

NORTHERN COLORADO PROSPERS

FORT COLLINS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE | QUARTERLY REPORT | OCTOBER 2018

Expansion of North I-25 Officially Underway

It's the day we've all been waiting for, a day many said would not come in our lifetime—the groundbreaking of the North I-25 Express Lanes project from Johnstown to Fort Collins. Thanks to the determination and relentless commitment of numerous participants—including Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce leaders and investors—Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is now moving dirt decades earlier than originally planned.

“Almost exactly five years to the day we were told it would be 2075 before they could start making improvements along the I-25 corridor, and we said no way,” said Barbara Kirkmeyer, Weld County Commissioner.

On Monday, September 10, dignitaries including Gov. John Hickenlooper, U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet and many local, state and federal officials, broke ground at the Colorado Highway 402 exit on the first segment of a multi-segment project which will eventual-

“When dollars are scarce you look for partnerships, and these local partnerships—which generated \$55 million local dollars—made it easy for CDOT to make the decision to partner.”

—David May,
Chair of the Fix North I-25 Alliance

ly lead to a widened interstate all the way to Denver.

The I-25 Coalition—a band of elected officials and citizens from three counties and fourteen communities—has been meeting regularly since 2013 to get a third lane on I-25 to ease traffic and safety concerns.

Working alongside the government coalition is the Fix North I-25 Business Alliance, formed under the the Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance (NCLA). It is



Courtesy of Zebra Jellyfish Photography

BREAKING GROUND: After a count down from Gov. John Hickenlooper, representatives from all I-25 project partners and distinguished speakers break ground on the North I-25 Express Lanes project on Monday, September 10.

chaired by David May, President & CEO of the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce and includes representatives from the business community.

“David May showed up to every single meeting. Even when the first meeting with CDOT got a little contentious, he kept coming back,” Kirkmeyer said, remembering some of the sharp exchanges between May and elected officials about the lack of progress on I-25.

When it was his turn to speak, May pointed to the heavy truck traffic barreling down the nearby interstate and commented on how I-25 not only moves people, it moves freight—a vital concern of business. He commended CDOT, area elected officials and local groups who came together to make the project happen, including NCLA, which is made up of the Fort Collins, Greeley and Loveland Chambers, Upstate Colorado Economic Development, and One NOCO. NCLA has led the lobbying and communication efforts to secure funding for North I-25.

“When dollars are scarce you

look for partnerships, and these local partnerships—which generated \$55 million local dollars—made it easy for CDOT to make the decision to partner on North I-25,” May said.

Carl Maxey, owner of MGS Incorporated, Maxey Trailer Sales & Truck Fitting and Maxey Transportation—and 2017-18 chair of NCLA—has been directly involved in the lobbying effort to secure transportation funding for Colorado and especially North I-25. When CDOT said there would be no money to fix I-25 for years, he and other business leaders at NCLA advocated legislation for a transportation bonding package to pay for highway improvements. They came back year after year. Eventually, the legislature did pass a bill in 2018 to authorize some bonding, but more importantly, two measures have been petitioned onto the November ballot that give voters a chance to vote on transportation funding.

“Having a free-flowing, safe I-25 is necessary to the success of my trucking business. We rely on the interstate for daily commerce

and when it's slow and congested it hurts productivity. What could be done in four days in the mid-2000s now takes us five, due to the congestion and frequent accidents,” Maxey said, who employs 54 people across the northern Colorado region and 200 people nationwide.

Gov. John Hickenlooper led the

Continued on page 2

PROJECT: I-25 NORTH EXPRESS LANES

- Increase highway capacity by adding two-way express lanes
- Replace aging bridges, widen others
- Improve bus service performance by adding new bus slip ramps
- Create pedestrian and bicycle access under I25 at Kendall Parkway
- Connect the Cache la Poudre River Regional Trail under I-25
- Complete early 2022

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Continued on page 2

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Continued from page 1

I-25 Express Lane Project Rolls Forward

groundbreaking ceremony, including leading dignitaries in ceremonially shoveling dirt to celebrate the start of the project. The dirt tossing took place in front of a gravel hill deemed Mount 402, the source of the gravel for the project which is repurposed debris from the 2013 flood in the Big Thompson Canyon.

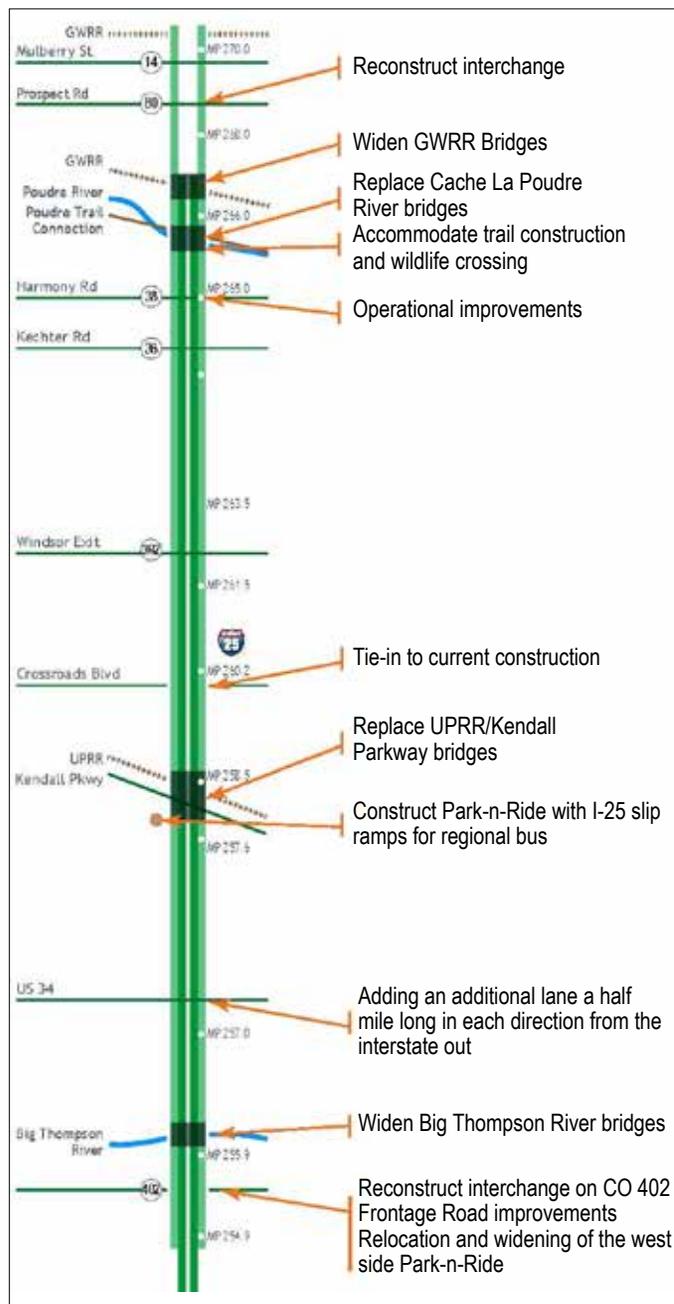
Johnny Olson, CDOT Region 4 Director, led the event and received words of praise from several speakers for his creative approach in advocating for the project. One of the 21 speakers who were each given a few minutes was Dan Betz, a local representative of U.S. Senator Cory Gardner's office. He shared Gardner's thoughts by saying, "This effort by the Northern Colorado community is certainly a model for other areas of the state and the country."

Now that the first segment of I-25 is funded, Maxey and others are looking ahead to ensure three lanes continue all the way to Denver and to have the funds for a 4th lane when the time is right. To that end, the two transportation proposals on the November ballot are an opportunity for North I-25. The initiatives are Fix Our Damn Roads – Proposition 109 (www.i2i.org) and Let's Go, Colorado – Proposition 110 (www.lets gocolorado.com).

"I-25 is the backbone of the NOCO economy. Without it, we become very regional, small in scope and isolated," Maxey said.

Thanks to the impressive collaboration between private citizens, public entities and the business community, for the time being we can avoid three-hour drives to DIA and Denver. Northern Colorado Prospers identified four goals over five years, and securing the money to widen North I-25 is one of them. With the groundbreaking last month this one is starting to roll.

CURRENT NORTH I-25 PROJECTS



SOURCE: Colorado Department of Transportation

NEW AND IMPROVED: Overall improvements to North I-25 between the Wyoming border and Johnstown include: rehabilitation or reconstruction of general purpose lanes, the addition of northbound and southbound express lanes, and the construction of inside and outside shoulders in both directions.

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS



Courtesy of Zebra Jellyfish Photography

DREAM TEAM: Representatives of partner organizations hold a map of the North I-25 express lanes project, overlaid with each of their logos. Back row, from left to right: Ann Hutchison and Carl Maxey. Front row, from left to right: David May, Gerry Horak, Mindy McCloughan, Sandra Solin, Barbara Kirkmeyer and Bill Becker.

Chamber Endorses Both Transportation Ballot Measures

The Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce is recommending support for both transportation measures that will be included on Colorado's November ballot. The Chamber believes both Colorado Proposition 109 (Fix Our Damn Roads initiative) and Colorado Proposition 110 (Let's Go, Colorado initiative) are viable measures that will address the traffic problem in the state and bring some funding up north to Interstate 25 (I-25).

"There is no doubt our roadways in Colorado need improvements. This is the consequence of too few resources for too many years. In November, we all have a chance to help," said David May, Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce President and CEO. "Voting 'yes' for both measures will add to the investment that is much needed for transportation and work toward what we value the most in providing safe and efficient travel to our families and businesses."

Proposition 109 would utilize existing tax dollars and inject \$3.5 billion into the state highway system by issuing bonds, and commit securing them with \$150 million annually from the general fund.

Proposition 110 would inject \$20 billion into the state and local transportation system including state highways, local transportation projects and multi-modal transit projects over 20 years via a .62% dedicated sales tax. It would also direct the issuance of bonds to jumpstart projects and commit \$150 million annually from the state's general fund.

"Two measures, two yes votes, will finally provide the funds necessary to fix our (damn) roads and keep Colorado moving! Let's go, Colorado. Vote yes on 109 and 110 and fix Colorado roads," said Sandra Solin with Capitol Solutions and the Chamber's lobbyist.

As the population in northern Colorado continues to grow (projected to nearly double by 2040), the congested roads will only get worse. The Chamber, along with Northern Colorado Prospers investors, surrounding chambers, cities, counties and other regional partners have deemed fixing I-25 as a top goal.

Continued on page 3

Supporting Clean, Affordable, Reliable Electricity

As part of the Northern Colorado Prospers Bold Voice of Business initiative, the Chamber is an advocate for maintaining a supply of clean, affordable, and reliable electricity for the region.

To aid in the efforts, the Northern Front Range Zero Net Carbon Task Force was formed as a collaboration between the Fort Collins, Loveland, and Longmont chambers and includes some major power user members. Since February, the task force has been charged with studying various proposals that could impact how the region produces electricity.

Local citizens are advocating for the City of Fort Collins to commit to 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030. In response, the task force interviewed over 24 major power users, and hired an external consulting team to analyze the proposal. The following business priorities were extracted from the interviews:

- Almost all expressed support of the environment and adding more renewables when it makes technological and financial sense.
- The highest business priority of the majority interviewed is power reliability, followed by affordability.
- Premature retirement of efficient and clean coal-fired generation is not a business goal and is seen as wasting an important already paid-for community



Photo by Marekuliasz / Getty Images

SOLAR POWERED: A large solar energy farm (3.3MW) at Colorado State University's Foothills Campus, with a view of Fort Collins in the background.

investment.

- It is prudent to maintain a diversified portfolio of energy resources.
- It is critical to understand the true cost to business of any renewable energy plan.

The task force concluded its work by sending an alternative resolution to the Fort Collins City Council and staff in August with hopes the following considerations will be taken when it looks to adopt a final resolution in October:

- "Electricity is a fundamental

element of everyday American life, something that impacts quality of life, the economy, health and safety, and is embedded in every product, service, and activity used by every individual, family, business, government entity, and nonprofit..."

- Support clean, affordable, reliable electricity and encourage best possible use of existing capital assets.
- Support moving to greener alternatives when feasible while keeping rates as low as possible and without compromising reliability.

▪ Do not commit to a specific percentage of renewables by a specific time and support PRPA to pursue renewables in a brisk but prudent fashion.

▪ The City should be pragmatic, thoughtful of the social well-being and health of residents and economic health of the area; and work with the experts.

▪ There is a great collaborative regional partnership with PRPA.

▪ PRPA's Rawhide Unit 1 continues to be among the nation's top performers, all while doing so in an environmentally responsible manner.

Sneak Peek: Bringing Business Home Campaign

We have something brewing and want our supporters to hear and see it first!

In June, the Chamber began to research a public campaign for greater awareness and understanding of the Fort Collins business community. The purpose is to help make the connection between business success, economic vitality of the community, and our ability to afford great public quality of life amenities like good schools and parks.

With the help from the Chamber's campaign partner, Jet Marketing, we want to introduce you to: Bringing Business Home.

The creative process, refining of messaging and campaign details are in the beginning stages and we hope to roll this out to the public later this fall. Stay tuned!

For background: The campaign's first task was to meet with marketing and public relations professionals (including OtterBox, Jet Marketing, FirstBank, and Old Town Media) and gathered ideas, insights, and



SNEAK PEEK: The Bringing Business Home campaign will launch later this year.

feedback to creating a successful campaign. After collecting valuable insights, the Chamber determined goals, target audiences and Jet Marketing was

engaged to help develop, design, produce, and implement a public campaign.

Jet Marketing implemented a discovery phase, organizing a

public perception survey to use when creating themes, messaging, and concepts. We look forward to sharing more with you in the upcoming months.

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Northern Colorado Prospers Continues to Make Impact

As reported at the Annual Northern Colorado Prospers Summit, the Fort Collins Area Chamber is making an impact on key issues that are important to the business community.

Bold Voice of Business



Help identify candidates for the Fort Collins City Council

The Chamber is encouraging people to run for the 4 seats available on the Fort Collins City Council in April 2019. To date, 9 have indicated their interest in running.

Support an appropriately funded local government

The Chamber hired a researcher to produce comparative peer city data and how current Keep Fort Collins Great tax money has been used.



City of Fort Collins Impact Fee Audit

The Chamber, the Fort Collins Board of Realtors, and the Northern Colorado Homebuilders Association hired DPFPG to complete an audit of the City of Fort Collins' use of capital expansion fees. The review of five years of collections identified general alignment with community expectations, with approximately \$200,000 needing to be reimbursed to the fund.

Transportation Efforts

Northern Colorado leaders and elected officials asked the Colorado Transportation Commission to direct more resources to North I-25 and move all of North I-25 from Longmont (Highway 66 north of Longmont) to Highway 14 (Mulberry) in Fort Collins to the Tier 1 project list (i.e. the Colorado Department of Transportation's top priority list). The Commission did so.

A total of \$590.5M has been secured for North I-25

The Colorado Department of Transportation has estimated it will begin work on the I-25 and Prospect interchange in June 2019, with completion in the spring of 2021.

A City of Fort Collins Budgeting For Outcomes offer has been submitted for widening Prospect Road at Sharp Point to I-25. The goal is to complete the widening by the time the interchange is complete.

Align, Attract, and Retain Talent



Finding workers has become increasingly difficult. The Chamber is leading a coalition called Talent 2.0

In September, the Chamber hired Development Counsellors International (DCI), a place-marketing firm, to help develop a talent attraction portal. That work is currently underway. As part of the discovery process, the DCI team is interviewing employers and conducting a survey. The portal is scheduled to be up and running by early 2019.

The EMSI talent identification database tool is being tested.

Larimer County has contracted for a web-based tool that helps employers identify where talent is located around the country by job type. If you are interested in participating, contact Amanda Repella at Larimer County at repellac@co.larimer.co.us.



Child Care Task Force Update

A task force of 18 area business and child care advocates have been studying the challenges of limited child care capacity and affordability in Larimer County. A report with strategies for change will be released by the end of the year that should help lessen this barrier to employment.



NOCO Housing

The last NOCO Housing NOW All Partnership Meeting held in September featured the following presentations:

- Housing by Ted Leighty, CEO of the Colorado Association of Home Builders
- An update on the Grace Gardens at Derby Hill Project in Loveland

Expand and Retain Existing Business



The Chamber, working with area partners, has completed 30 primary employer interviews providing key insight into expansion opportunities for business in Northern Colorado.

Some emerging themes have been depicted from the interviews including:

- Finding talent is a challenge – scarce resources, area cost of living is barrier
- I-25 frequently cited as issue
- Most interviewees have added workers over the last 3 years and are planning to add more in the next 3
- Bullish on Northern Colorado economy

A LOOK AHEAD

- **Election Day is November 6.**
The Chamber will have coverage, endorsements and provide resources to local and state ballot measures in the 2018 General Election.
Please visit: fortcollinschamber.com/business-advocacy/elections/

- **Thank You NCP Advisory Council**



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We look forward to seeing you in 2019!



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