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## CDOT head calls for new thinking

The future of transportation 'more than a highway'

By Donna Gray  
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Aspen, CO Colorado  
June 23, 2007

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**GLENWOOD SPRINGS** — In a world of dwindling oil reserves and growing concern over climate change, new thinking is necessary to solve traffic and its attendant pollution problems.

That was one of the themes of a transportation conference Friday at the Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs.

Former Rifle resident Russell George, executive director of the Colorado Department of Transportation, called the present "a moment of challenge" to find creative solutions to forge a new energy economy less dependent on carbon-emitting cars.

The future for transportation in Colorado, he said, "is more than a highway."

George, whom Gov. Bill Ritter appointed to head the department this year, spoke of one opportunity that rings true to many who live along the Interstate 70 corridor.

CDOT is preparing a programmatic environmental impact statement to evaluate ways of alleviating growing congestion on I-70. A coalition of local governments has pushed CDOT to look at alternatives to adding more driving lanes and creating another bore at the Eisenhower tunnel, including bus and rail transit.

George said he supports those alternate means of travel for the corridor.

"There's no question in my mind. ... It's my belief that

Russell George, director of the Colorado Department of Transportation, speaks at the Transportation and New Energy Economy conference Friday at the Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs. (Kara K. Pearson/Post Independent)



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CDOT absolutely embraces these multimodal opportunities," George said.

However, CDOT hasn't enough money to fund its highway projects, let alone new transit, he added. "It's just the cold, hard facts."

Although the funding source is unknown, "we have to have an honest-to-God irrevocable start on the transit piece. I don't think we can afford not to."

Although it has not been popular with voters, states and the federal government need to increase gasoline taxes, the backbone of highway funding. They also need to consider collecting tolls to fund highways. Major East Coast highways have tolls along their lengths, as do highways in Europe, said David Burwell, former CEO of the Rails to Trails Conservancy.

"Transportation is essentially about community development," he said, and communities need to be involved in designing their streets and highways.

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