



*Providing a Voice for Northeast Colorado*

**OPPOSING EXPANDED OVERSIGHT BY THE  
COLORADO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OVER  
TRI-STATE GENERATION AND TRANSMISSION  
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

TE-2009-12

WHEREAS, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc., a not-for-profit, member-controlled electrical cooperative, exists to provide affordable, reliable electrical service that is sensitive to local issues unique to the communities it serves across Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico and Wyoming;

WHEREAS, Progressive 15 supports environmentally-friendly energy production while recognizing Tri-State's responsibility to balance that goal with the other needs of its member communities;

WHEREAS, the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has opened up Docket Number 09I-041E to deliberate the expansion of its oversight to Tri-State's energy development strategies and has asked for public comment on the issue;

WHEREAS, Tri-State is member-owned and its governing body is comprised of representatives from each member co-op so it is directly accountable to its customers;

WHEREAS, any PUC-mandated sustainability initiative which works to the detriment of Tri-State's member communities undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the local, democratically-controlled Board of Directors;

WHEREAS, decisions about how to provide electricity to Tri-State's largely rural service area, and how to balance environmental concerns with the need for reliable and affordable electricity in these communities, are best made by local cooperatives and their members, not unelected regulators in Denver;

WHEREAS, although it is not currently subject to comprehensive oversight by the PUC, Tri-State has launched numerous initiatives with its members to reduce power usage by consumers, develop new sources of renewable energy and invest in new technology;

WHEREAS, if Tri-State is forced to comply with an increased layer of costly regulation, it will have fewer resources to invest in future energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Progressive 15 opposes the extension of the PUC's regulatory power over Tri-State.

*Adopted this 1<sup>st</sup> day of May, 2009*

## Policy Statements

### **PS-2007-10**

Progressive 15 requests CDOT to adopt rules (consistent with USDOT) which provide year around opportunity for ag producers to advertise on-farm products

### **PS-2007-11**

Progressive 15 supports a comprehensive study of existing regulations and associated impacts to state and local roadways and movement of goods within, to from and through Colorado regarding vehicle weights and configuration including those affecting agriculture commodities

### **PS-2007-12**

Progressive 15 supports efforts to fund and develop the federally designated North / South Trade corridors affecting Colorado; Ports to Plains and Heartland Express

### **PS-2007-13**

Progressive 15 supports efforts to fund and develop North / South Trade Corridor High Plains Highway 385

### **PS-2007-14**

Progressive 15 urges, encourages and support efforts within Northeast Colorado to direct the State of Colorado to secure additional funding through innovative and creative methods to address the maintenance and repair of the transportation infrastructure of the region.

### **PS-2007-15**

Progressive 15 urges collaborative efforts to expand federal and state funding options to improve the state wide transportation system.

## Principles

### TRANSPORTATION PRINCIPLES

Action 22, representing 22 counties in Southern Colorado; Club 20 representing 22 counties on the Western Slope and Progressive 15, representing 15 counties in Northeast Colorado, have released a set of COLORADO TRANSPORTATION PRINCIPLES to help frame the discussion on the state's future transportation infrastructure challenges. The PRINCIPLES were developed by a statewide coalition of community and business

interests, including representatives from the Denver Mayors Caucus, Denver Chamber and Denver Regional Council of Governments.

Colorado's rapid growth over the past 25 years has pushed the transportation system beyond its capacity and available funding. The result is that we are using today's transportation dollars to solve yesterday's transportation problems while trying to adequately plan and fund our future transportation systems. As citizens, we must concentrate efforts and make major changes in the transportation arena to preserve and enhance Colorado's economic development, tourism, quality of life, viability and sustainability.

The statewide coalition offers the following principles, which are intended to inform and assist decision-makers, community leaders and the general public in developing a balanced policy to address Colorado's transportation challenges. They should be considered as a whole and not advocated individually. In addition, the coalition believes the urgency of the issues must transcend politics and geographic boundaries.

**A. Secure Adequate Funding to Support the Long-term Transportation Vision**

1. Invest Necessary Funding to Preserve and Maintain Colorado's Transportation Infrastructure
  - a. Colorado's current transportation infrastructure is the backbone and foundation for the State's future transportation system.
  - b. Maintaining and preserving the current transportation infrastructure is critical because:
    - i. Deferred routine maintenance projects become reconstruction projects at substantially higher costs;
    - ii. Other projects are delayed or lost;
    - iii. Safety is compromised; and
    - iv. Mobility is impaired.
  - c. Maintaining the transportation infrastructure must include state and local roads and bridges; transit; rail and aviation infrastructure.
  - d. The transportation infrastructure needs to be maintained in a manner that meets established performance standards.
  - e. The transportation infrastructure needs to be improved to current design standards where appropriate.
2. Invest Necessary Funding to Avoid and Alleviate Congestion and Improve Mobility Statewide.
  - a. Enhancing and improving the current transportation infrastructure is critical, otherwise:
    - i. Safety is compromised.
    - ii. Congestion increases the cost of consumer goods and services; and costs commuters and businesses lost time and wasted fuel.
  - b. Pursue multi-modal transportation solutions that provide access across the state, while preserving the quality of life in our communities including but not limited to:

- i. Increasing cooperation and collaboration between CDOT, regional organizations, local governments, transit providers and other transportation agencies;
    - ii. Achieving mutual goals as part of the comprehensive statewide vision;
    - iii. Leveraging federal, state and local resources;
    - iv. Encouraging transit-oriented development (TOD) where appropriate to reduce travel demand and use;
    - v. Improving and integrating bus and fixed-guideway systems (dedicated transit right-of-ways);
    - vi. Expanding capacity through the use of HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle), HOT (High Occupancy Tolling) and Toll lanes; and
    - vii. Reducing single occupant users and vehicle miles traveled; and
    - viii. Including safe, accessible routes for cyclists and pedestrians.
    - ix. Explore and pursue opportunities to relocate commercial traffic (rail and truck), utilities and through-traffic outside of congested areas in cooperation with local governments.
  - c. Balance the allocation of resources between current and future transportation needs (including but not limited to the development of new transportation corridors).
  - d. CDOT should develop performance measures for congestion as it has done for pavement condition, surface treatments, bridge structures and safety and make appropriate investments to avoid and alleviate congestion statewide to meet those measures.
3. Secure Additional Funding for Colorado’s Transportation Infrastructure
- a. Acknowledge that all Coloradans must participate in solutions to the transportation-funding dilemma.
  - b. Develop additional resources
    - i. Evaluate and consider enhancement of existing funding mechanisms including but not limited to:
      - 1. Increasing or indexing the gas tax
      - 2. Alternative fuels or fuel sources
      - 3. Advocating for additional federal dollars
      - 4. Reviewing SB-01 and its “trigger”
      - 5. Vehicle Registration Fee
      - 6. License Fees
    - ii. Evaluate and consider New Funding Mechanisms, including but not limited to
      - 1. Further utilize tolling authority
      - 2. Amend fiscal constraints such as TABOR/Amendment 23/Gallagher, while preserving the basic premise of voter approval for any tax increases
      - 3. Explore new tax sources
      - 4. Use Rural/Regional Transportation Authorities (RTAs)
      - 5. Encourage private/public partnerships
      - 6. Development fees

- 7. General Fund Allocation
  - 8. Enhance existing bonding authority.
  - 9. Alternative User Fees
    - a. "Wheel Fee"
    - b. Vehicle Miles Traveled Fee
    - c. Congestion pricing
    - d. Infrastructure utility fee
  - iii. Other
    - c. New funds generated locally should not negatively affect State Transportation funding allocation.
4. Efficiently spending dollars that are currently available including but not limited to:
- a. CDOT and local entities are encouraged to cooperate on locally or privately-funded improvements to the State Highway System as long as those improvements are consistent with the applicable regional and state transportation plans and procedures.
  - b. Strike a balance between the purpose of the project, the need for environmental protection, environmental justice, and public participation while achieving timely completion of the environmental review process.
  - c. Off system improvements that relieve state highway congestion should be considered for state funding.

**B. Enhance the Roles of all Participants in the State's Transportation Planning Process**

- 5. Encourage broad participation in the continuing development and enhancement of the strategic, statewide vision for transportation.
  - i. Continue improving the planning process in the development, enhancement and implementation of a comprehensive statewide strategic vision.
  - ii. Improve opportunities to encourage input into the planning process by the general public.
  - iii. Improve communications between local, regional and state transportation agencies and the general public; and encourage local and regional agencies to utilize CDOT in the development of local and regional transportation priorities.
  - iv. Ensure that the statewide vision is coordinated with regional and local communities to
    - v. assure priorities, plans and visions are consistent with one another.
    - vi. Recognize multi-modal options for urban as well as rural areas.
- 6. Elevate Public Awareness of the Statewide Transportation Challenges
- 7. Educate the public about the transportation planning process and opportunities for
  - i. involvement in that process.
- 8. Develop an ongoing campaign to educate and engage the public on local, regional and
  - i. state transportation needs (both current and future) and the growing discrepancy

- ii. between the cost of those needs and resources currently available to meet them.
  - iii. Communicate the urgency of making investments in the transportation system today to
  - iv. avoid substantially higher costs in the future.
- 9. Emphasize the vital relationship between transportation infrastructure and the economic
  - i. viability of the state, as well as that of local and regional communities.
- 10. Acknowledge that Viable Transportation Corridors Support and Sustain Regional and Statewide Economic Development
- 11. The comprehensive statewide transportation vision must recognize the vital relationship
  - i. between the transportation system (air, rail, highway and transit), the efficient
  - ii. movement of people, goods and services (intra- and inter-regional), and economic
  - iii. sustainability for the State of Colorado.

*Adopted the 20<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2005*