

SECTION 3

Review Process

On March 29, 2004, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) released the I-25 Environmental Assessment to the public for a 45-day review period.

Document Availability

Prior to the official release date, the I-25 EA was hand delivered to the following institutions to facilitate the public review process:

Pikes Peak Regional Libraries:

- Penrose Public Library
- East Library & Information Center
- Fountain Branch Library
- Monument Branch Library
- Palmer Lake Branch Library.

Military Library: HQ USAFA/DFLIB Academy Library.

College Libraries:

- Pikes Peak Community College Rampart Library
- University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
- Pikes Peak Community College Centennial Library
- Colorado College Library.

Governmental Institutions:

- FHWA Office, Lakewood, CO
- CDOT Region 2 North Program
- CDOT Public Affairs Office
- Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments
- City of Colorado Springs
- Citizens Action Center
- City of Fountain
- El Paso County Commissioners Office.

Public Notification

The I-25 EA availability for review was advertised and promoted to the public through several modes of communication, including print advertising, direct mail, press and media releases, and the project Web site.

Advertisements announcing the release of the I-25 EA for review, the comment period and the Open Forum Public Hearing began on March 28, 2004 and ended on May 2, 2004 and were placed in the following publications: *The Gazette, Colorado Springs Business Journal, Hispania News, Fountain Valley News, Woodmen Edition, Cheyenne Edition, and the Tri-Lakes Tribune.*

An oversized postcard was mailed on April 6, 2004, to approximately 5,000 names from the mailing lists for the I-25 EA, the Baptist/North Gate, Nevada/Rockrimmon, Garden of the Gods, Fillmore, Bijou and Cimarron interchanges.

On March 24, 2004, a press release kit was issued to the print and broadcast media in the Pikes Peak Region and followed up on March 29, 2004 with a Press Release announcing the availability of the I-25 EA for review and public comment. In addition, media advisories on the location of the document for review and the Public Hearing continued through the comment period.

Finally, the I-25 EA public Web site (www.i25environment.com) contained the notice of the availability of the document at various locations throughout the Pikes Peak Region as well as the actual document with its appendices. Links from the www.interstate25.com and the city and county Web sites connected interested citizens to the document.

Comment Period Extension Request

The day after the public comment period began, a request was received from an attorney representing the Old North End Neighborhood, requesting that the 45-day public review period be extended by an additional 30 days to a total of 75 days, or approximately two and a half months. Soon thereafter, five other organizations and one citizen

submitted letters supporting the Old North End Neighborhood's extension request, or making their own requests for largely identical reasons. These letters are provided in Appendix D of this decision document.

FHWA reviewed the extension request and determined that the stated reasons in these letters did not provide good cause for extending the comment period. Subsequently, responses were sent to the requesting parties to notify them of this decision.

Public Hearing

The Open Forum Public Hearing was held on April 22, 2004 at the LeBaron Hotel, in central Colorado Springs.

The Open Forum Public Hearing had displays of the findings of the I-25 EA, staff available to answer citizens' questions, and an opportunity to comment on the I-25 EA. Citizens could drop in at any time. There was no formal presentation. A court reporter was available on-site to take oral comments and comment forms were also available for submittal of written remarks.

At the hearing, 120 citizens signed in, 33 provided written comments and 22 verbal comments were made to the court reporter. Some of the attendees elected to take home copies of the public comment form, which they subsequently filled out and returned later during the comment period.

Agency Review

The I-25 EA was provided to the following agencies for review:

- Colorado Department of Wildlife
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Regional Floodplain Director
- U.S. Air Force Academy
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Comments Received

After the release of the I-25 EA on March 29, 2004 and continuing through the 45-day review period, ending on May 12, 2004, comments on the I-25 EA were received from a total of 10 governmental agencies and more than 650 citizens and organizations. Approximately 550 of these submittals were made by e-mail directed to the project website. Approximately 50 letters were received from the public, together with a total of about 50 public hearing comment forms. About 80 percent of the comments that were received expressed support for the Proposed Action.

The large number of comments received is likely due to heavy promotion of the project website, which offered a convenient mechanism for the public to respond.

Public and agency comments, together with responses, are provided in the following sections of this FONSI.