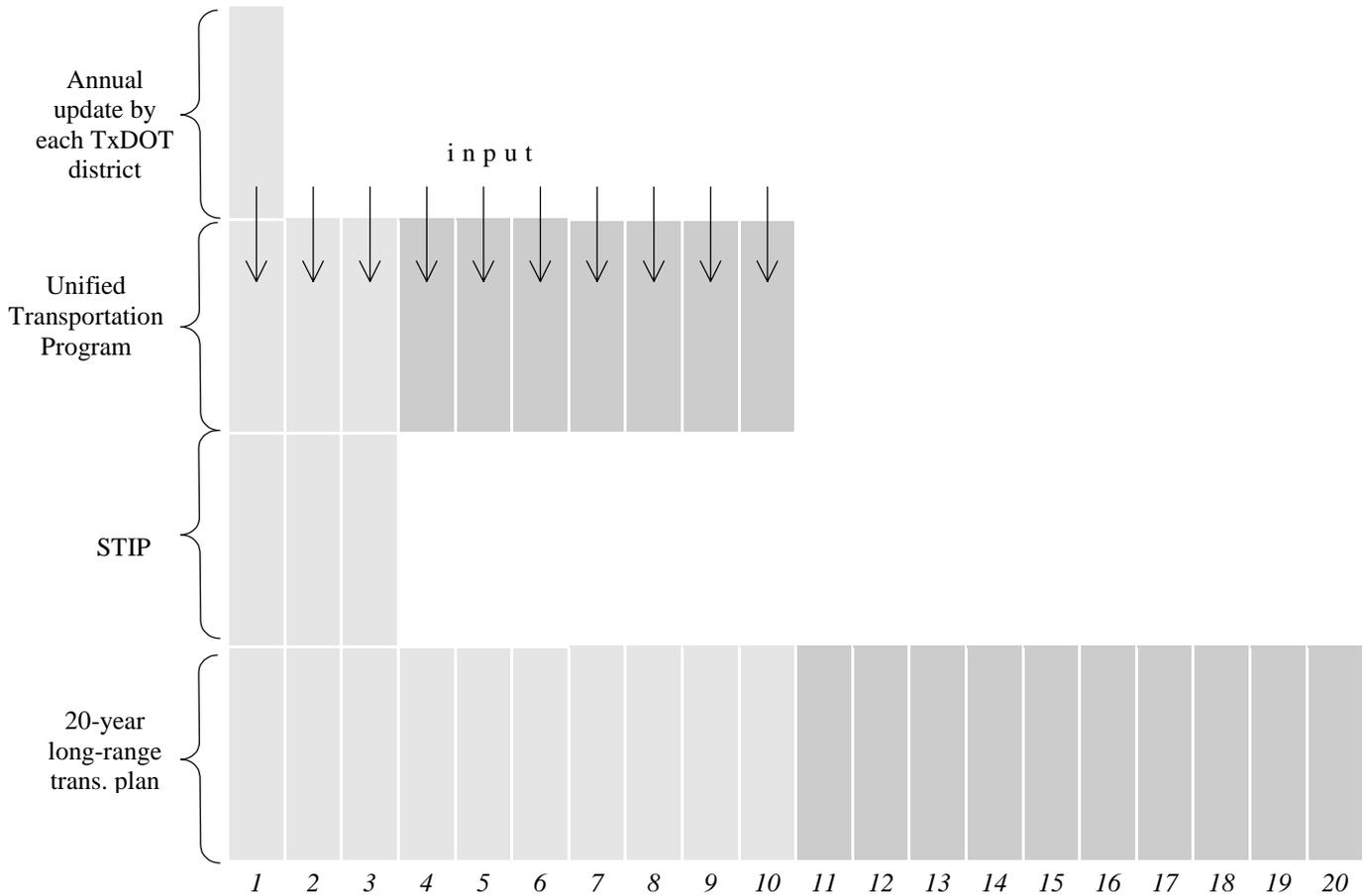
The councils of governments act to provide input, but have no defined role or official capacity in the rural transportation planning process. Many counties are very rural and don't conduct transportation planning; they generally work with their district engineer. Only a few rural councils of governments have regional plans, which are generally integrated into the statewide and district plans. TxDOT planning staff provide advice and guidance to the councils of governments upon request.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

- Councils of governments and local elected officials provide input to the TxDOT districts regarding project needs that may eventually become part of the Unified Transportation Program.
- The Texas Transportation Commission and TxDOT use the Unified Transportation Program as the ten-year plan for transportation project development. The Unified Transportation Program is updated annually.
- Rural needs are identified for inclusion in the Unified Transportation Program by the district planning process.
- The Unified Transportation Program provides projects that become part of the STIP. The STIP is made available for comment at the district level annually.
- The STIP, the Unified Transportation Program, and a three-year financial plan are the backbone for developing projects for the intermodal transportation network in Texas.
- The statewide plan is policy-based. Rural officials and transportation stakeholders are involved extensively in plan development. The plan addresses many rural issues.

Exhibit 4a illustrates Texas’ transportation planning process.

Exhibit 4a: Rural Planning Integration in Texas



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials may participate in rural transportation planning through involvement and collaboration with the TxDOT district engineers and their councils of governments. They may also create coalitions to advocate projects and garner funds. Although it is discouraged, occasionally an elected official will bypass the planning process and, through the district engineer, will lobby the Transportation Commission directly on behalf of a project. Local elected officials do not have independent discretion over any transportation funds, although they may assist in applying for a project loan at the State Infrastructure Bank.

4.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

Texas has a fairly complicated framework through which funds are suballocated to different program categories. Many of these categories are needs-based and provide funds to districts for preservation, or to specific systems, such as the Texas Trunk System or the Farm to Market System. For categories of funds suballocated to districts, the TxDOT districts involve rural interests and officials in needs identification and project prioritization. This process identifies and includes projects in the ten-year Unified Transportation Program.

TxDOT expects to be able to fund about one-third of needed transportation projects. Projects in the Unified Transportation Program are funded by the Transportation Commission in two ways:

- One way is for the Transportation Commission to authorize individual projects for inclusion in certain categories of work, and on an annual basis, review and re-authorize projects as appropriate. These projects are usually mobility and bridge replacement and rehabilitation projects, which typically take a significant length of time to develop. These types of projects often require feasibility studies, route studies, public hearings, environmental assessments, assessments of social and economic impact, and the purchase of right-of-way.
- Another way the Transportation Commission authorizes projects for some of the categories in the Unified Transportation Program is by authorizing program amounts (usually once a year) for activities which reflect the Commission's intentions to address a specific activity, such as rehabilitation or preventive maintenance. The program amounts for a particular program may be allocated to the districts by a formula approved by the commission. For other programs, such as safety or railroad signals, the program amounts are distributed on a statewide basis by the TxDOT division office responsible for the administration of that program after the division office has evaluated, ranked, prioritized and selected projects for the program.

The dollar amounts approved by the Transportation Commission for the programs are generally based on anticipated apportionments that will become available in the future. Projects in programs are authorized for development so that they will be available for construction when the apportionments are established annually.

4.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Public transit services are widely available, but residents are unaware of them. Also, transit services will provide a ride to a senior citizen between two communities, but not to several senior citizens between the same communities.

Transit funds cannot be used for advertising, and consequently transportation services are underutilized. Attempts are being made to use congestion management funding to advertise these services. Additionally, transit funds cannot be used to provide charters, which are defined as more than one person going to the same location. Seniors work around this prohibition by meeting and then calling one after the other to request a ride.

- It is difficult to provide project match money.

Rural planning organizations often must come up with a “gimmick” to receive match funds to finance a needed project, such as applying for historical status or other special federal funds.

- Many counties, municipalities, and regions do not have long-range transportation or other plans, and therefore are underrepresented and believe they don’t compete as well as larger, neighboring MPOs.

These entities are realizing the need for transportation and economic development planning and, with the assistance of the councils of governments and TxDOT, are gradually creating such plans. These are being used in STIP development. However, several regions do not have enough funds or population to do even basic planning, and rely completely on their district engineers to act as their advocates.

4.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- TxDOT district engineers have good relationships with their regions, and are often long-time residents of those areas. Objections to how they conduct planning are rare.
- With the formation of councils of governments, TxDOT employees can communicate more effectively with a large number of people.
- When regional plans are created, TxDOT makes an effort to incorporate them into the statewide plan.

Weaknesses

- TxDOT district engineers provide the main opportunity for planning input. There are few other structured communication methods for councils of governments.
- Enhancement project funding is a “cattle call” – the region that can match the most money receives the most until funds are gone.

- TxDOT cannot deny landowners access to highways, and can only condition how it will be done.
- There are no guidelines for developing regional plans.

4.5 Success Stories

- The U.S. 190 and Highway 21 east-west corridor was a successful multi-organization venture that raised \$7.5 million toward its construction, which will begin in 2002. Small communities and counties along the corridor, judges, business leaders, and TxDOT all collaborated together to build a four-lane highway in place of the current two-lane road.
- Rural planning organizations have found it successful to apply for special status designations in order to receive additional roadway funding. After the road between College Station and Austin was successfully declared a Presidential Highway, this method was used elsewhere to receive money.

5.0 Utah

Utah contains 87,080 lane miles of roads, 72,649 lane miles of which are rural, and 5,418 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Sixty-five percent of rural roads are locally owned. Utah's rural transportation planning system is considered to be top-down.

5.1 The Rural Planning Process

Utah has seven planning districts, or associations of governments, and four Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) regions, whose boundaries do not coincide. There is a Joint Highway Commission, comprised of 15 county representatives and 15 municipal representatives. This commission makes decisions regarding projects on the local system funded by state and federal funds for federal or other eligible facilities. Its function is to meet twice a year, prioritize projects, and distribute funding. UDOT does not provide funding to the planning districts or associations of governments, but offers technical staff support.

All transportation planning in Utah is centralized, with input from the regions. The localities provide input through open houses or written comment at the project stage for the state highway system; there is no other input process. Planning officials meet with local elected officials twice a year to explain the current funding situation, and the STIP project selection process does consider rural priorities. UDOT is completing corridor plans for its rural areas.

State planning and research funds support rural planning activities, although the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget provides grants for general planning, which include transportation at the county level. UDOT recently completed an evaluation of its planning process and will be implementing changes aimed at strengthening planning and increasing regional and local input.

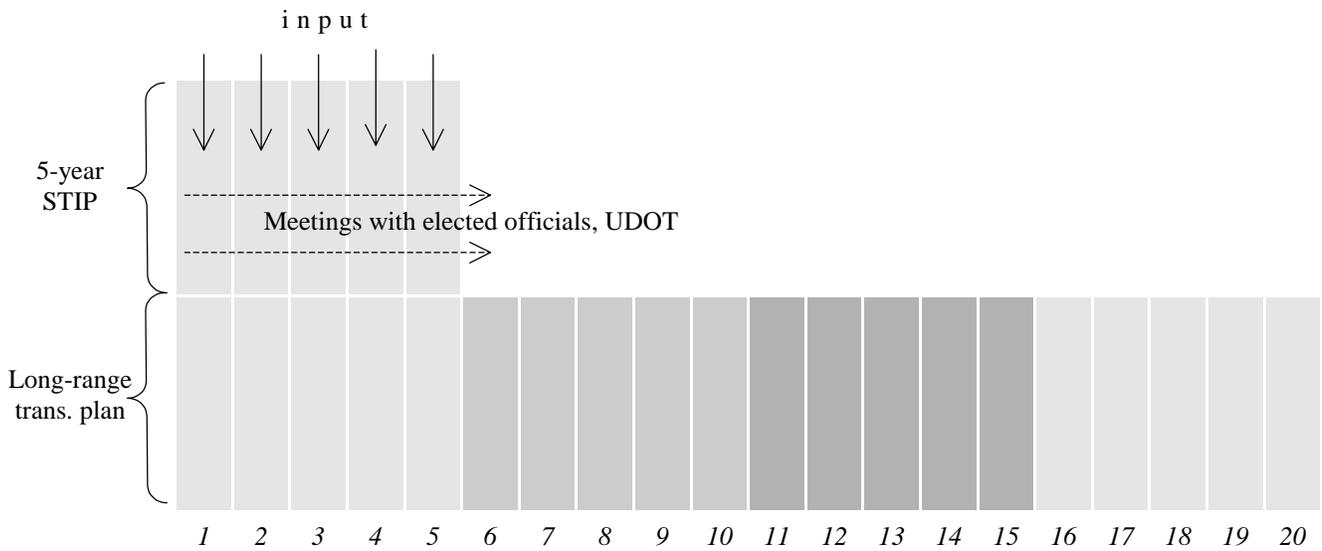
Principal Rural Planning Activities

- Region directors solicit input for projects, and UDOT planning officials meet twice a year with local elected officials to discuss transportation projects and planning.
- All projects require coordination with the UDOT region director. Opportunity for public input must be provided through a public meeting, such as a city council or county commission meeting. In order to be evaluated by the Joint Highway Commission, projects must be sponsored by a municipality or association of governments.
- The Joint Highway Commission meets twice a year to prioritize projects suggested by the regions and distribute funding. Joint Highway Commission staff meet with each county every year to identify needs and priorities.

- The Transportation Commission approves projects recommended by the Joint Highway Commission for inclusion in the STIP. There is a 30-day public comment period for the STIP. UDOT has a five-year STIP.
- UDOT conducts an annual partnering workshop with the associations of governments to develop the STIP, and the Transportation Commission conducts a yearly Roadway Preservation and Committed Programs workshop.

Exhibit 5a illustrates Utah’s transportation planning process.

Exhibit 5a: Rural Planning Integration in Utah



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials may provide input for rural transportation planning through involvement with their associations of governments and collaboration with their UDOT region director. Local elected officials establish project priorities for funds programmed by the Joint Highway Commission on county roads and city streets.

5.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

Fifty percent (50%) of transportation funds are distributed based on population. Thirty percent (30%) can be used anywhere in the state at the discretion of the Transportation Commission, 10% is spent on highway safety projects, and 10% is spent on enhancement projects.

- Transportation enhancement project funds are appropriated to UDOT, which administers all federal and matching funds. The Enhancements Advisory Committee assists the Transportation Commission in administering the enhancement program. This committee submits a list of recommended projects to the Transportation Commission for approval and inclusion in the STIP.
- The Joint Highway Commission is responsible for administering the funding program for county roads and federal aid eligible facilities on the state system.

5.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Within UDOT there is disconnection between the priorities, the selection, and the planning, and also between the district levels and state headquarters level. What the district wants is not always reflected in the STIP.

UDOT is trying to better incorporate district priorities and regional plans, and is making strides to enhance the public participation process.

- In the past, opportunities for public input were limited and often considered to be too late in the process to have real influence.

UDOT is taking strides to formalize the public input process and offer more opportunities for earlier involvement. However, comments received by the Transportation Commission are incorporated and acted upon only if considered to be “appropriate.”

5.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- UDOT is currently developing corridor plans for 40 identified high priority corridors, and is partnering with local governments to develop master transportation plans and corridor plans of state interest.
- One region has developed a user’s guide that is distributed to municipalities, with UDOT organization charts and names to contact for help. It also explains how to deal with certain local issues, like why there isn’t a crosswalk at a location.
- UDOT is implementing a series of improvements to the planning process.

Weaknesses

- A project cannot receive additional funding after undergoing concept development.
- There is little input from local elected officials and the public prior to conceptual design.
- Local entities that have done their own transportation planning are trying to integrate their plans, but there is no formal channel.

5.5 Success Stories

UDOT has implemented project manager training and the “cradle-to-grave” handling of transportation projects to ensure that they stay consistent with the original needs and intent. The training also includes methods for increasing public involvement and input, and coordination with local elected officials.

6.0 Workshop Findings and Conclusions

6.1 Similarities

Consensus was reached by the Colorado workshop participants in many areas, most notably regarding public involvement, project development, and funding. These agreements are listed below.

- Citizens, in coordination with their local elected officials and planning agencies, have the ability to bring projects to fruition.
- Rural planning organizations are an effective tool in educating the public on transportation and development issues. They are valuable in reaching agreement on rural priorities.
- Urban areas use transportation funds on enhancement projects like overpasses and bike paths, while rural areas struggle for funding to maintain and build roadways. Rural areas must compete with MPOs, with the department of transportation acting as arbitrator and distributor of funds.
- Smaller communities generally do not have economic development, growth management, or land use plans prepared.
- There is a movement from policy- and project-based plans to corridor-based planning.
- Rural planning organization region boundaries do not coincide with department of transportation districts, thereby creating additional meetings with different representatives, but also forcing the coordination and integration of plans.

6.2 Differences

Differences between the states were also noted, which tended to center on governmental organization, regulations, and the programming process. These differences are listed below:

- States vary from taking a top-down approach to rural planning – such as Utah, which makes final funding and project selection decisions – to states that have a more bottom-up approach like Colorado, where a portion of the state funds are programmed through the regional planning process.
- Some rural planning organizations have no planning funds or defined role, while others are provided with more extensive resources and an official capacity.

- Some rural planning organizations have a purely advisory role, while others actively develop, plan, and program their transportation projects.
- The extent to which regional plans affect the prioritization and selection of projects varies. Some states actively coordinate plans, while others use them more as input.

Attachment A. Participants

Colorado Workshop

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Intermodal Transportation Division
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Texas Department of Transportation

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Cochise County Highway Department, AZ

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Northern Arizona Council of Governments

Jennifer Finch
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Division of Transportation Development
Colorado Department of Transportation

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Senior Transportation Planner
Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization

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Colorado Department of Transportation

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Chairperson, Southwest Regional Transportation
Planning Commission, CO

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Transportation Program
Central Arizona Association of Governments

Bob Gorman
Intermodal and Statewide Planning Division
Federal Highway Administration

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Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization, AZ

Randy Harrison
Project Manager
Daniel, Mann, Johnson, & Mendenhall, CO

Edward Hocker
Planner
Daniel, Mann, Johnson, & Mendenhall, CO

David Johnson
Community Planner
Federal Transit Administration, CO

Michael Kennedy
Budget Analyst
Colorado Department of Transportation

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City Manager
Town of Limon, CO

Barbara Kirkmeyer
County Commissioner, Weld County, CO
Chairperson, Upper Front Range Planning
Commission, CO

Leah Lane
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Colorado Department of Transportation

Lorrie Lau
Transportation Planner, Region 8
Office of Program Development
Colorado Division Office
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Susan McClain
District Planning Engineer
Texas Department of Transportation

Maureen Paz de Araujo
Transportation Director
Daniel, Mann, Johnson, & Mendenhall, CO

Joel Phillips
Regional Planner
Colorado Department of Transportation

Richard Reynolds
Director, Region 5
Colorado Department of Transportation

David Rose
Principal
Dye Management Group, Inc., WA

George Roussos
County Commissioner, Eagle County, CO
National Association of County Engineers, State Director

Felipe Sanchez
Public Transit Administrator
State Delegate, Community Transportation Association
of America
Pima County Department of Transportation, AZ

Carol Short
Trustee/Planning Commissioner
Town of Bayfield, CO

Ken Sweet
Executive Director
Northern Arizona Council of Governments

Joe Tempel
Manager
Modal Planning
Colorado Department of Transportation

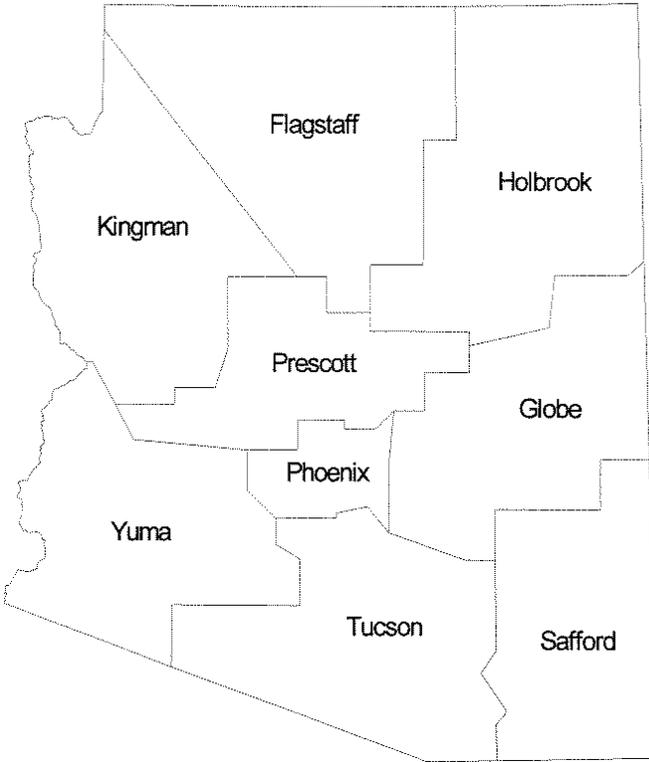
Lou Trapani
Chairperson
Intermountain Regional Planning Commission, CO

George Ventura
Regional Planner
Colorado Department of Transportation

Attachment B. Maps

Arizona

ADOT Engineering & Maintenance Districts



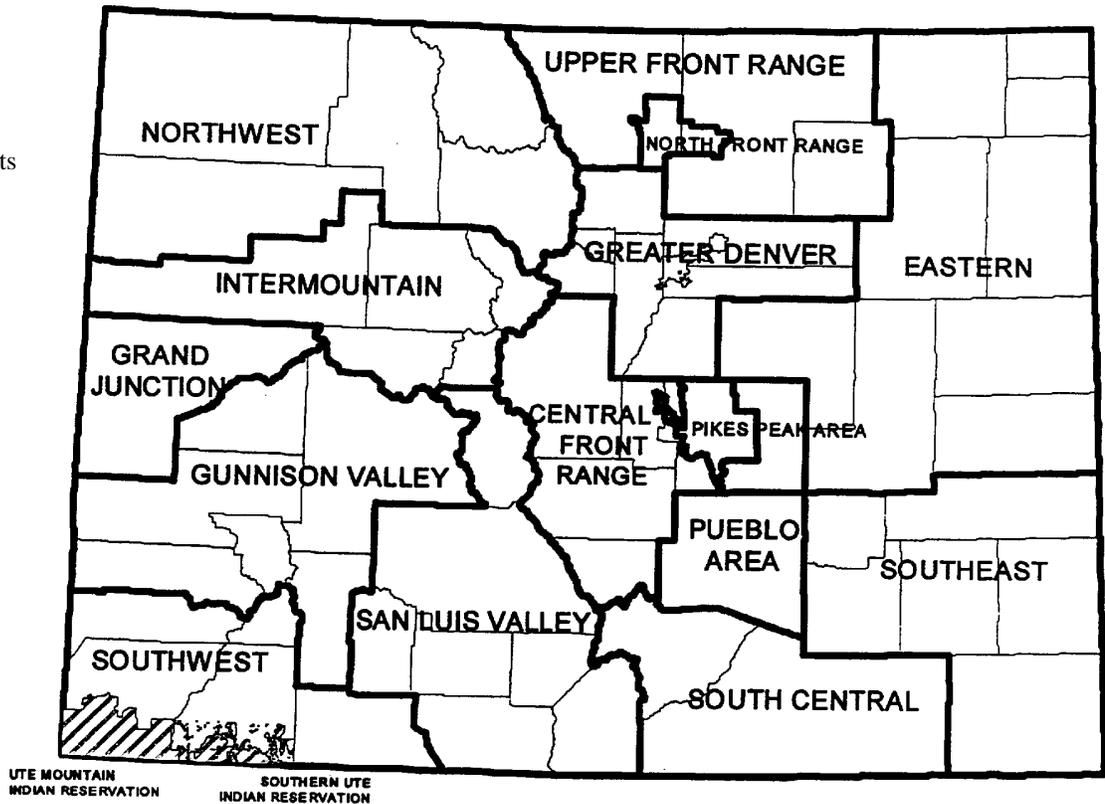
Counties



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Colorado

Planning districts

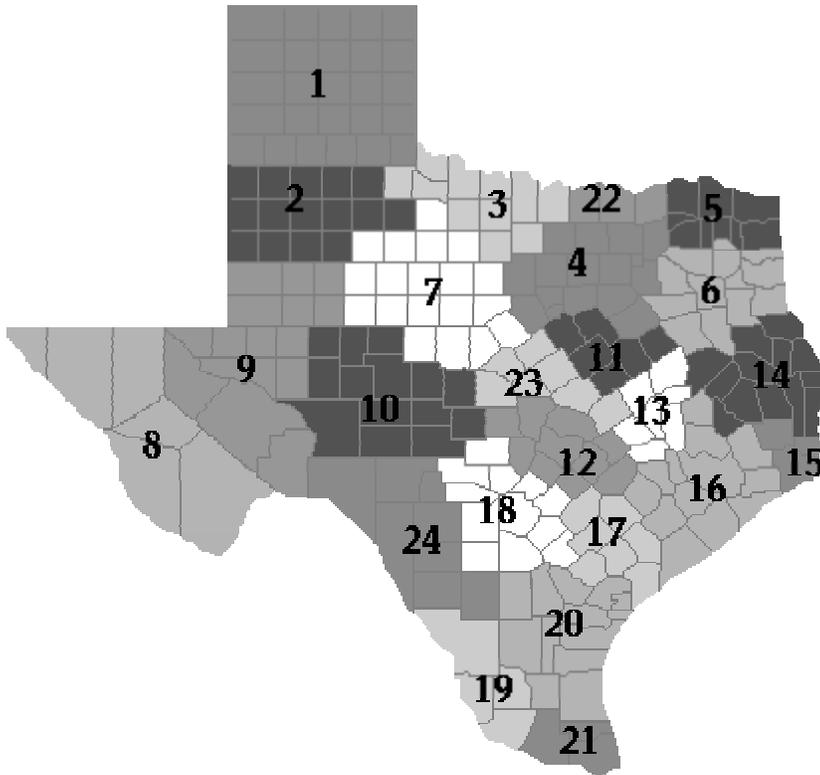


Commission districts



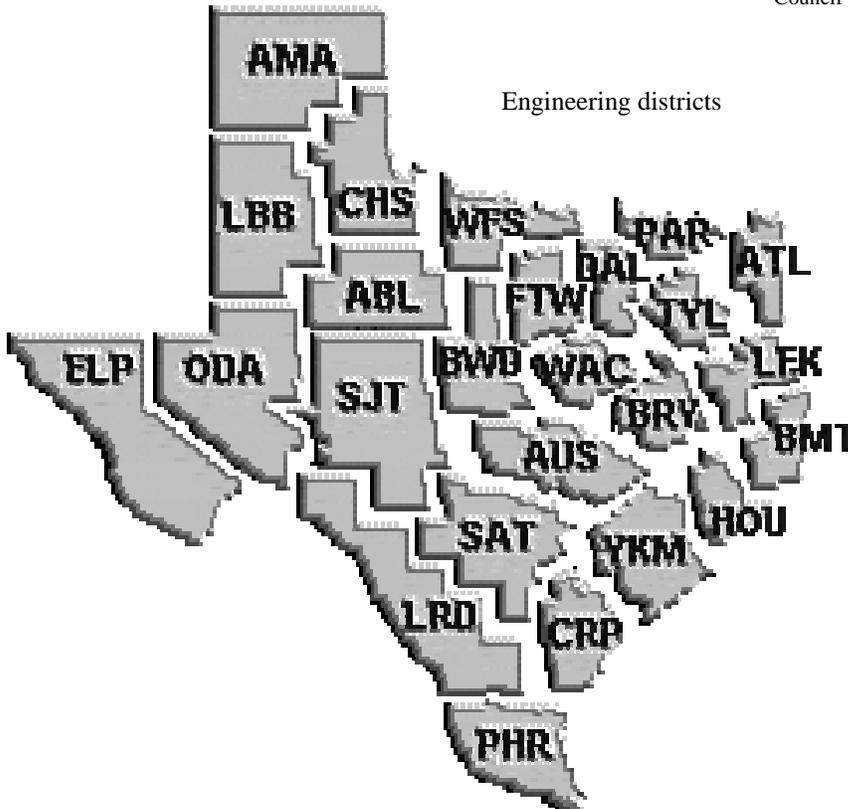
Texas

Planning districts



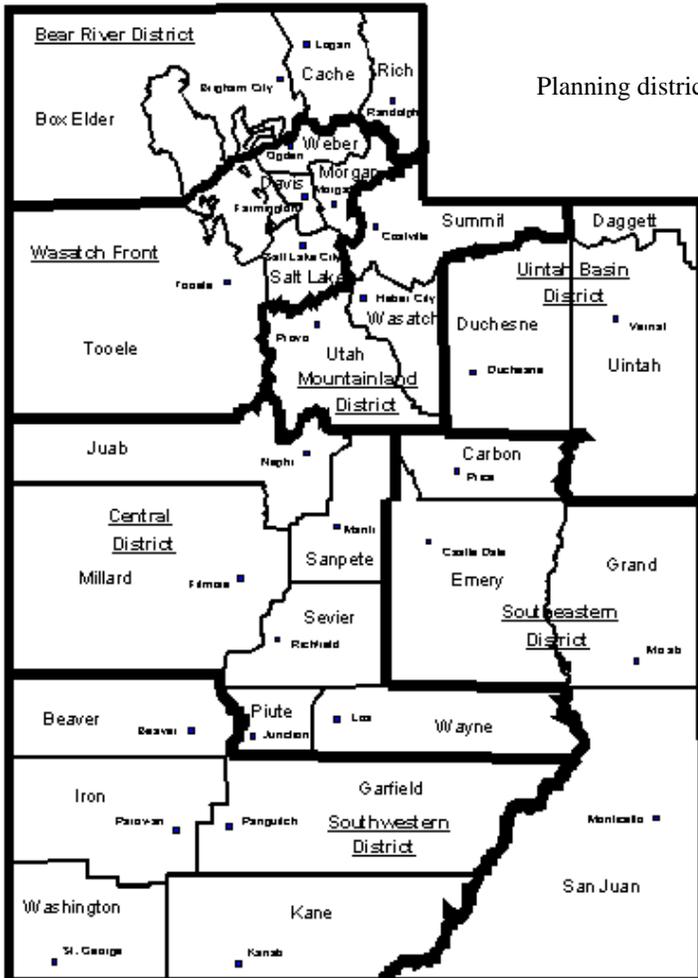
1. PRPC - Panhandle Regional Planning Commission
2. SPAG - South Plains Association of Governments
3. NORTEX - Nortex Regional Planning Commission
4. NCTCOG - North Central Texas Council of Governments
5. ATCOG - Ark-Tex Council of Governments
6. ETCOG - East Texas Council of Governments
7. WCTCOG - West Central Texas Council of Governments
8. RGCOG - Rio Grande Council of Governments
9. PBRPC - Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission
10. CVCOG - Concho Valley Council of Governments
11. HOTCOG - Heart of Texas Council of Governments
12. CAPCO - Capital Area Planning Council
13. BVCOG - Brazos Valley Council of Governments
14. DETCOG - Deep East Texas Council of Governments
15. SETRPC - South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
16. H-GAC - Houston-Galveston Area Council
17. GCRPC - Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission
18. AACOG - Alamo Area Council of Governments
19. STDC - South Texas Development Council
20. CBCOG - Coastal Bend Council of Governments
21. LRGVDC - Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
22. TEXOMA - Texoma Council of Governments
23. CTCOG - Central Texas Council of Governments
24. MRGDC - Middle Rio Council Development Council

Engineering districts

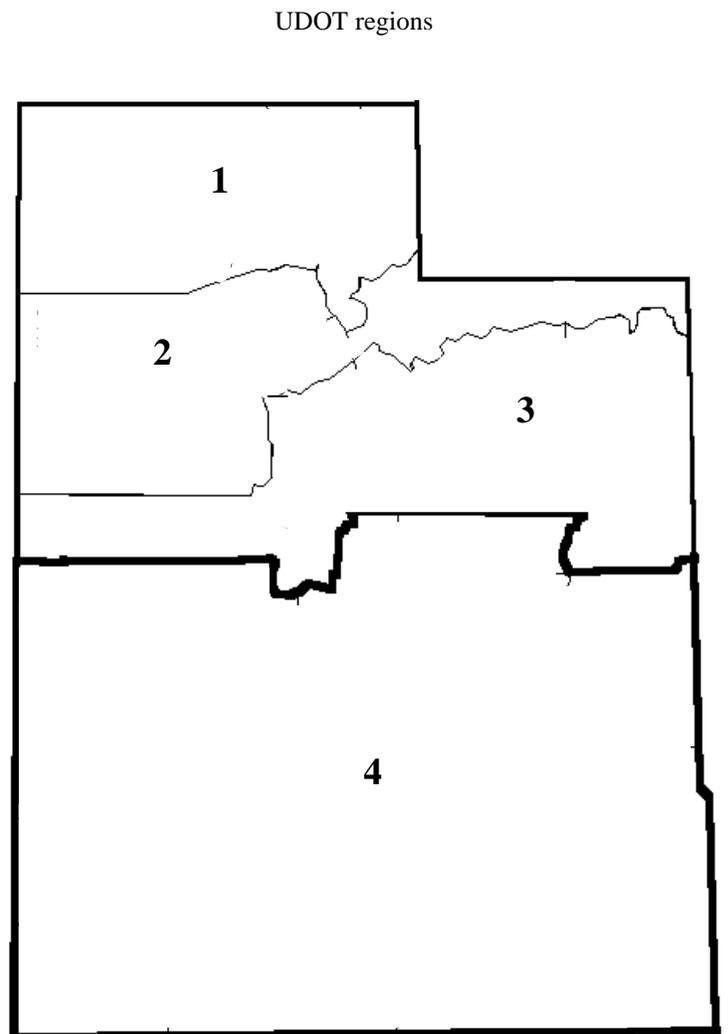


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Utah



Planning districts and counties



UDOT regions