



## FAQs

**Q: Who are the sponsoring agencies for this project?**

A: FHWA and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) are the sponsoring agencies. In addition, CDOT coordinated with US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, State Historic Preservation Office, City of Colorado Springs, and other local agencies.

**Q: Why are improvements on the corridor needed?**

A: Constructed as a bypass in 1964, US 24 is the only highway route into the Rocky Mountains for nearly 50 miles north and south of Colorado Springs. Today the highway serves local and regional travelers between mountain communities and the Colorado Springs metropolitan area. Current travel patterns and volumes on the highway have resulted in congested conditions during peak travel periods. Continued growth in El Paso and Teller Counties will exacerbate these congested conditions if improvements are not made to the highway.

Specific operation problems along US 24 include the following:

- Local cross streets add traffic volumes to US 24 which slow speeds,
- Traffic volumes at signalized intersections exceed capacity resulting in back up traffic on the highway, and
- Unsignalized intersections have unacceptable delays to traffic trying to cross or enter US 24.

**Q: Who should I contact for more information?**

A. The project team can be reached by phone or email.

Phone: 719-477-4970

Email: [us24winfo@wilsonco.com](mailto:us24winfo@wilsonco.com)

<http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/us24west>

**Q: In 2008, the project's total property acquisitions was announced at 61 commercial and 6 residential properties. Has that changed?**

A. The Right-of-Way or the footprint of the US24 improvements has not changed since the public meeting in August of 2008. The Environmental Assessment (EA) reports both full and partial acquisitions. The EA reports the acquisitions by parcel, property ownership type, and acreage. Further the EA discusses the number of residential and business relocations that are expected to occur. Through the EA analysis it was discovered that

some properties thought to contain one residence actual contained as many as 14. It was also found that some commercially zoned properties held both a business and a residence. This information has been reported in the EA. Therefore, although the numbers have changed, the actual footprint of the US24 improvements has not changed.

**Q: Why does the proposed action keep US 24 a two-lane facility west of 31<sup>st</sup> Street?**

A: By removing the intersection at Ridge Rd and US 24 this increases capacity of US 24 making the two lanes sufficient west of 31<sup>st</sup> Street. Three lanes are required east of 31<sup>st</sup> Street to allow space for turn lanes and 3 lanes through the intersection for east bound travel.

**Q: The 25th Street bridge is on the RTA's Priority A list for replacement. Why is this replacement needed if it's just going to be removed in the future when the highway is improved?**

A: Since the bridge will not be needed after the US24 improvement project, CDOT has coordinated with Colorado Springs' staff and the City has determined not to replace the bridge as planned, but instead repair the existing structure.

**Q: Why were no bicycle lanes included in the proposed action?**

A: For safety reasons, there are no bicycle lanes on US 24, however, the Midland bike/pedestrian and equestrian trail runs parallel to US 24 between the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail and Ridge Road. The existing four block gap between 21<sup>st</sup> Street and 25<sup>th</sup> Street will be connected by the proposed project. The project will also construct other improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the corridor. Sidewalks would be constructed along each of the cross streets to US 24 to improve pedestrian mobility to the north and south of US 24. Improvements at Ridge Road and US 24 will provide pedestrian and bicycle access to the Red Rock Canyon Open Space.

**Q: What will happen to the Fountain Creek?**

A: In conjunction with the redesign and development efforts for US 24, CDOT, the City, highway users and adjacent landowners have joined forces to develop restoration strategies for Fountain Creek. The vision is to establish a major recreational amenity corridor or greenway along Fountain Creek. The greenway will make the US24 neighborhoods truly "walkable communities". Water quality facilities will be incorporated into the greenway improvements. One of CDOT's commitments as a part of the US24 project is to preserve and restore the Fountain Creek ecosystem.

**Q: How will improvements to US 24 accommodate transit?**

A: Currently, bus service is operated by Mountain Metro Transit, a division of the City of Colorado Springs. They have four routes that operate in the US 24 corridor but none of them run on US 24. Colorado/Manitou Avenue is the existing local transit route. The Ute Pass Express was a regional demonstration bus service on US 24 between downtown Colorado Springs and mountain communities that ended in the fall of 2011. There is private bus service running through the corridor which is provided by the casinos to their Cripple Creek businesses. The proposed action would continue to accommodate express bus service on US 24 for regional travelers and existing bus service on city streets for local travelers. At the northeast corner of US 24 and 31<sup>st</sup> Street, the proposed action would enhance transit operations in the study area by providing land for a new park and ride facility, which would be built by others.

**Q: What public outreach has been done on this project?**

A: The project team provided a variety of opportunities for soliciting public input and involvement into the EA process. The team encouraged open communication and was responsive to all groups and individuals interested in the project. Public outreach on the US 24 West project included public open houses, neighborhood organization and small group meetings, workshops, newsletters, website postings, and media information. In addition, the following teams were also formed: Executive Leadership Team, Technical Leadership Team, Aesthetic Working Group, the Midland Greenway Advisory Committee, and the Fountain Creek Restoration Project. In addition, a project website was a dynamic tool for providing access to reports, documents, newsletters, announcements and meeting summaries. Media relations played an active role in disseminating information about the project. Additionally, a public website has been used to provide updated information on the project, [www.coloradodot.info/projects/us24west](http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/us24west).

**Q: What are the next steps?**

The EA document will be released for a 45 day public review and comment period in early summer of 2012. A public hearing will be held during that time to present information and solicit public and agency comments. Following the public comment period, CDOT and Federal Highway Administration will consider and address all comments and publish a decision document.

**Q: What is the cost of the project? What is the construction schedule?**

A: The project is included in the "Moving Forward Update" (the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan) adopted in January 2012 by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG). The estimated cost for US24 improvements, from Ridge Road to 8<sup>th</sup> Street, is \$230 million for construction and \$50 million for right-of-way. These costs do not include improvements at I-25/Cimarron. This interchange is listed separately in the Regional Transportation Plan with a cost estimate of \$95 million.

The Regional Transportation Plan assumes that the Proposed Action would be built in phases over several years as funding comes available. To facilitate implementation of the entire project, the US 24 corridor has been broken into construction packages that can be built independently and upon completion, will provide immediate benefits to the community. The timing for each phase is dependent on future funding.

**Q: How is the I-25/Cimarron interchange related to the US24 improvements?**

A: I-25 /Cimarron interchange was approved as a part of the I-25 EA in 2004. During the US24 design, modifications to the I-25/Cimarron interchange were suggested that would improve operations for both US24 and the interchange. These modifications have been discussed in the US24 EA. The I-25/Cimarron project is identified in the PPACG 2035 Regional Transportation Plan as a separate project.

**Q: Will noise walls be constructed as part of the project?**

A: After conducting a noise analysis for the proposed action, CDOT determined that noise walls would be reasonable and feasible along US 24 at the following locations:

Area	Height	Approximate Length
11 <sup>th</sup> Street to 14 <sup>th</sup> Street	18 feet	1,400 to 1500 feet
A-1 Mobile Homes	15 feet	1,400 to 1500 feet
Red Canyon Place	15 feet	800 to 1000 feet

These walls are forecasted to mitigate noise levels for 110 residences along US 24.

**Q: How did the public’s ideas influence this project?**

A: The public’s input helped craft the vision, the critical issues and criteria. Additionally, they contributed many of the 395 ideas, nine potential solutions and two alternatives that were evaluated. Specifically, there were 51 ideas from the public that influenced the design of the proposed action. These ideas from the public have been highlighted in the booklet “Shifting Gears” prepared by the project team. Public input influenced the Aesthetic Guidelines, the design speed, the economic analysis, and the Fountain Creek Greenway Master Plan

**Q: What has CDOT done to address Aesthetics in the corridor?**

A: Aesthetic Guidelines were developed in conjunction with the community stakeholders. These guidelines provide direction for project features such as wall and bridge treatments. These guidelines are available on the web site, [www.coloradodot.info/projects/us24west](http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/us24west).

**Q: What is likely to be the first project on the corridor?**

A: The 8<sup>th</sup> Street and I-25/Cimarron interchanges are the highest priority on the corridor. This does not preclude other projects as funding becomes available.

**Q: How will this project coordinate with the Gold Hill Mesa Development?**

A: The US24 team has coordinated with the Gold Hill Mesa development continually throughout the project development. Gold Hill Mesa access needs were included in the US24 improvement analysis. The recent Fountain Creek Restoration at Gold Hill Mesa is an example of the partnership formed among CDOT, the City of Colorado Springs and Gold Hill Mesa to move improvements forward.

**Q: Why doesn't this project include the Manitou Avenue Interchange?**

A: The US 24 project does not include improvements at the Manitou Avenue interchange because analysis of existing and future safety and traffic operations indicate that improvements are not needed.

**Q: Were high occupancy lanes (HOV) lanes studied for the corridor?**

A: Yes. HOV lanes were suggested as a solution in the beginning of the project, as was light rail to Teller County. A member of the Technical Leadership Team, representing Mountain Metro Transit reviewed these suggestions and the long range plans for transit on US24 and found that US 24 West was not planned as an HOV corridor nor a light rail corridor.

**Q. What is going on with the Express Inn?**

A. CDOT has identified the Express Inn as a property needed to complete improvements for the interchange upgrades at I-25/Cimarron and 8th Street. CDOT does not currently own this property.