



# Cell Phone Connectivity Interim Committee

Wireless Coverage Concerns:  
Roaring Fork Valley and beyond

August 12, 2024



**Kris Mattera, Executive Director**

**Basalt Chamber of Commerce | 406 members**

- Concentrated in the Basalt area, spanning from Aspen to Rifle.
- Chamber and Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)

**Largest industries**

- Architecture and Construction Services
- Retail
- Health, Wellness and Fitness
- Business services

Tourism is important to the local economy. The counties that make up 3% of the state's population ("Rockies Playground" accounted for 15% of the state's total tourism revenue - \$4.3 billion in 2023.



# The Problem (and not just in the Roaring Fork Valley)

Significant lack of reliable cellular and data service in densely populated and well-traveled areas.

- Cell service is now an essential utility and it is lacking here.

Demand consistently outpaces existing infrastructure. Resident population and area visitation continue to grow.

- Area populations swell in key tourism seasons. The local population doesn't reflect actual demand.

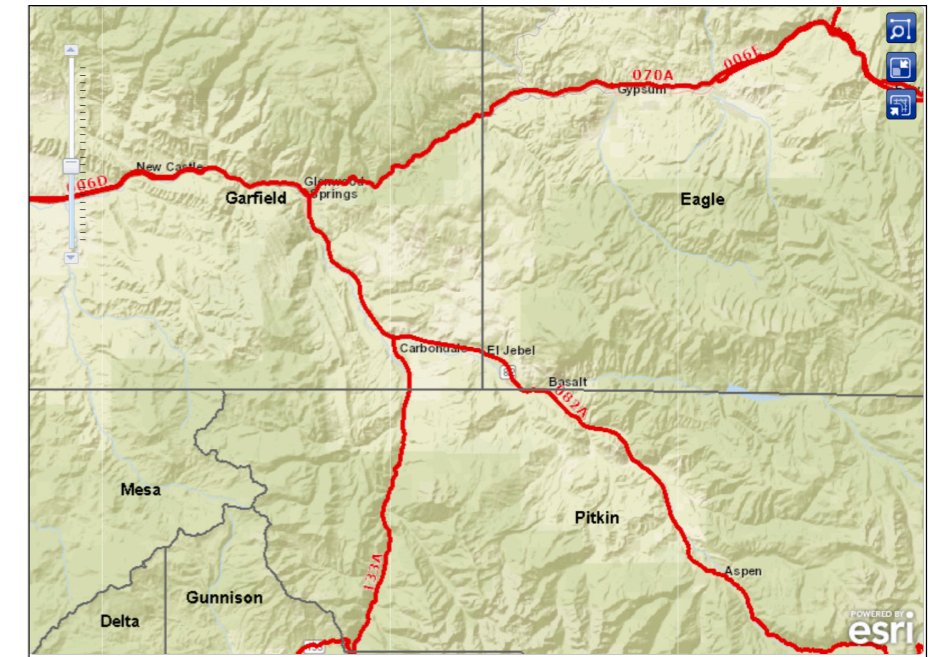
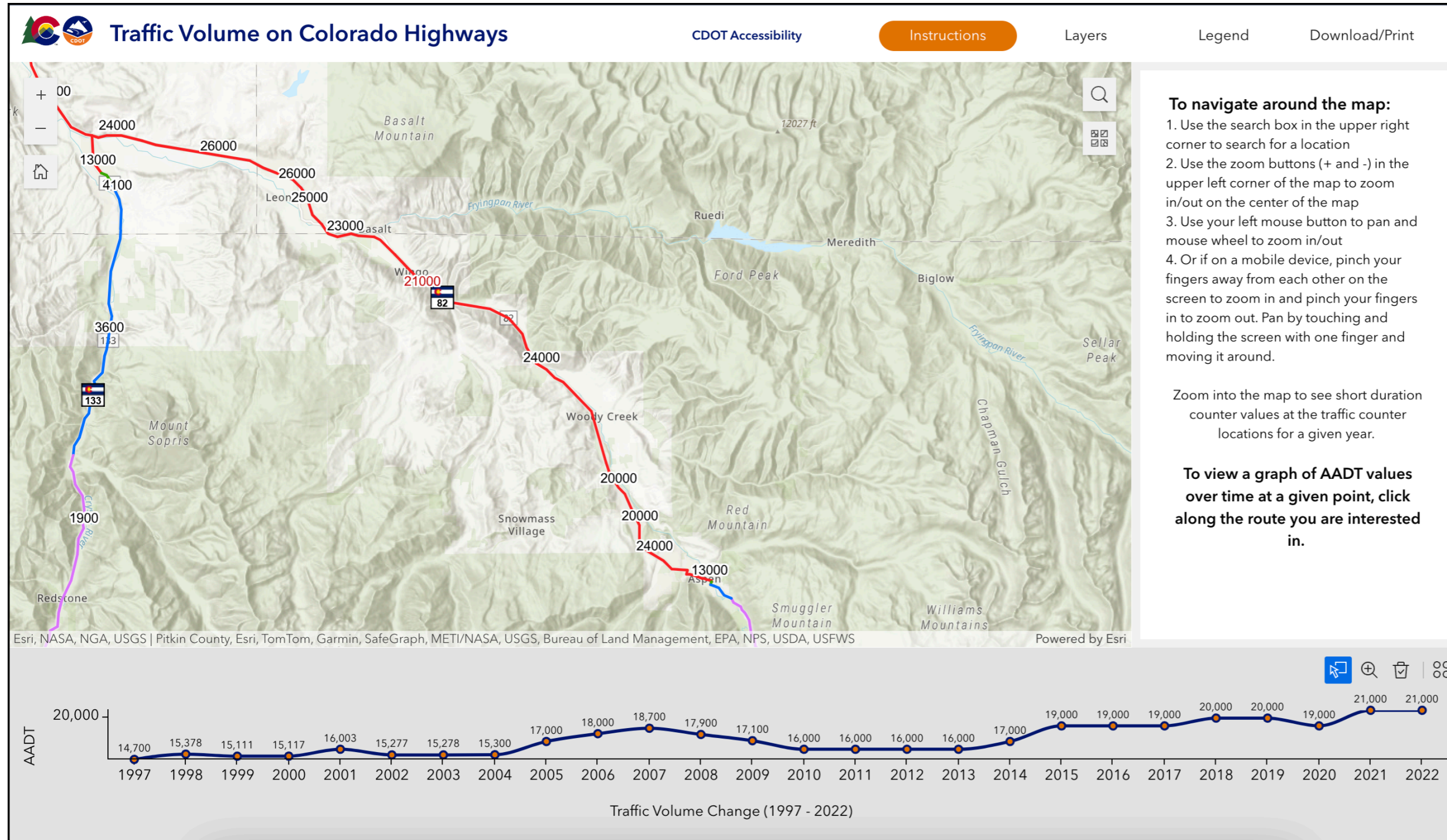
Lack of redundancies result in single points of failure and communication outages.

- If the Internet is down, there is no cell service. If there is a power outage, there is no Internet AND no cell service.

**Poor coverage impacts emergency services, the local economy, area businesses, residents, visitors and commuters.**



# Major Area of Concern - Hwy 82, MM 0-40



Source: CDOT

**20,000-27,000 AADT**  
(Annual Average Daily Traffic)

**40,000+ residents**

These challenges are faced by many rural resort communities and the Western Slope.



# Case studies

## Hwy 82 accident and dropped call with CSP due to SOS signal

- Dead zone impeded calls for emergency services and towing along a busy highway.

## Business trying to reduce commuter traffic foiled

- Pilot program to pay employees to leverage RFTA commute time canceled due to inability to use mobile hotspots on the go.

## Emergency situation only known due to landline

- Power and Internet outage during Lake Christine Fire rendered cell phones useless.

## Major commercial areas reliant on wifi for connectivity

- Businesses and visitors reliant on Internet connections for regular communications, including hotel guests visiting the area.



# Suggested locations for a committee field trip | Known dead areas



MM 1.5-6.5 | South Glenwood Springs

MM 8-10.5 | Aspen Glen

MM 13-18 | Catherines Store, Cerise Ranch, Dakota Drive, Blue Lake

MM 19-21 | El Jebel, Willits

This area has minimal cell service, and businesses (and customers) are heavily reliant on Internet connectivity.

Off of MM 23 | Historic Downtown Basalt and Southside  
Drop calls or poor reception (1-2 bars in major commerce areas)

MM 27-31 | Snowmass Canyon

MM 31-35 | Gerbazdale, Aspen Village, Cozy Point  
East bound is typically worse.

**Following community input, it would have been faster to map the areas of *good coverage*, as that list was much shorter.**

# Suggestions

Identify gaps in coverage/dead zones in major corridors and economic centers.

Map coverage disparities by carrier and hold accountable for delivering promised service (e.g. 3 bars but no service).

Investigate redundancies for emergency communications (beyond FirstNet).

Increase bandwidth to match or exceed demand, inclusive of local and visitor populations in the area.

Prioritize infrastructure improvements and a long-term plan to address growing bandwidth needs.



**Thank you!**

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