

Get to Know



U.S. Senator Michael Bennet

Senator Michael Bennet was born in New Delhi, India while his father was serving as an aide to the U.S. Ambassador to India. He earned his Bachelor's degree in history with honors from Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT, and is a graduate of the Yale Law School, where he was the Editor of the Yale Law Journal. Senator Bennet began public service when he worked as an aide to the Governor of Ohio. He also served as Counsel to the Deputy Attorney General during Bill Clinton's administration. He went on to serve as the Chief of Staff to then Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper. In 2005 he was appointed superintendent of Denver Public Schools.

Senator Bennet has served as a United States Senator since 2009 when he filled the seat vacated by Senator Ken Salazar who was appointed to become Secretary of the Interior. Senator Bennet was elected to his seat in 2010.

This year Senator Bennet introduced bipartisan legislation to help state and local officials rebuild critical infrastructure - including roads, highways, bridges, schools, and water projects. The legislation, known as the Partnership to Build America Act, would create a federal infrastructure bank using a public-private partnership to help finance public projects. CDOT is very supportive of this legislation and was consulted by Senator Bennet's office in the crafting of the bill.

Closer Look: The Highway Trust Fund

Over the last few months, you've probably been hearing about the impending insolvency of the federal Highway Trust Fund.



What does that mean, and how does it impact Colorado and the Colorado Department Of Transportation (CDOT)?

The Highway Trust Fund (HTF) is the federal transportation fund that receives money from the federal tax on gasoline and diesel fuel. The primary expenditures from the account are in the form of transfers back to the states for highways and mass transit. This year, CDOT expects to collect about \$496 million from the HTF, or about 44% of our total budget. Other transportation organizations, like the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and our larger urban transportation partners, such as the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) rely on these funds as well.

Because the 18.4 cents per gallon federal gas tax has not been increased since 1993, and due to rising fuel efficiency of our vehicles, the amount of money the fund takes in each year has been significantly less than what Congress has authorized each state to receive through the federal transportation law, called MAP-21. The current dilemma isn't anything new. Since 2008, Congress has used about \$50 billion of non-gas tax funds to fill up the Highway Trust Fund and sustain the current level of transportation funding. *cont. page 2*

Hail to the Chief....Engineer

Josh Laipply has been announced as CDOT Transportation Program Director and Chief Engineer. Josh will officially assume the position in the first half of July.

As Transportation Program Director and Chief Engineer, Josh will be responsible for integrated transportation program development functions including planning, engineering, design, and construction. The Division of Transportation Development, Division of Transit & Rail, Office of Program Management, Office of Major Project Development, and Project Support will all report to him. Additionally, though the regions will operationally report to the Deputy Director, as the Chief Engineer Josh will continue to oversee all project development and delivery functions, control engineering and construction contracts, and manage resulting claims or liabilities. *cont. page 2*



Josh Laipply

Upcoming Meetings

Colorado Transportation Commission Workshops/Meeting
July 16-17, 2014
CDOT Headquarters in Denver, CO
Email: Tromila.Maile@state.co.us

Colorado Transportation Commission Workshops/Meeting
August 20-21, 2014
CDOT Headquarters in Denver, CO
Email: Tromila.Maile@state.co.us

Club 20 Transportation Policy Meeting
July 18, 2014
Inn and Suites at Riverwalk in Edwards, CO
Phone: 970-242-3264

AASHTO Standing Committee on Rail Transportation
September 7-10, 2014
Magnolia Hotel in Denver, CO
Website: <http://www.coloradodot.info/aashtoscort>

Trust Fund.....cont. from page 1

At some point in August, the Highway Trust Fund will run out of money unless Congress acts, as they have before, to restore solvency to the fund. Without a fix, it is estimated that over 6000 construction projects could come to a halt nationwide, putting 660,000 American jobs at risk. Here in Colorado, we can draw on our existing cash balance to replace federal dollars, so projects already underway won't skip a beat. If Congress hasn't done anything to restore solvency at the start of the federal fiscal year (beginning October 1), we may need to hold back on advertising new construction projects until the funding issue is resolved.

CDOT fully expects Congress will find a way to continue transportation spending, even if it is a short-term fix (two years or less). Congress knows the link between the economy and transportation funding, and the department remains optimistic they will stabilize the Highway Trust Fund for the next fiscal year.

In the last few weeks, lawmakers have suggested fixes ranging from limiting U.S. Postal Service deliveries on Saturdays to raising the gas tax by 12 cents and indexing it for inflation. CDOT does not anticipate that either of these proposals will have much traction. However, last week, Sen. Ron Wyden, a Democrat from Oregon, and Senator Orrin Hatch, a Republican from Utah, crafted a proposal to keep transportation spending at current levels through the end of the calendar year by providing the trust fund with about \$7 billion. This proposal, or something like it, stands a pretty good chance to get us past the November elections and into December, where a lame duck Congress will have the whole conversation over again.

Chief Engineercont. from page 1

Josh has served as our CDOT Bridge Design & Management Branch Manager since 2012. He joined CDOT that year after working with us since 2010 on our FASTER/Bridge Enterprise program from the private sector. Previously, his private sector project work included I-335 in Chicago; SR 202 widening in Phoenix; Denver Union Station; and the RTD Light Rail Facility Improvements at Elati and Mariposa in Denver.

Josh's connections to CDOT go far deeper than just his current employment and his job experience. He grew up around the Department; his father, the late Larry Laipply, was an engineer for CDOH and CDOT Region 6 and Josh was no stranger to Laipply Memorial events which raised scholarship funds in his father's memory for graduating high school seniors of CDOT employees and retirees.

Please join us in welcoming Josh to his new post at CDOT.