

SECTION ONE: Introduction/Project Map

US 24 has a long history as a transportation corridor that goes back to the Native Americans and prospectors who once used this route looking for food and wealth. Ute Pass, as it was once known, has gone from a dirt path to a four-lane limited access highway that provides local trips for daily travelers, an entryway for recreational mountain activities and a transportation route for regional commuters and freight haulers. Over the years, the populations of the Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs areas have grown and so has its appeal as a tourist destination, increasing the highway's use. Since 1964, only minimal highway improvements have been done in response to that increase to address safety and maintenance issues.

Together, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have taken steps to redesign sections of the highway. They have studied the current and future

traffic demands, along with highway alignment, to develop a plan that will correct roadway deficiencies and improve safety, mobility and access.

Approximately 4.5 miles of US 24 is expected to undergo infrastructure improvements. The I-25/Cimarron Interchange is the eastern end and just beyond Ridge Road is the western end of the corridor. Two new interchanges will be installed at 8th and 21st Streets. Intersection improvements will be made at 26th and 31st Streets. An overpass at Ridge Road will be constructed and the potential for a privately funded 15th Street overpass are all a part of the plan. In addition, wider shoulders, an additional travel lane for both the east and west bound traffic, new turn lanes, signage, retaining walls and pedestrian bridges are expected. As these improvements are implemented, US 24 will provide a safer and more accessible route for commuters, tourists and residents of the Colorado Springs area.

In conjunction with the redesign and development effort for US 24, CDOT, the City, users and adjacent landowners have joined forces to develop restoration strategies for Fountain Creek. Fountain Creek is such

an integral part of the highway corridor, paralleling US 24 from the I-25/Cimarron Interchange to Manitou Springs. These partners are taking the opportunity to improve water quality, flood risk management, fish habitat, access and recreation.

Recreational improvements are envisioned for the existing Midland Regional Trail. This includes the use of excess CDOT right-of-way for parks and creek restoration. This restoration will include landscaping, water features, public gathering spaces and additional bicycle/pedestrian paths. These improvements will involve approximately 2.5 miles of the creek. Please see the Appendix for a more detailed description of the Midland Greenway.

As part of the redesign effort for US 24 and the Fountain Creek corridor, these aesthetic guidelines have been prepared to address the aesthetic treatment of the proposed transportation and creek enhancements. Specifically, these guidelines provide direction on the aesthetic treatment of gateway features, vehicular and pedestrian bridges, noise and retaining walls, sidewalks, trails, landscaping and creek improve-

ments. These guidelines are developed in conjunction with the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the US 24 West Corridor.

The US 24 West Corridor is seen as having two distinct design segments: the Urban Design Segment and the Rural Design Segment. Each segment captures the character and intrinsic qualities of the highway and adjacent Fountain Creek corridor. These qualities were derived from community input, land use, landmarks and development patterns.

The Urban Design Segment begins at the I-25/Cimarron Interchange on the east and continues west to just past 31st Avenue. This segment includes: Old Colorado City, Gold Hill Mesa and the historic railroad roundhouse. The Rural Design Segment includes the area just west of 31st Avenue to just west of Ridge Road. This segment includes Ridge Road and Red Rock Canyon Open Space.

