

February 26, 2007

Ouray County 4-H Event Center
22739 Hwy 550
Ridgway, Colorado

- H. **6:00 p.m. The Board of County Commissioners of Ouray County conducted a public meeting to discuss and solicit input on Dave Wood Road. Specific to the discussion were the following topics:**
- a. **Overview of Tri-County Commissioner meetings (Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel) concerning Dave Wood Road,**
 - b. **Discussion concerning Tri-County Horsefly Area Traffic Study,**
 - c. **Solicitation of public input on Dave Wood Road.**

Commissioner Batchelder opened the public meeting and explained to those assembled that the intent of the meeting was to disseminate information to the public and to provide a history of Dave Wood Road. He emphasized that the County does not have any current plans for Dave Wood Road but with more and more growth, the County will be put in the position of having to make some decisions in the future. The Commissioners wanted to get public input as to what the County's position should be for the future. He explained that Dave Wood Road runs through three counties: Montrose County, Ouray County and San Miguel County. The three counties have been meeting to come up with a comprehensive plan for each county. Actions taken in Ouray County affect Montrose County and San Miguel County, as do actions taken in the other two counties. Ouray County does not have any control over the other counties and the other counties have no control over Ouray County. At this point, Commissioner Batchelder turned the meeting over to Greg Moberg, Land Use Administrator, for a brief history of the road.

Greg Moberg provided a slide presentation. Dave Wood Road for a long time has been an issue for all three counties. Elk Mountain Resort is located entirely in Ouray County and is a resort for commercial purposes. A second project, Cornerstone, is located in Ouray County and Montrose County. A third development, Paxton Lake / Hideout Ranch, is mostly in Montrose County. The three counties have three different zones and standards. In Ouray County and San Miguel County, density is 1:35. In Montrose County the density is different. The three Boards of County Commissioners got together and had a traffic study done by an independent contractor, Stantec. The study projected a 3% growth rate in 20 years in Ouray County, which is conservative. It is currently running at 4%. Traffic volumes for 2026 were projected at 2,900 daily vehicle trips without improvements, and 4,100 with improvements.

Commissioner Batchelder interjected that Ouray County is in a slightly different position than the other two counties. If Dave Wood Road is improved and becomes a bypass for traffic between Montrose and Telluride, it will affect the town of Ridgway.

Bill Collier of Ouray inquired about income from property taxes of residences on Dave Wood Road and whether it would help pay for improvements to the road. Commissioner Batchelder noted that most of the property is 35-acre and 40-acre parcels, with most being ranches. Generally, the taxes residential properties pay do not pay for the services they receive from the County. And, the farther out the property, the less is paid for the services received. Mr. Collier advocated for a user tax.

Sheelagh Williams, resident of Log Hill, inquired if improving Highways 550 or 62 would be better than improving Dave Wood Road. Commissioner Batchelder explained that the County does not pay for improvements to Highways 550 or 62; the State does.

Steve Stuhmer, who owns property along the three-mile stretch of Dave Wood Road that is in Ouray County, asked what Ouray County could do to ensure that he has access to his property. Montrose County set up roadblocks and blocked him from getting to his property. Commissioner Batchelder emphasized that Ouray County does not have control over what Montrose County does. He suggested that Mr. Stuhmer contact Montrose County and copy Ouray County. The Ouray County Commissioners could advocate for access on Mr. Stuhmer's behalf. Historically, that portion of Dave Wood Road has not been plowed; the Forest Service will not allow plowing through Forest Service property. Mr. Stuhmer explained that he was most upset because he arrived late at night, almost out of gas, and there was no warning that the road was blocked.

Brit Hay recalled that when Cornerstone received its original plat approval, access to Dave Wood Road was part of the approval. At that time, the Commissioners and Cornerstone promised him that the road would only be used for emergency access. Now it is something different. Commissioner Batchelder agreed that the actions taken by the Ouray County Board of County Commissioners was for emergency traffic only. The only way that could be changed would be by the Commissioners, with public notice and public hearings for input from residents and adjoining counties. As far as Cornerstone's wishes, Brian Wallin apologized to Mr. Hay if he alluded to promising never to use that access. At the time, Cornerstone wanted emergency access only and has not requested any other access at this time. Mr. Hay discussed the Forest Service's problem with access.

Tammy Randall Parker, Ouray District Ranger, addressed Mr. Hay's concerns. At this point, there has been no application from Cornerstone for an access easement. Hideout Lake has applied to the Forest Service for an access easement to Dave Wood Road. Ms. Parker explained that she, too, was at the meeting to get public feedback and to talk about public access.

Mr. Hay explained that when he applied for a permit to build his house he had to pay an exorbitant road impact fee without any services. He asked how Dave Wood Road would be maintained when there is a lot of extra traffic. Commissioner Batchelder pointed out that if the road is not maintained it will help to control the traffic.

Dan Pierce, who resides in the northwest corner of Ouray County, asked when the Forest Service would be making repairs to Dave Wood Road in the Forest Service lands. Ms. Parker explained that the Forest Service and Ouray County currently have a FRTA (Forest Roads and Trails Act) easement, in place since 1999. Ouray County is now responsible for the maintenance on Dave Wood Road. In Montrose County, there is no FRTA easement in place. Montrose County has a Schedule A agreement and gets federal dollars through HUTF (Highway Users Tax Fund) to pay for maintenance on Dave Wood Road.

Mr. Stuhmer questioned why, if Montrose County is receiving federal funds to maintain the road, it was blocked off. Ms. Parker discussed the USFS Travel Management Plan put in place in 2002. When Elk Mountain Resort was built, Montrose County authorized maintenance permits with Elk Mountain Resort but not for the remainder of the road. Montrose County did not authorize opening of the road during winter for public safety issues. Some of the developments are willing to fund improving the road and maintaining it.

Gypsy Dave, property owner along Dave Wood Road, recalled that in 1979 Montrose County had blocked off the road at the mailboxes. He encouraged more dialogue between Montrose County and Ouray County to improve the road.

Ken Lipton, Ridgway, suggested that since there are only four miles in Ouray County, it would be good to find out Montrose County's and San Miguel County's positions on the road. Commissioner Batchelder noted that San Miguel County's position is for it to remain as is but to improve the intersection with Hwy. 62. Montrose County's position is that the road needs to be improved to county standards to maintain anticipated traffic.

Patty Painter, CR 28 and 62x roads, in Ouray County, expressed a number of concerns about improving the road. Wildlife habitat would be affected by the increase in the amount of traffic. There was also the concern about substantial wind with snowdrifts that would make it hard to keep the road plowed. The portion of the road in San Miguel County is bordered by private property and maintained by the owners; San Miguel County does not maintain it. The focus of attention needs to be on public transportation as opposed to throwing money into the road that would take business away from the town of Ridgway and create a lot of problems. She read a note from a resident on CR 28 who opposed Dave Wood Road improvements.

Dan Pierce asked if the Forest Service would allow improvements to be made to Dave Wood Road through the national forest when the time comes. Ms. Parker explained that was why she was at the meeting. She was hoping that the three counties could get consensus from the public as to what improvements should be made. She added that, at this point, no improvements have been proposed to Dave Wood Road as it crosses the national forest.

Sarah Coulter, resident of Log Hill, representing San Juan Corridors Coalition (SJCC), discussed that the process is not new to SJCC. Dave Wood Road is a source of great concern from a wildlife point-of-view. As speed and traffic increases, there will be a lot of problems to drivers and animals, not to mention the removal of the animals from the roadway. One thing that SJCC has encouraged is, once the road is improved, that it not be improved in such a way as to significantly increase speed limits. The road could be designed to retain the curves that would help to keep the speed down. She added that the Stantec study showed that 3,700 trips would not be going to Ridgway if a bypass is created.

Bob LeCour, Ridgway, discussed big herds of deer and elk and that the reason for the slaughterhouse on Hwy. 550 is movement. Herds of deer and elk move to the west toward Norwood. If Dave Wood Road is built to accommodate high speeds, there will be two slaughterhouses. He acknowledged that, eventually, Dave Wood Road will be improved but urged that it be done in a way to keep the curves so that the speed is maintained at a slower rate to help citizens move through.

Bill Collier, Ouray, asked if there is sufficient existing right-of-way or will the County have to buy additional right-of-way. Commissioner Batchelder explained that Ouray County maintains that it has a 60-foot right-of-way; however, it is not common for a county to hold title or proof that it owns property other than the fact that it is there. The County maintains that it has a 30-foot right-of-way on each side of centerline but there is no way to prove it. If challenged, the County would have to go to court and at court level, more than likely would be successful, but it would take longer.

Boone Wilson lives on the Montrose side and makes trips to Telluride twice a day. If improved, a lot of people would be traveling over the road. It would cut off half-an-hour to forty-five minutes of travel time for him. But it would not be a good thing to improve it to make it a bypass.

Greg Clifton, Town Manager of Ridgway and representing the Town Council, applauded the Boards of County Commissioners from all three counties for bringing the issue to the public eye. He was not at the meeting to weigh in on the bypass, but to make comments on the Stantec report that he felt was flawed. Vehicular traffic increases will not be linear, but exponential. Secondly, Table 1, a matrix of proposed improvements, suggested that widening improvements to Highways 62 and 550 are not needed. None of the statewide planning processes involving these highways suggest that the highway capacity is okay; all suggest that there are needs. According to Mr. Clifton, the report does not give accurate indicators of what traffic is likely to do. With regards to funding, the consultant made reference that funding could be achieved through a multitude of scenarios and felt that statewide funding was improving for these sorts of projects. Mr. Clifton suggested that there is nothing that indicates that there will be state dollars available for these projects. Montrose County told him that the developers would pay 100% of the improvements but he did not believe that. Taxpayers will bear the brunt. Commissioner Batchelder clarified that Mr. Clifton was requesting that the Board of County Commissioners not take any position that would take funds away from improvements to the highway through Ridgway. Mr. Clifton added that the numbers used by the consultant were

average daily numbers, therefore, skewed. The 2026 projections are probably low. When traffic engineers look at roads and say that the roads will handle this type of traffic, they are not considering the quality of life issues.

Dan Pierce noted that, from the presentation and listening to comments, everyone agrees that the corridor growth is inevitable. How long it will take is the other question. He would suggest that the Board of County Commissioners continue positive dialogue with the other two counties and developers so as to move forward.

Ken Lipton advised that there are no existing funds for capital improvements to Dave Wood Road in Ouray County and there would not be in the future. Even if the consensus of the people present and the rest of the community were for improvement, he asked how it would be funded. The only practical answer is that development would have to pay its way.

John Hollrah spoke to the issue of inevitable growth. He suggested that Montrose County was driving the issue by increasing density on the road. Commissioner Batchelder replied that was not necessarily true. No matter what Montrose County does, there would still be an issue of more traffic than the road can potentially handle.

A member of the public pointed out that the alluded to figure of 1:2 density of developments in Montrose County was not accurate when the entire property in the developments was taken into consideration due to many areas of open space.

John Peters added that zoned development is a negotiated development that takes into account clustering and open space subject to a public process. Maximum density is established by planned development. He suggested that a more accurate figure would be 1:2.7.

Craig Fetterolf noted that taking all of these factors into consideration, Cornerstone has a density of about 1:15.

Bill Collier asked what would be the probability of making Dave Wood Road a state road. Commissioner Batchelder reported that the State has taken the position that it will not fund any more lane miles.

Commissioner Batchelder replied to a question posed by Jane Collier that Cornerstone was required to pay impact fees and to pave Government Springs Road. The impact fees went to help with that paving. Cornerstone was also required to create a metro district to cover future maintenance costs interiorly and at 80% on Government Springs Road. The metro district provides all of the services that the County would provide except for fire and police.

David Masters with Elk Mountain Resort pointed out that Elk Mountain had spent a significant sum without Ouray County requiring it. In a sense, development does pay its way. With 275 acres, Elk Mountain is the only resort; the other projects are developments.

With no further comments, Commissioner Batchelder thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 2007.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF OURAY COUNTY, COLORADO

Attest:

Don Batchelder, Chair

Heidi M. Albritton, Vice Chair

Michelle Nauer, Clerk and Recorder
By: Linda Munson-Haley, Deputy Clerk of the Board

K. Keith Meinert, Member