



I-70 coalition's next step is funding

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The work of the Interstate 70 coalition is far from done, says Northwest Colorado Council of Governments director Gary Severson.

As soon as July, the 31 jurisdictions will start to form a transportation management agency. The new organization would initially focus on fundraising, Severson said. The key is to access some state, federal and private funding, he added.

Colorado's congressional delegation has taken an interest.

Representatives from Sens. Ken Salazar's and Wayne Allard's offices, as well as from Rep. Mark Udall's office, attended a recent coalition retreat, and suggested that a unified position would find support.

"The agency will work with our congressional delegation to find some of that funding," Severson said, explaining that it's still too early to talk about specific dollar amounts.

The private sector will also play an important role, Severson said.

In Clear Creek County, former county commissioner Ed Rapp advocates considering the next step: forming a state-authorized transit district, with state-authorized powers.

Rapp said the Roaring Fork Transit Authority so far is the sole entity formed under a state law that enables creation of rural transit districts, but that it could be used as a model.

Rapp said the evolving entity should also be prepared to become a lobbying force at all levels, from local municipal governments right up to the state and federal level. Cashing in any political chips could be crucial he said at a recent meeting in Frisco, outlining a course for civic activism.

As a last resort, I-70 group should be prepared to lean on the Federal Highway Administration in Washington, D.C., Rapp said. If CDOT moves ahead with a plan that's not acceptable to the coalition, that leverage may be needed to try and persuade the feds to withhold approval of CDOT's decision.

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