



## Mountain coalition's next step is money

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**Bob Berwyn**

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This summer, the mountain towns working on traffic on the High Country stretch of I-70 will form what's called a transportation management agency.

The organization will focus on raising funds from federal, state and private sources to pay for ideas meant to deal with freeway congestion, said Gary Severson, director of the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, a regional lobbying organization.

Colorado's congressional, including senators Ken Salazar and Wayne Allard and Eagle County's congressman, Rep. Mark Udall, taken an interest, suggests a unified stance from the mountains towns would get more support in Denver and Washington, D.C.

"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.

In Clear Creek County, former county commissioner Ed Rapp advocates 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 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, the I-70 group should be prepared to lean on the Federal Highway Administration in Washington, D.C., Rapp said. If the Colorado Department of Transportation moves ahead with a plan that's not acceptable to the coalition, that leverage may be needed to try and persuade the feds to block the agency's decision.

Vail, Colorado

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