Election Day is quickly approaching and two important and somewhat confusing transportation funding measures will be on the Colorado ballot this year.

The first is Proposition 109, also called “Fix Our Damn Roads”. It is a transportation bond initiative that would authorize $3.5 billion in bonds to be used exclusively for road and bridge expansion, maintenance and repair of specific statewide projects. The principal and interest on the borrowed money would be paid for out of the state budget and legislators would decide how to repay the bonds out of the general fund over the next 20 years. These funds could not be used for transit, administration or any indirect costs not associated with the aforementioned projects. If the proposition is passed, there are 66 predetermined projects that will be fixed with this funding. The list of projects can be found at: http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Initiatives/titleBoard/filings/2017-2018/167FiscalImpact.pdf.

If passed, the funds for this proposition would need to be taken from other projects.

The second proposition on the ballot this year, Proposition 110 also called “Let’s Go Colorado”, would increase the sales and use tax by .62 percent over the next 20 years making the new rate increase from 2.9 percent to 3.52 percent by 2038. On average, this would cost each household in Colorado an additional $130.63 per year. Initially, the state could borrow $6 billion to fund immediate road and highway projects that have been neglected. It is estimated that the sales tax will generate $20 billion dollars over two decades, and of that, 45% of the funding would go to CDOT for state projects, 40% would go to local governments and the remaining 15% would go to multimodal projects aimed at reducing traffic congestion. If the proposition passes, projects to consider will be determined by various community governments and CDOT.

Hinsdale County Commissioner Cindy Dozier (R) said, "Colorado has been underfunding transportation for decades because we're using a funding source that just can't keep up while the need continues to grow. Speaking as a rural county commissioner, I believe the only way we'll be guaranteed that our local roads and highways will get the repairs they need, is by going to the ballot and dedicating new revenue to this critical priority."

The short and dangerously over-simplified version of these two Propositions is this – Proposition 109 funds road improvements without a tax increase; Proposition 110 funds road improvements with a tax increase. It’s important to keep in mind that the funds for improvements with Prop 109 (approximately $3.5 Billion) must be taken from other areas of the already stretched budget. The funds for Prop 110 are new and will leave intact other critical services currently being provided. It gets even more complex from here and you are urged to read the full report here.

In addition to this, the state legislature approved Senate Bill 1 in May 2018, that would require $50 million of general fund money to be transferred to help fund transportation for the next 20 years, resulting in $1 billion in additional funding. In 2017, the state legislature also passed Senate Bill 267, allowing the state to sell buildings it owned to investors and then use that money to fund $2 billion dollars in road projects. Thereafter, the government would then buy the buildings back through lease payments.
With numerous scenarios possible, some of the potential outcomes could be:

**Proposition 109 passes and 110 does not:**

In this scenario, the legislature would be required to cancel the funding provided by Senate Bills 1 and 267 in order to prevent the state from being over extended on the CDOT budget. The $3.5 billion would be then used to fix the 66 pre-determined projects. The state would have 20 years to repay the $5.2 billion dollar loan, including interest.

**Proposition 110 passes and 109 does not:**

The state would continue with the borrowing plan from Senate bills 1 and 267 and implement a new sales tax. Six billion dollars would be made available for immediate use on high priority projects.

**Both measures are passed:**

The sales tax would be implemented and the 66 projects listed under proposition 109 continue to be funded. The courts would have to decide how to move forward with the previous borrowing plans from Senate Bills 1 and 267.

**Both measures fail:**

This would trigger a ballot question for the 2019 ballot that would ask voters to approve $2.3 billion in bonds for transportation projects, resulting in the cancelation of Senate Bill 1 and 267.

It is clear that Colorado is in desperate need of funding for road projects and transportation to be able to cope with the increased population over the last decade. TRIP, a nonprofit national transportation research group, conducted a study in June 2018 in Colorado. Some of their major finding are as follows:

“Driving on Colorado roads that are deteriorated, congested and that lack some desirable safety features costs Colorado drivers a total of $7.1 billion each year.”

“Due to inadequate state and local funding, 40 percent of major urban roads and highways in Colorado are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on rough roads costs the annual Colorado driver $468 annually in additional vehicle operating costs.”

“Six percent of Colorado’s bridges are structurally deficient, meaning there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components.”

“Congested roads choke commuting and commerce and cost Colorado drivers $3.1 billion each year in the form of lost time and wasted fuel. In the most congested areas, drivers lose up to $1,190 and more than two full days each year in congestion.”

“Over the last five years, 2,595 people were killed in traffic crashes in Colorado. Traffic incidents in Colorado in 2016 caused $6.2 billion in economic costs.”

“Nearly 1.1 million full-time jobs in Colorado in key industries like tourism, retail, agriculture and manufacturing are dependent on the quality, safety and reliability of the state’s transportation infrastructure network. These workers earn $45.2 billion in wages and contribute an estimated $8.2 billion in state and local income, corporate and unemployment insurance taxes and the federal payroll tax.”
The full report can be found at:

It is clear that Colorado roads are in desperate need of repair. Ultimately how the repairs are funded will be left up to Colorado voters on November 6.