

Colorado Municipalities

Vol. 98, No. 3, July 2022

WILDFIRE

Growing threat highlights need for cities & towns to protect natural infrastructure

OPPORTUNITY

Federal government is making a historic investment in local communities

RESILIENCE

A forward-looking approach to maintaining crucial water systems



INFRASTRUCTURE EDITION

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- Communication skills
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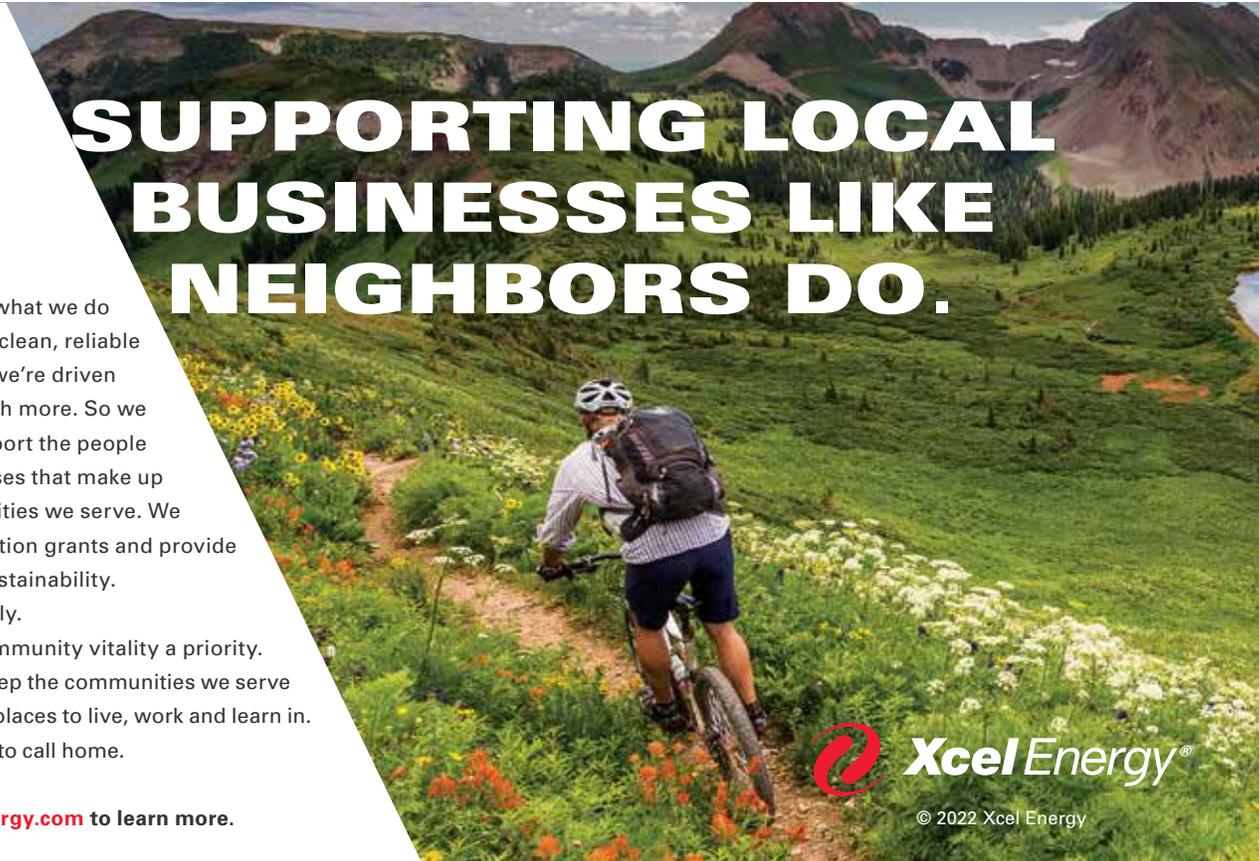
On average, agencies spend 30%-40% of total program cost in indirect costs to support federally funded grant programs. However, much of this indirect cost (payroll, IT, facilities) ends up being subsidized by the General Fund. Since most grant awards allow for indirect cost reimbursement, your municipality could be leaving money on the table. Partner with HdL to recover these expenses which are reimbursed directly into your General Fund, unrestricted.

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Karen Rosen, meetings and events planner

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Makenna Sturgeon, training and marketing specialist

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Mark Vanderbrook, database specialist

Allison Wright, finance and administration manager

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Randy Simpson, AuroraTV production supervisor

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Karla McCrimmon, Castle Rock court administrator

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Vacant

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Dan Hodges, Colorado Association of Municipal Utilities executive director

MUNICIPAL JUDGES

Katie Kurtz, Lakewood judge

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Karen Palus, Colorado Springs director of parks, recreation, and cultural services

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Rick Brandt, Evans chief of police

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PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTORS

Keith Reester, Littleton public works director

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DISTRICT 2

Randy Ready, Evans assistant city manager

DISTRICT 3

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DISTRICT 4

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DISTRICT 5

Jim Keehne, Burlington city administrator/director of public works

DISTRICT 6

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DISTRICTS 7/14

Heather Hillis, La Veta deputy clerk

DISTRICT 8

Dale Becker, Monte Vista mayor

DISTRICT 9

Andrea Phillips, Pagosa Springs town manager

DISTRICT 10

Ethan Funk, Ouray mayor

DISTRICT 11

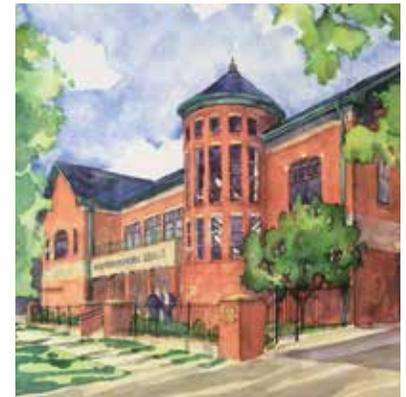
Melissa Kindall, Meeker town manager

DISTRICT 12

Torre, Aspen mayor

DISTRICT 13

Ashley Smith, Cañon City mayor



About CML

The Colorado Municipal League is a nonprofit association organized and operated by Colorado municipalities to provide support services to member cities and towns. The League has two main objectives: 1) to represent cities and towns collectively in matters before the state and federal government; and 2) to provide a wide range of information services to help municipal officials manage their governments.

MISSION

Colorado Municipalities is published to inform, educate, and advise appointed and elected municipal officials about new programs, services, trends, and information to help them perform their jobs and better serve their citizens and communities.

Letters to the editor

Have thoughts about an article that you read in *Colorado Municipalities*?

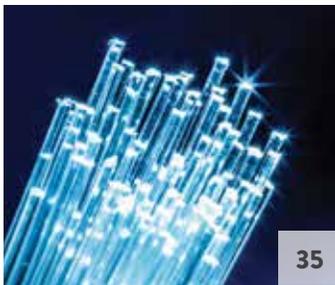
Want to share those thoughts with your colleagues across the state?

CML welcomes thought-provoking letters to the editor! Send comments to CML Engagement and Communications Manager Jennifer Stone at jstone@cml.org.

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Each issue of *Colorado Municipalities* reaches 5,000 municipal officials and decision makers. To reach those who lead Colorado cities and towns, contact CML Training and Marketing Specialist Makenna Sturgeon at 303-831-6411 or msturgeon@cml.org.

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Join CML

For associate membership information, contact CML Training and Marketing Specialist Makenna Sturgeon at msturgeon@cml.org.

ABOUT SOME OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS



IRMA ESPARZA DIGGS IS A SEASONED PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROFESSIONAL WITH EXPERIENCE IN THE PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND NON-PROFIT SECTORS. IRMA'S

INCOMPARABLE WORK ETHIC AND STRATEGIC POLITICAL SENSE HAVE EARNED HER KEY POSITIONS IN FEDERAL AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT, AS WELL AS MANAGERIAL ROLES IN A DIVERSE ARRAY OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

CURRENTLY, IRMA SERVES AS A SENIOR EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF FEDERAL ADVOCACY FOR THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES (NLC), SPEARHEADING AND ELEVATING THE ORGANIZATION'S GRASSROOTS AND LOBBYING EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF NLC'S MEMBER CITIES. HER LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN RAISING THE PROFILE AND REACH OF LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS ON CAPITOL HILL, IN THE WHITE HOUSE AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

PRIOR TO JOINING NLC, IRMA SERVED AS CHIEF OF STAFF IN THE OFFICE OF LEGISLATION AND CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION UNDER SECRETARY ARNE DUNCAN AND JOHN KING. OTHER ROLES SHE SERVED INCLUDE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. HOUSE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS, D.C. CITY COUNCIL CHIEF OF STAFF, CONGRESSIONAL LIAISON AT THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE DURING PRESIDENT CLINTON'S ADMINISTRATION, AIDE TO CONGRESSWOMAN EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON FROM HER HOME STATE OF TEXAS, AND AS A KEY OPERATIVE FOR THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE AND COUNTY MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES (AFSCME). IRMA EARNED HER BA FROM THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA AND AN MPA FROM AMERICAN UNIVERSITY.



KYRA GREGORY IS A DRINKING WATER TRAINING SPECIALIST FOR THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT. SHE, ALONG WITH HER

COLLEAGUES AT THE LOCAL ASSISTANCE UNIT, DEVELOPS AND DELIVERS TRAINING TO DRINKING WATER PROFESSIONALS ALL OVER COLORADO THROUGH SCHOOLS, ONLINE AND IN-PERSON TRAINING EVENTS, AND ONE-ON-ONE COACHING EVENTS. SHE HAS SEVEN YEARS OF TRAINING AND COACHING EXPERIENCE. KYRA WAS BORN AND RAISED IN LONGMONT AND IS DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE PUBLIC HEALTH OF ALL COLORADOANS.



AARON KIMPLE IS THE FOREST PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR THE MOUNTAIN STUDIES INSTITUTE. HE OVERSEES THE INSTITUTE'S FOREST PROGRAMS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION EFFORTS,

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, AND INCLUSION OF COMMUNITY VALUES INTO LARGE REGIONAL INITIATIVES. IN ADDITION, HE SERVES AS THE PROJECT MANAGER FOR THE SOUTHWEST WILDFIRE IMPACT FUND. HE HAS MORE THAN 20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT, NEARLY 30 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WITH LANDSCAPE ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING, AND 15 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC FACILITATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH. AARON WORKS WITH THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, REGIONAL TRIBAL ENTITIES, AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF ARCHULETA, SAN JUAN, LA PLATA, AND SAN MIGUEL COUNTIES. AARON HAS A BACHELOR'S DEGREE FROM EARLHAM COLLEGE IN RICHMOND, INDIANA, AND AN M.S. FROM BARD COLLEGE. HIS THESIS EXPLORED THE SPATIAL PATTERNS OF HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGID DAMAGE AND IMPACTS ON TREE PHYSIOLOGY AND WATER USE IN THE BLACK ROCK FOREST OF SOUTHERN NEW YORK.



BRANDY REITTER JOINED THE COLORADO BROADBAND OFFICE IN 2022 AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE OFFICE'S PROGRAMS

AND STATE-WIDE STRATEGY FOR BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT. HER WORK INCLUDES EDUCATION, OUTREACH, SUPPORTING REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS, FOSTERING RELATIONS WITH PARTNERS, AND MOBILIZING RESOURCES TO IMPROVE THE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY OF HIGH SPEED INTERNET. SHE WORKS TO ASSIST WITH POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENT, SERVES ON VARIOUS BROADBAND BOARDS, AND SUPPORTS THE WORK OF THE OFFICE. HER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE INCLUDES 15 YEARS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT IN CITIES AND TOWNS ACROSS THE STATE OF COLORADO. AS A FORMER TOWN MANAGER, SHE BUILT BROADBAND PROGRAMS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES AND HAS LEVERAGED RESOURCES TO DEPLOY BROADBAND IN HER COMMUNITIES. HER LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE INCLUDES MANAGING TOWNS IN WELD, CHAFFEE, SAGUACHE AND EAGLE COUNTIES. SHE HAS SERVED IN ROLES IN PUBLIC UTILITIES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS IN THE CITY OF LONGMONT, CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. SHE HAS A MASTERS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS. IN 2020, BRANDY WON THE CITY MANAGER OF THE YEAR FOR THE STATE OF COLORADO BY THE COLORADO CITY COUNTY MANAGERS ASSOCIATION AND HAS BEEN APPOINTED TO BOARDS FOR SEVERAL CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS. BRANDY IS ORIGINALLY FROM COLORADO AND GREW UP ON THE FRONT RANGE. SHE MOVED TO THE HIGH COUNTRY 10 YEARS AGO AND HAS LIVED IN SUMMIT, CHAFFEE AND EAGLE COUNTIES. SHE CALLS THE TOWN OF EAGLE HER HOME AND HAS SPENT MOST OF HER CAREER IN RURAL COLORADO. IN HER FREE TIME, BRANDY ENJOYS SKIING, CAMPING, RUNNING, MOUNTAIN/DIRT BIKING AND RAFTING THE COLORADO AND ARKANSAS RIVERS. SHE ENJOYS THESE ACTIVITIES WITH HER HUSBAND, CHRIS, AND DOG, TINK.



ELLEN S. ROBERTS HAS LIVED ON THE WESTERN SLOPE OF COLORADO FOR OVER 40 YEARS, BEGINNING AS A RANGER IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK. ELLEN SERVED

IN THE COLORADO LEGISLATURE FROM 2007-2016 AND SPONSORED MANY BILLS FOCUSED ON IMPROVED FOREST HEALTH, WATER CONSERVATION AND WATERSHED PROTECTION AND SERVED AS CHAIRWOMAN OF THE WATER RESOURCES AND THE FOREST HEALTH INTERIM COMMITTEES. SINCE THEN, ELLEN HAS FOCUSED ON FOREST HEALTH AND WATER POLICY CONSULTING IN SOUTHWEST COLORADO, INCLUDING FOR THE SOUTHWEST WILDFIRE IMPACT FUND, A FOREST RESTORATION PROJECT MANAGED BY MOUNTAIN STUDIES INSTITUTE. SHE ALSO WORKED ON FOREST AND WATERSHED PROJECTS WITH THE COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE, THE SAN JUAN NATIONAL FOREST, AND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY-COLORADO CHAPTER.



TAMARA ROLLISON IS THE COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER FOR CDOT'S DENVER METRO REGION. HER POSITION INCLUDES A WIDE RANGE OF DUTIES, INCLUDING KEEPING

THE PUBLIC INFORMED OF THE REGION'S TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM AND IMPACTS. TAMARA STARTED HER CAREER IN BROADCAST JOURNALISM. SHE MADE THE TRANSITION FROM THE NEWSROOM TO THE DOT WORLD IN THE LATE 1990'S. SHE WAS WITH THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, SERVING VARIOUS ROLES, INCLUDING DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS. SHE ALSO WORKED IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS, CHANGE MANAGEMENT, AND LAUNCHING MARKETING PROGRAMS FOR MAJOR TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES. NEARLY SIX YEARS AGO, TAMARA WAS READY FOR CHANGE FOLLOWING THE MOST DIFFICULT LIFE-CHANGER OF ALL, THE DEATH OF HER 19-YEAR-OLD SON LOGAN. AFTER HE DIED IN A CAR CRASH IN 2016, TAMARA STARTED A NEW LIFE AND MOVED TO WHAT SHE CALLS HER SECOND HOME, COLORADO, TO BE CLOSER TO HER BROTHER AND NIECE AND THE MOUNTAINS, FROM WHICH SHE DRAWS STRENGTH. IF SHE COULD SUM IT ALL UP, TAMARA HOPES TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN HER TIME WITH CDOT AND SERVING THE GREAT STATE OF COLORADO.



DESI SANTERRE HAS BEEN WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL AFFAIRS (DOLA) SINCE 2017. AS THE WATER AND WASTEWATER PROGRAM MANAGER, SHE WORKS WITH

COLORADO COMMUNITIES TO EVALUATE AND SOLVE DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE CONCERNS. SHE STARTED AS AN SRF FINANCE ANALYST BEFORE MOVING INTO HER CURRENT POSITION IN 2019. PRIOR TO HER EMPLOYMENT WITH DOLA, DESI WORKED IN HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT. OUTSIDE WORK, DESI ENJOYS COOKING, TRAVEL, AND SPENDING TIME WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS.



JON STAVNEY IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NORTHWEST COLORADO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS, AN ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS 25

MUNICIPALITIES AND 6 COUNTIES, AND PROVIDES DIRECT SERVICES THAT INCLUDE ELEVATOR INSPECTIONS, WEATHERIZATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS LOANS, AGING SERVICES AND MANAGES STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS ON BEHALF OF THE REGION. JON HAS OVER 20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT BEGINNING WITH THREE TERMS ON THE EAGLE TOWN BOARD INCLUDING 4 YEARS AS MAYOR, TWO TERMS AS AN EAGLE COUNTY COMMISSIONER AS WELL AS 3 YEARS AS THE EAGLE TOWN MANAGER. HE HAS A PASSION FOR ASSISTING OTHERS WHO ARE ALSO DEDICATED TO PUBLIC SERVICE.



JACLYN TERWEY IS A LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY ADVOCATE FOR THE COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE. SHE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADVOCATING MUNICIPAL

INTERESTS BEFORE THE STATE LEGISLATURE. HER ISSUES INCLUDE BEER AND LIQUOR; MARIJUANA; HEMP; HISTORIC PRESERVATION; LOTTERY AND GAMING; PUBLIC HEALTH; PURCHASING; STATE BUDGET AND JBC; TELECOM AND BROADBAND; AND UTILITIES. SHE JOINED THE LEAGUE IN 2022.



COLLEEN WHITLOW IS THE MAYOR OF MEAD. SHE HAS BEEN A MEAD RESIDENT FOR OVER 20 YEARS. SHE IS A PROUD SMALL BUSINESS OWNER AND A 10-YEAR

MILITARY VETERAN FORMERLY STATIONED AT CLARK AIR FORCE BASE AND LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE. COLLEEN HAS SERVED ON NUMEROUS BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COALITIONS THROUGHOUT HER TIME IN PUBLIC SERVICE. SHE WAS ELECTED TO THE MEAD BOARD OF TRUSTEES IN 2014, AND SUBSEQUENTLY ELECTED TO MAYOR IN 2018.

STATE STRENGTHENS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Money from the American Rescue Plan will bolster access to care in communities across Colorado

BY JACLYN TERWEY, CML LEGISLATIVE & POLICY ADVOCATE

Federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars were allocated this year specifically for behavioral health in Colorado. In fact, \$450 million was distributed by the legislature this year to different programs and initiatives to help fund behavioral health services statewide.

The catalyst for all of the other funding opportunities was House Bill 1278, Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), which created this administration under the Department of Human Services. Previously, the Office of Behavioral Health was housed in this department, but this bill increases the level of responsibility and authority by establishing a commissioner and allowing for the BHA to promulgate rules. Further, there were many programs and services receiving statutory funding in prior years, but there was no tangible tracking or performance monitoring of these dollars to ensure the outcomes intended from the funding. The BHA will now have a performance monitoring system to ensure accountability and provide performance reporting.

We have heard across the state about the lack of access to behavioral health services, and how, in some areas, you have to drive upwards of two hours to even access a doctor or facility to receive treatment. This can be a major hindrance in encouraging individuals to seek treatment. House Bill 1281, the Behavioral Health-Care Continuum Gap Grant Program, was written with the goal of helping to fix this exact issue. This bill creates a grant program within the BHA to be awarded to nonprofits, community-based organizations, and local governments for community investment grants and children, youth, and family services grants. \$35 million is allocated specifically to the community investment grants including prevention, treatment, crisis services, recovery, harm reduction, care navigation and coordination, trauma recovery, trauma-informed training, training on providing services in a culturally responsive manner, transitional housing, supportive housing, and recovery homes. The grants may also be used for the assessment tool to determine what services are of most critical need in

the area to ensure the dollars are being spent most effectively. Children, youth, and family services grants are awarded \$40 million for establishing and operating care access points physically connected to a family resource center or a facility that provides behavioral health-care treatment. The final \$15 million is allocated for substance use workforce stability programs, prioritizing those that offer same-day or next-day appointments, serve low-income and marginalized populations, or intend to expand the number of individuals they serve.

These dollars, and others, are allocated to help create and enhance behavioral health infrastructure statewide to ensure outcomes and accountability in the services provided to our residents. CML was pleased to be a part of these discussions, guaranteeing local governments can be recipients of these grants or partners to those establishments providing these services so our residents receive the best care possible as close to their location as possible.

COLORADO EMPLOYER BENEFIT TRUST

CEBT
Benefit by Trust

ABOUT US

Since 2008, the Colorado Employer Benefit Trust (CEBT) has partnered with the Colorado Municipal League to provide benefit solutions that are superior and affordable. Currently, CEBT has grown to approximately 35,000 members representing over 400 public employers, including 84 municipalities. CEBT is recognized for its comprehensive benefit offerings, exceptional customer service, and ability to customize to meet each client's unique needs.

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CML provides municipal officials the skills and education necessary for good governance in Colorado's cities and towns through a variety of learning opportunities (traditional in-person workshops, short lunchtime seminars, and convenient online webinars) on numerous topics throughout the year. Visit cml.org/home/networking-events for upcoming events.



COLORADO
MUNICIPAL
LEAGUE

RESEARCH CORNER

INFRASTRUCTURE A CHALLENGE FOR CITIES AND TOWNS



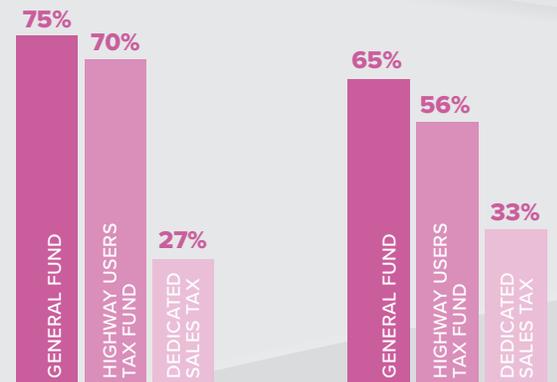
While Colorado's cities and towns were able to quickly recover from the fiscal hardships brought by the COVID-19 pandemic for reasons including robust federal assistance and higher than expected revenue, findings from the 2022 Colorado Municipal League State of Our Cities & Towns survey show that familiar challenges remain.

In 2022, Colorado's cities and towns are facing a lack of affordable housing, a tight labor market, and unfunded street/road maintenance. Looking ahead to the next five years, housing affordability remains the number one challenge, followed by budget constraints, policing, and transportation funding.



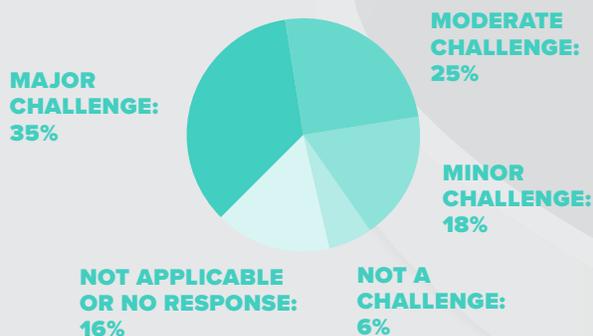
Paying for it

Most municipalities fund street maintenance and capital projects through the general fund and Highway Users Tax Fund.



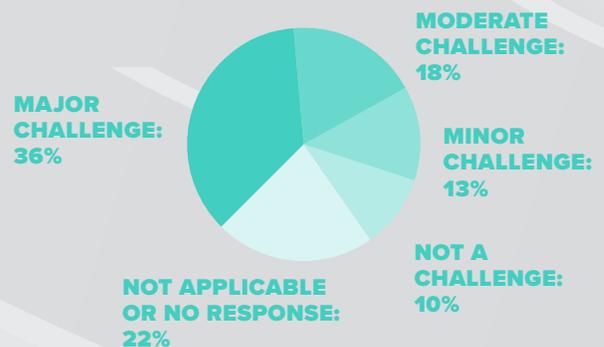
Widespread challenge

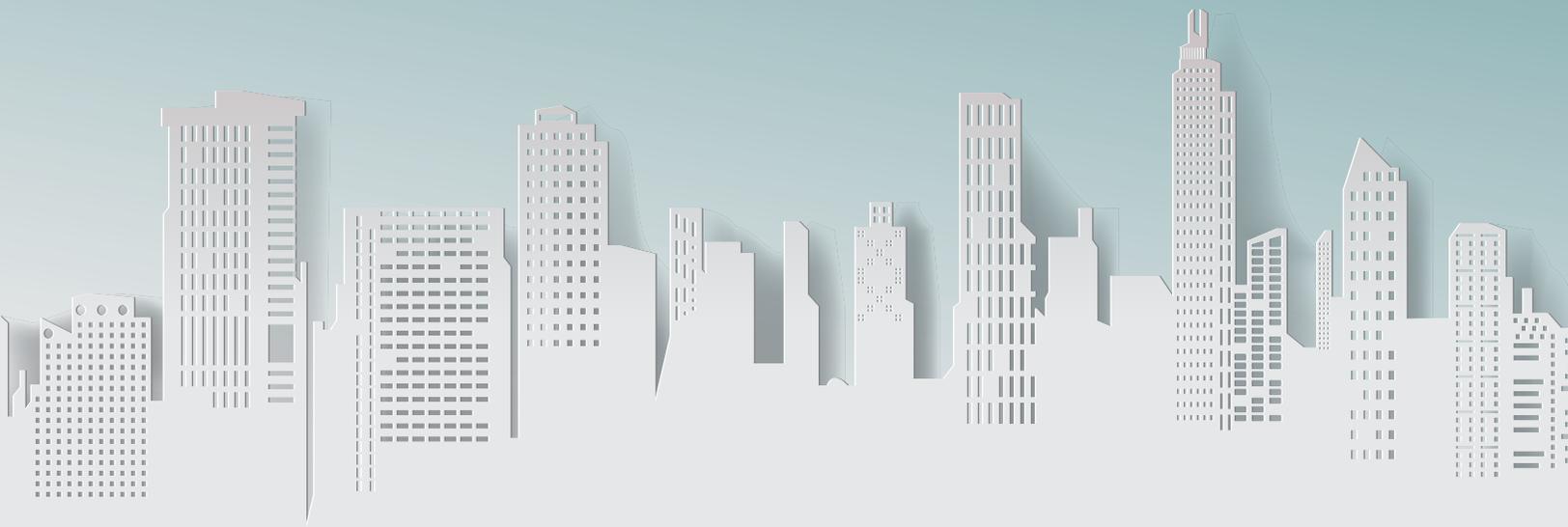
● Unfunded street maintenance & improvements are a ...



Respondents reported difficulty addressing both street maintenance needs and water/wastewater improvement needs.

● Unfunded water/wastewater maintenance & improvement are a ...





Unfunded Infrastructure

The most commonly reported projects and needs not currently funded:

53%

STREETS

41%

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

32%

WATER SUPPLY AND STORAGE

32%

WATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

43%

STORM WATER

33%

PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY

28%

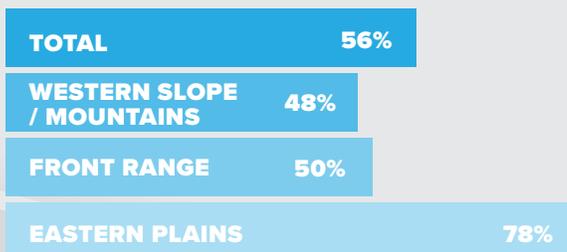
WASTEWATER FACILITIES



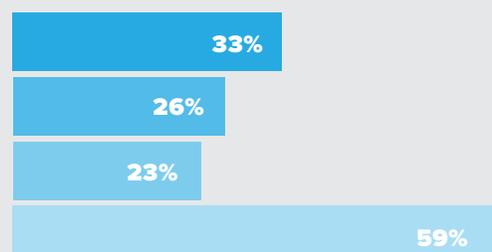
American Rescue Plan Act

Many Colorado municipalities plan to use funds they have received from the American Rescue Plan Act to address water and sewer infrastructure needs.

● Municipalities planning to invest ARPA funds in water and sewer infrastructure



● Municipalities reporting the investment is only possible because of ARPA funds:





THE FUTURE HAS ARRIVED

BY IRMA ESPARZA DIGGS

SENIOR EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW
AND AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ARE
TRANSFORMATIVE INVESTMENTS IN CITIES
AND TOWNS. HERE'S HOW COLORADO
COMMUNITIES CAN GET THEIR SHARE.

Cities, towns and villages have been calling on Congress to get to work on an infrastructure package since 2016. On November 15, 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was signed into law by President Joe Biden, surrounded by city leaders and members of Congress. Also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), this \$1.2 trillion bill resulted from years of local leaders calling for action with the National League of Cities (NLC), the Colorado Municipal League and business and industry leaders. Now, transformative investments in transportation, broadband and water are heading to Colorado, which can be used to create safer transportation, ensure equitable infrastructure among neighborhoods, build resilient structures and strengthen our economy.

This transformative investment is coming to cities on the heels of the American Rescue Plan, another major federal investment package that included funding to help cities, towns and villages recover from the coronavirus pandemic. Together, these two bills offer local governments a historic opportunity to invest in their communities—and the National League of Cities is here to help you navigate and maximize this moment.

BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW OVERVIEW

Cities, towns and villages are ready to rebuild their infrastructure with these new federal programs and resources included in

BIL, but how do the funds get to your community?

- Your state via the governor and various state departments
 - Directly to your city from the federal government
 - Your metropolitan planning organization (MPO) or regional council
 - Infrastructure authorities such as transit, airports or port authorities
- Traditionally, Congress sends most federal grants to the states with specific guidance for how those funds can be used or passed along to local governments. However, Congress now recognizes that regional and local organizations effectively reach communities' needs more expeditiously, and the BIL uses a more balanced approach by opening competitive programs that communities can access directly at the federal level.

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS OF INTEREST

The BIL authorized funding for many existing programs cities use, but perhaps more importantly it introduced many new programs that cities are eligible to access. For example, 31% of the \$642 billion in total transportation grants are competitive, which is a huge improvement in federal program access for cities, towns, and villages to these programs. Here is a sample of some of the top programs to consider working on.

TRANSPORTATION

- The Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program. Provides \$5 billion in direct

support to local governments for safety planning and implementation projects on roads that make them safer for all users. This program opened in May, and applications are due September 15. Today, most cities have eligible plans and projects they can leverage this program for, and applications can be submitted jointly with other eligible entities including your metropolitan planning organization, neighbor cities, counties, or tribes.

- Rebuilding American Infrastructure Sustainably and Equitably Grants (RAISE), also referred to as the Local and Regional Project Assistance Program. This program was open for applications through mid-April and has an allotment of approximately \$7.5 billion to provide grantees. Another round will be announced soon. Under the transportation category, this is the broadest available funding that can be distributed directly to a community.

- Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation Program (PROTECT). This program aims to build community resilience in the face of extreme weather and natural disasters and cities, towns, and villages can apply for \$1.4 billion dollars of the program's total funding through competitive grants.

BROADBAND

- Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program. This program is funded at \$1.25 billion and aims to support the implementation of digital equity projects.



Local governments can apply for this competitive grant on their own or in partnership with another entity.

- Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program. This program is funded at \$1 billion and will provide funding to expand and extend middle-mile infrastructure to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas to the internet backbone. Local governments can apply for this competitive grant on their own or in partnership with another entity.

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY, WATER

- Brownfields Revitalization. BIL provides \$1.5 billion for the EPA Brownfields program to scale up community-led brownfields revitalization. This additional funding will help put blighted and polluted sites in communities across the country back into productive reuse, spurring job creation and economic opportunity.

- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant. With the \$550 million provided through BIL, cities, towns and villages can develop comprehensive energy plans and jump-start or enhance energy efficiency programs in their communities. This program is available directly as formula grants from the U.S. Department of Energy to cities over 35,000 in population or the top 10 most populous cities in the state.

- Water Infrastructure State Revolving Funds. BIL provides \$50 billion to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to improve the nation's drinking water and

THESE TWO BILLS OFFER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY TO INVEST IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

wastewater systems, replace lead pipes, and address PFAS drinking water contamination and other emerging contaminants. This funding will flow through the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, and a portion will be available to local governments in the form of principal forgiveness/grants.

HOW TO NAVIGATE THE INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

We've just scratched the surface of opportunities available to you in the infrastructure law—so, how can you find more programs that meet the needs of your community?

The White House released a Guidebook and Technical Assistance Guide to help local leaders know what to apply for, who to contact, and how to get ready to rebuild, which can be found at *build.gov*.

This guidebook is a roadmap to the funding available under the law, as well as an explanatory document that shows, in as much detail as currently available, program-by-program information. There is an accompanying search tool you can use to find specific programs.

At *build.gov*, you will also be able to

access the White House's Rural Playbook to help rural and small communities understand the available funding in the BIL. It identifies programs and sources of funds set aside for rural communities under the law and provides an overview of key flexibilities and other benefits available to rural communities under the law.

In addition to these resources, the Biden-Harris Administration officials hosted a series of webinars we called "Infrastructure School" to show how to use the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Guidebook and provide a deeper look at important information and upcoming milestones for each of the major areas of investment in the law. You can find recordings of the webinars here.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Cities, towns and villages are at a crossroads, with game-changing investments coming to communities to rebuild and recover. As you navigate these opportunities, know that the National League of Cities has your back. You can access the latest updates, in-depth articles, informative resources, and exclusive webinars at our website, *nlc.org*.

NLC also wants to help amplify local infrastructure projects nationally for greater recognition and to help us continue to target resources. Please take a few minutes to complete a survey in partnership with Polco to share how your community is using BIL program funding to invest in roads, transit, water, broadband and more: <https://bit.ly/3HB2Upa>.







NEVER GIVE UP

After failing five times to pass a tax increase to pay for infrastructure and services, the Town of Mead took a close look at what went wrong. Then they tried again.

BY COLLEEN WHITLOW, MAYOR, TOWN OF MEAD

The Town of Mead is like many other smaller cities and towns in Colorado, struggling to keep ahead of growth and its direct impact on infrastructure and municipal services. In 2018, Mead had a fledgling police department, crumbling roads, and a substantial funding gap between aging infrastructure and the means to pay for it.

Mead has a fairly conservative voting base, subsequently the Town explored a range of funding options prior to narrowing in on a sales and use tax increase. The sales and use tax increase was determined to have the best likelihood of support, while having a limited impact on residents.

For every municipality, navigating a tax increase can be fraught with hurdles. Our tale starts in 2018, with our first effort to pass a combined 1% sales and use tax increase for streets and police. It was widely known that Mead roads were quickly deteriorating, and the police department lacked funding sufficient to keep pace with a growing population. Residents rallied in support of this tax increase and despite the conservative nature of the community we were already celebrating our success. Imagine the surprise when the votes came back with a resounding “no.” The November 2018 ballot results were 49% yes and 51% no.

As the old saying goes: if at first you don't succeed, try again. So that's what we did!

In November of 2019, the Town pursued voter approval for a 1% sales and use tax increase to fund street improvements only. The ballot measure also authorized the Town to issue bonds to pay for street improvements. The result in 2019 was the same . . . "no." The November 2019 ballot results were 38% yes and 62% no.

In April of 2020, the Town sought voter approval for a modest lodging tax increase. The result? You guessed it, "no" again. The April 2020 ballot results were 38% yes and 62% no.

But, with every attempt and failure, we gained a bit more knowledge. The learning curve was steep. There was an obvious disconnect between Mead's elected officials and administration and Town residents. After three failed tax increase attempts, it was evident that resident education had to be a priority in any future election cycle.

By mid-2020, our education campaign was in full swing and included detailed information on streets, police services, and the municipal budget. Town staff used every communication tool available: website, social media, digital newsletters, and direct mail. The education campaign included a high level of participation from members of the Board of Trustees, the Police Department and Town Staff to engage residents on the goals to be achieved with a tax increase, while continuing to educate them on municipal services and budget misconceptions. The motto became: repetition breeds comprehension.

During this time, the Mead Board of Trustees unanimously voted to move \$2.1 million from general fund reserves to assist with the rehabilitation of Third Street. Third Street was a constant source of misery for Town staff and residents alike; continuous complaints, giant potholes, and blown tires. Moving \$2.1 million from general fund reserve helped in two ways; it demonstrated the elected officials'

commitment to preserving and improving Town infrastructure and public safety, and also highlighted the fact that fixing a small portion of roadway with reserve funds was not a viable long-term financial solution.

By the Fall of 2020, considerable progress had been made through education and engagement. Plus, we had improved resident relations by funding the total reconstruction of Third Street. It seemed like the right time to request a sales and use tax increase for both street maintenance and police. But, despite the Town's robust education campaign, when voting day came and went, we were left with two more "no's" from voters. The November 2020 ballot results were 44%

A MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS EXPRESSED A CLEAR WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR BETTER ROADS, BUT POLICE FUNDING WOULD HAVE TO WAIT.

yes and 56% no for streets) and 45% yes and 55% no for police.

As a result, 2021 started off downright gloomy! We were 0-5 in the last three calendar years on tax increase questions, and it seemed as if we were banging our heads against a voter brick wall. We had educated, we had engaged, we had boosted our transparency, and still we came up empty.

But sometimes to move forward, you must take a step back. Reassessment was necessary. A survey went out, the hard questions were asked, and the response was clear. The immediate need was repairing the failing streets, with a particular emphasis on the worst road in Mead, Third Street. A majority of residents expressed a clear willingness to pay for better roads, but police funding would have to wait.

Survey results in hand, the Mead Board of Trustees made the difficult decision to concentrate on funding for street

improvements. Simultaneously, the Third Street Reconstruction Project had commenced. Strategically, this provided an opportunity to correlate current revenues, the annual \$1.45 million street maintenance shortfall, and the escalating cost of infrastructure. Repetition breeds comprehension.

Throughout 2021, there were multiple public discussions and engagement opportunities. Education continued through the Town's website, social media, and print mail. Residents were provided Mead's current road maintenance budget, and a cost breakdown for slurry seal, chip seal, patching, and full reconstruction. Statistical data and facts supported the funding needs. We also made a commitment to establish a Street Improvement Fund into which the revenues generated by the proposed 1% sales and use tax increase would be deposited, reiterating that the fund could only be used for maintaining and improving Mead roadways.

In November of 2021, Mead residents voted YES to approve the 1% sales and use tax exclusively for street improvements. The November 2021 ballot results were 52% yes and 48 % no.

The ultimate result of five failed tax initiatives in three years, followed by a big tax win in year four is that we've enriched our communication strategies and recognize the integral need for transparency, statistical data, and connectivity.

A key component absent from the elections held in 2018, 2019, and 2020 was clear messaging and connection to all residents. The ability to reach the entire voting base through print mail with precise, factual information regarding the need for street improvement funding was crucial to our success in 2021. Revenues for the Town's Street Improvement Fund are estimated at \$2.2 million in 2022. Growth will continue to challenge Mead's infrastructure, but now, we feel as if we have the right tools in the toolbox to educate our voter base.

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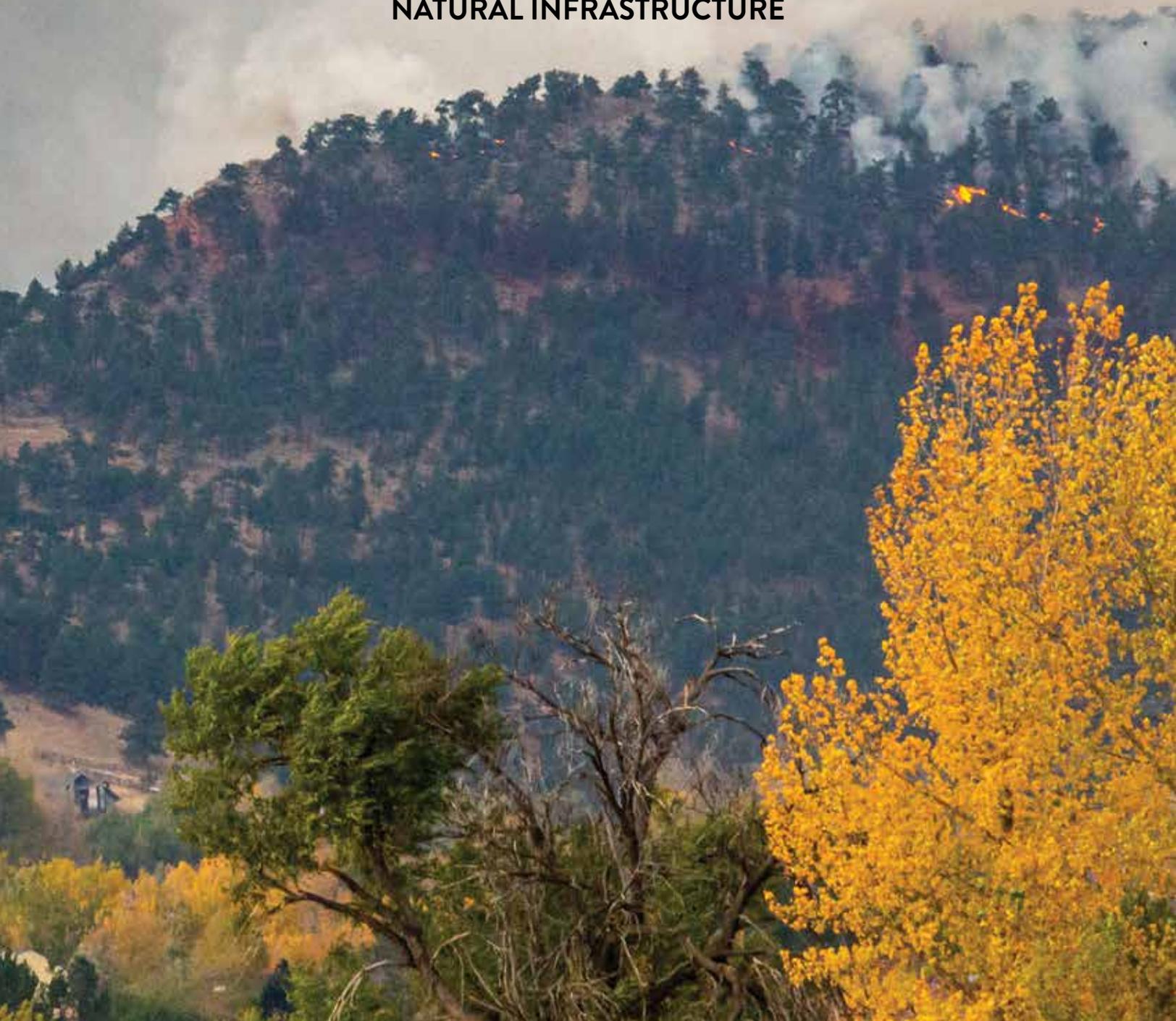
An airplane drops fire suppressant on the Cal-Wood fire in Boulder County in 2020.

THE TIME IS NOW

BY AARON KIMPLE, PROGRAM DIRECTOR, MOUNTAIN STUDIES INSTITUTE

ELLEN S. ROBERTS, FORMER COLORADO LEGISLATOR

TRUE WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS
REQUIRES LONG-TERM INVESTMENT
IN A COMMUNITY'S
NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE



Southwest Colorado's wildfire season has begun this year with a roar. From Pagosa Springs to Durango, residents and community leaders have been suddenly placed on high alert for evacuating homes on a moment's notice. And we are only in the earliest part of summer 2022.

With a changing climate, the threat of wildfire to communities and key infrastructure has grown. Awareness of risk and federal and state governmental expenditures in preparing for and fighting wildfires has also grown. A key team player who needs to be at the table for planning and investing in our climatic "new normal" is local governments.

Now is the time for local community leaders to help shape the response and future of their communities in facing the frightful ravages of uncontrolled fires. Now is the time for communities to invest in the future of their natural infrastructure, as essential as roads and water pipes, and leverage that investment to help secure

additional state and federal funds for this critically important work.

Protecting lives, homes, and watersheds are, of course, of primary interest. Communities in wildfire prone ecosystems will always be impacted by wildfire, but we can do better in supporting community resilience to wildfires. Colorado's communities need to rethink how they grow, what building codes are in place, and where they invest funds to support natural resources. Community safety is dependent upon fire-wise building construction and fuel management in the wildland-urban interface.

Community preparedness is dependent upon effective evacuation strategies and adequate emergency communication. Also, developing an approach to essential connectivity is important for all our communities. Preparedness work on the ground must support evacuation routes, supply routes, communication towers, and key power transmission corridors.

Wildfire planning conversations today

too often fail to recognize that communities rely on resilient ecosystems for key resources, which is the community's "natural infrastructure." Lakes, streams, and reservoirs, along with healthy forests, are the backbone of any water delivery system. They also are essential to a region's economic base and, especially in outdoorsy Colorado, support key recreational values.

When we recognize the value of ecosystem services by allocating sufficient budgetary resources to their protection, we are recognizing the very basic needs of any community. Investing in those ecosystems by preparing for post-fire erosion and employing measures to protect municipal water delivery, filtration systems, irrigation ditches, riverways, and reservoirs means truly preparing for wildfire.

Local governments can help create a scenario in which fire can play an ecological role increasing wildfire protection efficiency, reducing suppression



costs, and supporting community resilience. But, this can only be accomplished with focused vision on the long-term. Strategies addressing vegetation management, fire response planning, and community preparedness can create a holistic approach that allows for fire resilience into the future.

Investment in wildfire planning and reducing on the ground fuels means less risk and potential decreases in suppression costs. There is an economic development aspect to this long-term vision that relies on local businesses and workforce to meet a community's need in supporting healthy forests.

This ecosystems approach requires a significant investment of funds and capacity but addresses the problem of being penny-wise and pound-foolish when only focused on fighting fires as they arise. Smaller municipalities have smaller budgets and need to financially support a diverse array of community concerns. This

reality demands exploration of creative solutions.

In Southwest Colorado, a locally-led team explored the feasibility of developing a wildfire impact fund that includes a bonding component, allowing communities to invest in increasing the pace and scale of treatment on the ground, securing community resilience, while offering an extended payment period. The result of the team's work is known as the Southwest Wildfire Impact Fund (SWIF) and is built around a cohesive treatment plan with a landscape scale vision, working across boundaries and property ownership.

The SWIF model proposes a cooperative structure, incorporating community needs and relationships, that allows stakeholders to identify local values, opportunities, and strategies for implementation. SWIF proposes the use of an Intergovernmental Authority, though there are multiple governmental models that can support the cooperative engagement. A critical feature

for long-term success is financing work on a timeline of 20 years or more to ensure maximum impact in reducing wildfire risk and restoring and protecting healthy forests and watersheds.

Bonding possibilities for local governments include working with the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority, a state agency with specific statutory authority to work on forest restoration and watershed protection projects.

Local government engagement in planning and funding of wildfire preparedness is timely. We are in a unique era for forest management. Communities may choose to adopt the SWIF model or create their own collaborative approach to protect their natural infrastructure, but now is the time to go big, and long-term, so that Coloradans have a home to go to, not if, but when the next wildfire moves through our communities.

Left: The Lefthand Canyon Fire burns a hillside in Boulder County in 2020.

Right: A neighborhood destroyed by the Marshall Fire in 2021.





GATEWAY TO THE ROCKIES

BY TAMARA ROLLISON

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Bridge & highway project aims to improve
safety, travel times on I-70 at Floyd Hill



Interstate 70 runs from Baltimore, Maryland to near Cove Fort, Utah. The most spectacular section of I-70 stretches 144 miles from just west of Denver to Glenwood Springs. The scenic road travels through the rugged terrain of the Rocky Mountains, including the highest point on the Interstate Highway System at 11,158 feet where drivers cross the Eisenhower Johnson-Memorial Tunnel, just beneath the Continental Divide. The I-70 Mountain Corridor is a large part of what makes Colorado a great place to live and visit—and generates billions in tourism revenue for the state and small mountain communities.

I-70 is the only east-west interstate in the 500 miles between I-40 in New Mexico and I-80 in Wyoming. It is the only route for freight between Denver and the western mountains of Colorado and is a primary part of the National Highway Freight Network. Millions of households and businesses depend on freight deliveries in and through the corridor.

NEED FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Built many decades ago, much of the I-70 infrastructure is at the end of its useful life and repairs are becoming more frequent with higher costs and traffic impacts. One of the most congested locations on the mountain corridor is I-70 at Floyd Hill, the gateway to the Rocky

Mountains from the Denver metro area. Floyd Hill is a significant ridgeline when traveling west from Denver along I-70, and it is the entry point to many mountain communities. The westbound I-70 bridge at the bottom of Floyd Hill has exceeded its service life by 14 years. CDOT has been methodical about its maintenance and has invested in scheduled and emergency repairs. If this bridge fails or becomes too unsafe for travel, the alternate route across Colorado on freight-accessible routes is 90 miles longer and traverses even more mountainous terrain.

I-70 at Floyd Hill sees over 100 crashes per year and reports congestion and other incidents particularly during peak weekend travel periods. Drivers are often gridlocked for hours, making it a challenge to reach many of the state's premier destinations and difficult and costly to move freight.

I-70 FLOYD HILL TO VETERANS MEMORIAL TUNNELS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

To address these vulnerabilities, CDOT in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, mountain communities, local and state officials and various state agencies, developed a project that greatly improves travel and safety by revamping eight miles of I-70 from west of Evergreen to eastern Idaho Springs, called the I-70 Floyd Hill to Veterans

Memorial Tunnels Improvements Project. Improvements include:

- Building a third westbound I-70 Express Lane from the top of Floyd Hill through the Veterans Memorial Tunnels, which will link to the existing westbound I-70 Mountain Express Lane to Empire; this will eliminate severe bottlenecks that currently plague travel time and reliability at the sudden two-lane segment just over the top of Floyd Hill.
- Completing a new frontage road connection between US 6 and Idaho Springs for greater emergency and detour accessibility.
- Replacing bridges, reconstructing highway interchanges and flattening horizontal curves for improved safety and better sight distance.
- Improving the multimodal Greenway trail.
- Building wildlife crossings and fencing, and restoring nearby creek and riparian areas to protect and preserve the local environment and wildlife.
- Developing a mobility hub with EV infrastructure and accessibility options that integrate into the state's growing I-70 transit service, including the new "Pegasus" service that was added in May 2022 to the corridor as mitigation for this highway project.
- Providing permanent air quality monitors and coordinating rural broadband access with local communities.



When completed, the project will provide the following benefits:

- **Improve travel times, reliability, and safety:** By eliminating the bottleneck at Floyd Hill, the project will significantly reduce travel time and decrease the number and severity of crashes through more consistent traffic flow and speeds.
- **Support communities:** The project will provide alternate emergency access through a newly connected frontage road system that strengthens safety and mobility for thousands of Coloradans that rely on I-70 to access their communities and for the millions that visit the mountains annually. I-70 is the lifeline for commerce and tourism that support rural mountain town economies.
- **Is fiscally responsible:** This section of I-70 has not had significant improvements since its original construction in the 1960s. Maintaining the corridor's aging infrastructure is increasingly expensive and time consuming and disrupts travel for individual communities and the public. It is more effective and efficient for CDOT to replace this infrastructure rather than to continue to invest scarce dollars in facilities that are at the end of their service lives.
- **Fosters environmental sustainability and resiliency:** The project will help bring about improvements--such as new transit service and coordinated rural broadband access -that support the ways travel can and will change in the future. It also includes new air quality monitors and provides a redundant route for when natural disasters disrupt highway travel. Impacts to high-quality wetlands and wildlife habitat have been avoided while important riparian areas of Clear Creek will be restored; improving water quality, wildlife habitat, and prized fishing and rafting areas. Lastly, the project will construct the corridor's first major wildlife crossings.

CONSTRUCTION

Construction is expected to begin on wildlife crossings in the fall of 2022 followed by other early projects in 2023. The major I-70 Floyd Hill construction is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2023 and take about four years to complete.

The estimated cost of the project is \$700 million, with \$395 million of that amount coming from state funding sources and \$65 million generated from Express Toll revenues. CDOT has applied for \$240 million in federal grant funding to close the funding gap. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3Ik9lbu>.





RESILIENCE

**MAINTAINING WATER
INFRASTRUCTURE IS CRUCIAL
FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

BY KYRA GREGORY, DRINKING WATER TRAINING SPECIALIST

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUALITY CONTROL DIVISION

Safe drinking water and reliable wastewater disposal is a cornerstone of our society. The Water Quality Control Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is dedicated to ensuring safe drinking water provision and proper wastewater disposal. Partnering with communities and water/wastewater providers in the state to protect these critical services supports our mission to protect and restore Colorado's water quality for public health, the environment, and future generations. This article will explore simple techniques to build resilience in your water/wastewater system to help you maintain water utilities now, during emergencies, and for decades to come. With increased resilience comes better protection of the public and environmental health benefiting drinking water consumers, recreators, wildlife, and streams and lakes.

When we discuss water utility resilience we have two main areas to explore, the present and the future. Looking at the present we evaluate a system's current situation to identify how the facilities are meeting standards and protecting public health and the environment. When we look to the future we are thinking of where money and energy needs to be spent to continue to protect public health and the environment in our changing world. Looking to the future involves also planning for emergencies and upsets to the system. Here are a few examples of how to evaluate the present and future of your water system to build resilience:

TECHNICAL CAPACITY

Now: How is your water and wastewater being treated? Is your facility meeting the bare minimum or are you going above and beyond the regulations? What additional actions could your operational staff take to ensure public health is being protected? Do you have documented procedures to

carry out critical tasks? Is your system protected from malicious actors (both physical and cyber)?

Future: How will you maintain treatment in years to come? How will you maintain treatment during emergencies? What is the framework for future regulations and how will your facility meet the new requirements?

MANAGERIAL CAPACITY

Now: Who is overseeing the running of your water/wastewater facility? Are they qualified? Do you have correctly defined roles and responsibilities? Are you connected with your critical customers and sector partners?

Future: Do you have redundancy of critical decision makers (Operators in Responsible Charge) to operate during an emergency? Are you training future personnel to take over the oversight of your facility when current staff leave? How will you communicate with your customers during an emergency situation?

FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Now: Are your rates set to adequately operate and manage your water/wastewater facilities?

Future: Do you have a budget plan for the future that assesses the age of your infrastructure and timing for when you will need to replace key elements of your system? Are you prepared financially for an emergency that impacts your whole system?

If you are a decision maker or an administrator for a water or wastewater system these questions can be overwhelming. But, taking the time and energy to build resilience is a crucial step to protect the health of your community now and for years to come.

The Environmental Protection Agency created a framework for building water infrastructure resilience to aid in this crucial task:

- Conduct an assessment and reduce risk
- Plan for and practice responding to emergencies
- Monitor systems for contaminants.

RESOURCES

Below are some resources that the division has gathered to aid in your work to build water infrastructure resilience.

- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Drinking Water and Wastewater Resilience Website** — <https://bit.ly/3R2z9Is> — provides many resources to help you assess, plan, train, respond, detect, and recover from water infrastructure emergencies.
- **CDPHE-WQCD Water Sector Security Toolbox** — <https://bit.ly/3ywA0Ui> — built to help water infrastructure professionals understand how to plan to protect their facilities from security threats, and how to respond in the event of a security breach and includes resources for regulatory requirements during security events.
- **CDPHE-WQCD Local Assistance Unit Website** — <https://bit.ly/3OBoJrp> — Register for training and request one-on-one assistance from our team of coaches dedicated to building drinking water/wastewater resilience in Colorado through our Technical, Managerial, and Financial framework.
- **Colorado Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (CoWARN)** — <https://bit.ly/3QTucLQ> — A free mutual aid network where utilities provide aid to other utilities. Sign up for membership and your facility can request or provide resources during an emergency.
- **U.S. EPA Climate Resilience Evaluation and Awareness Tool (CREAT) Risk Assessment Application for Water Utilities** — <https://bit.ly/3NzHhr1> — This is a tool that assists water sector utilities in assessing climate-related risks to utility assets and operations. Throughout the five modules, users consider climate impacts and identify adaptation options to increase resilience.

SPOTLIGHT

WATERWORKS

BY DESI SANTERRE

WATER AND WASTEWATER PROGRAM MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL AFFAIRS

Does your municipality need funding for drinking water or wastewater infrastructure projects? Colorado's State Revolving Fund (SRF) has been the leading funder for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects in the state for decades. This low-interest loan program is administered in Colorado by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), and the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority (CWRPDA).

Thanks to the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the SRF has a vastly increased funding capacity through 2026. Approximately \$680 million dollars of additional funding will be sent to the Colorado SRF over the next five years, which increases the state's annual allocation by about 5 times. In addition to providing supplemental funding for normal types of SRF projects, the infrastructure law created special funding pots for the identification and removal of lead service lines, and the remediation of emerging contaminants, particularly forever chemicals perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS/PFOAS).

The SRF can provide both small and large loans; recent loans have ranged

from \$250,000 to \$55 million. Colorado local governments, including municipalities, counties, and special districts are eligible applicants. Private non-profits can also use the SRF to finance drinking water projects. There is a broad array of eligible projects including, but not limited to, water and wastewater treatment, distribution/ collection, water and energy efficiency projects, system consolidation, forest health and watershed management, water reclamation and reuse, etc. There are seven application cycles per year to allow for maximum flexibility to meet an applicant's construction schedule needs. Reduced interest rates, planning grants, design and engineering grants, and loan forgiveness may be available to disadvantaged communities.

While loan forgiveness availability has been limited in previous years, the new BIL funding comes with a requirement to distribute a certain amount of the funding as grants or loan forgiveness, as shown in the table above. This means loan forgiveness will be available to more borrowers and in larger amounts over the next five years. In fact, projects addressing PFAS or emerging contaminants may be eligible for 100% loan forgiveness! Because the BIL requires the loan forgiveness to go to disadvantaged communities, the Colorado SRF has created an expanded

eligibility criteria to ensure more applicants are able to access this once-in-a-lifetime funding opportunity, including those that have not previously qualified for disadvantaged community benefits.

All prospective borrowers must be on the SRF eligibility list. The list is generated from a survey that is conducted in June each year by CDPHE. Once a borrower is on the eligibility list, the funding process starts with a pre-qualification meeting to verify borrower and project eligibility, outline program requirements, and align program deadlines with the applicant's project needs. After the pre-qualification meeting, the borrower will be guided by their SRF project team through the program requirements, including the submission of a project needs assessment, environmental review, and design review, that must be completed prior to loan application. Most borrowers are able to move from pre-qualification meeting to loan application in 6-18 months depending on the borrower and the complexity of the project.

To learn more about the State Revolving Fund or to start the funding process, please contact the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment project manager for your region: <https://bit.ly/3ArTc74>. We look forward to working with you!

SPOTLIGHT BROADBAND

BY BRANDY REITTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COLORADO BROADBAND OFFICE

In 2020, Gov. Jared Polis released the Broadband Initiatives Report, outlining the state's vision to create economic opportunity for Coloradans and accomplish the administration's Bold Four issues through changing how Colorado governs, maps, funds, and deploys broadband.

In February of this year, Polis signed an Executive Order directing the Colorado Broadband Office (CBO) to develop a Broadband Strategic Plan to connect 99% of Colorado households to high-speed broadband by 2027. His actions are already providing swift improvements to access for individuals, schools, and businesses while cutting red tape, saving people money, and providing clear and transparent access to funding opportunities that will spur innovation through broadband access.

"As a former technology entrepreneur myself, I know firsthand the importance of high speed internet connectivity. Expanding access to broadband will open up new markets for small businesses, entrepreneurs, students and families. It's critical to commerce and education," Polis said. "We're committed to ensuring all Coloradans have access to high-speed internet, no matter their zip code."

DIGITAL DIVIDE

The Colorado Broadband Office recognizes that keeping Colorado's economy competitive requires further investment in infrastructure. Their recent

report asserted that "Colorado's broadband infrastructure must allow the state to compete in the global economy, ensuring all residents can participate in the digital age regardless of zip code. New and emerging applications, services, and technologies (like smart grids, virtual classrooms, telehealth, and precision agriculture) demand more bandwidth than is available in most areas of the state."

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored how essential broadband truly is—from telehealth to remote school, overnight, our lives went almost completely virtual. Those lacking access or with limited access, suffered consequences. At the beginning of the pandemic, areas like Rio Grande County saw as many as 36% of households lacking an internet subscription. In Denver County, 13.1% went without a reliable internet subscription. This digital divide isn't acceptable and Colorado is determined to close it.

RURAL ACCESS

The CBO partners with vital stakeholders in Colorado's broadband infrastructure to identify communities in need of fast, reliable internet, most of which are in rural areas. The CBO will use this information to fund broadband infrastructure projects like Yampa Valley, which completed a successful infrastructure project in 2022. The Yampa Valley Electric Association received

money through the Broadband Fund, managed by the Broadband Development Board within CBO for last-mile broadband infrastructure. The project connected 240 homes that had satellite broadband or other slower broadband options to high-speed broadband.

Greater broadband access means a stronger economy, and more flexibility for businesses and workers to live and locate anywhere in our great state. This bolsters recruitment and retainment efforts, and can also lessen the strain on infrastructure such as housing.

HISTORIC INVESTMENT

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provide funding to make this a reality. The IIJA includes the largest investment in broadband deployment and adoption in U.S. history, with billions of dollars available across multiple new programs. Colorado expects to receive between \$300-\$500 million in funding for broadband from the IIJA Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program alone. It became apparent during the pandemic that the gaps in broadband access across the state are fundamental and perpetuate economic disparities. ARPA allocates \$162 million to Colorado through the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) for broadband infrastructure projects that address those critical infrastructure needs. The CBO is

THE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT INCLUDES THE LARGEST INVESTMENT IN BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT AND ADOPTION IN U.S. HISTORY, WITH BILLIONS OF DOLLARS AVAILABLE ACROSS MULTIPLE NEW PROGRAMS.



currently working with local stakeholders to identify areas in Colorado that lack access to fast, reliable internet. The CBO partners with internet service providers (ISPs) and local governments to obtain current broadband infrastructure data in preparation for a CPF grant program. These partnerships are vital to funding projects that will significantly impact Coloradans, enhance their technical lives, and allow them to live and work with fast, reliable broadband.

PARTNERING ACROSS GOVERNMENTS

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), allows tens of millions of American households to reduce their internet service costs by up to \$30/month (or \$75/month on Tribal lands). Nearly 40% of American households will qualify for this program—nearly half a million households in Colorado alone.

“Collaborating with our regional leaders is our path forward,” said Brandy

Reitter, Executive Director, Colorado Broadband Office. “The best experts are the ones in local communities, who can advise and partner with us. Successful implementation will require partnerships with towns, cities, and counties.”

Megan Chadwick Gernet, Kara Van Stralen, Kate Sneed, and Meridith Marshall contributed to this article.

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COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

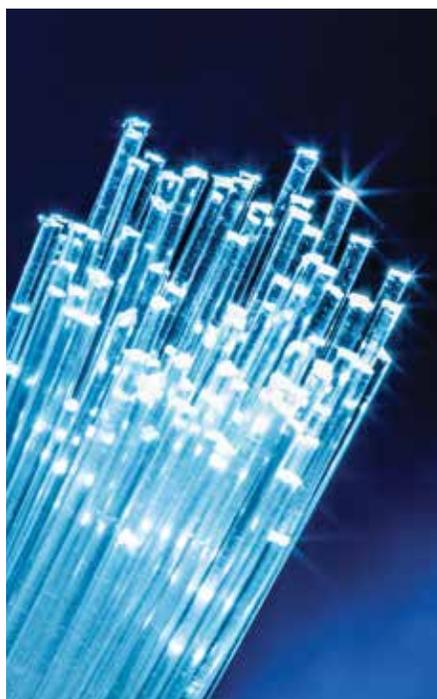
SPOTLIGHT

PROJECT THOR

BY JON STAVNEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTHWEST COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

It's not just larger municipalities these days treating broadband as a necessary utility. Many rural communities on the western slope now embrace a public role in broadband. Why? Because where there is internet, speeds are often not robust enough to meet evolving business, education, and personal internet needs. Furthermore, most communities are served by a single run of fiber, leaving entire counties at risk of a prolonged outage due to a single fiber cut—one mistake by a distant equipment operator. Affordable, reliable, and resilient internet service has proven to be elusive across the western slope of Colorado, which has prompted many local governments to act. Many municipalities, counties, and other community anchor institutions including rural electric co-ops and one health district in northwest Colorado are now in the public broadband business.

A decade ago, at the urging of its members and partners across nine counties, the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) surveyed members about their broadband services and then hired a regional broadband coordinator to provide “free” technical assistance to local governments. This lowered the barrier to entry for local government, especially those at an inquiry phase. In the past 10 years within Region 12, local



governments have invested over \$16 million dollars, matched by nearly \$14 million in DOLA grants, comprising 37% of all DOLA broadband dollars allocated since 2012 (<https://bit.ly/3HjQDFF>). In 2019, NWCCOG spearheaded what today is a 100-gig regional middle-mile loop named Project THOR which it operates on behalf of a co-operative of 11 communities involved in broadband that had found the next weak link in their local broadband solutions to be the middle-mile connection.

All this local investment has occurred

despite the presence of incumbent cable providers which also serve customers with broadband in most of these communities. The lack of critical population mass and distance between population centers prove to be significant hurdles to private investment alone in bridging the broadband divide. Local projects emerge because of local champions and rarely fit a template from another community. Even though it is new to public leaders, and historically has not been a core competency of most local government staff, broadband is too important to their constituents for even the smallest of communities to not perform some due diligence on how they could improve internet.

Project THOR is comprised of 173 miles of CDOT fiber leased through an Indefeasible Right of Use agreement and more than 20 circuits of dark fiber across 450 miles leased from internet service providers that is lit by over \$1 million of equipment housed in 13 meet-me-centers hosted by participating local governments connected to an internet POP at 910 Telecom in Denver. Host communities, matched with a DOLA grant, provided \$2.5 million in startup funds for the project which is owned by NWCCOG and operated by a private vendor. Host communities pay a monthly service fee in 6-month tranches to cover the cost of the operator, circuit leases, maintenance, and

THE LACK OF CRITICAL POPULATION MASS AND THE DISTANCE BETWEEN POPULATION CENTERS PROVES TO BE A SIGNIFICANT HURDLE TO PRIVATE INVESTMENT ALONE IN BRIDGING THE BROADBAND DIVIDE.

reserves. Host communities connected to Project THOR own an asset that they leverage for various needs including negotiating and partnering with local ISPs, providing last-mile service to customers directly, serving towers to provide better public safety communications, cell service, and public wi-fi as well as meeting their own strategic goals. Two 911 call centers in Summit and Eagle Counties run on Project THOR.

One key Project THOR design feature is the utilization of AI technology to leverage multiple redundant paths so that when there is a fiber cut, traffic is dynamically re-routed. Critical to host communities who are partners in the governance of Project THOR is that they have a voice in how it is managed, how it operates, and the future of the network. Project THOR touches 20% of the landmass of Colorado with over 233,191 residents in the service area which is 23% of the non-front range population and 4% of the total population of the state of Colorado.

Project THOR host communities include the City of Aspen, City of Glenwood Springs, Clear Creek County, Town of Eagle, Town of Breckenridge, Summit County, Town of Vail, Northwest Colorado Broadband (Steamboat Springs group), Middle Park Health (Grand County), Rio Blanco County and Yampa Valley Electric Association (Serving Craig, Moffat, and Routt Counties). ISPs interested in partnering should contact those entities directly. More information at <https://bit.ly/3mCmyHV>. NWCCOG Regional Broadband Director, Nate Walowitz also works with DOLA to provide technical assistance across state of Colorado. He can be reached nwalowitz@nwccog.org.

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CML CELEBRATES

COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE TRAVELS TO BRECKENRIDGE FOR 100th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The action was nonstop in Breckenridge for CML's 100th Annual Conference. The historic gathering featured over 40 sessions with two keynote speakers, a rocking exhibit hall with nearly 50 sponsors, as well as a huge 100th conference celebration featuring great food, talented performers, a concert by Hazel Miller, and a monumental overtime win for the Colorado Avalanche. The conference saw more than 1,300 attendees!

Planning is underway to celebrate CML's 100th anniversary throughout 2023. The annual conference will be held June 11-14, 2023, at The Gaylord in

Aurora. We're excited to continue celebrating CML's 100th year with you, and we are looking forward to 100 more!

THANK YOU

Thanks to the Town of Breckenridge, our sponsors, and all our members. And special thanks to the cities and towns that donated gift baskets for the raffle at the 100th Conference Celebration: Swink, Mountain Village, Limon, Elizabeth, Fountain, Blue River, Coal Creek, Granby, Kersey, Lone Tree, Fairplay, Mead, Yampa, La Jara, Fredrick and Durango.

Above: Attendees mingle at the 100th conference celebration June 22 at Riverwalk Center in Breckenridge.



Colorado Municipal League Executive Director Kevin Bommer snaps a selfie as the 100th Annual Conference begins on June 21.



Colorado Gov. Jared Polis speaks at the conference during the Elected Officials Breakfast on June 24.



Denver city planner Naomi Grunditz and councilmembers Amanda Sawyer and Jamie Torres present a session on housing June 24.



Attendees enjoy the opening reception at Beaver Run Resort in Breckenridge June 21.

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2022 Sam Mamet Good Governance Awards

La Jara town manager **Larry Zaragoza** and Silver Cliff mayor **H.A. Buck Wenzel** were named the 2022 recipients of the Sam Mamet Good Governance Award. Named in honor of retired CML Executive Director Sam Mamet, the award honors individuals who exemplify and seek to expand the application of principles of good governance. The awards were presented at the conference in Breckenridge on June 23.

Nominees

Award nominations were submitted by CML membership and voted on by members of the CML Executive Board. CML received 22 nominations for this year's award. The nominees included:

- Manitou Springs Deputy City Administrator Roy Chaney
- Montezuma Mayor Lesley Davis
- Mountain Village Director of Operations and Development Zoe Dohnal
- Northglenn Councilmember Joyce Downing
- Boulder Director of Housing and Human Services Kurt Firnhaber
- Denver Management Analyst Aaron Hurlburt
- Denver Auditor Timothy O'Brien
- Castle Pines City Manager Michael Penny
- Pagosa Springs Town Manager Andrea Phillips
- Denver Campaign Finance Administrator Andy Szekeres
- Dacono Clerk Valerie Taylor
- Brighton Councilmember Tim Watts
- Gunnison Finance Director Benjamin Cowan
- Glenwood Springs Finance Director Yvette Gustad
- Thornton Recreation Superintendent Chris Steinke
- Denver Elects Division Steven Sharp



Photos by CML staff
Larry Zaragoza, left, town manager of La Jara, receives a 2022 Sam Mamet Good Governance Award from retired CML Executive Director Sam Mamet.



H.A. Buck Wenzel, left, mayor of Silver Cliff, receives a Sam Mamet Good Governance Award from Sam Mamet.

2022 MUNiversity award recipients

Congratulations to the elected officials who completed the fundamental, leadership, and graduate levels of CML's MUNiversity program. Developed to recognize municipal elected officials investing time and resources to participate in educational events, the program intends to increase their knowledge of municipal government and enhance their capacity to lead. The following individuals were recognized at the Elected Officials breakfast held in Breckenridge on June 24.

Graduate level

- Larry Atencio, Pueblo councilmember
- Susan Jong, Rocky Ford mayor
- Wynne Shaw, Lone Tree mayor pro tem

Leadership level

- Marlo Alston, Centennial councilmember
- Robin Crossan, Steamboat Springs council president
- Doug Gaspell, Montrose councilmember
- Steve Kudron, Grand Lake mayor
- George Lantz, Greenwood Village mayor
- Candace Moon, Centennial councilmember
- Deborah Mulvey, Castle Pines councilmember
- Russell Stewart, Cherry Hills Village mayor
- Austin Valdez, La Jara mayor pro tem
- Laura Weinberg, Golden mayor
- Kathryn Wittman, Dacono mayor pro tem

Fundamental level

- Mladenka Boehrer, Mountain View councilmember
- Bill Carlson, Palisade trustee
- Michael Carson, Alamosa councilmember
- Guyleen Castriotta, Broomfield mayor
- Justin M. Critelli, Salida councilmember
- Detra Duncan, Fountain councilmember
- Tracy Engerman, Castle Pines mayor
- Tamara Estes, Fountain councilmember
- Dennis Flores, Pueblo councilmember
- John Fogle, Loveland councilmember
- Sean Ford, Commerce City councilmember
- Derek Glosson, Akron trustee



Photos by CML staff

CML Executive Director Kevin Bommer, second from left, congratulates Graduate level MUNiversity award recipients Susan Jung, Larry Atencio, and Wynne Shaw.



Kevin Bommer, center, congratulates Leadership level MUNiversity award recipients.

- Jason Gray, Castle Rock mayor
- John S. Hamrick, Cañon City mayor pro tem
- Josh Hardy, Granby mayor
- Richard Holt, Centennial councilmember
- David Kerber, Greenwood Village mayor pro tem
- Wendy Koenig, Estes Park mayor
- Hilary LaBarre, Woodland Park mayor
- Gary J. Lagrimanta, Kersey mayor
- Dwayne D. Lehnertz, Mt. Crested Butte councilmember
- Rachel Richards, Aspen councilmember
- Anna Stout, Grand Junction council president / mayor
- Ed Ulibarri, Montrose councilmember
- Jerry Valdes, Littleton councilmember
- Jenny Willford, Northglenn mayor pro tem
- DeLanie Young, Telluride mayor



“The MPA program at Adams State gave me an opportunity to refine the skills I already have to continue to serve the most vulnerable in my community in a different capacity”

Theresa Ortega
Executive Director of Tu Casa, Inc. and the Children Advocacy Center of the San Luis Valley

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COLORADO MUNICIPALITIES

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2022

ANNUAL SEMINAR ON MUNICIPAL LAW

CML's Annual Seminar on Municipal Law will take place Sept. 23-24 at the Grand Junction Convention Center. This conference provides expert Colorado-specific information that is directly relevant to the daily practice of municipal attorneys in the state, as well as opportunities to network with peers.



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