

STATE OF COLORADO

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

136 State Capitol Building
Denver, Colorado 80203
(303) 866 - 2471
(303) 866 - 2003 fax



Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

January 9, 2009

The Honorable Mark Udall
United States Senate
8601 Turnpike Dr., Ste 206,
Westminster, CO 80031

Dear Senator Udall:

On December 9, Governor Bill Ritter wrote President-Elect Obama and you with his recommendations about how best to create jobs in the short term, and make long-term economic investments through a transportation and energy infrastructure stimulus package. Today we are writing to let you know that the Ritter administration has processes in place to ensure rapid deployment of federal resources that flow to our state once a stimulus package is signed into law.

To ensure that we achieve outcomes that benefit the citizens of Colorado, the Governor directed members of his administration to meet with key leaders who represent our state's cities, towns, and counties. We represent the participants at the first meeting, held earlier this week.

Governor Ritter and local government interests are in agreement on some key elements that we hope you will keep in mind when Congress debates stimulus proposals:

- The use of block grants to distribute stimulus dollars to states,
- No matching requirements for high priority, bid ready projects,
- No earmarks for specific states or localities, and
- The use of state agencies to facilitate within-state distribution

All of us acknowledge the tremendous need for infrastructure investment. We know that you have seen lists of potential projects that are ready to go. The challenge will be to move the dollars from a federal allocation to actual projects on the ground. We are committed to working together on behalf of the citizens of our state. It was with this commitment in mind that the participants recommended the use of existing state processes for grant distribution to transportation and infrastructure projects.

For example, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) already has a substantial federal and state-mandated transportation planning process in place, and while meeting participants agreed that we must remain flexible in order to accomplish the mandates of a stimulus package, it was agreed Colorado should follow that existing planning process and look to projects that have already been prioritized by CDOT and their transportation partners from around the state. CDOT held an open informational meeting the day following my administration's meeting with Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI) and Colorado Municipal League (CML). Over eighty participants from around the state participated—mayors, county commissioners, city and county transportation planning staff, and representatives and staff of the state's urban Metropolitan Planning Organizations and rural Transportation Planning Regions were in attendance, as well as staff from our Colorado Congressional Delegation. These participants agreed that the existing process for prioritizing projects works in Colorado, and we should use that process for any stimulus funds coming to Colorado. To that end, Colorado's Transportation Commission is holding regional meetings with CDOT staff and our local and regional planning partners from around the state in early January to scour the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and other ready-to-go projects so that those projects may be regionally prioritized based on various levels of potential stimulus revenue. We are confident CDOT and our planning partners will have prioritized projects ready to go when the stimulus bill is signed.

The Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) currently administers both state and federal dollars to improve the livability of towns, cities, and counties. Community development infrastructure projects such as water and sewer, energy conservation and retrofitting of public facilities, development of energy-efficient libraries, schools, city and county court houses and local government road and bridges currently benefit from the department's project review and funding processes for bid ready projects. As Congress expands the stimulus package to include dollars for infrastructure beyond transportation, Colorado would utilize a competitive application process, managed by the Department of Local Affairs, to quickly send federal grant money to cities, towns, counties, schools, hospitals and other special districts.

Additionally, we provided an opportunity for state agencies and institutions of higher education to identify infrastructure projects that would qualify under the required timelines. Many critical projects that could significantly improve the quality of Colorado's system of higher education were identified. Given the fact that state funding for capital construction has virtually dried up, which in many is cases the primary or sole source of funding for these projects, additional federal assistance will likely determine if a project is constructed or delayed indefinitely.

Direct funding to Colorado to offset our rapidly growing Medicaid costs would also be extremely helpful. Such support would directly result in smaller cuts for our higher education system and enable us to continue to provide critical, yet optional Medicaid benefits such as prescription drugs. During the past recession, Colorado also received direct federal aid, which we were able to allocate at our discretion. This type of funding would enable us to scale back or avoid cuts to many essential programs such as child welfare and mental health services.

Your debate in Washington will focus on the size of the package and method of deployment. Success of a federal stimulus package that invests in public facilities will depend upon the speed with which states can put grant dollars to work. Whatever size of the package, Colorado will be nimble with the stimulus resources because of the commitment of state leadership to the economic well being of our citizens.

Thank you for your efforts on our behalf. Please contact (your choice) if you would like more details about specific projects or about processes that we are discussing.

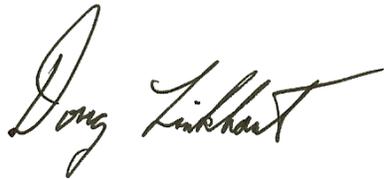
Sincerely,



Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor



The Honorable Kathay Rennels
President
Colorado Counties Inc.



The Honorable Doug Linkhart
President
Denver Council Member-At-Large
Colorado Municipal League