

### MAKE JOBS; DRIVE SAFE; SUPPORT A FASTER TRANSPORTATION PLAN By Representative Joe Rice

Every day we drive ourselves and our families across bridges to get to work, go to school, and go about our lives; few realize that 126 of these bridges are dangerous and urgently need repair -- and one in five Colorado roads are in such bad shape that they need to be rebuilt.

Some pass-the-buck advocates want to wait, to address this urgent issue later rather than now. They argue that during this recession we do not have the money for these projects. This sentiment was echoed in Minnesota in 2007 when Mn/DOT (Minnesota's Department of Trans-

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### GOVERNOR RITTER SIGNS FASTER TRANSPORTATION BILL



*Photo courtesy of the Office of the Governor*

In 1909, the Colorado Legislature created a transportation commission, thereby establishing that roads, bridges, highways and byways are the responsibility of state government. One hundred years later, legislatures took another historic step. With the passage of the FASTER bill (Senate Bill 09-108) legislators created the first new revenue stream for transportation projects in 17 years, and the first-ever dedicated and sustainable funding source for transit. The bill was signed into law by Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. on Monday March 1, 2009.

House sponsors included Representatives Rice (see commentary, top left), Benefield, Terrence Carroll, Court, Fischer, Frangas, Green, Hullinghorst, Judd, Labuda, Levy, McCann, Merrifield, Middleton, Ryden, Scanlan, Sue Schafer, Todd and Vigil. Senate Sponsors include Gibbs, Bacon, Boyd, Foster, Heath, Hudak, Morse, Romer, Bradon Shaffer, Veiga, Williams, Groff and Newel.

Colorado's road and bridge system is in its current state of disrepair because rev-

enues from the gas tax are not keeping pace with the rising costs of maintenance, repair and construction. Colorado currently has over 125 structurally deficient bridges and many roads that are at or past their useful asphalt paving life.

Joe Blake, President of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, said, "Senate Bill 108 is going to give our economy a little more gas to get going— by creating jobs in industries that quickly spin-off into more jobs, by fixing roads and bridges we need to use to get to all corners of our state, and by giving us the first reliable, truly dedicated funding stream for roads and bridges since the gas tax was enacted in Colorado."

This bill generates new revenue for transportation projects by raising vehicle registration fees and car rental fees. Fees are assessed based on the vehicle weight, and will increase gradually over the next 5 years. The impact on the average Colorado driver will be \$42 per year by 2012.

To date, CDOT has funded just over

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## OFFICERS

President: **Dan Blankenship**  
Roaring Fork Transportation Authority  
Phone: 970.920.1905 ext. 4981  
[dblankenship@rfta.com](mailto:dblankenship@rfta.com)

Vice President: **Ron Andresen**  
First Transit, Inc.  
Phone: 303.244.1380  
[rob.andresen@ft.firstgroupamerica.com](mailto:rob.andresen@ft.firstgroupamerica.com)

Treasurer: **Lenna Kottke**  
Special Transit - Boulder  
Phone: 303.447.2848 ext. 103  
[lenna@specialtransit.org](mailto:lenna@specialtransit.org)

Secretary: **Philo Shelton**  
City of Steamboat Springs  
Phone: 970.871.8204  
[pshelton@steamboatsprings.net](mailto:pshelton@steamboatsprings.net)

Past President: **Sherry Ellebracht**  
RTD - Denver  
Phone: 303.299.2353  
[sherry.ellebracht@rtd-denver.com](mailto:sherry.ellebracht@rtd-denver.com)

## DIRECTORS

**Hank Braaksma**  
Seniors Resource Center  
Phone: 303.917.6692  
[hbraaksma@srcaging.org](mailto:hbraaksma@srcaging.org)

**Brad Patterson**  
Greeley-Evans Transit  
Phone: 970.397.8564  
[brad.patterson@greeleygov.com](mailto:brad.patterson@greeleygov.com)

**Sherry Ritenour**  
City of Colorado Springs  
Phone: 719.385.5429  
[sritenour@springsgov.com](mailto:sritenour@springsgov.com)

**Harry Taylor**  
ECO Transit  
Phone: 970.328.3521  
[harry.taylor@eaglecounty.us](mailto:harry.taylor@eaglecounty.us)

## PARTICIPANTS

**Eric Ellis**  
CDOT  
Phone: 303.757.9766  
[eric.t.ellis@dot.state.co.us](mailto:eric.t.ellis@dot.state.co.us)

**Elena Wilken**  
CASTA Executive Director  
Phone: 303.839.5197  
[elenaw@coloradotransit.com](mailto:elenaw@coloradotransit.com)

**Ann Rajewski**  
CASTA Executive Director  
Phone: 303.839.5197  
[annr@coloradotransit.com](mailto:annr@coloradotransit.com)

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear fellow transit professionals,

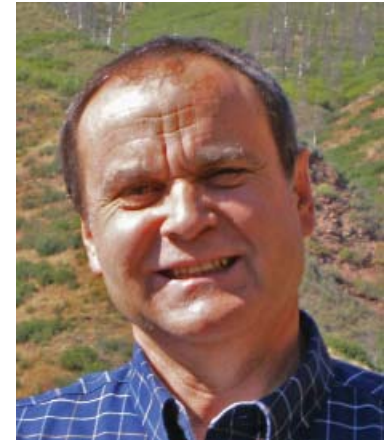
It has been a busy few months at the CASTA offices. The association is affiliated with no less than five bills this year, and we are excited at the potential for positive changes in the transit industry in Colorado.

•HB 108, otherwise known as the FASTER bill, was signed into law by Governor Bill Ritter on Monday, March 2 providing the first-ever funding for transit from the General Fund. (See cover story).

•HB 1034 – allows voters to approve property tax as one of the tools for Regional Transportation Authorities to raise funds. CASTA has been a strong supporter of this bill. I testified in favor of the bill for the Joint Transportation Committee. It passed the house in February, and is currently with the Finance committee in the Senate. Many thanks to Representative Larry Liston and Senator Dan Gibbs for sponsoring this bill.

•HB 1027 – This bill allows transit buses to place an electronic LED sign on the back of the bus that indicates when the bus is pulling back into traffic. We have many CASTA members who have testified in support of the bill, including Philo Shelton (Steamboat Springs). Thanks to Representative Joe Rice and Senator Dan Gibbs for sponsoring this bill on CASTA's behalf.

•HB 1016 – This bill would have allowed people who are lawfully present in Colorado to use their existing license to drive in Colorado. Transit agencies that recruit out of state and out of country for seasonal drivers would have benefited – the current processing time for these employees is lengthy and complicated. Unfortunately the bill was pulled due to difficulties in verifying other states' and countries' licensing requirements.



•Finally, HB SB 94 would create a Division of Transit and Rail at the Colorado Department of Transportation. The CASTA board has been working closely with CDOT, RTD and other stakeholders to ensure that local transit retains authority, that the division would have the appropriate authority, power and responsibility. The bill passed the Senate Transportation and Appropriations committees and was referred unamended to the Senate on February 27. Many thanks to Representative Claire Levy and Senator Suzanne Williams for sponsoring this bill.

We continue to build long-term relationships with legislators, state employees and other elected officials to educate on the benefits of transit, and to build support for sustainable funding and sound transportation policy.

If you are interested in participating in any of the legislative activities, please call the CASTA offices at 303-839-5197 – I am sure they will put you to work! ▪

Sincerely,  
Dan Blankenship  
President

## FEDERAL UPDATE

The big news on the federal scene this year is the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). CDOT has been working diligently to prepare lists of projects that are "ready to go" on both the highway and transit sides without really knowing how the bill would look. Their goal is to meet the obligation requirements of the first round of funding in order to be in the running for additional funding if it becomes available.

To be eligible for stimulus funding, projects must meet all Federal requirements, including a complete environmental process,, and be able to obligate funds within 180 days. This bill does not require a local match, projects can be fully funded. The funding is being distributed through established programs. The following is a listing CASTA put together for the recent CTC visit to DC. It includes funding amounts and likely projects.

### Competitive Grant Program (national process)

- \$100,000,000 to public transit agencies for capital investments that will reduce energy consumption or greenhouse gas emissions of their public transportation systems.
- \$750,000,000 available for New Starts program

### 5307– Transit Capital Assistance

- Denver-Aurora (\$64.16 million) Funds will enable RTD to complete several capital improvement projects that otherwise did not have funding.
- Colorado Springs (\$9.09 million) Mountain Metro will build either the Downtown Transit Facility or apply the funds to other capital expenditures, depending on FTA guidelines.
- Fort Collins (\$3.63 million) Funds will be used for fleet replacement by exercising existing ng options.
- Boulder (\$3.41 million) Funds will be used for fleet replacement and Bus Rapid Transit enhancements.
- Grand Junction (\$1.62 million) Grand Val-

ley Transit will build either a new maintenance facility, transfer facility or Clifton community bus station depending on FTA guidelines.

- Greeley (\$2.12 million) Administered by the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization. Funds will be used to build a new bus wash and replace older vehicles.
- Lafayette/Louisville (\$1.31 million) Funds will be used for fleet replacement and other capital expenditures.
- Longmont (\$2.35 million) Funds will be used for fleet replacement and other capital expenditures.
- Pueblo (\$2.52) Funds will be used for fleet replacement and other capital expenditures.

### 5311 – Rural (\$12.49 million)

- Summit Stage transit facility
- RTA Bus Rapid Transit enhancement technology
- Remainder: Statewide bus replacement program

### Fixed Guideway Modernization (\$754,000)

- RTD-Denver

CASTA will keep the transit community apprised of opportunities for agencies to apply for this funding or additional funding as application processes are announced through our e-newsletter. You may sign up to receive the CASTA e-newsletter at [www.coloradotransit.com](http://www.coloradotransit.com) (bottom right corner of homepage).

### CTC Update

The Colorado Transit Coalition's annual trip to meet with legislators in Washington DC ran from February 25th – 26th this year. Team members included

Marcy Abreo (Loveland Transit), Dan Blankenship (Roaring Fork Transportation Authority), Brenda Broyles (Pueblo Transit), Mike Rose (Vail Transit) and Harry Taylor (ECO Transit). The team did a great job of representing the coalition and made an excellent case for supporting the CTC request.

The trip included meetings with Representative John Salazar, Senator Mark Udall and Representative Betsy Markey in person, and additional meetings with staff members of the other legislators, with the exception of Representative Michael Coffman. Overall, the meetings went well. Patton Boggs had already laid a good foundation for our team by meeting with the delegation a few weeks prior to our visit.

As expected, most members were very supportive of CASTA and willing to do whatever they could to help us for 2010. We were able to give the legislators and/or their staff a feel for the state of transit in Colorado where ridership continues to increase steadily while many funding sources, such as sales tax revenue, are decreasing.

It is likely that two members will not endorse earmark requests for CTC in 2010. Representative Coffman has decided not

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2010 CTC Team members pictured from L to R: Mike Rose, Ann Rajewski, Brenda Broyles, Dan Blankenship, Marcy Abreo, Harry Taylor

## NOTICE OF FRAUDULENT LETTERS

Fraudulent letters purporting to be issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) have been issued to DOT contractors and potential contractors. These fraudulent letters request that current or potential contractors register by submitting their company's financial information on a release form entitled, "Authorization to release financial information". Please be aware that DOT does not require any financial information to be submitted in order to be eligible for procurement.

Fraudulent letters, which have been faxed out to current or potential contractors, were signed by the following individuals who are referenced as Senior Procurement Officers: Frank M. Orell, Randy Cohen, Dan Jacobs, Lisa Johnson, Jason Scarlett, George Mason, Julie P. Wenzel, Bradley K. Wash, Robert Dal, James Buchanan, David Jacobson, Jennifer Donaldson, Jennifer Stewart, Jeffrey Steinberg, John Steinberg, Joshua Greenberg.

Please DO NOT complete the release form which is attached to the letter and DO NOT release any information to the facsimile number cited in the letter. For an example of the latest letters being sent out to contracting personnel, please visit <http://www.dot.gov/ost/m60/greenbergltr.pdf>.

For additional information, or to report receipt of a fraudulent letter, contact the Department of Transportation, Office of the Inspector General at 800-424-9071. ■

## GROUP BUYING OPPORTUNITY

The South West Transit Association (SWTA) is fielding interest from agencies who would like to participate in a SWTA Regional Acquisition Center. The Acquisition Center would provide an opportunity for transit properties to save money by creating bulk buying for products like buses, vans, computers, motor parts and much more. Jim Meeks, Procurement Officer for the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority (COTPA), has agreed to lead this member-only effort. He has cleared a SWTA member pilot program with FTA that would allow buying of vehicles and other items across the 4 FTA regions that service the 8-state SWTA area (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas). Please email Jim ([jim.meeks@okc.gov](mailto:jim.meeks@okc.gov)) or [swta@swta.org](mailto:swta@swta.org) if you are interested in this pilot program. SWTA has also set up an online blog site for this effort (<http://www.swta.org/blog/?p=165>) to allow SWTA members to exchange information regarding purchasing needs and who else might be shopping for or purchasing similar items. ■

## NEW INTERCITY BUS SERVICE



*Scott Truex, Gunnison RTA Executive Director (2nd from the right), and Jon Valerio, CDOT Transit Planner (far right) are pictured with two passengers on the maiden voyage of the Denver-Gunnison intercity bus route.*

Exciting news from Gunnison! A new intercity bus service between Denver and Gunnison was launched on January 14th, 2009. The bus service runs between Gunnison and Denver via US 50 and US 285 for a total distance of 215 miles one-way. The service will be operated with a 15-passenger van between Gunnison and Salida, and a 47-passenger coach between Salida and Denver. The van was purchased with CDOT funding and is operated by the Chaffee Shuttle out of Salida; the coach is being operated by Black Hills Stage Lines.

Stations served on this route include: Gunnison, Poncha Springs, Salida, Buena Vista, Fairplay, Jefferson, Grant, Pine Junction, Denver Union Station, and Denver Greyhound Station. The Denver-Gunnison intercity bus service would not have been possible without the contributions from: The Gunnison Valley RTA, Western State College, the WSC Foundation, Park County, Chaffee County, as well as the cities of Salida, Buena Vista, and Poncha Springs. Special recognition goes to CDOT and John Valerio for their efforts in getting this service up and running. ■

## **FASTER Bill continued from cover...**

\$70 million in transit projects using what is known as Senate Bill 1 (1997) funds. However, these funds are available only in years when the state budget grows more than 6%, creating a volatility that makes planning and constructing transit projects difficult. Although some years the fund provided as much as \$20 million for transit, many years the fund was zeroed out.

The funding is to be credited to the Colorado Department of Transportation, counties and municipalities in accordance with existing distribution formula. The bill requires that CDOT, counties and municipalities expend their allocated revenues for road safety projects, and specifically requires CDOT to spend a specific portion of its allocated revenues for transit-related projects.

When first written the bill did not include funding for transit, as the total amount raised (about \$250 million per year) is just 25% of the amount CDOT needs to maintain existing roadways. CASTA expressed disappointment, but acknowledged the significant highway and bridge needs around the state. During subsequent negotiations, and in conjunction with land use and environmental concerns, leading legislators agreed to include funding for transit.

The bill identifies two sources of transit funding, creating opportunities previously unavailable to Colorado transit operators.

Starting in FY2009-10, and for each succeeding fiscal year, \$5 million is to be credited to the State Transit and Rail Fund (created simultaneously in the bill). The funds are to be used by the State Transit and Rail Division (another piece of pending legislation) to provide grants to local governments for local transit projects.

The money may not be used for the condemnation of land except for the purpose of relocating rail corridors or rail lines.

Ten million dollars per year are to be used for the "planning, designing, engineering, acquisition, installation, construction, repair, reconstruction, maintenance, operation or administration of transit-related projects, including but not limited to designated bicycle or pedestrian lanes of highway and infrastructure needed to integrate different transportation modes within a multimodal transportation system."

Clearly there are many details to be developed in the implementation of both of these programs.

RTD-Denver also benefits from the passage of FASTER. A last-minute amendment removes the requirement that RTD-Denver go to the legislature for permission to go to the voters for a sales tax increase, thereby giving RTD-Denver the same authority and discretion enjoyed by the other Regional Transportation Authorities in Colorado.

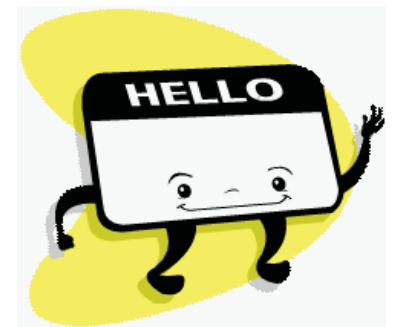
The bill includes other components. It creates a statewide bridge enterprise to finance, repair, reconstruct or replace bridges designated as structurally deficient, functionally obsolete, or rated poor by CDOT. Specifically the enterprise has the authority to impose a bridge safety surcharge and using the revenues generated to directly pay for the projects for repayment of bonds.

The bill also creates a high-performance transportation enterprise with the authority to pursue public-private partnerships and "other innovative and efficient means of completing surface transportation infrastructure projects. This enterprise would replace the existing Colorado Tolling Enterprise.

And finally, the bill creates a temporary Mileage Based Revenue (MBR) commission to design, develop and implement pilot programs to evaluate alternative

mileage-based revenue systems.

For more information on the bill, please visit Governor Ritter's website at [www.colorado.gov/governor](http://www.colorado.gov/governor). You can find the full text of the bill on the Colorado General Assembly website at [www.leg.state.co.us](http://www.leg.state.co.us) and search for Senate Bill 09-108. ■



## **Have you planned for CASTA Conferences in 2009?**

### **Spring Training Conference**

May 5-8, 2009

Cheyenne Mountain Resort  
Colorado Springs, CO

### **Fall Transit Conference**

September 8-11, 2009

Snowmass Village Conference Center  
Snowmass Village, CO

### FEDERAL continued from page 3...

to put forth any earmark requests in 2010, and Representative Lamborn will not submit earmark requests in 2010 for projects that are not national security projects. During our meetings with them, we reiterated that the only way the state can access this funding is through the appropriation process. We also encouraged them to consider making a request on behalf of the CTC for the SAFET-LU Reauthorization bill, in light of the small earmark of \$234,000 which was awarded to the CTC this year. Additionally, the team informed the delegation that an appropriations request for the reauthorization should be submitted for review by the beginning of April. CASTA will communicate with the CTC to discuss this request. ▪

### STAY UP TO DATE ON THE AMERICAN RECOVERY & REINVESTMENT ACT

The following is a list of informative websites related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA):

- **Federal Transit Administration**

[www.fta.dot.gov/index\\_9118.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/index_9118.html)

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has a portion of their website dedicated to keeping you informed on details related to the ARRA. The FTA's ARRA guidance includes details related to significant new funding for transportation, timing, and funding levels of the legislation.

- **Colorado Department of Transportation**

[www.dot.state.co.us/arra/](http://www.dot.state.co.us/arra/)

Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has launched a new Web site dedicated to the state's transportation projects that will be funded through the ARRA. The site contains detailed infor-

mation about all of the ARRA projects CDOT will manage, including a project description, amount of ARRA funds dedicated to the project, project status and photos.

- **Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board**

[www.recovery.gov/](http://www.recovery.gov/)

The ARRA is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, create or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st century. With much at stake, the Act provides for unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability so you will know how, when, and where your tax dollars are being spent. This website, Recovery.gov, will be the main vehicle to provide each and every citizen with the ability to monitor the progress of the recovery. ▪

## FOR SALE WHEELCHAIR LIFT EQUIPPED MINIBUSES

Access Institute has minibuses for sale. They are renovated as needed and will always be in excellent condition mechanically and appear nearly new, with no rust or corrosion. Prior to sale of our buses, a complete inspection & servicing is performed. There is a 30 day warranty on parts. CDL is NOT required.

### Additional Information

**Seating:** The interiors have very flexible layouts to accommodate 2 or more wheelchair passengers plus those seated.

**Options:** Options include front and rear heat and AC plus, usually, cruise control, tilt steering, etc.

**Prices:** Vary depending on year/mileage; most vehicles are typically priced within the range of \$10,900 - \$21,900.

**Delivery:** Possible for some locations. A discount is given when picked up at our location.



Please call or email for information & photos of buses currently available.

Access Institute — a 501(c)(3) volunteer non-profit organization  
(800) 929-4811 / [access@silverstar.com](mailto:access@silverstar.com) / [www.accesstours.org](http://www.accesstours.org)

## **SUPPORT FASTER TRANSPORTATION PLAN continued from cover...**

portation) put the brakes on bridge repair due to concerns about costs, despite the fact that internal Mn/DOT documents proved that they were warned about a potential collapse, according to the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. Tragically, later that year, during an evening rush hour, the I-35 bridge collapsed, killing thirteen. Something needs to be done right here, right now in Colorado to avoid the same fate as Minnesota. Colorado drivers and businesses are already enduring rutted roads and crumbling bridges. The infrastructure in our great state needs repair and it won't wait.

We will pursue a long-term, sustainable funding solution called FASTER (Funding Advancements for Surface Transportation and Economic Recovery) that will create jobs year after year and maintain safe roads and bridges. This legislation will stimulate job growth, invest in transportation safety projects, and establish a foundation for future funding systems.

We know what needs to be done and this is the only way to do it quickly and responsibly while creating a system to prevent this level of degradation from occurring again. Colorado FASTER must be passed not only to get our economy

moving again but also to ensure that the roads and bridges we drive on every day are safe and maintained.

The bill calls for an annual car registration fee of \$30-40 (depending on the weight of the vehicle), a \$2 a day car rental fee, and a penalty on late registration and fee on oversized and overweight vehicles to pay for road and bridge repair. These fees will be staggered and phased in over time. We understand the importance of keeping fees as low as possible while at the same time moving our state's business and economic future forward.

For an average investment of \$2.50 a month for each car, we can help secure Colorado's long-term success. This will ensure continued funding of road and bridge projects to repair our dilapidated infrastructure. After the repairs are made, this funding will continue to pay for road and bridge repair to prevent our infrastructure from falling back into disarray. The current inadequate CDOT budget for bridge and road repair will be corrected with passage of the FASTER bill.

One of the biggest sectors hit during this tough recession has been the construction industry in Colorado. Contractors have laid off 30% of their workforce and

have equipment sitting idle. The investment in our infrastructure would help boost our economy by putting thousands of Coloradans back to work.

A lot of hard work and negotiation has gone into this legislation, making it a solid proposal. It has the support of a broad coalition of businesses such as the Metro Chamber I-70 Corridor Coalition and the Contractors Association. We continue to have many discussions about the bill with House and Senate Republicans and their recommendations have been incorporated into the plan.

So far, our transportation funding system has failed to provide the dollars to get shovels in the ground and get people back to work. Now, we are working on two fronts: one, to make sure we get the federal funding we need to jump-start the jobs that will repair our rutted roads and broken bridges; and two, we will pass FASTER, which creates jobs immediately while solving the transportation funding problem by creating new revenue streams for the long term.

We hope to have your support. ▪

## **ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION SURVEY**

In conjunction with a grant received from the Federal Transit Administration, Meeting the Challenge, Inc. is conducting a survey designed to collect information from people with disabilities regarding their experiences with public transportation. We invite all people with disabilities to participate. Information gathered will be used to determine what barriers still exist in public transportation for people with disabilities and will be used to create Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) technical assistance materials directed toward alleviating those barriers.

The online survey can be accessed at <http://mtcinc.transit.sgizmo.com>. It is estimated that it will take from 5 to 15 minutes to complete the survey. If you do not have internet access, you can participate by calling Meeting the Challenge at 1-800-864-4264 (select menu choice #2), Monday through Friday between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM (MT), and a staff member will assist you with the survey by telephone. If you prefer a paper copy of the survey, one can be obtained by calling the same phone number. Responses to the survey will be collected through March 31, 2009.

Please share information regarding this survey to any individuals with a disability or to any groups serving individuals with disabilities that you feel would be appropriate respondents.

Meeting the Challenge, Inc. (MTC) is a knowledge management and dissemination company. MTC's fundamental goal is to organize and present information to users in a form that increases their awareness and understanding of the underlying subject allowing them to implement actions based on the knowledge gained. ▪

## UPCOMING EVENTS

For more information on events visit [www.coloradotransit.com](http://www.coloradotransit.com) and click on Conferences and Training.

- **CDOT Policy Option Workshop, Glenwood Springs**  
March 24, 2009  
Sponsor: CDOT  
Location: City Hall Council Chambers  
101 W 8th St, Glenwood Springs, CO
- **Blood Pathogens**  
March 26, 2009  
Sponsor: CASTA & First Transit  
Location: Colorado Springs, CO
- **Communities on the Move: Using All Transportation Options (ADA & beyond)**  
March 26, 2009  
Sponsor: Easter Seals Project Action & Pueblo Transit  
Location: Pueblo, CO
- **Coordinated Mobility: A Unified Transportation Management Solution**  
April 6-7, 2009  
Sponsor: CTAA, Mesa County Regional Transportation Planning Office, CASTA  
Location: Grand Junction, CO
- **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise**  
April 15-17, 2009  
Sponsor: NTI  
Location: Denver, CO
- **CASTA Spring Conference**  
May 5-8, 2009  
Sponsor: CASTA/CDOT  
Location: Colorado Springs, CO
- **Transit Law Seminar 2009**  
June 2009 (exact dates TBA)  
Sponsor: SWTA  
Location: Denver, CO
- **Transit Bus System Safety**  
August 10-14, 2009  
Sponsor: TSI & RTD  
Location: Denver, CO
- **CASTA Fall Transit Conference & EXPO**  
September 8-11, 2009  
Sponsor: CASTA/CDOT  
Location: Snowmass Village, CO

In accordance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, CASTA does not discriminate on the the basis of disability, race, color, national origin or gender. For more information about these statutes, or to file a complaint, contact CASTA Executive Director: 303.839.5197