

Areas of Special Attention are locations or stretches along the Interstate 70 (I-70) Mountain Corridor that have been identified as having multiple or unique issues. These areas were identified by stakeholders during the Aesthetic Working Group meetings.

Addressing the various issues and integrating them into design solutions requires further understanding of stakeholder concerns, the issues, and some of the suggested solutions. These concerns, issues, and suggested solutions (when available) have been recorded and provided in a report for each Area of Special Attention.

## WHY TWIN TUNNELS IS AN AREA OF SPECIAL ATTENTION

- *Proximity to Clear Creek*
- *Landmark to Idaho Springs*
- *Creates traffic congestion*
- *Wildlife movement/land bridge*
- *Proposed third bore*
- *Proposed AGS*



## How to Use This Report

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The intent of this report is to provide to planners and designers of the I-70 Mountain Corridor a record of the discussions focused on the Twin Tunnels Area of Special Attention. To that end, this report includes the concerns expressed by many stakeholders: citizens, business owners, property owners, organizations, and agencies. This report also includes a description of the area, the goals and objectives for the area, relevant studies and plans that must be reviewed, and the suggested process for moving forward.

This report is not an exhaustive list of alternatives and may not include recent comments and issues.

For all studies along the I-70 Mountain Corridor, a primary source of information must be the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). The Twin Tunnels Area includes the PEIS elements of the Advanced Guideway System (AGS) and planned highway improvements. Further, the Twin Tunnels Area has historic resources protected by the 106 Programmatic Agreement; is in close proximity to Clear Creek, which is addressed in the Stream and Wetland Ecological Enhancement Program (SWEEP) Memorandum of Understanding; and is adjacent to a wildlife area addressed by the A Landscape Level Inventory of Valued Ecosystem Components (ALIVE) Memorandum of Understanding Wildlife Linkage

Interference Zone. These agreements can be found on the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Web site in Corridor Guidance.

## **Issues and Proposed Improvements**

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The Twin Tunnels serve as a gateway to Idaho Springs and the Mountain Mineral Belt for travelers westbound on I-70. Located between Floyd Hill and Idaho Springs, the design and location of the tunnels create a major 'pinch point' for travelers. Limited shoulder space, outdated tunnel design and a dark and imposing tunnel façade cause drivers to reduce their speed when approaching. As traffic increases over the next 30 years, these issues will further compound.

Wildlife patterns and the proximity to Clear Creek at the Twin Tunnels compounds issues as wildlife north of I-70 must cross the highway to reach Clear Creek.

Proposed I-70 improvements include a new six-lane highway, Advanced Guideway System (AGS), new tunnel bore, or new tunnel (65 mph option only).

## **Twin Tunnels Information**

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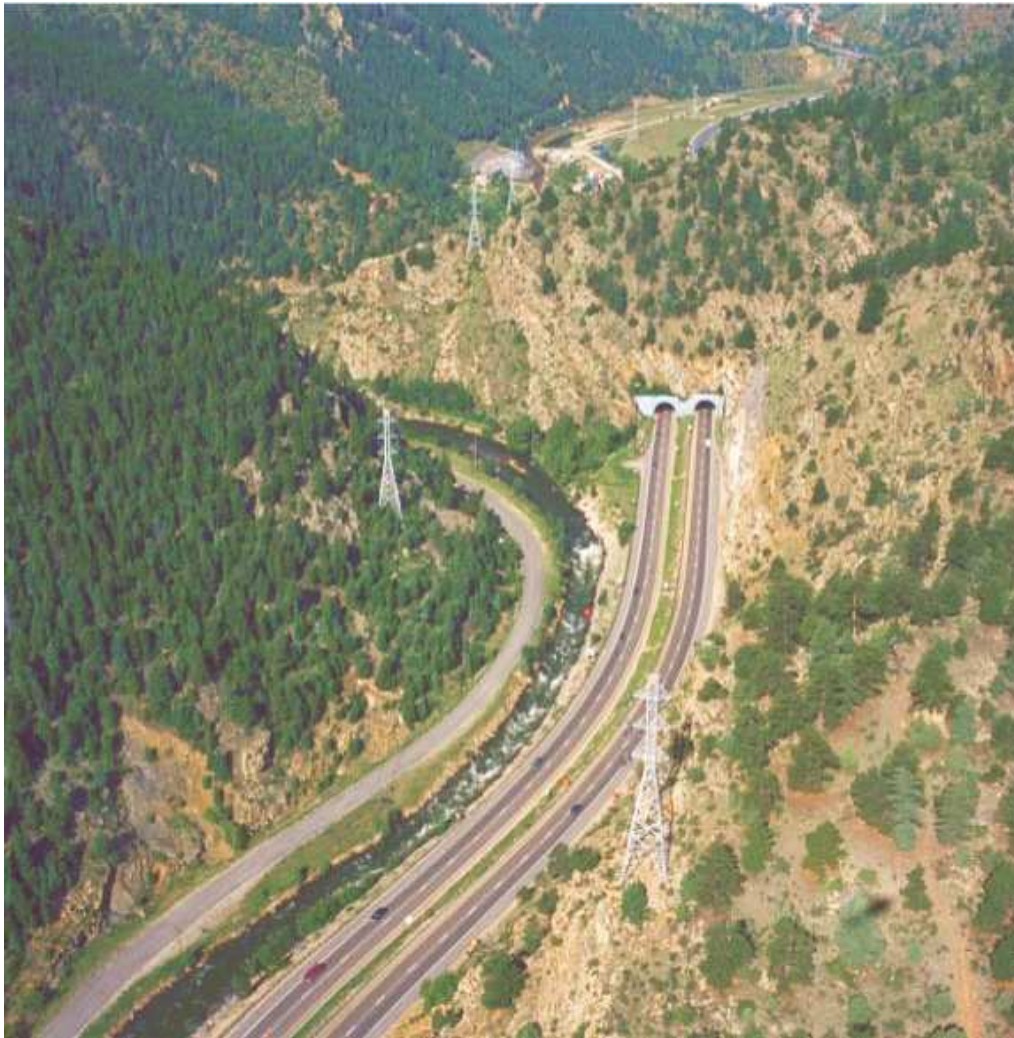
### *How this Report Was Developed*

The Twin Tunnels Area was identified as an Area of Special Attention by the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Aesthetic Working Group.

### **Area Limits and Description**

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The Twin Tunnels Area is generally bound by Central City Parkway (exit 243) on the east and the interchange at the west end of Idaho Springs (exit 241). These limits (mile marker 242 to mile marker 243) were used to focus the discussion



**Twin Tunnels**

### **Twin Tunnels Context**

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The context of the Twin Tunnels is unique to the I-70 Mountain Corridor. Important contextual features and places around the Twin Tunnels Area add to its unique character. The Twin Tunnels are close in proximity to Clear Creek, are a landmark going into and coming out of Idaho Springs, and are the first tunnel that is passed through traveling westbound on I-70. The functional aspect of the Twin Tunnels is graphically represented on the Functional Context Map, which illustrates the layout and operational aspects of the area --including land use, circulation and access interrelationships, and operational priorities.

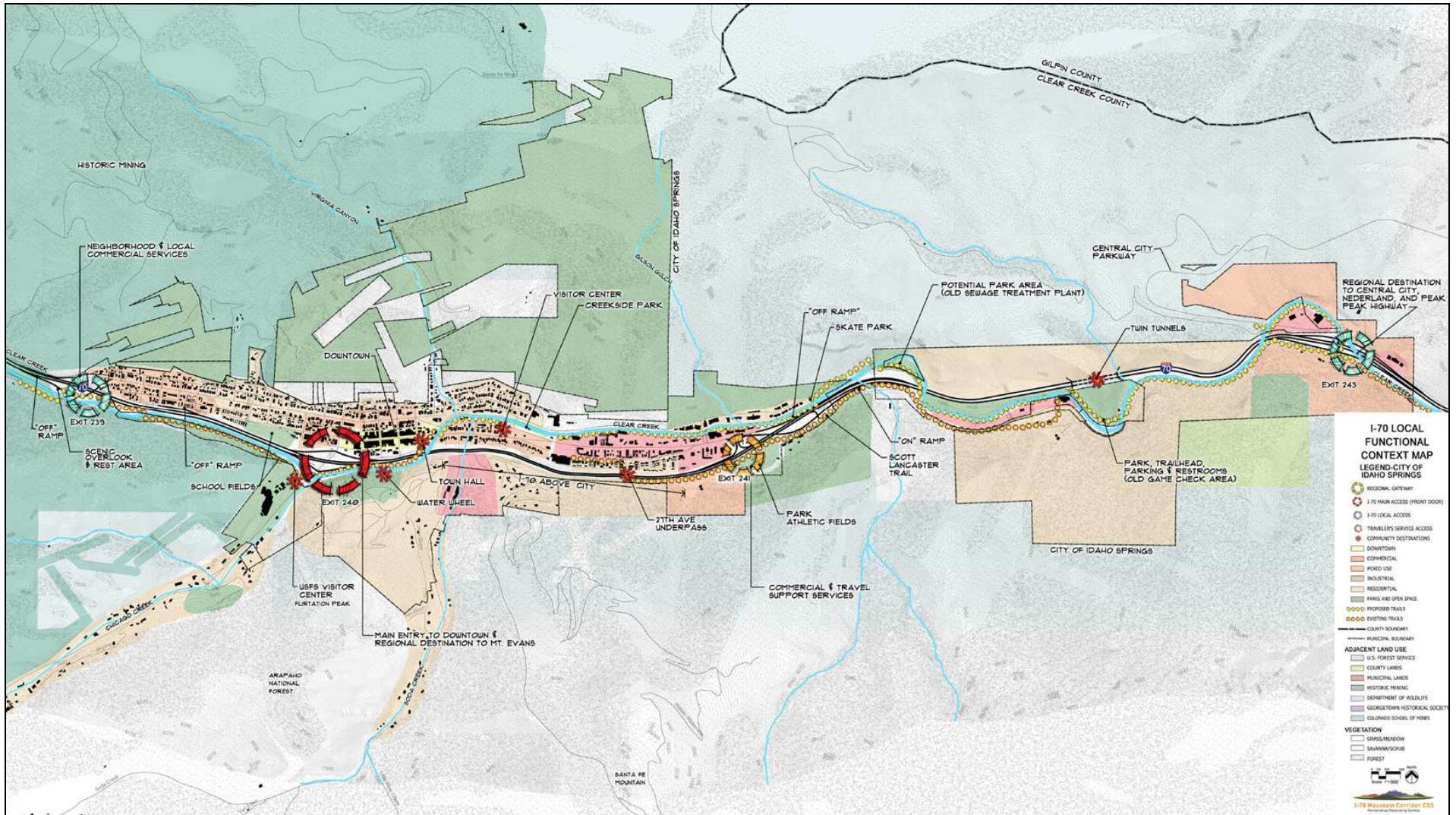


# TWIN TUNNELS- AREA OF SPECIAL ATTENTION REPORT

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## Twin Tunnels Functional Context Map





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WESTBOUND APPROACHING THE TWIN TUNNELS



VIEW OF SOUTHSIDE OF TWIN TUNNELS - FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: IDAHO SPRINGS ROAD E, CLEAR CREEK, AND I-10



EASTBOUND APPROACH TO TWIN TUNNELS FROM IDAHO SPRINGS



EASTBOUND ENTERING THE TWIN TUNNELS



WESTBOUND APPROACHING THE TWIN TUNNELS

TWIN TUNNELS  
CONTEXT  
PHOTOGRAPHS



### Transportation Vision Elements to Be Considered

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Future improvements and studies in the I-70 Mountain Corridor through the Twin Tunnels Area should consider each of the elements outlined below.

- Advanced Guideway System (AGS).
  - **Include studying terraced roadway alternatives** on hillsides because of lower environmental impacts and better community interface and development through the Twin Tunnels Area.
  - **Potential Station Locations**
    - Base of Floyd Hill/US 6 Interchange (exit 244)
- I-70 Improvements
  - **Road Improvements**
    - Six-lane highway (mile marker 246 to mile marker 241)
    - Potential third bore
- Clear Creek Enhancements
  - Realignment
  - Amenities
  - Economic opportunities
  - Land use changes
  - Recreational opportunities
- Other Elements
  - Demographic reassessment
  - Develop community understanding and support

See [Tunnel Visioning - A Design Workshop for the Twin Tunnels](#) for more information regarding the Twin Tunnels Area of Special Attention.

### Goals and Objectives for the Area

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- Mitigate unfavorable visual appearances from both the community and roadway perspectives with the use of buffers and transitions between community uses.
- Allow no further encroachment into Clear Creek.
- Restore existing rock faces, unstable slopes in Clear Creek.
- Provide open structures over the creeks for wildlife passage. (This is a Wildlife Linkage Interference Zone LIZ #11.)
- Minimize economic impact to the communities.

## Design and Engineering Guidance

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### I-70 Mountain Corridor Design Criteria - Overview

The following overarching principles apply to the entire I-70 Mountain Corridor. These principles are supported by the Aesthetic Guidance, which is divided into Design Segments and which presents specific objectives and strategies. The principles are provided to the future managers and designers of transportation facilities within the corridor to guide the desired outcomes of individual projects.

#### A. Corridor Design Character

Elegantly engineered transportation facilities will reflect function, simplicity, and integrated design throughout the corridor. The landscape under, adjacent to, and beyond the structures supporting transportation facilities shall be rugged, organic, and made of natural materials. Designers will not attempt to make facilities appear falsely natural with the application of materials. The linkage of land and transportation features will be visualized as a single design effort, rendering a cohesive quality to the entire corridor. The geometry of the road should maintain a continuous flow and fit existing land forms.

#### B. Integrated and Complete Design

All facilities included in a project -- whether primary or auxiliary to the function of the corridor -- will be identified, programmed, and conceptually designed prior to completion of 30% design. This will include consideration of the entire construction disturbance zone. A comprehensive design is necessary in order to plan for all construction disturbances and create an integrated, sustainable corridor that accounts for each project. Aesthetic objectives and functionality are optimized when all elements are included in the design at inception. Integrated design includes considerations such as drainage and hydrology, water quality, wildlife crossings, rock cuts, life cycle costs, and long-term maintenance.

#### C. Partnerships to Create the Corridor

Corridor design will include consideration of a buffer and transition area between transportation facilities and community-oriented land uses. The landscape planting, earthwork, structural solutions, and location of the transportation facilities need to be fully examined in order to avoid potential visual and scenic impacts, buffer highway noise, and preserve community character and patterns. Road and trail connections and multi-modal travel corridor opportunities should be considered. Reinforcement of alternative methods of travel such as pedestrian and biking paths should be incorporated and coordinated with community and recreational planning efforts.

#### D. Using the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS)

The I-70 Mountain Corridor PEIS contains critical background and reference information foundational to design. The PEIS should be reviewed throughout the entire design process

for insight into the detailed assessments of various corridor aspects. This will ensure alignment and consistency with the analyses and recommendations determined by the PEIS.

### **E. Corridor-Wide Projects**

Projects that will be implemented across the entire corridor have the potential to create elegant consistency. These projects should be approached with an additional level of care and scrutiny, and should address the ideas set forth in the Aesthetic Guidance for all four corridor Design Segments. The goal should be a project that yields an overall aesthetic benefit to the corridor.

## **Engineering the I-70 Mountain Corridor**

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### **Design Criteria**

Seven required Engineering Design Criteria have been developed to address the unique characteristics of the I-70 Mountain Corridor. These criteria are intended to influence the alignment of the transportation facilities and are an essential component of the engineering design.

The Engineering Design Criteria have been developed and adopted by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) because they represent an approach that enhances safety, mobility, and sustainability while reducing maintenance through design and engineering.

### **Design Criteria Categories**

The following Design Criteria categories direct the development of both I-70 and the Advanced Guideway Systems (AGS)\*:

- Design Speed
- Alignment
- Slope Cut and Fill
- Disturbance
- Rock Cut
- Bridge Structures
- Sound Attenuation

\*As the AGS for the I-70 Mountain Corridor is further defined, developed, and refined, the criteria may be updated to match the chosen technology.

### **Application of Design Criteria**

All of the Design Criteria must be met in Life Cycle Phase 2: Project Planning. Alternatives may be refined in Life Cycle Phase 3: Project Design, when the designer is able to determine which criteria may require an exception and why. The one exception for this requirement is in Areas of Special Attention, where a design exception may be considered in Phase 2 due to the complexity of the issues involved.



Federal, state, and local agencies will neither officially review nor grant design exceptions until Life Cycle Phase 3: Project Design.

**Project Leadership Team Role**

The Project Leadership Team (PLT) must be apprised of the Design Criteria being used on its I-70 Mountain Corridor project.

Justification for any criteria that would not be met as determined during design must be presented, discussed, and agreed upon by the PLT. Consideration will be given to the I-70 Mountain Corridor Core Values; safety; operation; compatibility with the overall network; character of traffic; cost implications; and impacts to scenic, historic, and environmental features. Other variables to consider include the amount of change to the criteria, its effect on other criteria, and any additional impacts that one change may make.

**Design Exception Process**

Due to challenges presented within the I-70 Mountain Corridor, a situation may arise in which the existing Design Criteria cannot be met, or in which the impact of meeting the criteria would be too great. Should this be the case, a design exception must be requested. Design exceptions may assist a designer in finding a transportation solution that balances impacts to scenic, historic, and culturally or environmentally sensitive areas while still providing for safety and mobility. Designers should think innovatively, consider the Core Values, and take into account the flexibility available to them when designing a transportation solution for the I-70 Mountain Corridor.

Design exceptions may be granted for the following justifications:

- Complementing surrounding physical characteristics
- Enhancing safety
- Increasing capacity
- Reducing costs
- Protecting the environment
- Preserving historic and scenic elements
- Interfacing with multiple modes of transportation
- Utilizing new technology or innovative approaches
- Doing the right thing

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**I-70 Mountain Corridor Design Criteria**

Design Criteria		Remarks
<b>Design Speed</b>	For I-70, 65 MPH design speed. For Advanced Guideway System (AGS), dependent on technology.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Posted speed of 55 MPH on I-70.</li> <li>2) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) 13 controlling criteria and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Design Criteria apply.</li> <li>3) Technology-appropriate Design Criteria will apply to AGS.</li> </ol>
<b>Alignment</b>	<p>Eastbound highway lanes, westbound highway lanes, and the AGS will be designed as separate, independent alignments.</p> <p>The three alignments will maintain no less than the existing median width or create a clear zone that does not require a guardrail or barrier.</p> <p>No loss of existing vertical separation of highway lanes will occur in any section.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Provides a recovery zone.</li> <li>2) Median required for snow removal and maintenance.</li> <li>3) Separation prevents headlight glare, improving safety and maintenance conditions.</li> <li>4) Separate alignments will adapt to topographic conditions.</li> <li>5) See Illustration 1 for highway cross section.</li> </ol>
<b>Slope Cut and Fill</b>	<p>Limits of physical disturbance shall be less than 40 vertical feet from the top of the pavement or rail platform to the farthest edge of cut or fill.</p> <p>Cut and fill embankment will not exceed a slope of 2.5:1 (H:V).</p> <p>All roadway retaining walls over 12' in height will be installed below the elevation of the roadway.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Planting, re-vegetation, and restoration of slopes will be successful with flatter slope embankment.</li> <li>2) Slopes will be more easily maintained and erosion and sediment transport will be manageable.</li> <li>3) See Illustrations 1 and 2.</li> </ol>

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Design Criteria		Remarks
<b>Disturbance</b>	<p>Construction will be fully contained with areas of historic or current disturbance if no centerline change occurs.</p> <p>New alignments must be consistent with Design Criteria for slope cut and fill.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Existing maintenance problems will be resolved or improved by staying within the existing limits of disturbance.</li> <li>2) Construct without increasing the disturbance zone.</li> </ol>
<b>Rock Cut</b>	<p>A geotechnical analysis report will be completed and reviewed prior to any proposal to create rock cuts for an alignment.</p> <p>If rock cuts are required, naturalized custom cuts methods are required. Rock cuts shall be constructed using scatter blasting techniques and provide for adequate rockfall area at the base.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Allows for understanding of rock formations at an early planning stage to potentially avoid rock cuts.</li> <li>2) Avoids rockfall mesh and reduces maintenance.</li> <li>3) Scatter blasting techniques provide a naturalized cut and allow safety from rockfall to be incorporated in the design.</li> </ol>
<b>Bridge Structures</b>	<p>Bridge structures will not utilize slope paving techniques and will require a closed-end abutment design with a minimum vertical height of 8', measured below the bridge girder.</p> <p>Bridge embankments shall be 2.1:1 maximum.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Avoids the maintenance of slope paving.</li> <li>2) Provides a method of incorporating re-vegetation and landscape into bridge slopes.</li> <li>3) A clear span over streams and drainages avoids water quality construction impacts and reduces maintenance and pier scour.</li> <li>4) Provides benefits below bridges for vehicle clearance, wildlife crossing, solar access, and re-vegetation success.</li> <li>5) See Illustrations 3 and 4.</li> </ol>



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<b>Design Criteria</b>		<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Sound Attenuation</b>	<p>Sound buffering and attenuation will be designed in conjunction with the horizontal and vertical alignment to eliminate the need for noise mitigation.</p> <p>Mitigation, if required, will integrate landforms, landscape planting buffers, and walls.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Design can minimize or eliminate additional noise mitigation.</li><li>2) If sound walls are required, see Illustrations 5 and 6.</li></ol>

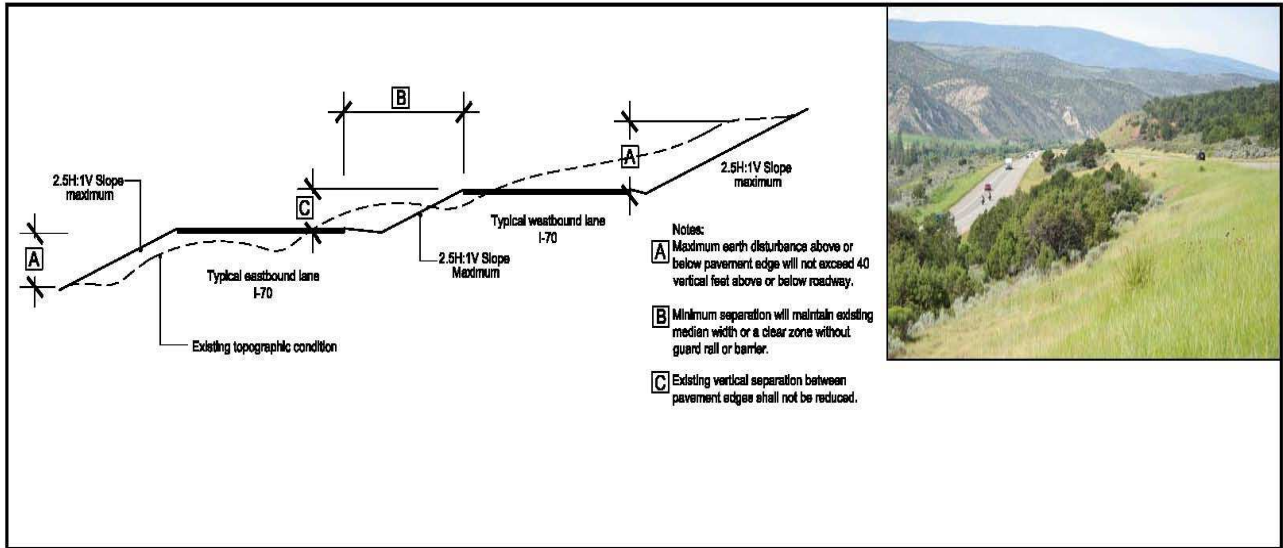


ILLUSTRATION 1: DESIGN CRITERIA FOR ALIGNMENT AND CUT AND FILL

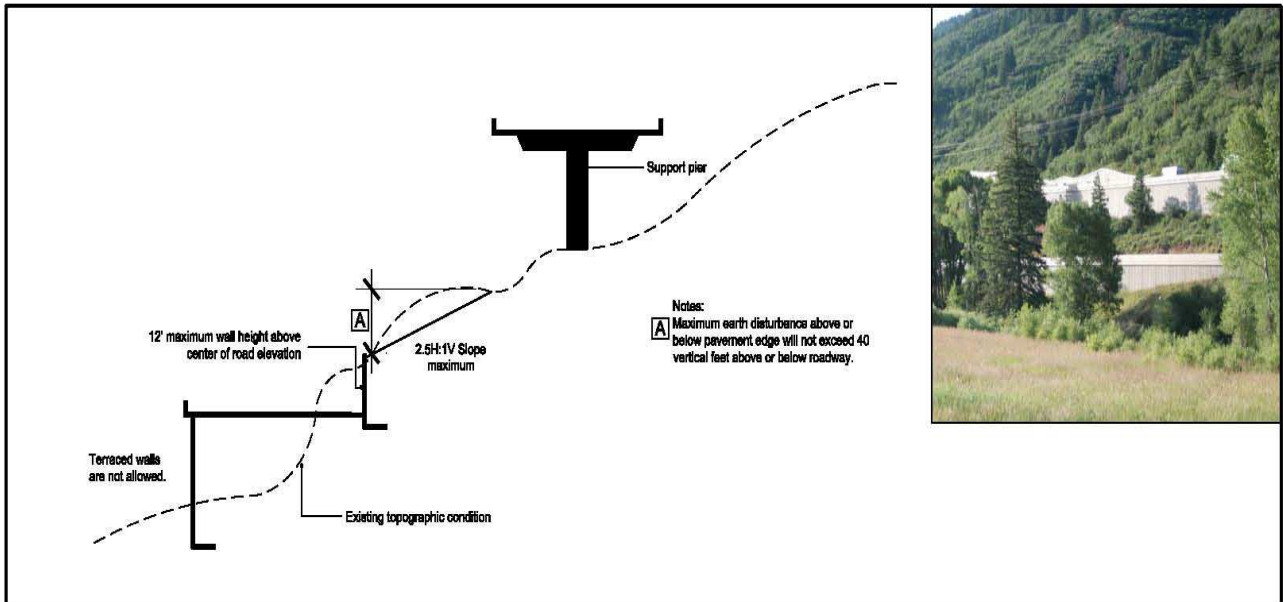


ILLUSTRATION 2: DESIGN CRITERIA FOR CUT AND FILL

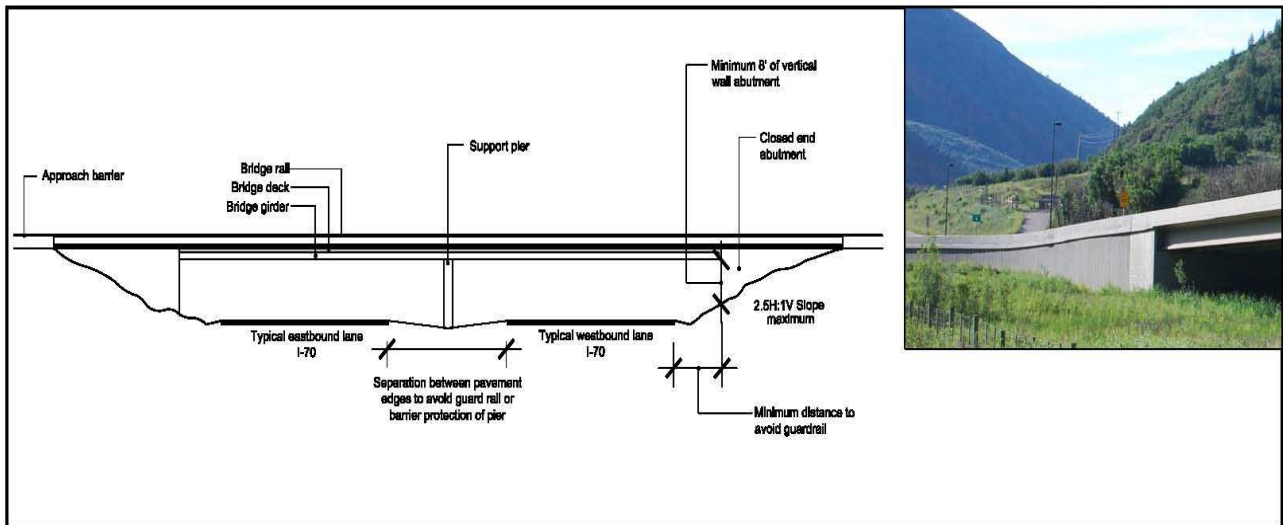


ILLUSTRATION 3: DESIGN CRITERIA FOR BRIDGE STRUCTURES OVER I-70

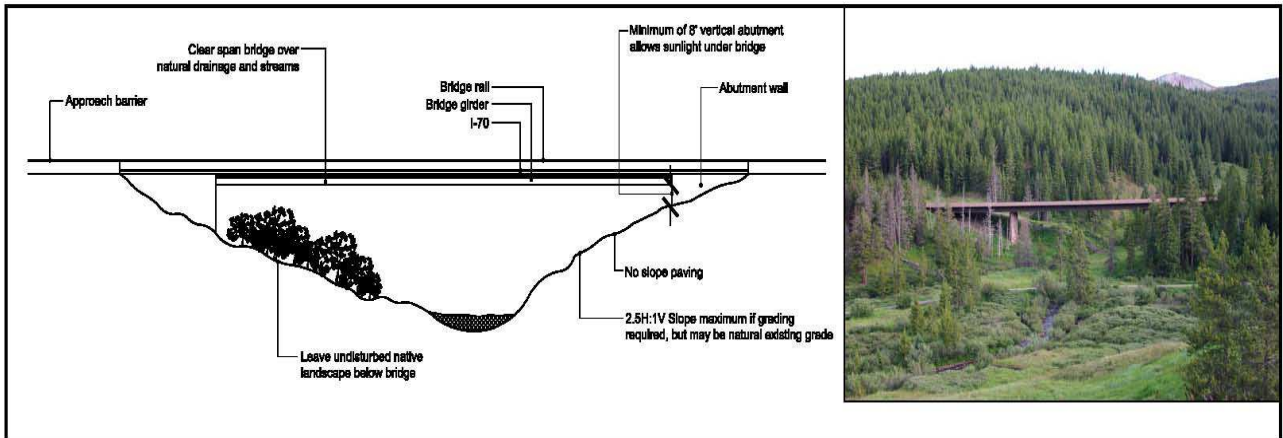


ILLUSTRATION 4: DESIGN CRITERIA FOR I-70 BRIDGE OVER NATURAL FEATURES OR OTHER ROADWAYS



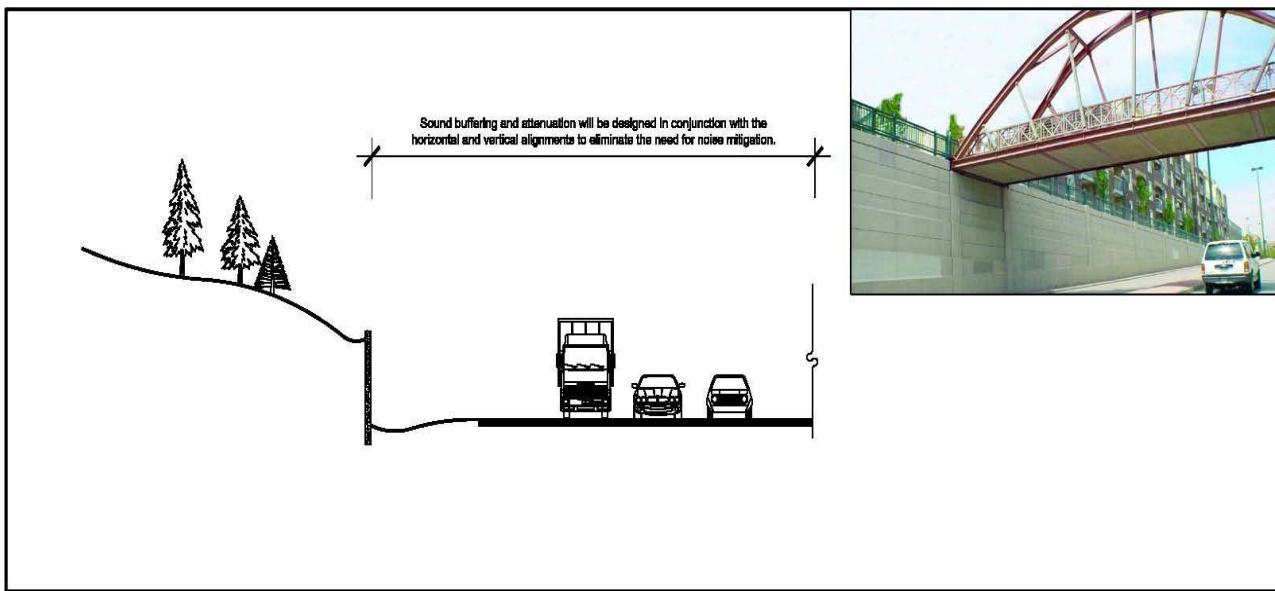


ILLUSTRATION 5: DESIGN CRITERIA FOR SOUND ATTENUATION

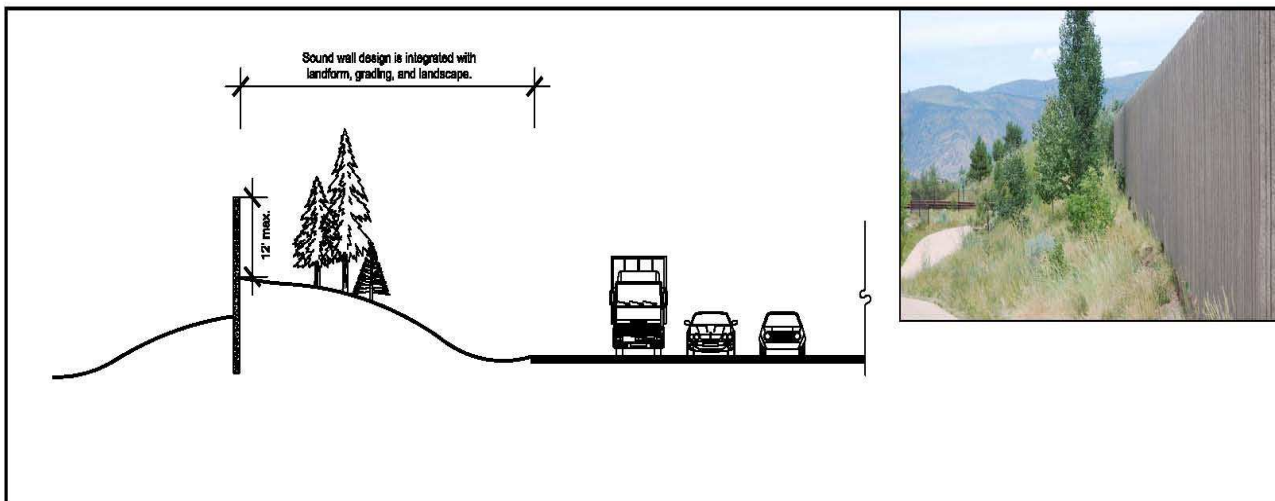


ILLUSTRATION 6: DESIGN CRITERIA FOR SOUND WALL DESIGN

## **Who Should Be Involved?**

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Stakeholders in the Twin Tunnel Area include citizens, business owners, property owners, organizations, travelers, transporters, and agencies. Future studies, planning, and design work should continue to involve not only these stakeholders, but also planning, design, landscape architecture, operations, environment, public process, and communications experts. This involvement and collaboration will allow the stakeholders to look for common ground and provide opportunities to develop partnerships to further the shared vision.

The following is an initial list of agencies and organizations. Additional stakeholders and partners should be involved as they are identified.

- Idaho Springs community members
- Clear Creek County staff
- City of Idaho Springs staff
- Historical Society of Idaho Springs
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Railroad Administration
- US Forest Service
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Colorado Historical Society
- I-70 Coalition
- Denver Regional Council of Governments
- Northwest Council of Governments
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Colorado Motor Carriers
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Audubon Society
- Colorado Rail Passenger Association
- OmniTrax
- Trout Unlimited
- Colorado Preservation
- ECO-Resolutions
- Center for Native Ecosystems
- Rocky Mountain Rail Authority
- Colorado Association of Transit Agencies

**Other Relevant Materials to Be Included in the Process**

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The following should be included in continuing work in the Twin Tunnel Area. This is an initial list and provides a starting point. Additional studies and plans should be included and referenced as they are identified.

- I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
- I-70 Mountain Corridor CSS Guidance
- I-70 Mountain Corridor 106 Programmatic Agreement
- Stream and Wetland Ecological Enhancement Program (SWEEP) MOU
- A Landscape Level Inventory of Valued Ecosystem Components (ALIVE) MOU
- I-70 Coalition Land Use Planning Study for Rail Transit Alignment Throughout the I-70 Corridor
- City of Idaho Springs, Colorado Comprehensive Plan
- Clear Creek County Master Plan
- Clear Creek Sediment Action Control Plan (SCAP)
- Clear Creek Greenway Plan
- Rocky Mountain Rail Authority High Speed Rail Feasibility Study
- I-70 Mountain Corridor Chain Station Plan
- Rocky Mountain Rail Authority High Speed Rail Study

The studies listed below have not begun or are not complete at the time of this report. When completed, these studies will provide insights and input to future work.

- CDOT Statewide Transit Plan
- Idaho Springs Local Planning Study
- Idaho Springs Demographic Reassessment
- Interchange Safety Study
- Frontage Road Feasibility Study
- West Interchange Closure Feasibility Study
- I-70 AGS Tier 2 Study
- School District Facilities Reassessment Study