



Southern Mountain Loop

Highway 12 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study



Fact Sheet No. 2 | December 2019



Study Overview

The South Central Council of Governments and Colorado Department of Transportation are studying the Scenic Highway of Legends (SHOL) byway, an 82 mile corridor between Walsenburg and Trinidad along US 160 and State Highway 12. The purpose of the project is to improve highway safety and provide a regional and local multi-use trail, completing the Colorado Front Range Trail (CFRT), along the byway. The CFRT is a planned multi-use trail by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife along the Front Range from Wyoming to New Mexico. This study, being conducted as a Planning and Environmental Linkages study, will determine a master plan of future projects to improve highway safety and provide a multi-use trail.

What are the Transportation Issues Within the Corridor?

A key first step in delivering transportation improvements is understanding the problems and issues needing to be solved. Specific needs and opportunities within the Corridor have been identified as follows:

- **Highway Safety** – A review of a five-year crash history revealed that the Corridor’s safety is generally typical of similar rural highways within Colorado. However, while not extraordinary, there are localized areas of higher crash concentrations. Not unexpected, wild animal crashes are the highest type of crash, accounting for 37 percent of all crashes. Crashes with fixed objects, due to vehicles leaving the roadway, account for 22 percent. Locations where these crashes typically occur are where there are opportunities to improve the highway’s safety.
- **Multi-use Trail Accommodations** – Much of the Corridor is used by bicyclists and pedestrians for recreation, local commuting and special events. Currently, there are no designated bicycle or pedestrian facilities fully along the SHOL. While bicyclists can legally travel along the highway, the narrow shoulders and steep grades do not adequately accommodate all cyclist types and abilities. Opportunities to provide better trail accommodations, as well as improve safety and complete the CFRT, include wider roadway shoulders as well as potentially a trail off the highway in some locations.
- **Multi-use Trail Connectivity** – While there are local trails within the various communities and public lands, such as Lathrop and Trinidad Lake State Park and the San Isabel National Forest, there are no trails that uniformly connect these amenities. The completion of the CFRT provides an opportunity to better connect these recreational resources.



Higher Crash Concentration Locations (US 160 and SH 12)

- **Wild Animal Crashes:**
 - Area around Lathrop State Park
 - Cucharas River north of La Veta
 - Purgatoire River east of Weston
 - Canyons near Trinidad Lake State Park
- **Lane Departure Crashes:**
 - Curve southeast of North Lake
 - One-mile section near Vigil
 - Two-mile section near Segundo
- **Rear-end Crashes:**
 - Walsenburg US 160 railroad crossing
 - Short section near Jansen
 - Local street intersection in Trinidad

What are the Improvement Concepts being Considered?

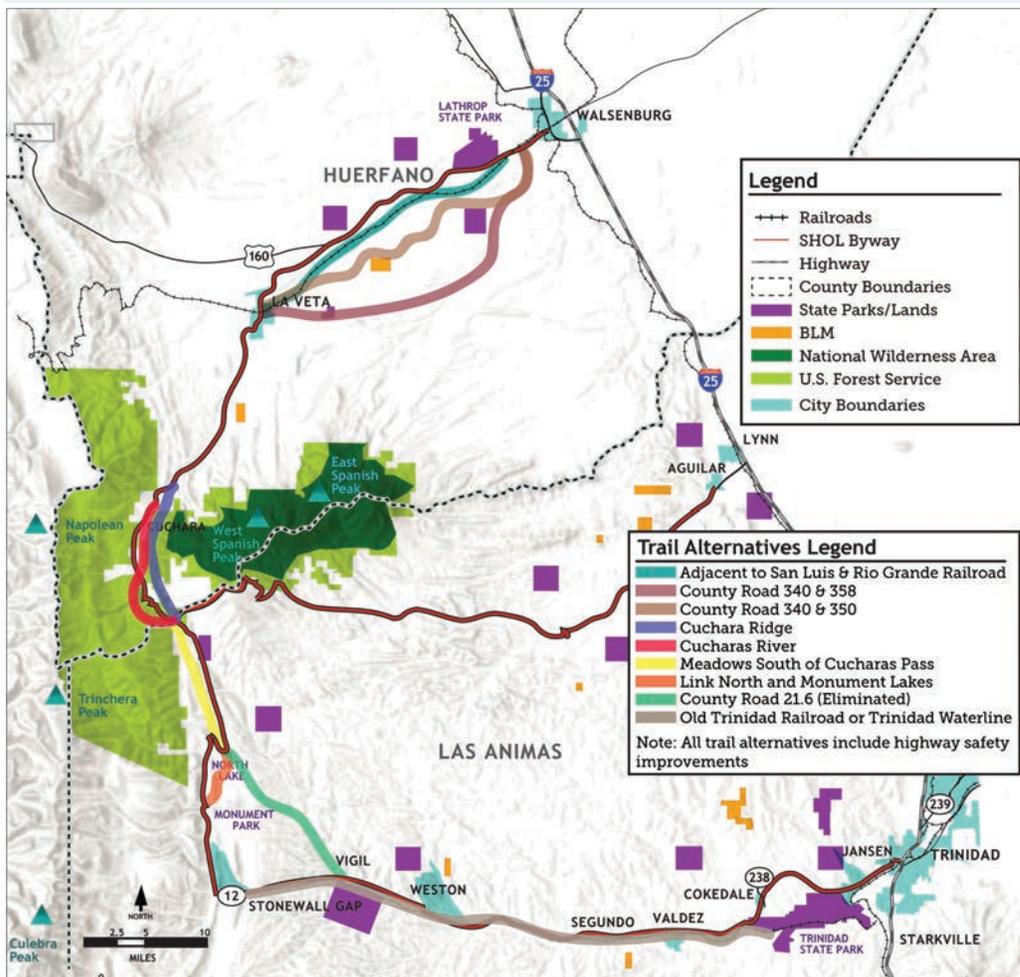
Improvements being considered entail highway safety improvements plus a multi-use trail along the full length of the byway. The safety improvements would include local upgrades plus at least a four to eight feet wide roadway shoulder, depending on location and amount of traffic. A new eight feet wide multi-use trail, either along the highway or on a separate route, would connect and end at Lathrop State Park to the north and Trinidad Lake State Park to the south. For areas where the trail would run along the highway, the trail would be integrated into the highway roadside. For areas where off-highway trail routes are being considered, the roadway shoulders would be widened per the minimum safety width recommendations.

A number of alternative off-highway trail routes are being considered. A screening of these alternatives recommended the elimination of the County Road 21.6 route because it would bypass Monument Lake and Stonewall – two important and desirable connections for the new trail.

What's Next?

The study team will be evaluating these improvement alternatives and will share information at upcoming study events. Opportunities to learn about the study, provide comments on the alternatives, or learn about the study's recommendations will include coffee chats and a public open house near the study's completion. Coffee chats will provide you an opportunity to casually and informally visit with team staff about the study.

These chats are not official public meetings, but rather opportunities for you to meet and visit with the team. A more formal public open house will be convened following the chats. Look for announcements of these events in the coming months. The study is anticipated to be completed in the summer of 2020.



How to stay Involved?

Your input is important to us. You can provide comments or be informed of upcoming events by visiting the project website, sending us an email or giving us a call.

Email: SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.codot.gov/library/studies/co-12-sml-pel>

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MULTI-USE TRAIL ROUTE ALTERNATIVES

Vista Segment

(Walsenburg to La Veta)

Along Highway
Adjacent to Existing Railroad
County Road 340 and 358
County Road 340 and 350

Alpine Segment

(La Veta to Vigil)

Along Highway Ridge East of Cuchara
Along Cucharas River Near Cuchara
Meadows South of Cucharas Pass
Link North and Monument Lakes
County Road 21.6 (Eliminated)

Mining Segment

(Vigil to Trinidad)

Along Highway
Along Old Trinidad Rail Line
Along Trinidad Waterline Route