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CAÑON CITY DAILY RECORD

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Thursday, May 28, 2026

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FREMONT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

McFall: Fire danger still exists

Commissioner asks residents to ‘be careful and diligent’ when outdoors to prevent wildfire

By Brian Porter
The Daily Record

Falling short of a Smokey the Bear impersonation, Commissioner Dwayne McFall warned residents Tuesday of the danger which still exists for wildfire after a downgrade to the fire ban by Sheriff Allen Cooper.

Fremont County presently is positioned at Stage 1 restrictions,

down from Stage 2.

“Which is still restrict(ive),” McFall said.

The substantial change from Stage 2 to Stage 1 restrictions, according to the Fremont County Sheriff’s Office website, relates to campfire within fire rings in developed areas and open fire in developed areas being allowed, but not necessarily advised.

“It is still kind of dry out there,”



Dwayne McFall

McFall said. “Even though (precipitation) is helping, it is not enough yet.” The furthest eastern portions of Fremont County, about 24% of the land area, are in abnormally dry conditions, according to U.S. Drought Monitor data from May 21. Another 20% of Fremont County, in the central and northern areas of the county, is in moderate drought. The western

area, about 56% of the land area, remains in severe drought. New data will be released Thursday.

“Those trees, the dry grass are still volatile fuels,” McFall said. “Be careful and diligent when you are out and about... and be safe.”

Cañon City was slightly above the normal precipitation value for May but is now trailing the average precipitation of 1.37 inches by 0.15 inches, according to the National Weather Service’s Pueblo office. The last recorded precipitation in Cañon City was on May 21. Drought.gov ranked April as

the 35th driest on record for Colorado and the sixth driest January-to-April period on record. Data for May has not yet been released. In April, Cañon City received 0.37 inches of precipitation.

More detail on what constitutes an open fire and a developed area is available through the FC-SO’s website and a graphic posted on Facebook.

Brian Porter is a special government and politics contributor to the Cañon City Daily Record.

PATHWAYS IN TECHNOLOGY EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS

Program gives Cañon City students a jumpstart on a career

By Olivia Johnson
The Daily Record

Cañon City High School is one of 20 high schools across the state to participate in the Pathways in Technology Early College High School program — and students are already reaping the long-term results.

P-TECH, an innovative educational model giving students the chance to graduate with far more than a cap and gown, has been a staple at CCHS since the 2017-18 school year. Through P-TECH, students can earn a high school diploma, complete college coursework, gain industry certifications, and build direct connections to future employers, all while still in high school.

Launched in Colorado through state legislation in 2015, the program creates partnerships between school districts, community colleges, and industry leaders. The goal is simple but ambitious: prepare students for in-demand careers while reducing the financial and logistical barriers that often accompany higher education.

CCHS jumped on the proverbial bandwagon in 2017 when a Technical Writing Class full of juniors and seniors was tasked with writing a grant specifically meant to bring the P-TECH program to the school. They were asked to evaluate three key components of the program, including a secondary education partner, a post-secondary education partner, and industry partners aligned to a variety of possible pathways.

Students typically enter P-TECH programs as freshmen and follow a pathway that can last anywhere from four to six

PTECH » PAGE 4



COURTESY PHOTO

Ian Bursha, right, smiles for a photo with Madison Tortessi, the Director of Career and Technical Education at Cañon City High School. Tortessi was instrumental in Bursha’s success in the PTECH Pathway at CCHS.

FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL DISTRICT

Polis signs bills overhauling RTD board

New laws shrink the size of beleaguered transit agency’s board and the footprint of the rail district

By Nick Coltrain
ncoltrain@denverpost.com

The Regional Transportation District’s governing board and the geographic footprint of the Front Range Passenger Rail District will both shrink under a pair of bills signed into law Tuesday by Gov. Jared Polis.

The law passed as Senate Bill 150 this year reduces the size of the RTD board from 15 members to nine. Five members will be elected from separate districts, starting in the 2028 election, while the remaining four will be appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate. That is a change from the currently all-elected board.

The appointed members in the new configuration must collectively have expertise in finance, land use, transportation planning, and transit programs that primarily serve communities with higher environmental or health concerns. One must be a current or former member of an agency union.

That law also requires RTD to commission a study and adopt a plan to improve paratransit services by the end of 2027.

“Coloradans deserve affordable, reliable, convenient transportation to get where we want to go, and that starts with more efficiency, accountability and transparency, especially in our largest metro area,” Polis said in a statement about the SB-150 signing. “This new law will modernize RTD and deliver stronger and better transportation options that save people money and get Coloradans where we want to go.”

The bill resulted from recommendations issued by the RTD Accountability Committee earlier this year.

Another measure signed Tuesday, Senate Bill 172, narrows the Front Range Passenger Rail District’s boundaries to include only municipalities along Interstate 25 that will be directly served by the train system. Those municipalities include Trinidad to the south up to Fort Collins in the north, as well as Denver and south, west and northwest metro cities.

RTD » PAGE 4

HUDSON FACILITY

Bennet proposes law to limit new detention centers

Local officials say no contracts have been signed to reopen former prison eyed by immigration agency

By Seth Klamann
sklamann@denverpost.com

HUDSON » The fate of a shuttered Colorado prison that federal officials have targeted to become a new immigration detention center remained unclear Tuesday as U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet unveiled plans to try to slow the opening of more facilities in the state.

Standing outside the Hudson facility’s empty parking lot, Bennet, who is running to become the Democratic nominee for governor, said he would partner with state legislators to expand a 52-year-old provision in state law. The law gives local governments more regulatory and planning authority over matters of statewide impact.

Those powers have typically

been used for large projects that happen within a county or city’s boundaries — like airports, mining or water infrastructure — but Bennet said he wanted to expand them to also allow local governments to “say no” to detention centers. He is running in the June 30 Democratic primary against Attorney General Phil Weiser.

“Colorado will not become home to Donald Trump’s cruel immigration agenda,” he said of the president from a lectern

in front of the Hudson Correctional Facility.

Since last year, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials have considered reopening the former private prison northeast of Denver for immigration detention.

If Bennet’s proposal became law and could be used to slow down the opening of new facilities, it would require county officials to make use of it. Kelly Fleniken, the executive director of

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PTECH

FROM PAGE 1

years, depending on how quickly they complete their college coursework.

By the end, students may graduate with:

A traditional high school diploma
An associate degree or industry-recognized credential
Internship or workplace experience
A stronger pathway into employment or continued higher education
For many families, it is a chance to gain thousands of dollars' worth of college credits without the usual tuition burden.

One of P-TECH's biggest strengths is that it is not a generic program.

Each participating school builds pathways tied to specific industries, giving students a focused route into fields that are actively hiring.

For CCHS, that eventually led to pathways forming in computer information systems, auto technology, fire science, advanced emergency medical technician, welding, and, next year, they will add an elementary education pathway.

"Students can take as much as we offer in-building," said Director of Career and Technical Education at Cañon City High School Madison Tortessi. "For example, our auto students can take a lot of coursework in our building. Once they



COURTESY PHOTOS

Lester Limón, the CEO and Founder of p3 communities, mentors Tristan Ritchie, a 2021 CCHS graduate and former HS Pathways Program participant, during an internship through the PTECH program.

run out of classes at our school, they go to Pueblo Community College to finish out their degree."

Tortessi went on to detail that the program can stretch for several years post-high school, and tuition at PCC is paid via the funding provided by the Colorado Department of Education.

The graduating class of 2023 was the first to go through the full P-TECH program and boasted just two graduates, but, more recently, the program has seen more and more graduates. This year, eight students graduated from the

program, several of whom walked straight into careers in their respective fields of study.

Tortessi went on to note that 2024 CCHS and P-TECH graduate Ian Bursha is a shining example of what the program can do for students.

Bursha wasted no time turning his education into action. Through the P-TECH program, he completed dual enrollment coursework while still in high school, allowing him to earn his Associate of Applied Science degree in Fire Science just three months after graduation.

The program gave Bursha an early start in a field he was passionate about and opened doors that would shape the beginning of his career in emergency services.

During his junior year, Bursha secured a summer internship with the Cañon City Area Fire Protection District, an opportunity that provided first-hand exposure to the realities of fire service work. His days were spent participating in department training, riding along on both emergency and non-emergency calls, and learning directly from firefighters working in the field.

That experience proved to be more than just an internship. It laid the groundwork for relationships and professional connections that continue to play a role in his career today.

Shortly after graduating from CCHS in May 2024, Bursha began another intensive chapter of his training: EMT school.

Throughout the summer, he attended as a full-time student, completing the rigorous coursework and practical training required to become a nationally registered Emergency Medical Technician. By August 2024, Bursha had officially earned both his EMT certification and his Associate of Applied Science degree in Fire Science.

He quickly put those



Lester Limón, the CEO and Founder of p3 communities, mentors Tristan Ritchie, a 2021 CCHS graduate and former HS Pathways Program participant, during an internship through the PTECH program.

credentials to work, joining American Medical Response as an EMT, where he served from September 2024 through March 2026.

At the same time, Bursha continued building his fire service experience closer to home.

In April 2025, he joined the Cañon City Volunteer Fire Department, where he expanded his training and earned state certifications in Hazardous Materials, Firefighter I, and Wildland Firefighting. The connections he formed through his PTECH internship played an important role in helping him transition into volunteer service and further develop his skills.

That dedication and preparation paid off May 8, when Bursha officially began his career as a full-time firefighter with Pueblo Rural Fire Protection District.

Looking back, Bursha credits PTECH with giving him the foundation that helped launch his career.

"I'm all about P-TECH," Bursha said. "It changed my life, it gave me something to pursue, something that I loved, in high school."

While many of his later certifications came through additional training and

hard work, he says the program gave him the discipline, confidence, and early opportunities needed to move forward with purpose.

One of PTECH's greatest advantages, Bursha noted, is its accessibility. The program allowed him to earn college credits, professional certifications, and real-world career experience at no cost to him or his family.

For Bursha, that early start became the spark that ignited a career dedicated to serving others.

However, like countless similar programs across Colorado, budget cuts at the state level are threatening the continuation of the program.

"P-TECH was saved for one more year...we're really just hoping to get the word about how important and impactful this program is," Tortessi said.

"It would be very devastating if we lost this program...but the good news is we can still offer our students a ton of concurrent enrollment in our high school," she added. "And this program is so important because it really gives students something to focus on."



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RTD

FROM PAGE 1

Starter service, in a \$332 million project, is expected to begin by January 2029. Lawmakers created the original district in 2021 to govern the planned rail system.

"This law creates a clear path for the Front Range Passenger Rail to take shape, improving Colorado's transportation options and infrastructure for the municipalities that have already opted into this rail system," state Rep. Amy Paschal, a Colorado Springs Democrat and bill sponsor, said. "Soon, voters around these stations will get a say on whether or not their community will have Front Range Passenger Rail."

"This project has been a long time in the making, and I am excited for the opportunities that this will open up for my community in Colorado Springs."

Bulletin

FROM PAGE 3

Noon — Al-Anon Meeting: At E-Free Church Annex, 3000 E. Main St.

Noon to 1 p.m. Penrose Summer Food Service Program: At the Penrose Community Library. Free-to-go lunches for those 18 and under. Call 719-372-6017 for more information.

110 p.m. Bible study: Every Friday at the Golden Age Center, 728 Main St. 719-275-5177.

3-4 p.m. Ocean and Animal Conservation classes: With Nyah at the Canon City Public Library, 516 Macon Ave.

Saturday, May 30

10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Pantry of Fremont: A Client Choice



ERIC LUTZEN — THE DENVER POST

Colorado Gov. Jared Polis delivers remarks prior to boarding a passenger train from Union Station in Denver to Longmont during an inspection and demonstration trip of the Front Range Passenger Rail corridor on March 7, 2024.

Polis also signed House Bill 1313, which loosens the requirements local governments need to meet to qualify for affordable housing funding through Proposition 123.

"Under current Proposition 123 rules, even the most proactive local governments can't meet production requirements to access affordable hous-

ing funds, as rising construction costs continue to put up barriers," Sen. Matt Ball, a Denver Democrat and bill sponsor, said. "This important legislation modernizes Prop 123 requirements to allow more local governments to leverage this dedicated funding and create more affordable housing for Colorado families."

food pantry offering food to anyone in need. Bring boxes or bags to carry food home. Appointments can be set up during the first visit. 312 S. Ninth St., Ste. 3. For more information, call 719-458-9252 or visit The Pantry of Fremont on Facebook.

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Window Glow: Bask in the warm glow of original 1896 stained glass windows Tuesdays through Saturdays at the Bell Tower Cultural Center, 210 E. 2nd St. in Florence. Sunny afternoons are prime time. Free!

1030 a.m. to noon Saturday Aglow: meets at the Living Word Four Square Church, 1710 Mariposa Road near Dawson Ranch. Presenting Biblical principles for men and women as solutions for the challenging issues of our time. For more

information, call Kelly at 719-649-9318.

11 a.m. Bingo: At the American Legion Auxiliary, 209 E. Front St. in Florence. Doors open at 9:30 a.m.

6 p.m. Open Mic: At the Bell Tower Cultural Center, 201 E. Second St. in Florence. Performers sign in at 6 p.m., music begins at 6:30 p.m. \$1/person, performer or audience. 719-284-2038.

Sunday, May 31

8-10 a.m. Breakfast: at VFW Post 4061, 215 N. Cottonwood Ave., every Sunday. \$10 for adults, \$7 for children. Breakfast includes bacon, sausage, eggs, waffles, pancakes, potatoes, fruit and coffee.

1 p.m. Spanish practice: At the Bean Pedaler, located at 412 Main St. There is no cost to attend and all skill levels are welcome.