



Southern Mountain Loop

Highway 12 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

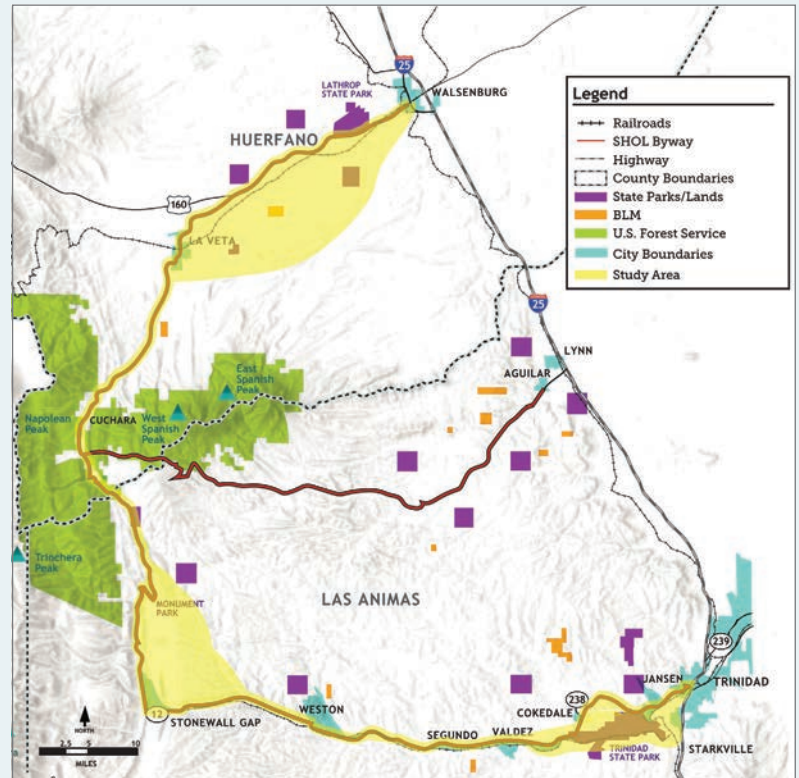


SOUTH CENTRAL
COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Colorado's Scenic Highway of Legends (SHOL) Byway stretches roughly 82 miles between Walsenburg and Trinidad along US 160 and CO 12. Located in south central Colorado, the byway provides access to recreation in the heart of the Spanish Peaks backcountry for both locals and visitors. Because of its natural beauty and untapped potential, this area has also been identified as the Southern Mountain Loop (SML) of the Colorado Front Range Trail (CFRT) – a planned multi-purpose trail from Wyoming to New Mexico along the Front Range.

While tourism has had a positive impact to date, the tourism economy in Huerfano and Las Animas Counties has lagged behind other regions within the state. A renewed vision and plan for the corridor, including highway safety, bicycle/multi-use trail, and byway-related infrastructure improvements, can be a driving force in realizing the full potential of the region's tourism-related assets. The South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) have initiated the SML Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study to create this renewed vision and produce a plan that attracts and serves visitors to the Spanish Peaks Country.



PROJECT GOALS

This project is intended to enhance the two-county region's tourism-related economy through a long-term investment plan for highway safety, bicycle/multi-use trail, cultural/heritage, and nature-based tourism infrastructure improvements along the SHOL. The study will identify bicycle and trail improvements to complete the SML segment of the CFRT. It will do so by balancing the protection and promotion of the Spanish Peaks Country natural environment according to local community values and goals. Specific needs to be addressed by the study include:

- Improve safety for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians along the corridor
- Provide a regional and local bicycle/multi-use trail system along the corridor
- Improve connections and access to communities and recreational areas along the corridor for all types of visitors and users



PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Outreach to businesses and residents in the study area is critical to ensure that the PEL study addresses local concerns and desired outcomes for future improvements. The business and resident outreach will occur throughout the study, providing opportunities for meaningful involvement and input. We will engage stakeholder groups for input in developing highway safety improvements, a primary trail route from which to access other existing hiking and bike trail along the corridor, and byway-related tourism improvements.

The project team will interact with communities throughout the corridor to better understand important issues, provide recommended improvements and identify opportunities throughout the corridor. The public will be provided a variety of opportunities to provide input.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES AND STAKEHOLDER COFFEE

The public is invited to participate in coffee chats and public open houses over the next 16 months.

- For updates and more information about the SML PEL Study and to receive email notices of the times/dates of future public open houses and stakeholder coffee chats, send an email asking to be added to the project database to:
SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com



For questions or to submit a comment, please send an email to:
SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com

For more information visit us at:
<https://www.codot.gov/library/studies/co-12-sml-pel>
Or

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sccog>
Click on Development link to access additional information about the SML PEL Study.

Questions? Call 719-427-1078

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