



23982-23929 I-70 West Vail Pass Safety and Operations Improvements Meeting Notes

Date: June 26, 2023

Purpose:

Combined Project Leadership Team (PLT) and Technical Team (TT) Meeting #37

Location:

Online Google Meet Meeting

Attending:

Attendance list:

- Patrick Chavez, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Statewide Emergency Manager
- Jamie Yount, CDOT Region 3 Winter Operations Manager
- Lisa Schoch, CDOT Historian
- Stacia Sellers, CDOT Communications
- Zebulon White, CDOT Region 3 Traffic Operations
- Kristin Salamack, CDOT U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Liaison
- Marcus Dreux, USFS
- Jeff Bellen, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Robert Jacobs, Summit County
- Kevin Sharkey, Eagle County ECO Trails
- Tracy Sakaguchi, Colorado Motor Carriers
- Larissa Read, Eagle River Water & Sanitation District (ERWSD)
- Shannon Anderson, Bicycle Colorado
- Mark Gutknecht, Kiewit
- Adam Geis, Kiewit
- Daniel Logston, RS&H
- Sam Stavish, CIG
- Mary Jo Vobejda, Jacobs
- Amy Hopkins, Jacobs
- Laura Meyer, Jacobs
- Loretta LaRiviere, Jacobs

Summary of Discussion:

The following is a summary of the subjects discussed during the meeting.

1) Introductions & Meeting Purpose

Mary Jo said today we will hear updates on Construction Package (CP) #5, CP #4 Repackaging and the inclusion of Avalanche Mitigation, construction, and public involvement updates.

2) CP #5 Update

Dan said the CP #5 FOR (90%) review meeting was held on June 13. This package is primarily the I-70 eastbound structure and associated roadway approaches. The rec path alignment near the structures and the final Polk Creek restoration has been moved into this package. We will be progressing our plans to final design and submit them to CDOT and Kiewit by August 17. Construction on CP #5 will begin in Spring 2024.

3) CP #4 Repackaging and Addition of Avalanche Mitigation Update

- a) Jamie said there is an avalanche path on the Pass at the Vail Narrows that we mitigate during the winter months. Parts of this path will be improved with the new roadway alignment, but not enough to change how we operate. We do explosive mitigation on the slopes at this site several times a year which require road closures. The logistics of the closures are challenging because we are taking maintenance resources off the highway to get those closures in place and then we have the cleanup operation which can result in significant delays.
- b) We have been talking for a while about installing passive measures in this area which would hold the snow on the slope, and we would no longer have to do avalanche mitigation. We think it is really worth the investment to try to include it in CP #4. It will eliminate the avalanche problem, keep our maintenance resources on the road, and keep the road open more during the wintertime. We have had some really long closures in the last five years for cleanup operations and installing the fences would be a big benefit for commerce and the public traveling public if we can get this project, constructed in the next few years as part of this package.
- c) Dan said avalanche mitigation was identified in both the West Vail Pass environmental assessment (EA) and Aesthetic Guidelines. There are two areas where we are looking to install passive snow fences. Three other locations will be somewhat mitigated by the roadway alignment by flattening the curve and providing additional storage on either side of the rock face and nets or fences are not anticipated to be needed in those areas.

The intent is to try to work within the aesthetic guidance of Vail Pass and not just have a line of fencing across the entire area, we will try to break them up a little bit and make them flow with the natural terrain, however anytime you have a fence on a rock outcropping, it will likely be visible. The fencing could be similar to what is installed in Glenwood Canyon or Georgetown which have been used successfully for both rock fall and snow mitigation. The color will match the aesthetics of the area, either the traditional Forest Service Brown which is used on a lot of the signage and fencing in the area, or we may take it a step further and try to match it with the natural terrain.

- Comment #1: Marcus asked if you have any preliminary designs on what the structures are going to look like as far as height, color, and type of fencing that you could send to me? I would like to share them with our landscape architect.
- Reply #1: Dan said he would be more than happy to provide examples so you have a better idea of the proposed layout, what the design will be and where the locations are. And we look forward to continuing discussions with you as we work through this project.

d) General comments

- Comment #2: Marcus asked if you know how these sites will be accessed for installation? We will need to determine if a permit will need to be issued for this.
- Reply #2: Dan said installation would probably be from both above and below with a minimal footprint. The hope is to use a crane from the bottom to install the fences on some of the lower reaches. There would likely be a small staging area at the top. A lot of the materials could be flown in via helicopter and then workers can hike in to access the higher areas and there would be no need for any new roads or temporary access routes.
- Comment #3: Larissa asked if you are going to be doing any tree planting? In the EA there was some tree planting as an option for mitigation Also, if for some reason this CP does not get through again, how will you be including the avalanche mitigation?
- Reply #3: Dan said avalanche mitigation was originally a standalone project and now we are looking to incorporate it into CP #4, but it could also easily be done as a separate project. It is a priority for not just the residency, but also the winter operations team to improve safety and reduce the maintenance winter operations in this area.

For tree restoration and tree planting is included in CP #4, this area specifically is very steep and rocky and I am not sure exactly what the



ability to do that in this area would be, but it is included in the overall project so throughout the corridor trees will be planted.

4) Construction Update

- a) Adam said we have made pretty good progress since the last meeting. If you have driven by you may have noticed that the girders are now in as well as the precast deck panel. The girders were installed right before Memorial Day, and then the precast deck panels were installed last week. The rebar subcontractor started last week on the installation of the reinforcement on the interior diaphragms, and they will be back this week to begin the deck rebar installation. Currently the first of three bridge deck pours is scheduled for the week of the July 24 and should be completed in early August.
- b) Both the nail installation and the architectural shotcrete have been completed on tier one of the mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) 3-1 wall and the crews are working on nail and shock grade installation on tiers two through four. Our hope is that, by the end of this week, we will be completed with nails on tier two and after the holiday we will begin the architectural layers on that tier, while they work on tiers three through five. As of last week, we about halfway done with the nail installation, and we have installed just over 22,000 lineal feet of nails onto the wall itself.
- c) We completed the rock blasting on eastbound side, just uphill from the existing bridges in May. So far, we have hauled off over 22,000 cubic yards of excavated material to the rest area project and East Vail median site. There is approximately another 60,000 cubic yards of excavation left to get off the project site.
- d) Architectural shotcrete on Wall 3-3 on the eastbound side of the rec trail will start on June 28.
- e) Comments:
 - Comment #1: Shannon said she rode the trail yesterday and it is so fantastic. I cannot thank you enough for what you've done up there, it is awesome. I am getting input from a lot of people about the wall when you go under the highway, which will be widened to the 14 feet as well. Correct? And what is the exact plan with that area?
 - Reply #1: Adam said when you come under I-70 and start up that hill, there is an additional MSC wall that will be built there. It has been moved to our CP #5 and will be built next season. The trail will be pushed further away from the interstate there and it will be a 12-foot path.



- Comment #2: Shannon said because of the new structure that is overhead, it's very dark under there and the pavement is really torn up. There is a dismount zone sign but nobody's dismounting there because you need some momentum to start up that steep part and I wonder if there is a way to just pave in there temporarily just make it a little safer.
- Reply #2: Adam said we will definitely look at that, and he appreciates hearing the people are enjoying the new trail alignment.

5) Public Outreach Update

- a) Sam said we are continuing to communicate the recreation path repair work for CP #2 punch list items and the two full trail closure dates over the last month. We did a lot of outreach to all the local bike shops and permit holders for the trail and worked with Marcus and the team at the Forest Service to get the information out around that. It all went well, and we did not have anyone getting dropped off thinking they were going get through and not able to get through on those two days. The project team even supported that with personnel on site to inform people on those couple of days.

We are meeting with the organizers of all three of the big rides that are coming through and communicating what things are going to look like in July and August.

- i) The lane impacts are remaining pretty consistent week to week, so the focus really has been more on just the more changing variability on the trail over the last month.

b) Comments

- Comment #1: Tracy asked if the big bike rides will be affecting the interstate, or will they remain on the bike path?
- Reply #1: Sam said I think for the most part, those are all on the trail at least the ones that are using Vail Pass. I cannot speak to further down to the west, near Dowd Junction, but I do not believe they're really on the interstate.
- Comment #2: Shannon said the one pinch point that I think with the path in general for these large group rides is Eagle/Vail, but I do not think any of these three rides go that far west. At Eagle/Vail you get pushed out into the highway on US Highway 6 and I wish we could put a sign there that say bikes may use full lane. There are a lot of signs, but the cars do not always pay attention to them.
- Comment #3: Shannon said when you are on the path between the Jersey barriers and I-70 it is a little confusing for riders because there are two solid



yellow lines and then a little bit of room on the right and the pavement on the right as you're going up the pass is pretty broken up. During the big rides that area gets really busy, and people are passing each other on those hills. Repaving or filling in the holes would really make it safer. You might go up there Sam and look at it.

- Reply #3: Sam said he appreciates the feedback and will definitely relay that to the full project team.

6) Schedule and Next Steps

- a) Mary Jo said advertisement for CP #4 will be in October and construction will continue into 2026. Some final restoration and landscaping work for CP #5 will also continue in early 2026.
- b) We are continuing to show the PLT/TT meetings monthly as design goes along. However, when we do not really have any new information to share, we will cancel meetings and by September we fully expect that we'll just go to quarterly meetings because we'll just have construction updates at that point. So, we will see how we do next month for July.
- c) General comments:
 - Comment #1: Shannon commented she liked how you did the introductions today. It was helpful to put faces and names together.

