



Federal Budget Cuts Threaten Vital Services for Older Adults

I run the Area Agency on Aging (Vintage) serving people aged 60+ across the six counties of our region. Funding derives from taxes redirected through federal and state sources from us to local providers. We provide services you may recognize, such as one-on-one Medicare counseling, direct payments to individuals for transportation and dental care as well as, support for caregivers. This funding is crucial for rural communities. Most people don't understand how the federal funding through the Older Americans Act (OAA) flows to the states through statewide Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), then to local providers and older adults directly.

On May 21, the House passed the Administration's Proposed Budget. We only know of these because of leaks; these are not services debated during the campaign or in public since. The following are some services to be eliminated.

- *Adult Protective Services* (helps protect vulnerable adults, like older adults and adults with disabilities, from abuse, neglect, and exploitation), the House put this back in.
- *Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program* (helps eligible individuals and families pay a portion of winter home heating costs)
- *SHIP Medicare Program* (unbiased, one-on-one Medicare counseling and assistance)
- *Evidence-Based Health Promotion and Disease Prevention* such as classes that help folks to prevent falls, the leading cause of injury and injury-related death among adults 65+.
- *Chronic Disease Self-Management Education* such as free classes for people with chronic conditions like diabetes, arthritis, and depression.
- *Elder Rights* (example: funding for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, who are certified people who advocate for individuals living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities). The House version proposes funding this.



Throughout the Vintage region, federal funding has been used to purchase vehicles for senior centers, pay for popular restaurant vouchers and home delivered meals, and get older adults dental services that they need (because Medicare and Medicaid don't often cover dental needs). It's used to support caregivers, provide legal assistance, and help older adults navigate complex systems like Medicare. These are real, tax-payer dollars going to good, effective, cost-efficient programs and older adults directly.

Breaking Apart the Older Americans Act Makes Aging Services Less Efficient and More Expensive

In addition to eliminating services, the federal department where the Older Americans Act (and funding for AAAs) sits, was eliminated. Aging programs moved into the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). With the breaking apart of the Older Americans Act, the Trump Administration is damaging the efficiency and the effectiveness of a successful 60-year-old Act and undermining the federal commitment to assist older Americans in aging well in their homes.

AAA services in our communities prove year in and year out to be cost-effective alternatives to Medicaid. AAAs promote healthy aging, help folks age in place, maintain their independence, and reduce the need for expensive institutional care.

Supporting our older adults isn't about politics. It's about doing what's right and what's right also happens to be less expensive than Medicaid long term care and what older adults want to do – age in their own home with their friends and family.

I ask our local, state, and leaders D.C. to stand up for older adults. Call on Congress to reject budget cuts and programmatic reorganization that would gut these essential programs. County by county data will be available on the [Vintage website](#) by June 2nd.

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County Commissioners Across NWCCOG Testify in Support of Lodging Tax Flexibility



NWCCOG is eager to shout-out key Commissioners across the territory who testified in legislative committees to encourage passage of HB 1247 enabling County voters the ability to increase the Lodging tax from 2% to 6% and expand the use of funds for a broader set of community benefits. Representatives for the governor's office attending the NWCCOG EDD Summit May 1 would not comment on the possibility of the Governor vetoing or signing the bill.

House Bill 1247 (2025)—a measure that would grant counties broader authority to use local lodging tax revenues beyond tourism promotion. [The bill, which has now been approved by the](#)

[Colorado House and Senate](#), is a major step toward enabling rural and resort communities to address critical infrastructure and housing challenges driven by increased tourism.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Meghan Lukens and Sen. Dylan Roberts, both of whom represent parts of the NWCCOG region, modifies a 2022 law (HB22-1117) by simplifying the ballot language and allowing voters to decide whether lodging tax revenues can be allocated to workforce housing, childcare, transportation, and other community needs directly impacted by tourism.

County leaders from Eagle, Summit, Grand, and Routt counties—many of whom are members of NWCCOG—testified at the State Capitol, citing the pressing need to rebalance how lodging tax dollars are used. While most counties in the NWCCOG region rely heavily on visitor spending, they are also grappling with strained infrastructure, labor shortages, and skyrocketing housing costs that make it difficult for workers to live in the communities they serve.

Summit County Commissioners Tamara Pogue and Nina Watters each spoke in favor of the bill, emphasizing that it is no longer sustainable to devote all lodging tax revenue to marketing. “We must ensure we’re investing in the infrastructure, housing, and services that support both residents and the visitors who come here,” said Commissioner Watters. Commissioner Pogue added that directing a portion of the funds toward housing and transportation would help ensure the long-term viability of their local economies.


Under HB 1247, counties will still need to go to voters to approve changes in how the funds are spent, but the ballot question will be streamlined and easier for the public to understand. The legislation is seen

as a win for local control, allowing each community to tailor tax spending to its unique tourism-related impacts.


The bill passed with bipartisan support and now heads to Governor Jared Polis for signature.

For NWCCOG member counties, this legislation represents both a policy victory and a testament to the power of regional collaboration. Their collective testimony underscores a growing consensus: sustainable tourism requires investing in the people and systems that make it possible.

Vintage Event



Health Effects of Ageism: Building Awareness



Join [Kris Geerken](#), MHA, for an enlightening session that explores perceptions about age and aging and their impact on health. Discover how ageism, often unrecognized, can detrimentally affect physical and mental health and overall lifespans.

Two dates available for this free and informative Zoom presentation. Just click on the Zoom link below to join.

June 12: 9-10am
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87032454952>

June 17: 12-1pm
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83318651012>

Celebrating a Milestone: Colorado's Mountain Rail Revival



We are thrilled to extend our heartfelt congratulations to our partners and the communities from Winter Park to Hayden on the groundbreaking 25-year agreement between the State of Colorado and Union Pacific Railroad. This [landmark deal](#) paves the way for expanded passenger rail service through the Moffat Tunnel, marking a significant step forward in sustainable and accessible mountain transportation.

The agreement, announced earlier this month, will introduce [three daily passenger trips from Denver to the mountains, enhancing connectivity for both residents and visitors](#). The route will traverse key mountain towns, including Fraser,

Granby, and Steamboat Springs, ultimately extending to Craig. This expansion not only revives a historic mode of travel but also offers a viable alternative to the often-congested Interstate 70, promoting environmental sustainability and economic growth in these communities.

We especially want to recognize and congratulate NWCCOG members Tim Redmond, Routt County Commissioner, and Fraser Mayor Philip Vandernail for their leadership and commitment to advancing regional transportation solutions. Their advocacy played a key role in making this long-envisioned service a reality for their communities and the broader northwest Colorado region.

A huge thank you to Governor Jared Polis who spearheaded the initiative. *"Everybody is excited! We're going to ride the train."* Beth Whited, President of Union Pacific, emphasized the broader implications of the partnership: *"This is the way that states need to think about their position in the global marketplace."* This collaboration exemplifies the power of public-private partnerships in driving forward-thinking infrastructure projects. By investing in passenger rail, Colorado is not only preserving a cherished part of its history but also laying the groundwork for a more connected and sustainable future. Grand and Routt Counties have high hopes for extending the benefits to Steamboat that Fraser and Winter Park have enjoyed for years.

We commend all stakeholders involved in bringing this vision to fruition and look forward to the positive impact this development will have on our state's transportation landscape.

Energy Program Updates

New On-Site Training & Certification Center Opens in Gypsum

NWCCOG's Energy Program is proud to announce the official Building Performance Institute (BPI) approval of the new Energy Training Center — a purpose-built 22x12 energy-efficient "tiny home" training and testing center located in Gypsum, Colorado. This facility marks a major milestone in the program's commitment to building a skilled local workforce, reducing certification costs, and expanding access to hands-on energy training right here in our region.

The tiny home training center includes:

- A controlled environment for conducting blower door tests, duct testing, thermal imaging, and flow rate measurements.
- A CAZ (Combustion Appliance Zone) with a furnace/water heater and dryer to show system interaction and ensure combustion safety.
- An attic space demonstrating various insulation types and techniques.
- A living room set up for hands-on diagnostics in real-world conditions.



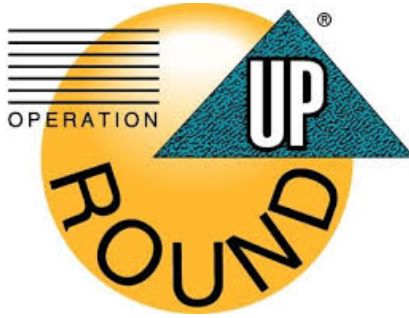
This facility now serves as the foundation for onboarding new energy team members, offering them the chance to build skills, gain confidence, and grow their careers within NWCCOG in a practical, guided environment.

Over the past decade, the team has relied on external testing sites and training centers — often out-of-state — to complete the required Building Performance Institute (BPI) certifications. Until recently, that meant sending staff to places like Santa Fe, flying in instructors, or scrambling to find testable homes in Denver that met strict training site requirements. These approaches were costly, time-consuming, and not ideal learning environments for their growing staff.

In Fall 2024, the program made a bold decision to take matters into their own hands. They researched, designed and began construction on their own energy training and testing facility, using it as a workforce development project. The contractor served as a mentor, guiding the energy staff through the process of building a highly energy-efficient structure from the ground up — providing critical learning in real time.

They've already used the facility to renew BPI certifications for staff members Neal Ashforth and Doug Jones, with an on-site trainer successfully conducting testing — proving that the facility works exactly as planned. "The training was great. Recertification can be stressful, especially with someone filming you. Being in a familiar facility made it much more comfortable. The setup simulates a real house on a smaller scale, which helps you focus. It's a big improvement over having to travel to Santa Fe or Denver for testing, and I really enjoyed it. Training onsite will be very beneficial for all our staff going through certification processes in the future." —Neal Ashforth, Energy Quality Control Inspector, NWCCOG. In May 2025, the Energy Program will welcome their first external groups: employees from Walking Mountains Science Center and the Town of Avon, who will complete training and certification for a wide range of energy audit roles. "Having access locally to training and testing for our energy analysts, who complete home energy assessments for the Energy Smart Colorado program, is essential to meet growing demand as we help more homeowners make educated decisions about energy improvements in their homes." —Nikki Maline, Energy Programs Director for Walking Mountains Science Center. This site now serves as a key regional asset for counties with different building stock and energy needs, offering them a local solution for high-quality, hands-on training.

Looking ahead, the next phase will focus on training NWCCOG staff to become certified BPI proctors — allowing the Energy Program to complete the entire certification process in-house. This shift is expected to bring significant taxpayer savings by eliminating travel and third-party certification costs for their



Energy Program Receives Community Support Grant from YVEA's Operation Round Up

The Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) Energy Program is thrilled to announce that it has been awarded an \$8,000 Community Support Grant by Yampa Valley Electric Association's (YVEA) Operation Round Up. This generous contribution will be used to train regional Home Energy and Weatherization front-line workers, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and tools necessary to improve energy efficiency and safety in homes across Northwest Colorado.

The grant will fund specialized training equipment, including the nationally recognized "House of Pressure," a hands-on tool developed by Community Housing Partners (CHP). This innovative prop simplifies complex home performance concepts related to air pressure, moisture, heat, and health and safety. It enables trainees to visually understand essential diagnostics such as blower door testing, zonal pressure testing, and combustion appliance zone (CAZ) testing. The House of Pressure is portable and will be used for collaborative training sessions across the YVEA and NWCCOG region.

This funding comes at a critical time for NWCCOG's Energy Program, which faces a shortage of qualified Energy Auditors and Quality Control Inspectors (QCI). By utilizing advanced training tools like the House of Pressure, the program aims to double its workforce in 2025—from six to twelve certified professionals—while serving over 400 households annually. These efforts will reduce energy consumption, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and address health and safety concerns in low-income housing throughout Northwest Colorado.

The grant complements ongoing investments in regional training infrastructure, including Eagle County's contribution toward a warehouse and classroom facility in Gypsum and funding from the Colorado Energy Office for trainer and trainee expenses. NWCCOG is also self-funding a Simulation Test House to further enhance its training capabilities. Together, these resources are paving the way for sustainable energy solutions that benefit both residents and the environment.

Beyond energy savings—estimated at \$283 per household per year—the program addresses significant health and safety issues while fostering civic-mindedness among its dedicated crew members. From retrofitting challenging structures to working under difficult conditions, these workers embody a commitment to improving lives through energy efficiency.

NWCCOG expresses its heartfelt gratitude to YVEA's Operation Round Up for making this vital initiative possible. With continued support from partners like YVEA, NWCCOG remains steadfast in its mission to create healthier homes and more sustainable communities across Northwest Colorado.

CDOT Telephone Town Halls

The Colorado Department of Transportation is taking a fresh look at Colorado's transportation investment priorities. As part of the Your Transportation Plan effort, CDOT will be hosting telephone town halls across the state.



COLORADO
Department of Transportation



The telephone town halls will allow Coloradans to speak directly with transportation decision makers for their area.

The Town Hall for Chaffee, Delta, Eagle, Garfield, Gunnison, Lake, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, Pitkin & Summit counties is June 3rd. [Register here!](#)

Upcoming Board Meetings

Thursday, June 5, 2025 – NWCCOG Energy Warehouse in Gypsum

Full Council & EDD Board Meeting

Primary Agenda Items: Approve March meeting minutes, approve Q1 Financials; EDD Board meeting



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