

THE COUNTY CONNECTION

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GREG SCHULTE, ADMINISTRATOR

Welcome to "County Connection!"

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to "County Connection!" This e-newsletter is intended to be a communication outlet to the interested general public and relay to you news and items of interest that you may not necessarily get from the general media – or maybe to even correct or clarify what is "heard on the street."

Our goal is to publish this newsletter at least once a month and also use it as an "alert" when there is pressing news or, more likely, a public meeting that

has to occur on an urgent basis. Furthermore, the intent is to send out the newsletter the first week of every month.

As always, we look forward to feedback and suggestions. If there is a question about County government that you always wanted to know but were afraid to ask, then send it our way! Featured in this edition of the County Connection, we will be focusing on road projects for 2010 as well as an educational piece under the heading of "Do You Know About...?"



Thanks for signing up for this service. I hope you find the information useful and, if we're lucky, maybe a little entertaining!



Juanita Bridge was one of the projects completed in the summer of 2009.

Special points of interest:

- Read about upcoming County Road Projects on Page 2.
- Learn more about Road and Bridge Funding on Page 2.
- Look for the next issue of the County Connection coming in early February.
- Check our website at www.archuletacounty.org for current information!

County Road Projects

2009 was a pivotal year for Archuleta County in terms of accomplishing road improvements. We undertook the first major paving project in recent memory with Park Avenue and Holiday Avenue. It turned out to be a well-done project that was completed under budget and on time. In addition, for the first time in several years, we put down 35,000 tons of gravel and did improvements to approximately 11 miles of gravel roads throughout the County.

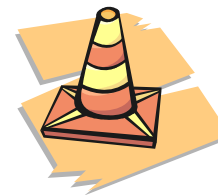
2010 is going to be even busier. I hope people don't mind living in a construction zone, because there will be orange cones all over the County in 2010. The paving projects will

include Aspenglow Boulevard and Handicap Avenue and have already been approved by the Commissioners. Regarding gravel roads, we have an initial recommendation to the Road Advisory Task Force for 15 miles of gravel road improvements with the recommendation to consider an additional 19.7 miles of gravel roads for improvements.

But, here's the problem ...

Logistically, when we map out the schedule of improving gravel roads, our crew really only has the capacity to work on 11-15 miles in a season depending on the complexity of the rebuilding

of the roads in question. That means we probably will need to contract out to achieve the additional gravel road improvements. Managing that effort also takes time and energy. Regardless, the proposed road improvements will go through the Road Advisory Task Force and then to the Commissioners for final approval. Look forward to hearing more about this in future County Connection editions!



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Do You Know About Road & Bridge Funding?

One of the most consistent comments the Commissioners and I receive is the statement of "I pay taxes so why aren't the roads better!" This explanation of Road & Bridge funding may help people understand what we can and can't do.

First of all, there are two initial categorizations of funding for Road & Bridge. The first is operational which includes the salaries, supplies and expenses needed to run the daily operations. The expenses include everything from the electric bill to toilet paper to vehicle parts. The second category is capital which includes everything from the purchase of vehicles to materials like rock and gravel.

The funding for the operational side comes from a variety of sources and in 2010 amounts to \$2.3 million. Of that amount, about \$729,000, or 32% of the total, comes from property taxes.

The vast majority of the funding, about \$1.4 million (62%), comes from what we characterize as "intergovernmental". In this case, \$1.2 million of the \$1.4 million is from Highway Users Tax Funds, or HUTF. The HUTF primarily comes from gasoline taxes, but also includes vehicle registrations, title and license fees. The state of Colorado has not increased its gasoline tax since 1992. Yet, from 1977 to 1992, the gasoline

tax increased on average by 1 cent a year. The gasoline tax is assessed by the gallon and depends on the number of gallons sold and not the actual price of gas. As a result we've seen a continual reduction in the HUTF through more efficient vehicles despite more miles actually traveled. In March, 2009 the state legislature passed the FASTER legislation that should add additional funding to Road & Bridge, but that remains to be seen.

It's sort of ironic that if we want more money to go to Road & Bridge then we should all drive more and choose less fuel efficient vehicles.