

Answers to Recent Questions

What is the schedule for funding? For construction phasing?

Funding for the construction improvements to US 24 West from Manitou Springs to I-25 can be scheduled after the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issues its Decision Document on the Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA is on schedule to be completed in the latter half of 2007 and FHWA approval would come in early 2008.

Once approved by the FHWA the project will be considered for construction funding in the Pikes Peak Area Council of Government's (PPACG) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Construction funding for the project is not included in the 2005-2010 TIP, or in the 2007-2012 TIP. When the TIP is revised for 2009-2014, funding could be included for any of those years.

Because it is unlikely that the entire funding amount would be approved at one time, the project will probably be completed in phases. The phasing plan would be contingent upon the amount of money approved and the priority of each segment or project. The highest priority project that fits within the allocated funding would be done first, and so on.

Where is the traffic coming from? Why is traffic growing?

The current traffic congestion on US 24 West is what prompted PPACG to ask CDOT to develop a long-range plan for the corridor. Based on existing traffic counts the road right now needs six through-lanes and double left turn lanes at several intersections to meet Colorado Springs and CDOT standards for traffic operations.

Traffic in the corridor study area is forecast by PPACG to increase approximately 0.5% to 0.75% annually between today and 2030. This percentage increase is less than the growth in the greater Colorado Springs area of 1.75% annually. The increase in traffic on the corridor results from growth in surrounding areas, growth in trips entering the corridor from points west and east, and additional traffic from the Gold Hill Mesa development.

US 24 West is a major component of the Pikes Peak Region's traffic system. It not only serves local neighborhoods, but also carries a large number of trips from people who do not live along the corridor. This is best illustrated by the forecast data which shows that in 2030 40% of trips on US 24 are expected to be trips that begin and end outside the corridor, 54% of the trips will begin or end outside the corridor, which means that only 6% will begin and end inside the corridor.

Why are there only two alternatives?

When the US 24 West project started in November 2004, CDOT asked citizens to identify the problems in the corridor and offer their ideas for solving them. At the second meeting in January 2005 we received 360 ideas. Those ideas were then analyzed (Level I Criteria) and four were removed because of various fatal flaws. That left 356 ideas to carry forward.

Those ideas were categorized and from that we were able to identify nine Potential Solutions. The Potential Solutions were then analyzed (Level II Criteria) and from that we identified the build alternative themes — the Midland Expressway and the US 24 Freeway. These 2 build alternatives incorporate transit and pedestrian facilities, thus representing multi-modal solutions for the US 24 corridor. Further, these build alternatives include elements that work to decrease the travel demand on US 24. Numerous ideas were provided that could be included in either build alternative. We refer to these ideas as Design Options and Additional Corridor Elements.

The proposed improvements are needed to meet today's traffic. Alternatives that only provide additional turn lanes or address signal timing do not adequately improve the mobility for the future.

The Design Options and Additional Corridor Elements that have been gathered throughout this process provide tremendous flexibility in how the alternative operates, looks and directs travelers. The Design Options include designs for several of the intersections and interchanges.

How does CDOT acquire property and/or relocate affected owners and tenants?

CDOT acquires real property required for transportation projects following a process originating in the federal and state constitutions requiring the payment of "just compensation" for private property taken for public use. Federal and state laws define a uniform right of way acquisition and relocation process where federal funding is being used, such as on this project.

Once right of way plans are finalized and approved, just compensation is determined by hiring independent real estate appraisers who follow a professional process to determine the current market value of the property being acquired as well as any compensable damages to remaining property. CDOT reviews all appraisals, both the Department's and the property owner's, if applicable, and establishes a "fair market value" to initiate negotiations with the owner of the real property. An experienced real estate specialist will meet with each owner and explain the parcel required and the purchase offer.

In the event that a settlement that is fair to both the property owner and taxpayers cannot be reached, CDOT will initiate the process of condemnation under the state eminent domain laws. Condemnation is a last resort and is used only in those instances where an agreement cannot be reached, or the property owners of record cannot be located, or the project schedule is such that immediate possession of the real property is needed to move forward with the project. In over 95% of all acquisitions by CDOT, settlement is reached through negotiations and the efforts of all parties working toward that goal.

Eminent domain actions by CDOT follow a two-step process requiring an initial “Immediate Possession” hearing where the amount of the approved offer is deposited with the court for the use and benefit of the property owners and also a later “valuation trial” to hear expert testimony and determine the amount of compensation due the owners. Less than 3% of CDOT acquisitions require a valuation trial to determine compensation due property owners. The important thing to remember is that throughout the entire property acquisition process CDOT is amenable to discussions to resolve differences and negotiate a fair settlement.

CDOT provides relocation assistance and payments to property owners and tenants to assist them with moving their personal property from land required for the project. Relocation services are available to residential occupants, businesses, farms and non-profits. Like the acquisition program, CDOT must follow a set of uniform federal procedures when administering the relocation assistance program. An experienced real estate specialist will work with owners and tenants to help determine housing and relocation needs and will explain the services and payments for which you may be eligible.

In addition to the purchase price paid for your residential property, the state will pay for moving costs and, if necessary, reasonable storage costs. You may also be eligible for other benefits or cost reimbursements such as a supplemental or down payment toward buying a replacement property along with incidental and closing costs. Throughout the process of relocating CDOT will continue to provide you with advisory assistance to help get answers to all your questions.

Businesses that are required to move receive the same advisory assistance along with moving payments and may be entitled to receive payments for reestablishment expenses, business site search or an alternative payment based on business income.

Throughout the development of the project CDOT is available to answer right of way acquisition and relocation questions. Three pamphlets are available at all public meetings that describe the fundamental elements of the Acquisition Program, the Residential Relocation Program and the Business, Farm and Non-Profit Relocation Program.