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Speakout: State wasting money on beltway

By Rob Medina
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It's obvious our state needs more money for state services and infrastructure. But it's also apparent that we can't trust state government to manage our tax dollars responsibly.

A case in point surrounds the Northwest Beltway being pushed by the Colorado Department of Transportation to come down Colorado 93 from Broomfield to Golden.

This project is indicative of how government is fiscally irresponsible. CDOT has already blown more than \$10 million on an inept Environmental Impact Statement study for this superhighway without thoroughly addressing air, noise and water. The entire study is tainted by CDOT twisting the facts and mismanaging the process.

Actually, the department's own 30-year traffic projections can't substantiate the exorbitant \$1 billion price tag for this superhighway. There's no doubt we need improvements in the northwest quadrant, but the best alternative are four-lane parkways — one down Colorado 93 and one down Indiana and McIntyre streets in Arvada, which will likely cost less and benefit us more by spreading out the traffic flow. CDOT has eliminated this alternative.

Proponents of this \$1 billion superhighway say it will spur economic development, but the state has not produced one shred of evidence to support this claim. And why wouldn't a less expensive four-lane parkway have the same economic benefit?

The state's other option to fund this superhighway is as a toll road. Has anyone checked the financial health of the Northwest Parkway through Broomfield lately? They're losing money because there are not enough people willing to drive it.

This superhighway is less about transportation and more about the governor, Jefferson County commissioners and Arvada City Council wanting to promote sprawl west of Denver. In the meantime, the state will waste \$1 billion for an unnecessary superhighway, money that could have gone to other badly needed transportation projects.

Before Gov. Bill Owens claims to be fiscally conservative, he should first consider our real transportation needs, and balance it with real fiscal responsibility. Once state government begins to make intelligent decisions on behalf of taxpayers, maybe we will trust again.

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