



**COLORADO**  
**Department of Transportation**  
Division of Transportation Development

Multimodal Planning Branch  
2829 West Howard Place  
Denver, CO 80204

TO: Transportation Commission  
FROM: Debra Perkins-Smith, Director of CDOT Division of Transportation Development  
Marissa Gaughan, MPO and Regional Planning Section Manager  
DATE: November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
RE: Sustaining Colorado Rest Areas

**Purpose**

This memo is intended to update the Transportation Commission on the function and condition of CDOT Rest Areas, demonstrate why Rest Areas are an important safety feature for our highway system, and present recommendations for a sustainable Rest Area Program.

**Action**

Approve change of concept for a sustainable Rest Area Program at CDOT.

**Background**

In 2016, the Transportation Commission requested a framework for assessing rest areas for improvements and/or closure. This memo outlines the results of the Rest Area Study conducted. The goals of the Rest Area Study were to:

- Research national standards and procedures that other states follow regarding rest areas;
- Inventory the 27 CDOT Rest Area facilities;
- Develop Rest Area policy guidance;
- Review expenditures data to estimate maintenance costs for Rest Areas, and;
- Develop a recommendation for a sustainable Rest Area Program.

The full Rest Area Study can be found at the link below:

<https://www.codot.gov/about/transportation-commission/documents/2018-agendas-and-supporting-documents/hidden-files-for-internet-posting/november-2018-workshop-tc-rest-area-study-phase-i.pdf>

**Details**

CDOT actively engaged with a diverse work group in developing the Rest Area Study. Internally, the work group included each of the CDOT Regions, Traffic and Safety Engineering Branch, Office of Communications, Civil Rights and Business Resource Center, Division of Highway Maintenance, Division of Transportation Development, and Property Management. Externally, CDOT engaged with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC), Transportation Planning Regions (TPRs), and the Colorado Tourism Office.

The conclusion reached from the Rest Area Study was that all CDOT Rest Areas should remain open with the exception of the Deer Trail Rest Area which has already been permanently closed. The reasons for this are demonstrable linkages between Rest Areas and highway safety, tourism and economic vitality, and public perceptions.

- **Highway Safety** - Rest Area facilities are essential safety features on the highway system. Driver fatigue is a major cause of serious traffic accidents that result in 1,500 fatalities and 71,000 injuries in the US each year. Attractive, strategically-placed Rest Areas help drivers recover from fatigue by providing a safe place to stop and rest before continuing their trips. Rest Areas also mitigate distracted driving by providing motorists with a safe place to talk or text on their cell phone.

- Tourism and Economic Vitality - Rest Areas, especially those that serve as Welcome Centers, demonstrate that CDOT cares about our travelers and wants people to enjoy the adventure of driving across the State of Colorado. Rest Areas provide great sources of information regarding trip planning, places to stay, special events, etc.
- Public Perceptions - Rest Areas are often a first impression of how CDOT serves the people of Colorado. According to recent functional classification counts conducted, CDOT Rest Areas are also very popular and well used. Closing rest areas, especially those with high usage rates, is usually met with significant opposition from the public. For instance, Virginia DOT closed 19 rest areas in 2009 with the intent of saving approximately \$9 million per year in costs. These closures were met with fierce opposition by interstate travelers because of concerns regarding traveler safety, and loss of state tourism dollars. As a result, legislation was passed that required all 19 rest areas to be reopened during the spring of 2010 with funds from Virginia DOT's maintenance reserves.

#### *Rest Area Policy Statement*

The Rest Area Study led to the creation of a Rest Area Policy Statement that reads:

*CDOT should ensure that public rest area facilities or acceptable alternatives are available with reasonable spacing along interstates and key corridors within the state for the safety, comfort, convenience, and information needs of motorists.*

Data-driven criteria was created around this policy statement and applied to the CDOT Rest Areas. Major findings from this analysis included:

- Reasonable spacing - The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guidance has 60 minutes or 60 miles of drive time as the maximum time/distance a driver should go without having a stopping opportunity available. The study recommended that CDOT follow the AASHTO Guidance in providing rest area facilities, unless an acceptable alternative was available for both passenger and freight vehicles.
- Safety - Crash pattern characteristics were analyzed for the 2-mile stretch of adjacent highway centered on each CDOT Rest Area. The study looked to see if there were asleep-at-the-wheel, driver fatigue, and driver-unfamiliar-with-the-area crash patterns, and/or crash frequencies above the statewide average. If one or more of these crash pattern characteristics were present, the study suggested that CDOT retain these rest areas for safety reasons as a way to mitigate the crash patterns observed.
- Key Entrance to the State - The study recommended that Rest Areas at key entrances to the state be provided to help drive tourism and economic vitality. Rest areas should welcome visitors, demonstrate that CDOT cares about the safety of our travelers, and wants our travelers to enjoy the adventure of driving across our great state.

Of the 27 CDOT Rest Areas that were the focus of this study, only four were identified as not being needed based on the policy criteria. Of those four, one has already been permanently closed (Deer Trail Rest Area in Region 4). The other three are currently a low cost to maintain, and experience high usage rates suggesting that it would be worthwhile for CDOT to keep these rest areas open from a cost/benefit perspective.

#### *Structure of a Rest Area Asset Program*

CDOT Rest Areas are aging and in need of significant capital investments. CDOT Rest Area Buildings currently have an average asset condition rating of a "C". However, this rating will decline significantly and rapidly unless changes are made to the way CDOT manages and maintains rest areas. Currently, Rest Areas do not have their own asset category and must compete with other funding needs, typically for Regional Priority Program (RPP) and Maintenance dollars. Additionally, user experience at CDOT Rest Areas goes beyond the condition of the building structure alone. For instance, proper lighting, adequate parking, clean and regularly maintained restrooms, proper signage, and other safety amenities to ensure travelers feel safe at CDOT Rest Areas 24/7 are also important factors in assessing rest area condition. CDOT Rest Areas have terrible reviews on Google. This indicates that CDOT needs additional performance metrics in place for evaluating Rest Area condition.

To this end, CDOT is proposing that Rest Areas become a separate asset category under Property Management. This will allow Rest Areas a separate funding structure for capital improvement and controlled deferred maintenance. Staff is also working to build a separate rest area level of service (LOS) into the overall Maintenance Level of Service (MLOS). Thereby, Rest Areas will also connect with the Maintenance Division with the creation of a Maintenance Program Area (MPA) dedicated just to the maintenance and operations of Rest Areas.

#### *Critical Rest Area Needs*

In addition to the regular yearly maintenance needs, the Rest Area Study identified that approximately \$28 million dollars in capital improvements are needed to rehabilitate CDOT rest areas. Most critical of these capital improvement needs include:

- Vail Pass Rest Area waste water upgrade - \$2-\$3 million
  - The Vail Pass Rest Area is in need of a waste water upgrade. The waste water system issues at Vail Pass Rest Area have reached such a critical point that CDOT is forced to close the rest area for two days per week so that the system can recover and be ready for weekend traffic. This closure results in a heavier usage of portable sweet smelling toilets (SST) at other sites, which are also at capacity. The expense of maintaining the SSTs is \$60,000 per year, which could be eliminated if there was a functioning waste water system in place. Additionally, the waste water upgrade would reduce current maintenance costs by 20-30%.
  - The Vail Pass Rest Area is a focal point for Colorado. With well over 2,500 visits a day, it is the most utilized CDOT rest area and is important for many safety reasons. The Vail Pass Rest area is also at or over capacity for truck parking most every day.
- Pueblo Rest Area Improvements - \$2 - \$3 million
  - The Pueblo Southbound Rest Area is also in need of a critical waste water upgrade. This rest area must often be closed due to waste collecting to unsafe levels. It costs CDOT approximately \$200,000 each time this happens to clean it out. The waste water upgrade would reduce maintenance costs by approximately \$25,000 per year.
  - With over 1,000 visits a day, the well-utilized Pueblo Southbound Rest Area is an essential safety feature for I-25.
- Rest Area Programmatic needs:
  - \$100k-500k to fully build Rest Area LOS into the MLOS system.
  - Web-based security cameras. Cameras would record illegal activity and help police spot real-time problems.
  - Appropriate signage informing the public of the presence of above security cameras.
  - Hersch Badge Systems on all Rest area doors- the same system is used throughout CDOT in order to lock down a facility remotely.
  - Solar trash cans- they compact refuse automatically and notify via phone app when full. Reduces maintenance time / resource needs with just-in-time information.
  - Replace existing facility windows and doors with more energy efficient models to reduce heating/air costs.
  - Convert old lever flush toilets to sensor based low-flow toilets to maintain a clean appearance and reduce water usage.
  - Permanent vehicle counters at rest area entrances to keep accurate count of facility users for annual reporting.

#### Next Steps

- January 2019: Discuss funding options
- 2019: Asset Management Program Development
  - Develop Maintenance MPA with LOS by tier
  - Set Performance Targets
  - Incorporate into Budget Setting Workshop

#### Attachments

- Attachment A - Rest Area Presentation



**COLORADO**  
Department of  
Transportation

**Transportation Commission**  
**Sustaining Colorado Rest Areas**  
**November 14, 2018**



## Timeline and Background

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- In 2016, the Transportation Commission requested a framework for assessing rest areas for improvements and/or closure.
- Today, we share with you the results of our Rest Area Study and Analysis.



# Agenda

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- Rest Area Study
- Why are Rest Areas important to CDOT?
  - Safety
  - Tourism & Economic Vitality
  - Public Perceptions
- How can CDOT set up a sustainable Rest Area Program?
  - Policy Statement
  - Structure of a Rest Area Asset Program
- Next Steps
  - Critical rest area needs
  - Funding Options discussion at January Meeting



## Rest Area Study

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- ✓ Review of other states and national standards
- ✓ Review of all CDOT Rest Areas
- ✓ Develop policy guidance
- ✓ Review of available expenditures data to determine maintenance costs
- ✓ Develop draft recommendation for a sustainable program





# CDOT Rest Area Facilities

## Rest Area Study

## CDOT Rest Areas

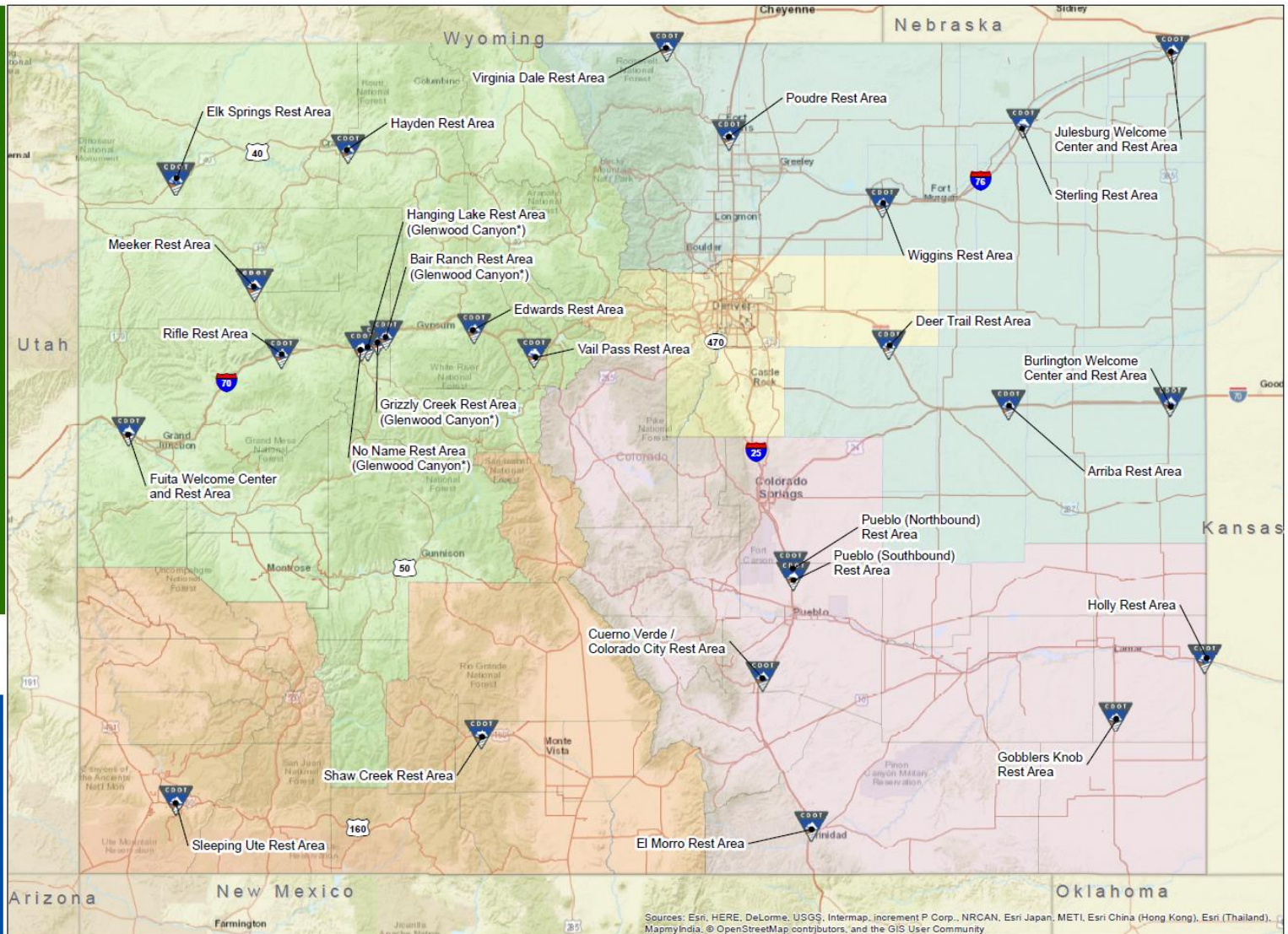


\* No recommendations are being made to the Glenwood Canyon Rest Areas as part of this study



0 15 30 60 Miles

**DRAFT**  
**August 2016**



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, increment P Corp., NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community





## Rest Area Study – Key Findings

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- Rest Areas should remain open
  - Rest Areas = Highway Safety
  - Rest Areas = Tourism & Economic Vitality
  - Rest Areas = How people view CDOT
- Need to find a long-term, sustainable way to fund and maintain rest areas
  - Rest Areas as a separate asset program



# Rest Area Study – Data Collection and Analysis

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- Usage data
  - Functional Classification Counts (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter)
  - Installation of Door Counters
  - Truck Parking Volume to Capacity Analysis
- Capturing more accurate maintenance costs
  - Work Order Manager
- Data Conclusions:
  - Data collected to date indicates rest areas are well utilized, and several are often over capacity for truck parking. More funding is needed for annual maintenance of Rest Areas.



# Rest Areas = Highway Safety

## AAA: Drowsy driving plays larger role in accidents than federal statistics suggest

Bart Jansen, USA TODAY

Published 2:13 a.m. ET Feb. 8, 2018 | Updated 7:59 a.m. ET Feb. 8, 2018



Sleepy drivers cause nearly 1 in 10 crashes in the U.S. that accounts for several thousands deaths per year, according to study released by the car and travel group AAA. USA TODAY

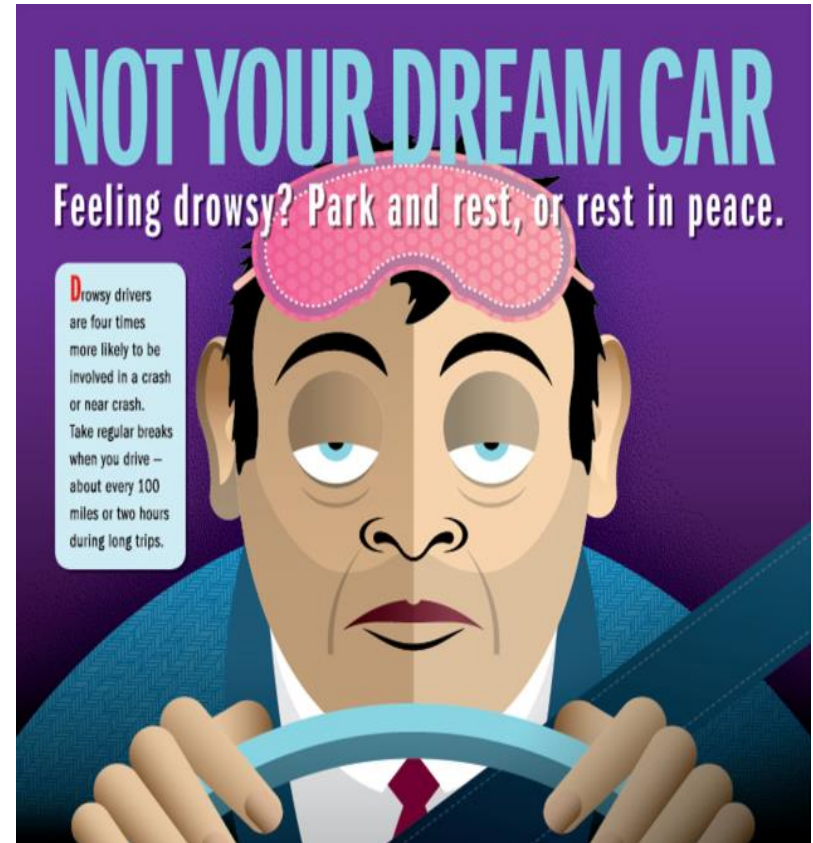
- By studying dashboard video from 700 accidents, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that 9.5% of all crashes involved drowsy drivers, based on the portion of time the drivers' eyes were closed in the minutes before a crash. The portion grows to 10.8% in more severe crashes.
- Federal estimates suggested drowsiness was a factor in only 1% or 2% of crashes.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/02/07/aaa-drowsy-driving-plays-larger-role-accidents-than-federal-statistics-suggest/313226002/>



# Rest Areas = Highway Safety

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<https://www.ghsa.org/sites/default/files/2017-02/Drowsy%202016-U.pdf>





## Rest Areas = Tourism & Economic Vitality

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Rest Areas, especially those that serve as Welcome Centers, demonstrate that CDOT cares about our travelers and wants people to enjoy the adventure of driving across the State of Colorado.



Julesburg Welcome Center  
1,500+ visits a day





# Rest Areas = How people view CDOT

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## Vail Pass – I-70 West (CDOT R3)

2,500+ visitors per day



**Chris Los**  
2 reviews

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ a year ago

Our visit here yesterday was far away the worst I have ever seen this stop and I have visited this stop since the 80s. The bathrooms stunk and were filthy the grounds also were untidy. There were portolets outside. I should have used those instead. Atrocious.



**Travis McDowell**  
**Local Guide** · 35 reviews · 45 photos

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ a year ago

Dirty is an understatement, this was embarrassing



**Nathan Smith**  
**Local Guide** · 11 reviews · 9 photos

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ a year ago

Rest area building was closed. Great view, wish I could actually stop to rest.



**Elkins Dahle**  
**Local Guide** · 504 reviews · 104 photos

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 2 months ago

Small and jammed up with cars, tourists, bikers. No place to park. For all the people here CO needs to build a rest area 100 times bigger with car parking for 100+ cars and truck parking for 50+ trucks. There is currently parking for like 20 cars and like 2 big trucks. That's all it offers.



# Rest Areas = How people view CDOT

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## Pueblo SB– I-25 South (CDOT R2)

1,000+ visitors per day



**Angela Hively**

2 reviews

★★★★★ 3 years ago

Pit toilets, no water, potable or otherwise, complete regression to before the age of the railway. People who refill their own water bottles should stop elsewhere.



**Steven Nielson**

**Local Guide** · 115 reviews · 3 photos

★★★★★ 2 years ago

Non-flush toilets full of more flies than I have ever seen in my life, with a terrible smell. I live in North Pueblo under 10 minutes away from this rest stop so if I got here it has to be an absolute emergency, and I still walked out in disgust. Non-potable water as well.



**Ann Thompson**

7 reviews · 10 photos

★★★★★ a year ago

It was closed. Couldn't even use a picnic table. Starting on I 25S in Denver, this leg of our trip has been a nightmare!



# Rest Areas = How people view CDOT

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## Arriba Rest Area – I-70 East (CDOT R4)

1,500+ visitors per day



**Justin Grogan**

Local Guide · 335 reviews · 361 photos

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 2 years ago

During the day, I'd give it 2 stars.. Not the cleanest, restrooms smell. At night, I'd give it a 0!!! Very dark, sketchy, and desolate. Be cautious!



**Joe Zanghi**

Local Guide · 88 reviews · 21 photos

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ a year ago

As a CO resident, I was embarrassed by this rest stop. The restroom was filthy, smelled bad and was poorly lighted. Common CDOT! You can do better with my tax money!



**Erin Winstanley**

1 review

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 3 weeks ago - 🚩

The water fountains don't work & bathrooms are old/dirty.



# Rest Area Policy Statement

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CDOT should ensure that public rest area facilities or acceptable alternatives are available with reasonable spacing along interstates and key corridors within the state for the safety, comfort, convenience, and information needs of motorists.

Rest area parking and comfort stations should be free of charge and accessible at all hours. Rest areas at key entrances to the state should be provided to help drive tourism and economic vitality. CDOT should pursue partnerships at rest areas to maximize both effectiveness and funding opportunities, and to promote safety and sustainability.



# Funding and Management Structure

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## Current

- No Performance Targets
- Management – Decentralized by Region
- Funding – Adhoc (ie RPP, Maintenance)

## Future

- Performance Targets
- Management – Asset Management
  - Property Mgmt – Asset Manager
  - Division of Maintenance – MPA
  - Region – Maintenance
- Funding – Constrained but Stable (ie Asset Management)





## Next Steps

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- Analysis from the Rest Area Study indicates that \$28 million is needed to rehabilitate CDOT Rest Areas
  - In addition to increased funding for regular, yearly maintenance needs.
- Critical Rest Area Needs
  - Vail Pass - \$2+M for repairs
  - Pueblo SB - \$2M for repairs / rehabilitation
  - Major safety improvements at all rest areas including improved lighting, web-based security cameras, etc.
- January 2019: Discuss funding options
- 2019: Asset Management Program Development
  - Develop Maintenance MPA with LOS by tier
  - Set Performance Targets
  - Incorporate into Budget Setting Workshop