



Colorado Department of Transportation

August 2019 eNewsletter

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*Please forward/share this email with others who may have an interest in the Ilex Design-Build project.*

[To view a PDF, click here.](#)

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**Website:**  
[Colorado Info Project](#)

**Email:**  
[i25ilex@PublicInfoTeam.com](mailto:i25ilex@PublicInfoTeam.com)

**Hotline:**  
(719) 470-2270

### **Quick Links**

[Project Website](#)  
[CDOT Website](#)

### **What the Project Involved**

The Ilex interchange is the first segment to be constructed as part of the New Pueblo Freeway.

## **Official Ribbon Cutting Signifies Completion of First Project of The New Pueblo Freeway**



Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and contractor Flatiron Construction, hosted more than 100 community members at a ribbon cutting ceremony June 27 at Runyon Field Sports Complex Parking Lot to celebrate the completion of the I-25 Ilex to City Center Drive Design-Build Project (Ilex), the first project of The New Pueblo Freeway.

Karen Rowe, CDOT Region 2 Transportation Director (RTD) welcomed guests and recognized the numerous agencies, staff and community organizations which played significant roles in the success of the project. Representatives from the project agency partners included: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), City of Pueblo, and Pueblo County.

"The state of Colorado is undergoing noticeable demographic changes and our roadways must grow alongside this," said Rowe. "The New Pueblo Freeway is a great example of how we are making the necessary changes to adapt accordingly and make traveling our highway system a safe and enjoyable commute. With Ilex being the first phase in a multiphase project, we are proud to see these changes becoming a success," she said.

Funding for this first project of The New Pueblo Freeway was made possible from past and present efforts of CDOT leaders and local elected officials who saw this project as the beginning of

The project consists of replacing bridges on I-25 between Ilex Street and City Center Drive in Pueblo. Work included rehabilitation of bridges on northbound I-25 over Santa Fe Avenue (US 50C), I-25 over Indiana Avenue, on the Santa Fe Avenue (US 50C) bridge over the Arkansas River, and on Northern Avenue and Mesa Avenue over I-25.

Structurally deficient bridges on I-25 over Gruma Drive, the Union Pacific Railroad, and Ilex Street were removed and replaced.

Interchange ramps were lengthened to provide safer transitions onto and off of the Interstate, especially the 1st Street ramp to southbound I-25. Roadway curves were softened to improve visibility and provide a smoother ride for motorists.

Local roadway improvements were included at D Street, Ilex Street, Bennett Street cul-de-sac, Clark Street cul-de-sac, and along Santa Fe Avenue.

Bridges were widened at City Center Drive and I-25 over Santa Fe Avenue (widened to the median).

Noise abatement also occurred along some segments of I-25.

### **Project Partners**

- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Federal Highway Administration
- City of Pueblo
- Pueblo County
- The Community

something great for the City of Pueblo and everyone who travels this highway. The approximate \$100 million project was fully funded by RAMP (Responsible Acceleration of Maintenance and Partnerships), Colorado Bridge Enterprise and local match from the City of Pueblo and Pueblo County.



"Over the last five years, one-time tax dollars, the gas tax and other vehicle fees have allowed the Colorado Transportation Commission to maintain and improve roads and bridges in Colorado," explained Bill Thiebaut, District Transportation Commissioner. "The investment in Pueblo has been \$250 million -- creating nearly 2,500 jobs -- including this wonderful phase of The New Pueblo Freeway, the first major reconstruction of our 1950's Pueblo freeway in the last three decades. Kudos to the taxpaying public for allowing us to wisely invest their money."

In addition to Rowe, ribbon cutting celebration speakers included CDOT Deputy Director Herman Stockinger, FHWA Colorado Division Administrator John Cater, City of Pueblo Mayor Nick Gradisar, Colorado Transportation Commissioner Bill Thiebaut and Flatiron Construction Senior Vice President Eric Taylor.

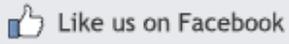


"I first saw plans for reconstruction of I-25 more than 20 years ago when I was president of the Pueblo Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, so this has been a long time in coming," Mayor Gradisar told the crowd at the event.

"And I certainly hope it doesn't take another 20 years to finish the other phases of Interstate-25, which is the oldest section of I-25 that remains in the state of Colorado. The completion of I-25 through Pueblo remains a top priority for the Pueblo Area Council of Governments."

The Ilex Project is an example of how CDOT is providing transportation solutions to the State of Colorado. The Project has significantly increased safety on the I-25 corridor through Pueblo from Ilex Street (now D Street) to City Center Drive. Motorists experience much safer driving conditions, decreased accidents and enjoy a greatly improved driving experience.

The Ilex Project has made several safety improvements including:



## Additional Project Information

For more information about the I-25 Ilex Design-Build project, visit the [CDOT website project page](#).

## Project Facts

- 318,825 hours worked by craftsmen without major injury
- 131,408 square feet of retaining wall and 16,377 square feet of noise wall
- 139 girders, laid end-to-end, would stretch between three and four miles
- Approximately 600,000 cubic yards of dirt, equal to 86,000 Asian elephants
- 8,000 cubic yards of concrete, enough to fill the inside of 4,320 cars
- 1.8 million pounds of rebar, equal to the weight of about 450 average size cars
- 4,000 feet of reinforced concrete pipe of drainage, equals approximately the stroll on the Pueblo Riverwalk
- 6,000 tons of asphalt
- Landscaping: 174 trees, 82 shrubs and 27 acres of seed

## Ribbon Cutting

- Widening of shoulders to 12 feet so cars and emergency vehicles can pull off safely
- Longer acceleration and deceleration lanes for improved merging on and off the Interstate, as well as the opportunity for proper slowing down and speeding up
- Straightened alignment where there were previously tight curves to allow for consistent speeds through the corridor
- Standardized lane widths
- Improved lighting and signage for increased visibility

This project also celebrates many other positive changes such as a desire to improve the look and aesthetics of the interstate from the local community perspective. Aesthetics were chosen to compliment local land uses around the project. And, 11 bridges were replaced, rehabilitated or widened.

"On behalf of all the men and women who work at CDOT and in the transportation industry, we extend our sincere thanks to the community for your patience and your partnership to make this project happen," said CDOT Deputy Director Herman Stockinger. "I'm excited for the people of Pueblo. They have waited for this for this for a long time and they deserve this project."

[VIEW](#) the Ribbon Cutting Program.

## Completed Segment of the I-25 Ilex Project



[CLICK HERE](#) to view Pueblo Chieftain I-25 Ilex Project Video.

## Project Timeline

- I-25 through Pueblo was built between 1949 and 1959.
- The old state highway 85/87 used to go along Lake Avenue, Main Street and Elizabeth.
- At the time, engineers designed the freeway to serve transportation needs through the year 1975.
- I-25 serves as a critical north-south link in the nation's Interstate Highway System and as a strategic international corridor under the North American Free Trade Agreement.
- I-25 through the Pueblo corridor had its first major reconstruction project in 1990 - the I-25/ US 50/CO 47 Gateway Project.
- FHWA and CDOT initiated an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for improvements of I-25 through Pueblo in 2000.
- The EIS analyzed transportation conditions, identified transportation needs along the corridor that would best



Pueblo County Sheriff's Honor Guard



CDOT Region 2 Transportation Director Karen Rowe, CDOT Deputy Director Herman Stockinger and Colorado Transportation Commissioner Bill Thiebaut



Pueblo Mayor Gradisar and Colorado House Representative Donald Valdez



Progress photos



Community members

reflect the values of the community.

- The EIS was funded with CDOT's Regional Priority Program fund (RPP, \$14 million).
- The final EIS was signed in 2013, with the Record of Decision (ROD), Phase 1 (Arkansas River to 50/47), signed in 2014.
- In 2015 Flatiron Construction began construction on the first project of The New Pueblo Freeway, the I-25 Ilex Street to City Center Drive Design-Build Project.

### CDOT Locals Bring Personal Perspective to Work on the Ilex Project

Working on the I-25 Ilex Design-Build project is more than just another job for Jennifer Billings and Joe DeHeart. Both Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) employees were born and raised in Pueblo.

Each has shared that they take great pride in their work, and this completed project is especially important to them since they are Pueblo natives.

For Jennifer, CDOT/former project PM and contract expert, working on a project so close to home "allowed my family and friends to see what I do and to understand what CDOT does," she said. "Since the project is in my hometown, I know more about traffic patterns, events, future plans, and other aspects that allowed me to approach project management and design differently and more effectively."



Jennifer made certain to share her excitement with her son and local baseball players (9- to 12-year-olds) by including them in the project ribbon cutting ceremony. Baseball players participated by handing out programs to all those who attended. This seemed fitting since the ribbon cutting event was at Runyon Field and the wall construction around the area features an image of a baseball player.



Flatiron Construction Team



As a CDOT resident engineer, Joe's top priority has always been safety. In his day-to-day work, he developed project designs to satisfy needs and then builds that design.

"I felt proud in delivering transportation improvements that reduce accidents and save lives," Joe said. "I'm excited to offer a better transportation system that makes every Pueblo driver's experience safer, less stressful, and more predictable."

### **Pueblo Native Shares Family Legacy of I-25 Work**



Pueblo Native Truman Pooler on CDOT's I-25 & Ilex Street Project Completion

Pueblo native Truman Pooler attended the ribbon cutting event and shared his story. Truman's dad and neighbor built the original bridges on I-25 in the 1950's. As an Operating Engineer, Local No. 9, Truman worked on running pipeline at the Northern Avenue Interchange. Since the Ilex Project started in 2015 Truman has visited the project site almost daily taking more than 400 progress photos for his personal photo album.

"I'm impressed by the equipment and how they did it," said Pooler. "This is a cumulation of a good thing."

[CLICK HERE](#) to view video.