June 24, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
United States House of Representatives  
2134 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC  20515

The Honorable Sam Graves  
United States House of Representatives  
1135 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC  20515

Re:  Ports-to-Plains High Priority Corridor Interstate Designation on the National High System in Colorado

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Representative Graves:

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is not opposed to Congressional action to designate the Ports-to-Plains Corridor, which is a Congressionally-designated High Priority Corridor, as a future Interstate Highway. Communities along the proposed route across rural eastern Colorado have strongly supported this designation.

It is important to note that while the state does not oppose the interstate designation, CDOT does not have the roughly $3 billion it would cost to bring the facilities up to interstate standards, and does not project to have the resources to accomplish the task in the next twenty years. CDOT’s current development plan of projects is a statewide $4.8 billion plan that will take optimistically ten years or more to build, and does not make significant steps toward bringing these highways to interstate standards.
Furthermore, it is important to note as Congress considers reauthorization of the FAST Act, CDOT supports providing formula funds to states, with categorical program guidelines and requirements, and in a manner that allows for the state to prioritize funds towards those projects that have been identified as part of our State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP,) as required by FHWA. Of note, CDOT's STIP currently being updated to conform to the planning process that we conducted, working collaboratively with stakeholders across the state including all 64 counties in Colorado. Importantly, CDOT would oppose earmarks if proposed as part of the next surface authorization bill and believes it is important to prioritize funds for projects that have been fully studied from both an economic and environmental standpoint.

If you have any questions or if I may be of further assistance, please contact me at shoshana.lew@state.co.us or your staff may contact Eric Richardson in our CDOT Federal Affairs Section at 303-757-9105 or eric.richardson@state.co.us.

Sincerely,

Shoshana M. Lew
Executive Director