

# UNDER THE DOME

WITH THE NCLA

MARCH 10, 2014

## **BUSINESS COMMUNITY SUPPORTS ALL FUNDING OPTIONS FOR I-25 HIGHWAY EXPANSION**

Interstate 25 has been dubbed the Mainstreet of northern Colorado. As the major north-south spine for the multitude of significant east-west corridors that bind northern Colorado into a strong economic engine, staying ahead of the congestion curve is imperative to maintaining our economic strength.

A third lane from Highway 66 north of Longmont to Highway 14 in Fort Collins is the one of the highest transportation funding priorities for the northern Colorado business community. Under traditional funding scenarios, the \$1.2 Billion project is projected to be completed in 75 years. Given this timeline, the NCLA supports, and will lead in collaboration with our elected officials, the pursuit of any and all funding options to expedite funding of this critical corridor.

The North I-25 Coalition, chaired by Weld County Commissioner Barbara Kirkmeyer, was formed in September to address funding concerns along the northern I-25 corridor and includes representatives of each of the communities within 5 miles of the I-25 network from 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Northglenn and north through Fort Collins. Representatives of the Colorado Department of Transportation are also a formal part of the coalition.

Last week, representatives of the NCLA and its members organizations joined the coalition in an ongoing dialogue about the \$90 M in available dollars for the North I-25 Corridor from the CDOT “Responsible Acceleration of Maintenance and Partnerships” program, otherwise known as “RAMP”. RAMP has become the tool for public private partnerships (P3) and “managed lanes” to be part of the accelerated funding equation for projects throughout the state.

Disappointingly, it was made clear the highway improvements from RAMP dollars would primarily be directed to projects between 120<sup>th</sup> Ave and Highway 66. It was also evident that the corridor north of Highway 66 may not prove to have sufficient volume to justify a P3 arrangement to expedite construction of a third lane. A decision to proceed with RAMP dollars request, however, is required in early April unless an extension of time is granted. The NCLA supported a request by the I-25 Coalition to extend the time in order to allow additional options to be fully considered.

Although a more difficult political environment in which to request specific transportation project funding, securing federal authorization for funding this

nationally significant corridor is among the avenues being pursued. The NCLA supports this approach and supports the outreach key elected officials in the region have made with our Congressional leaders including Congressman Cory Gardner, Congressman Jared Polis and Senator Michael Bennet. We are very encouraged by their respective commitments to funding the corridor.

Much remains to be done to accelerate expansion of the north I-25 corridor. 75 years in unacceptable. All funding options are on the table and the NCLA will explore the viability of each.