



## SB24-091

### Prohibit CDOT from Charging Annual Fees for Broadband Access

**Sponsors: Sens. Mullica and B. Pelton, Reps. Martinez and Catlin**

Broadband connectivity continues to be a challenge for many rural areas of our state. These communities either lack high-speed Internet access or lack the redundancy to protect their Internet connection when a line is accidentally cut during excavation or other construction activities. To address this digital divide, Governor Polis has issued an executive order that sets a goal of 99% broadband connectivity by 2027.

In order to reach these remote areas of the state and achieve this connectivity goal, Internet service providers (ISPs) will need to utilize state highway rights-of-way (ROW) for fiber deployment. The Colorado Department of Transportation recently adopted an annual fee schedule to charge rural providers three cents a foot for utilizing the state ROW. While this fee sounds relatively low, it will add tens of thousands of dollars in costs **annually** to many of these broadband projects, making them infeasible, if not impossible, to carry out.

A project underway in SE Colorado that would connect the Town of Kim with the City of Trinidad via Hwy 160 would have to pay \$10,000 per year in annual fees to CDOT. Another project in SW Colorado is attempting to connect the towns of Dolores and Rico along Hwy 145. That project would have to pay CDOT almost \$6000 per year (\$120,000 in annual fees over the twenty-year life of the project).

CCI has worked with the bill sponsors and a coalition of ISPs, economic development organizations and rural advocacy groups to bring forward SB24-091, a bill that will prohibit CDOT from enacting any annual fees for the usage of CDOT right-of-way. The bill also seeks to expedite the review of permits for access to the CDOT ROW and eliminates demands for in-kind donation of infrastructure and services. The bill does allow one-time permitting fees for CDOT to recover the cost of permit review.

This legislation is not just about improving broadband connectivity; it is about empowering the rural areas of our state with the tools they need for education, healthcare, economic growth and community development. Counties are committed to bridging the digital divide and ensuring that every citizen, regardless of their location and income level, has access to reliable and affordable high-speed Internet.

**Please Support Affordable Statewide High-Speed Internet Access  
Vote YES on SB24-091**

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