



TABOR Issue Brief

The Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR) restricts the amount of revenue that can be spent on state and local services—from health care to transportation to education. In the 1990s, TABOR forced reductions in many state services, and since 2000 the revenue situation has become especially dire. TABOR's ratchet effect won't let services recover, even when the economy rebounds, so the cuts caused by revenue shortages remain in place. Services will never be able to catch up or keep pace with real economic growth—and will, in fact, continue to shrink—unless we change TABOR's spending limits and eliminate the ratchet effect.

According to Legislative Council's Dec. 2004 forecast, under current revenue projections, the General Assembly will have to reduce FY 2005-06 expenditures by \$244.9 million to accommodate allowable General Fund growth as prescribed by TABOR, while simultaneously giving back \$459.2 million in refunds. Colorado's improving revenue environment means that programs supported by either General Fund or cash funds will compete against each other under TABOR spending restrictions.

TABOR Briefs:

- Agriculture
- Art and Culture
- Colorado's Economy
- Community Colleges
- Higher Education
- Judiciary
- Medicaid and Health
- Mental Health
- Public Health
- Public Libraries
- Rural Colorado
- State Parks
- Transportation

Transportation

- In 2003, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave Colorado a D+ for the condition of the state's roads and highways and a C+ for its bridges.
- The Surface Transportation Policy Project has noted that roads across the nation are in need of repair. However, Colorado is among several states whose road conditions have actually worsened. In 1994, 65% of Colorado's roads were in poor condition, by 2001, that percentage rose to 73%.
- Colorado spends far less than other states to maintain its transportation infrastructure, ranking just 44th based on spending per mile of highway in poor condition.
- Between 1990 and 2002, Colorado experienced the third highest population growth in the nation, and the third largest increase in vehicle travel. Colorado's population increased 37%, while vehicle travel on Colorado's major highways and roads increased 60%.
- The average daily one-way commute in Denver increased from 22.2 minutes in 1990 to 25.9 minutes in 2000. As a result, the typical commuter in Denver now spends an average of 31 more hours a year in rush-hour traffic—the equivalent of nearly four working days.
- Colorado needs an extra \$1.6 billion a year to cope with the state's crumbling bridges, jammed highways, and decaying roads. Without additional funding, the backlog of necessary transportation improvement projects will total \$12.6 billion by 2010.
- The Colorado Department of Transportation is using money that would normally fund construction to help pay back bonds for 28 major road projects. Starting in 2006, debt service obligations will grow to \$168 million annually for the next 10 years.

TABOR ISSUE BRIEF: TRANSPORTATION

Colorado's rapid growth over the past 25 years has pushed the transportation system beyond its capacity and available funding. The result is that we are using today's transportation dollars to solve yesterday's transportation problems while trying to adequately plan and fund our future transportation systems. We must concentrate efforts and make major changes in the transportation arena to preserve and enhance Colorado's economic development, tourism, quality of life, viability and sustainability.

ACTION 22, Colorado Transportation Principles, Dec. 2004.

- According to the Governor's Task Force, a minimum investment of \$206 million per year would be required just to maintain the state's current transportation infrastructure.
- Some 28 high priority transportation projects have been deferred due to funding shortfalls. Below are just a few of the many stalled projects aggravating Colorado drivers.

High Priority Deferred Projects (7th Pot)			
Project	Percent Funded	Project	Percent Funded
I-25, South Academy to Briargate	(48%)	US 160, Wolf Creek Pass	(75%)
I-25/US 36/ SH 2	(80%)	US 550, Durango to New Mexico	(38%)
US 287, Campo to Hugo	(46%)	US 160, Junction of SH 3 to Florida R.	(38%)
Powers Blvd, Colorado Springs	(24%)	East Corridor and West Corridor	(1%)
I-70 from DIA to Eagle County Airport	(2%)	South I-25, Denver to Colorado Springs	(26%)
North I-25 Corridor, SH 166 to Fort Collins	(11%)		

(Funding Status of Projects as of November 2004)

(SOURCES: Governor's Transportation Task Force, Surface Transportation Policy Project, www.transact.org, 2003; JBC, Colorado Department of Transportation, Briefing Document FY 2005-06, American Civil Engineers Report Card 2003, www.asce.org/reportcard/; Transportation Finance Task Force Report 2004; Surface Transportation Policy Project, "The State of Our Nation's Roads", www.dot.state.co.us/budget/; The Road Information Program (TRIP) report, "Making the Grade in Colorado: An Analysis of the Ability of Colorado's Transportation System to Meet the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," 2004; Colorado Transportation Principles, Dec. 2004. Action 22, www.action22.org).