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## Guest Commentary: Mobility and sustainability can move us forward together

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May 22, 2021

As local elected officials, we know that the quality of our transportation system ranks among the most pressing issues for our residents, businesses and visitors. As active participants in a wide range of government coalitions across the state, we frequently discuss how our inadequate transportation infrastructure is among the most urgent issues all over Colorado.

Colorado's method of funding transportation has been deficient for a very long time, essentially locking in funding levels from decades ago despite construction inflation and population growth. The resulting funding backlog amounts to billions of dollars, causing congestion on our highways, crumbling roads and bridges, safety concerns and limited mobility options. The consequences are numerous, distressing and lived by Colorado residents daily.

Locally, our voters have supported aggressive efforts to design, fund, and implement our transportation solutions including RFTA, WE-cycle and dedicating a portion of our local sales and use tax. However, we will not have local success without statewide success. As Colorado's population continues to explode and increasing numbers of vehicles compete for limited capacity on our roads, further degradation of our transportation system is inevitable unless we take action now.

Although mobility options have certainly improved over the last decade — and more Coloradans can choose to travel by light rail, local transit, Bustang and other bus services, bicycle share services and bike paths — most simply don't have these options. While Colorado communities, including ours, have invested heavily in improving walkability and bikeability, there are many communities across the state where walking and biking aren't safe or comfortable options.

Gov. Jared Polis and a bipartisan group of state legislators recently introduced a long-heralded transportation funding package with hopes of passing it this legislative session. It is the product of many months of stakeholder outreach, tours around the state and conversations with hundreds and hundreds of Coloradans. On review, it appears to do a good job of assembling a mix of sustainable funding sources that will match the evolving needs of a modern transportation system.

As the bill makes its way through the General Assembly, we hope our legislators ensure that we don't solve the transportation funding crisis at the expense of the climate crisis. Transit and multi-modal investment need to be a centerpiece of Colorado's transportation future, particularly as our transportation system is one of Colorado's largest carbon contributors. Assessing the greenhouse gas emissions impact should be a key part of how we fund regional transportation plans and projects, and we believe our communities are well poised to partner with the state on such projects. Additionally, we'd like to see this bill provide funding for access to key recreational resources in a manner that does not compromise them.

We know that it will be hard work to get this bill passed, and we stand ready to support our legislators and the governor in getting it done. Colorado cannot keep kicking this can down the road. It is time to secure sustainable funding streams to solve our transportation challenges, and ensure that our state successfully addresses climate change.

Torre, mayor, city of Aspen

Bill Madsen, mayor, town of Snowmass Village

Kelly McNicholas Kury, chair, Pitkin Board of County Commissioners