

A balanced transportation system accommodates the safe movement of residents, tourists, and goods through the region using an enhanced highway system, public transit, telecommunications, air service and trails.

Transportation



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TRANSPORTATION

Executive Summary

The **Southwest Colorado Index**, previously called the Pathways to Healthier Communities Indicator Report, was first published in 1996 by Operation Healthy Communities Inc. (OHC). That first edition was conceived before data was readily available on the Internet, and there was a tremendous need for localized data as well as a single document to measure community trends. OHC developed vision statements with broad-based community input that defined what a healthy community would look like, and various measures were collected and developed to track changes and evaluate trends over time. After producing five editions of the Indicator Report, the Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado (Region 9) took over publication of the document in 2008. This 2015 edition, produced in a series of installments, is provided courtesy of several regional organizations that recognize the importance of looking at trends and supplying up-to-date information.

This report provides an update on the regional transportation system. A balanced transportation system accommodates the safe movement of residents, tourists, and goods through the region using an enhanced highway system, public transit, telecommunications, air service and trails.

Key Findings – Though only 4.8% of the state’s highway lane miles, SW Colorado sees a higher than average number of safety concerns and some of the most costly maintenance challenges in the state for avalanche control, rock fall areas and snow removal. The region is projected to receive CDOT funding of \$35 million of Regional Priority Program (RPP) funding over the next ten years to address corridor priorities. In our region US 160 and US 550 were selected as key corridors to our region’s transportation system. The number of highway accidents in each county has been declining since 2010. From 2001 to 2014 the number one cause of highway accidents in Archuleta, La Plata and Montezuma Counties was wildlife.

Public transit is still problematic for many areas of the region, although vehicle miles and the number of trips made by transit providers have generally increased since 2000. Telecommunication infrastructure has improved, but when we compare the number of households served in our region (59%), to other rural regions (69%), as well as to the balance of the state (93%) it is clear that we have a bit of catching up to do. Providing air services continues to be a challenge as carriers shift in response to changing markets and regulations. Because of the recreational nature of our area, bicycle use in the region is a popular and growing activity for both transportation and recreation. Highway shoulders and off-system trails are in high demand to meet cycling and pedestrian needs.

Research staff: Laura Lewis Marchino – Deputy Director, Region 9 EDD;
Donna K. Graves, Information Services

Contributors: CDOT Staff – David Bourget, Mike McVaugh, Matt Muraro, Nancy Shanks

Reviewers: Jessica Laitsch, SWCCOG

Community Vision – A balanced transportation system accommodates the safe movement of residents, tourists, and goods through the region using an enhanced highway system, public transit, telecommunications, air service and trails.

The multimodal transportation system in the Southwest Transportation Planning Region (Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma and San Juan Counties) is very important to the economic and social well-being of the area. Just about every activity we engage in outside of our homes involves the transportation system. Roads, bridges, tunnels, transit systems, railroads, sidewalks, bike paths and airports are essential to our livelihoods and lifestyles, providing for the delivery of goods to markets, and providing access to recreation. People in our region often commute long distances to take advantage of employment, shopping opportunities, or lower real estate prices.

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has just updated the Region's 2040 [Transportation Plan](#). In addition to the 1,099 lane miles in the highway system, our region has 2,966 miles of local roads (within towns or municipal areas) and 2,606 miles of forest roads. Due to weather and terrain the region has some unique challenges. Though only 4.8% of the state's highway lane miles, Southwest Colorado sees a higher than average number of safety concerns and some of the most costly maintenance challenges in the state for avalanche control, rock fall areas and snow removal. These challenges include:

- 18% of highway pavement conditions have a drivability life of less than 4 years. 70% of roadways have a drivability of 4 to 10 years, with 12% greater than 10 years. Drivability life is a calculation based on smoothness, pavement distress, and safety.
- 4 Scenic Byways including *Tracks Across Borders* designated in April 2015.
- 6 ski areas (Chapman, Hesperus, Kendall, Purgatory, Silverton, Wolf Creek).
- 21 local and human service transit providers.
- Wolf Creek Pass receives the most snow in Colorado.
- 121 rock fall sites.
- 165 avalanche runs, the most in the state.
- US 550 at Red Mountain Pass has 110 avalanche pathways, the most in the United States.
- 76 bridges, 89% in good condition and 11% in fair condition.

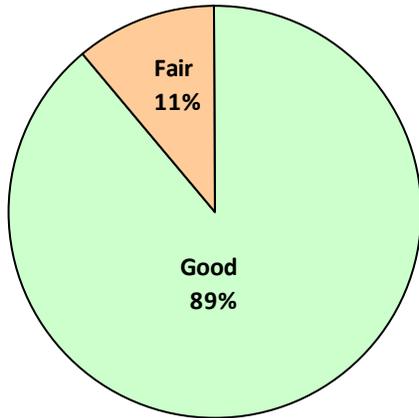
Transportation Funding

The sustainability of transportation funding is in question. Colorado's highway infrastructure is aging with lengthy sections of road entering their 4th or 5th decade of service. The gasoline tax, the primary source of transportation funding, has not increased since 1991. There are several pots of money used for transportation projects. Senate Bill 09-108, also known as FASTER (Funding Advancements for Surface Treatment and Economic Recovery), generates funding comprised of car rental fees and weight-based vehicle registration fees. Monies collected under the FASTER Safety Fund are to be used for construction, reconstruction or maintenance projects that the Colorado Transportation Commission, a county or a municipality determine are needed to enhance the safety of a state highway, county road or city street.

FASTER allocates money to state and local road-safety projects based on the existing distribution formula of 60 percent to the state, 22 percent to counties and 18 percent to municipalities.

Bridge Condition

Source: CDOT 2011-2013

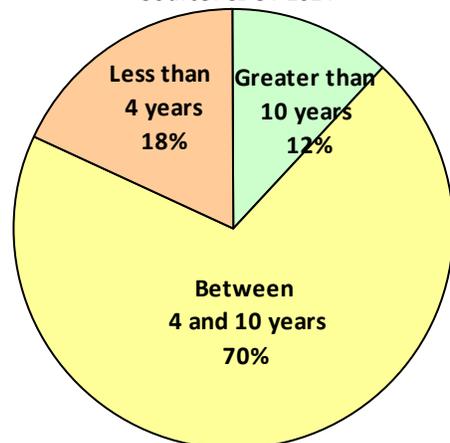


FASTER also dedicates money to bridges through the Colorado Bridge Enterprise (CBE), a government-owned business entity within CDOT. The Colorado General assembly created the [Colorado Bridge Enterprise](#) to complete designated bridge projects that involve the financing, repair, reconstruction and replacement of bridges designated as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, and rated “poor” by CDOT. In our region, none of the bridges currently has a poor rating, though 11% are only in fair condition.

Drivability is a function of roadway smoothness, pavement distress and safety. Drivability Life (DL) is an indication that reports how long, in years, a highway will have acceptable driving conditions. In our region, 18% of highways are estimated to have less than four years of life left.

Drivability Life

Source: CDOT 2014



The region is projected to receive \$35 million of Regional Priority Program (RPP) funding over the next ten years, this is State funding from CDOT allocated to each region to address corridor priorities.

Southwest TPR State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Regional Priority Program			
Corridor	Description	Suggested Funding Amount (millions)	Estimated Cost (millions)
US 160	Prepare design and purchase right of way to complete interchange for US 160 and US 550	\$ 1	\$ 91
US 550	US 550 "GAP" CR 302 to Sunnyside (half build option)	\$ 13	\$ 14
Total		\$ 14	\$ 105

In our region, US 160 and US 550 were selected as having high importance to the transportation system.

Safe Roads

The number of accidents in a region reflects the numbers of people sharing the road as well as the road conditions. Safe roads are a function of adequate signage, passing lanes, safe intersections, weather conditions and driver experience.

Year	Archuleta	Dolores	La Plata	Montezuma	San Juan
2001	235	41	766	421	25
2002	248	43	757	405	40
2003	247	45	876	433	34
2004	256	50	899	434	29
2005	185	39	809	391	35
2006	205	44	810	373	36
2007	233	37	839	372	30
2008	183	54	786	357	21
2009	159	35	759	376	31
2010	174	36	657	331	24
2011	187	31	682	322	35
2012	192	32	691	355	33
2013	162	35	685	311	25
2014	195	42	758	374	15
Total	2,861	564	10,774	5,255	413
AVG	204	40	770	375	30

Source: CDOT

Highlighted cells in this chart illustrate the years in which there were more accidents than the fourteen year average. The number of highway accidents in each county has been mostly declining since 2010. From 2001 to 2014 the number one cause of highway accidents in Archuleta, La Plata and Montezuma Counties was wildlife. In Dolores County overturning was the most common, and in San Juan County it was collisions with fixed objects. There also were a lot of motorcycle crashes in San Juan County, which accounts for 32% of the overturns named as the second highest cause of accidents.

On-System Crashes by County 2001 to 2014

County	On-System Crashes**	Property Damage Only**	Injury**	Fatal**	Most Common Crash Type	Second Most Common Crash Type	Third Most Common Crash Type
Archuleta	204	147	54	2	Wildlife	Fixed Object	Rear End
Dolores	40	26	14	1	Overturning	Fixed Object	Wildlife
La Plata	770	571	192	7	Wildlife	Fixed Object	Rear End
Montezuma	375	267	104	5	Wildlife	Fixed Object	Rear End
San Juan	30	18	11	1	Fixed Object	Overturning	Wildlife, Side swiping

Source: CDOT

** Average per Year 2001 to 2014

Information regarding DUI caused accidents was not available for this report.

Transit

Transit service is desired in all parts of the region to relieve traffic flow, provide essential links bringing employees to commercial centers, as well as providing transit services to the elderly and those with disabilities. Tourism has also created a need for transit to improve the traffic flow at major recreational areas. For the majority of providers, vehicle miles and the number of trips have generally increased since 2000.

The following table lists the major transit providers in our region, but it does not include school transportation systems, private tour operators, lodging or casino shuttle services, and senior care facilities.

Transit Provider	Year	Days per Week	Annual Veh. Miles	# Trips	# of Vehicles	Comments
Cortez Cab	2015	4	129,766	11,435	3	New Service
Archuleta County Senior Services	2004	4	11,804	7,528	2	Now operated by Mtn. Express.
	2007	4	11,547	5,448	2	
Archuleta County Mtn. Express	2004	5	69,748	15,748	3	Annual vehicle miles are declining.
	2007	6	63,276	10,136	3	
	2015	5	41,496	*	3	
Dolores County Senior Services	2004	3	5,720	2,400	1	More vehicles and more clients to more events.
	2007	5	23,800	3,452	3	
	2015	5	79,571	5,320	6	
Durango Transit	2004	6	344,533	267,019	14	More vehicles, increasing number of trips.
	2007	6	410,695	273,345	16	
	2015	7 (6 winter)	391,000	472,943	18	
Durango Transportation	2004	7	279,503	16,010	5	Now Durango Cab.
	2007	7	*	*	*	
Durango Cab	2015	7	280,808	20,866	5	New Service.
Montezuma Public Transportation	2004	5	36,301	3,395	5	More vehicles and vehicle miles, more trips.
	2005	5	33,235	6,754	7	
	2015	6	106,071	9,941	9	
La Plata Senior Services	2004	5	*	1,227	2	Annual vehicle miles have increased but demand for services is not being met.
	2007	5	40,901	6,027	4	
	2015	5	45,721	*	4	
SUCAP-Ignacio Roadrunner	2004	6	45,020	7,669	1	More vehicles and vehicle miles, more trips.
	2007	6	105,210	14,170	4	
	2015	7	240,850	35,337	7	
Roadrunner Stage Lines	2015	7	173,040	5,920	2	New Service 2014.
Ute Mtn. Ute Tribe Transit	2004	5	112,000	71,31	5	Fewer vehicle miles and trips.
	2007	*	*	*	*	
	2015	5	23,000	657	1	

Source: Individual Service Providers

* Data not available

Direct comparisons for the number of passengers served by each provider are difficult as some are reporting the number of passenger trips while others report the number of program trips. *Program trips* are generated by transit ridership to and from specific social service programs, while *non-program demand* (i.e. passenger trips) are generated by other mobility needs of elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and the general public, including youth.

Non-program trips may include shopping, employment, and medical trips. For example, Communities Connections, Inc. serves persons with disabilities and has two, 15 passenger buses to take clients in Durango and Cortez to day programs. They are looking to purchase two additional handicapped accessible vans to serve those living outside of the Durango and Cortez communities.

Intercity Bus Service - Intercity bus service is limited in the region. Bus service was provided by TNM&O, a private carrier that serves as an "interline" to Greyhound Bus, until 2010. After several years of no service, Roadrunner, a program of Southern Ute Community Action Programs (SUCAP), began service in July 2014 with Roadrunner Stage Lines. This service provides one round trip daily from Ignacio to Grand Junction, Colorado to meet up with other established Greyhound routes.

Telecommunications

Telecommunications is also considered to be a transportation element in our region. Broadband is now virtually considered a utility for businesses and home-based employment, no different than water, sewer, telephone service, electricity, and roads. Advancing the telecommunications infrastructure throughout the region has been a documented priority for well over a decade. With the decline of energy revenues and employment, diversifying the economy is especially critical in the coming years. The ability of regional businesses and residents to access new technologies and telecommunications services is essential to fostering economic growth.

Adequate telecommunications coverage requires substantial investments from both the private and public sectors to bring services to areas where private companies cannot (or will not). In 2010, the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG) was awarded a \$3 million grant to implement a high capacity network for the regional governments. The total project, including local matching funds, was over \$4 million. This network, known as the Southwest Colorado Access Network (SCAN), provided communities in our region secure connections between governmental offices, educational institutions, law enforcement, libraries, fire departments and medical facilities. The SCAN also focused on developing cost effective broadband services. The SCAN Final Report, outlining the scope and accomplishments of the project can be seen at <http://www.swccog.org/projects/telecom/>.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) periodically updates its performance measurement for broadband speeds. By definition, "advanced telecommunications capability" requires consumers to have access to actual download (i.e., to the customer) speeds of at least 25 Mbps and actual upload (i.e., from the customer) speeds of at least 3 Mbps (25 Mbps/3 Mbps). The Colorado Governor's Office of Information Technology maintains a website that updates information about broadband speeds and coverage across the state. This interactive map is a useful tool to see how our communities are doing <http://www.oit.state.co.us/strategy/broadband>.

	# of Households w/ Advanced Telecommunications Capability*	Total # of Households	% of Households Served
Archuleta	1,160	5,209	22%
Dolores	1	900	0%
La Plata	14,081	21,101	67%
Montezuma	7,373	10,491	70%
San Juan	14	343	4%

Some areas of the region fare better than others, but when we compare the number of households served (59%) to other rural regions (69%), as well as to the balance of the state (93%) it is clear that we have a bit of catching up to do.

*FCC definition: 25 Mbps/3 Mbps

Entire Region 59.5 %

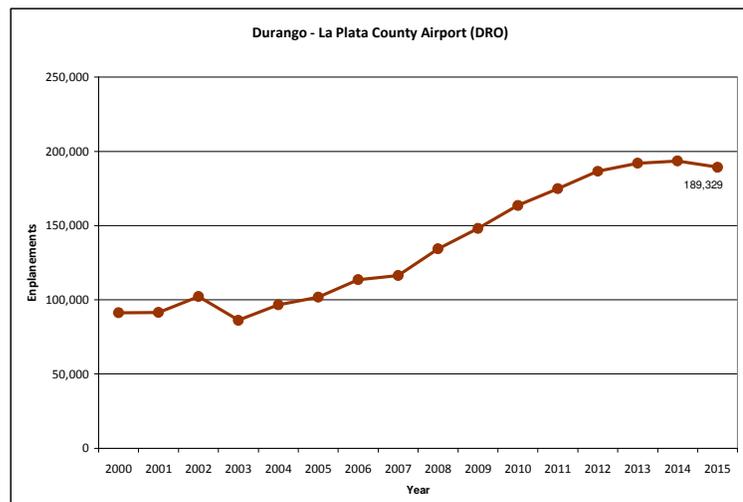
Entire State 93 %

Entire State - Rural areas only 68.8 %

Air Service

In western Colorado, aviation services have become increasingly important in maintaining and enhancing the viability and vitality of local and regional economies. Within the region, there are three general aviation facilities and two commercial service airports. General aviation facilities are located in Dove Creek, Durango (Animas Airpark), and Pagosa Springs (Stevens Field). **Dove Creek** has a runway, but does not offer any services. **Animas Airpark** provides maintenance services, rental planes and flight training. Many of their clientele are local recreational flyers. **Stevens Field** offers a variety of aviation services, including tie downs, hangars (when available), maintenance facilities and fuel. It is also considered to be an important amenity for 2nd homeowners who commute into the area in private planes.

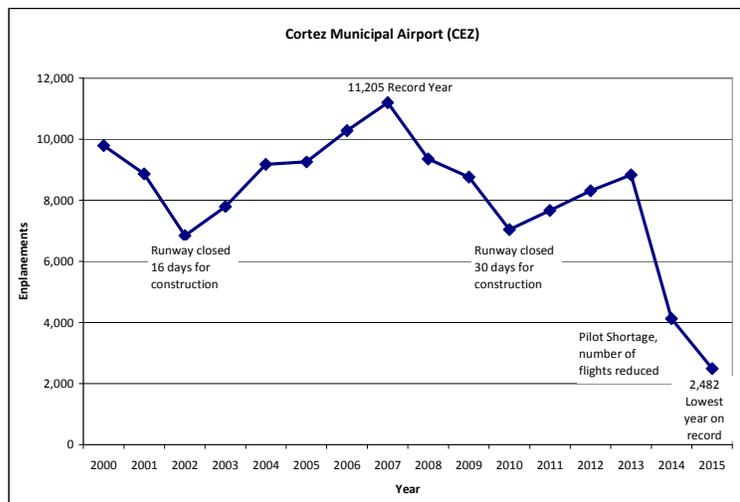
Commercial airports include Cortez Municipal Airport (CEZ) and the Durango-La Plata County Airport (DRO). They provide the bulk of business and passenger activity. The **Durango-La Plata County Airport** terminal opened in February 1988. It has two airlines, five rental car agencies, two restaurant/bar locations (including one in the secure passenger waiting area), and a gift shop. Several airlines have come and gone at DRO, which is currently served by United, with non-stop service to Denver; and American Airlines, with non-stop service to Dallas – Fort Worth and Phoenix. Passenger activity has shown steady growth, as measured by the number of passengers boarding (enplanements), since 2003.



DRO is currently updating its Airport Master Plan, which will study the facility needs to meet projected aeronautical demand for the next 20 years and recommend a plan that prepares the airport to serve as the preferred gateway and economic catalyst for the Four Corners region.

Cortez Municipal Airport (CEZ) is a public use air carrier airport owned and operated by the City of Cortez. It was originally constructed in 1951. The current terminal building was constructed in 1959 and consists of an airline operations area, car rental service counters, restrooms, and Federal security aspects for the airline operations. The Cortez Municipal Airport has seen a number of ups and downs over the years, primarily due to episodes of construction. CEZ was served by United Airlines until 2004, but now uses Great Lakes Airlines, which offers non-stop service to Denver. An air taxi service, the Cortez Flying Service, is also available at CEZ.

The airport has been severely impacted by rule changes implemented by the FAA in 2013 requiring pilots to have 1,500 flight time hours to fly airline aircraft. The previous level was 500 hours. Great Lakes lost 3/4 of their pilot roster and had to cut service to communities, some losing service entirely. CEZ went from 22 weekly flights to 7, and from 19 seat aircraft to 9 seats. They are still an Essential Air Service (EAS) community, but continued service depends on the survival of the airline. Great Lakes Airlines is the largest EAS provider in the nation, with only a handful remaining. The future is bleak for many small airports in rural communities.



Multi-modal Transportation

Because of the recreational nature of our area, bicycle use in the region is a popular and growing activity for both transportation and recreation. Highway shoulders and off-system trails are in high demand to meet cycling and pedestrian needs. CDOT has committed 2.5% of their construction funds on bike and pedestrian programs (CDOT Fiscal Year 2015 Annual Report).

All five counties have trails and bike paths listed in their Community Development Action Plans for 2016. Some of those projects include the Town to Lakes Trail in Pagosa Springs; completing the Town Trail in Silverton; mapping bike routes in Dove Creek; designating usages of trails around Rico; and a Mancos connection of the Colorado Trail and creating a Path to Mesa Verde that would run to the City of Cortez. In La Plata County, work on the Smart 160 Trail and Animas River Trail in Durango continues.

The City of Durango approved a North Main Corridor Mobility Study in early 2016 that includes plans for safer bike and pedestrian access as well as improved connectability on city streets. Durango has been listed as a Bike Friendly community since 2008 by the League of American Bicyclists. Durango has also achieved Gold Status, one of only 5 communities in Colorado.

When focusing on motorized travel in addition to transit, area groups are advocating for future Park & Ride locations for commuters. Several have been planned and developed in the last few years including one at the junction of US 160 and CR 225A and the Sleeping Ute Rest Area between Mancos and Cortez. Also, La Plata County is currently developing a Park and Ride area at the intersection of US 550 and CR 302 which should be completed in 2016.