

Build the Jefferson Parkway

By Preston Gibson

Leaders of chambers of commerce and economic development organizations around the Denver metropolitan area understand that transportation is one of the prerequisites to attracting quality businesses and jobs.

That is why we believe now is the time to build the Jefferson Parkway and help the region complete the last section of the beltway around Denver. The metro area is waiting for the connectivity and mobility that will be a reality if we tap the resources of the private sector to construct the Jefferson Parkway.

The metro area is poised to complete this critical infrastructure. The Jefferson Parkway Public Highway Authority recently completed a feasibility study that found a connection from Highway 93 to Highway 128 is needed and has reasonable prospects for financing. In addition, more than 20 private companies have shown an interest in participating on the parkway. And the parkway reached a major milestone this summer when the Colorado Department of Transportation approved a System Level Study for the proposed intersections/interchanges of the Jefferson Parkway with State Highways 128, 72 and 93 as meeting their standards.

Completing the Jefferson Parkway is not just important for relieving traffic pressures along the U.S. 36 corridor, Interstate 70 and within the local Jefferson County area. Completing the beltway also will link the entire greater Denver region, giving businesses and workers an efficient alternative to move throughout the metro area.

The region is expected to grow by an additional 50 percent, or 1.3 million people, over the next 20 years. It is short-sighted to delay the necessary infrastructure those numbers will demand.

The Jefferson Parkway's primary value is regional transportation, but its impact on economic development can't be overlooked. A study found that the parkway would realize an additional \$8.4 billion in economic potential and 17,000 additional jobs for the Jefferson County area alone. We believe the parkway would mean more jobs and new businesses.

Communities around the metro area have been working to connect our region with this beltway since the late 1960s. The work has resulted in the completion of C-470, E-470

and the Northwest Parkway. We call on citizens throughout the region to remember that every link in the current beltway chain was a struggle to complete.

The parkway can be completed without increasing traffic lanes in the Golden area, and actually improve traffic flow through the city. The metro area's beltway will not be a system until it is complete.

After 40 years of planning and work, it is time to finish this critical link in infrastructure for regional mobility and realize billions in economic development for the area. It is time we unite to buckle the beltway.

Preston Gibson is president of the Jefferson Economic Council. Other signatories are Accelerate Colorado president Wendy Mitchell; Adams County Economic Development president Bill Becker; Arvada Chamber president Dot Wright; Arvada Economic Development associate director Hazel Hartbarger; Aurora Economic Development Council president Wendy Mitchell; Aurora Chamber president Kevin Hougen; Broomfield Economic Development Corp. president Don Dunshee; Evergreen Chamber president Melanie Nuchols; Metro Denver Economic Development Corp. executive vice president Tom Clark; Metro North Chamber executive president Deborah Obermeyer; South Metro Chamber president John Brackney; Southeast Business Partnership president John Lay; and West Chamber Serving Jefferson County executive president Amy Sherman.