



Local Agency Process Reevaluation Meetings

June 8, 2010

CDOT Region 3

City of Steamboat Springs

Meeting Notes

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the meeting is to solicit input from local governments to improve the administration of the Local Agency Program.

Meeting Agenda

- Opening Remarks and Introductions
- Meeting Guidelines, Existing Roles, and Agenda Review, Process overview
- Solicitation of issues, ideas and concerns regarding Local Agency Process
 - **Project Initiation Process**
 - **Project Design/Advertisement**
 - **Award of Project/Construction**
- Next Steps

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Neil Lacey, Project Development Branch, CDOT Headquarters, opened the meeting and gave an overview of expectations of the meeting and described elements that relate to the local agency processes. Neil introduced Tobilynn Erosky, meeting logistics and note taker, with CDOT and Andrea Meneghel, meeting facilitator, with CDR Associates. Andrea asked the group to introduce themselves and share one objective for the meeting or identify the most important issue to address during the meeting. The group stated the following:



Issues, Objectives, and Concerns

- There have been issues working with CDOT specifications and plans. These work fine for large highway and bridge projects but should be scaled down for a smaller scale project such as a bike path or trail project.
- Brian Killian, CDOT Region 3 Local Agency Coordinator, was here to listen to the issues to see what could be improved.
- Shaun Cutting, Federal Highway Administration, stated that CDOT is looking at alternative ways to provide oversight of Local Agency projects commensurate with the project type. Input is needed from all at the meeting so that CDOT, FHWA, MPO's/TPR's and Local Agencies can combine ways to do things better.
- The City of Craig stated that the engineering process is extremely cumbersome. There is a perception that expenditures are being wasted in overall process that could be better utilized. One such way to create efficiencies is to consider different tiers of requirements based on the type of project (i.e. road, bridge, trail). The Right of Way process is confusing and this is one of the biggest issues that needs to be addressed in the Local Agency program.
- Routt County is seeking clarification for requirements for TIGER Grant (Phase 2) funds. Also the County would like an understanding of the NEPA requirements (environmental process) and ROW process to address the requirements in the grant as well as for Local Agency projects. The County indicated that it is not clear where to get this type of information from during projects; whether it should be from FHWA or CDOT?
- Jackson County attended to learn more about the Local Agency program and to absorb all of the information from other Local Agency comments.
- The City of Steamboat Springs suggested streamlining the existing process for trails and indicated a need for scaling back engineering requirements and specifications so that they are commensurate with type of project and funding provided.

Neil introduced Federal Aid Highway Program Stewardship Agreement and talked about federal, state, and local relationship for Local Agency projects. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss how to improve the program. The group was then asked to provide input regarding the process. The discussion notes are below.



Project Initiation Process: Identify key issues and recommendations –Local Agency Manual – Chapters 1-4

- The question was asked what are the funding streams available for the Local Agency program in Region 3 – there are 5 areas for federal funding: Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS), Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAC) for 2 areas (Steamboat Springs & Aspen), Transportation Enhancement, off-system bridge, and transportation safety program.
- Routt County asked about application for Tiger Grants – should the County consult with CDOT or FHWA about approval and confirmation that it has met grant submittal requirements?
- Off-system bridge program has provided frustration for Routt County where the project took 2 years to get to construction. They did not have a lot of help in understanding the construction process.
- It was clearly stated that one of the biggest challenges in the Local Agency process is dealing with Right of Way (ROW) issues. The process is very detailed and time consuming due to the CDOT/federal requirements. Local Agencies have experienced setbacks with having to provide Right Of Way documentation that a county road is in fact owned by the County.
- Hiring consultants for ROW process is expensive for the mountain communities due to distances and paying for travel time. Isn't there a way to certify the Local Agencies so that they can complete this portion of the process in a cost effective manner?
- For smaller mountain communities the distance from their CDOT Region makes it harder to get engineering assistance from CDOT to work with them to get them through the Local Agency process. Is there a way that communication and assistance between CDOT and the Local Agency can be improved?
- Some of the Local Agencies are being discouraged from pursuing federal funds due to the lengthy process and time involved with meeting requirements associated with federal funds. For example enhancement projects, off-System bridges (Steamboat/Routt County) or other smaller projects, it takes a lot of time to complete the ROW processes.
- There is a perception that larger Local Agencies have an advantage in securing project funding since they have more resources and can provide the matching agency costs. It is difficult for smaller agencies with tight budgets to fund the costs to pursue federal funds due to what they believe is a longer more detailed process.
- A timeline is needed that would outline the project development process from initiation to completion. This would be helpful for identifying how much time is needed to allocate for each step in the process .



Project Initiation Process (continued)

- Local governments carry funds for a limited time and if a project's process takes longer than originally anticipated, then the funding can be shifted to other community needs (while the project loses funds).
- Because Local Agencies also apply for matching grants from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and the Department of Local Assistance (DOLA), there is a need to be able to understand timeframes for all sources of funding.
- A better understanding for the ROW process is required at project initiation so that the Local Agencies understand the documentation and required information that will need to be included for a project. The City of Craig spent a lot of money on engineering and didn't do the ROW properly and now doesn't have the required project matching funds. Addressing the ROW requirements and discussing the quality of the documentation early on would avoid having Local Agencies to spend funds to do things over.
- Local Agencies suggested that early coordination upfront with CDOT would be very helpful in order to clarify questions and assist them with understanding the process requirements so that Local Agencies can make efficient use of the project funds.
- Routt County has applied for off system bridge funds and has not heard back on the status of its application from CDOT or FHWA. Routt County stated that it would not be interested in designing a bridge that would not get funded. Because there are several bridges in Routt County that need to be addressed, it needs better communication from CDOT/FHWA in order to conclude what can be done.
- Bridge projects take more requirements – Local Agencies are not sure what requirements need to be met. Suggested that CDOT provide more training on a Regional level to Local Agencies by funding categories (i.e. off system bridge, safe routes to schools) so that expectations are understood and the anxiety regarding applying for federal funds can be turned around to one of excitement .
- Local Agencies inquired about how to best deal (or receive assistance from CDOT) with federal regulations/rules when they pose a challenge to carrying out a project? Jackson County provided a specific example where it had a bridge project with ROW requirements to replace the bridge which is 40/50 years old. Local Agency had difficulty in providing documentation for easements which added time and costs to the project, and felt this was causing delay and difficulty.



Project Initiation Process (continued)

- There is a need from Local Agencies in mountain regions to make efficient use of time to address their shortened construction seasons and need help with funding and budget (need timeline on these so money won't be lost – maximum three years? For example, Local Agencies want help from CDOT Region 3 to buy in to a process where if the Local Agencies are able to complete all of the necessary steps for Step A in fall then steps B,C,D can be completed over the winter to be able to advertise for construction in May.
- Mountain communities are looking to CDOT for assistance in the form of additional resources with their projects or prioritization of work load to meet their seasonal milestones to keep projects moving and be able to construct projects timely to meet their shortened construction seasons.

Project Design/Advertisement: Identify key issues and recommendations – Local Agency Manual Chapters 5-7

- Routt County asked if CDOT can work with them in either getting training or having a Region Environmental specialist come out and work with them on required environmental studies so that these can be completed prior to winter before weather problems come and shut down access to site for 8 months. Brian Killian suggested that one way to expedite the resolving of issues could be for the Local Agency to send a video or pictures of the project to the Local Agency Coordinator for review.
- Consultant selection – is there a timeline on selection and do the Local Agencies have to use different consultants on each project? Per Brian, each project is different and is project-by-project so Local Agencies have to bid out services competitively to give different consultants a chance at each project. Design Engineers need to be different from Construction Engineers unless a waiver is granted per the guidance provided in CDOT Policy Memo #23.
- The City of Steamboat Springs has an engineering firm under contract to assist them with their projects. Being able to use the same consultant on consecutive phases of a project or on new projects due to skill set, familiarity, and knowledge of CDOT's processes would be very helpful. This way, the Local Agencies would not have to train a new consultant on their way of doing projects such as trails or bridges. Can trail projects be treated differently from road and bridge projects to take advantage of local resources and knowledge? Can previous engineering consultant services competitive bid be used to be more efficient?
- Being required to hire certain firms when they are non-local adds additional costs to the projects because of travel times or hotel stays. Requirements where non-local firms are to be hired should be evaluated to determine what can be done to save costs.



Project Design/Advertisement (continued)

- DBE requirements on small projects – Difficult to meet UDBE goal. In the past, it has been challenging to get UDBE's to respond or show up for a project to complete the small amount of work. The City of Steamboat Springs feels that it is very expensive to have UDBE's travel from cities not in region to do work and that they won't come if they already have other work where they are. Can the UDBE goal process be revisited to be more reflective of work to be performed and available UDBE's in geographic area to reduce the UDBE goals on projects in mountain communities?

Award of Project/Construction: Identify key issues and recommendations – Local Agency Manual Chapters 8-11

- Local Agencies think that materials testing requirements are too restrictive (i.e. too many tests and too much documentation). The City of Craig has limited access to multiple firms. Only one firm is available and costs add up for travel times from their office to the project site. Can materials testing for trail projects be changed so that it is not treated the same as a highway project? Can the Task Force evaluate if the same level of requirements should be applicable to projects of such differing magnitudes?
- Routt County stated that it would be very helpful to hold a pre-construction coordination meeting with CDOT to identify which forms for materials testing would be required for a project. The City of Steamboat Springs has had this provided in the past and found it very helpful.
- The City of Craig and City of Steamboat Springs are very appreciative of CDOT's assistance during the Design and Construction phases of their projects given the resource constraints that CDOT is experiencing..
- It would be helpful to provide examples of required CDOT forms that have been completed accurately on CDOT's website so that Local Agencies have a model/example to follow. This is similar to those in the Appendix of the CDOT Construction Manual.
- It was suggested that terminology in the CDOT Local Agency Manual, Chapter 8 could be revised where it "directs" city engineers to "supervise construction". Bob Furman, City of Steamboat/Civil Design Consultants, Inc. felt this wording could be more consistent with that of liability insurance verbiage as the Contractor does the work and the consultants administer the construction project for the owner. He suggested softening the language to include verbiage such as "review" or "recommend" to better reflect the responsibility. Bob indicated he would review the section and submit a comment through the Local Agency email address to suggest what sections/areas/terms could specifically be evaluated for revision.



Award of Project/Construction (continued)

- City of Steamboat Springs stated that a current need is for CDOT to provide specific information about what is required for project closeout. The City had questions on “cancelled checks for verification” requirements – it would like more information from CDOT on detailed checklist of requirements on Project Closeout requirements. City of Steamboat Springs was invited to e-mail their questions about what is required so that this could be passed on to the Task Force for consideration.

Other issues: Identify key issues and recommendations

- IGA’s – Brian Killian said that these take time and if you hit milestones (Notice to Proceeds, etc.) – have to encumber funds through option letter which adds time. Suggested that the existing IGA flowchart could be improved if timelines were added for option letters and approvals

Next Steps

The audience expressed appreciation to CDOT for holding this meeting. They noted that this is a positive approach to working on these issues. They expressed thanks to having these meetings in order to be able to share their concerns with CDOT.

Andrea encouraged attendees that were interested in representing their Region on the Local Agency Task Force to notify Brian Killian. He also noted that the meeting notes will be posted on the website and that any further comments can be communicated through the Local Agency email address that was provided (ProjectDevelopment@dot.state.co.us).

ATTENDEES:

Bob Furman	City of Steamboat Springs/Civil Design Consultants, Inc.
Brian Killian	CDOT
Shaun Cutting	FHWA
Dave Pike	City of Craig
Heather McLaughlin	Routt County
John Rich	Jackson County
Craig Robinson	City of Steamboat Springs
Neil Lacey	CDOT HQ, Project Development Branch
Tobilynn Erosky	CDOT HQ, Project Development Branch
Andrea Meneghel	CDR Associates