



Planning Connections - March-April 2017

CDOT planning news you can use.

CDOT to Shave Nearly Two Years from US 34 Reconstruction Time



Permanent reconstruction work in the Big Thompson Canyon is going forward now in a stepped-up schedule. This is how this section of US 34 looked after the September 2013 floods.

The section of US 34 that winds through the Big Thompson Canyon between Loveland and Estes Park sustained huge flow surges that exceeded the 500-year flood event during the September 2013 floods. Watershed runoff combined with flows released from Lake Estes Dam and surges from debris dam breaches produced the surges. Major sections of roadway were washed away completely, along with access bridges and retaining walls. In the narrows, much of the roadway and grade were undermined, washing out the pavement from below and exposing the wall support structures.

Now CDOT Region 4 is working to cut nearly two years off the expected permanent reconstruction time on US 34 in the canyon. The tradeoff for this time savings is closing the canyon again October 2017 through May 2018, the same timing as the current closure, and expanding the closure area from the Narrows past Drake. Under the revised plan, when the canyon opens to regular traffic on May 25, drivers will see mostly clear roads through the busy summer and early fall seasons. Come early October, the canyon would again close to through-traffic, with regularly timed access for canyon residents.

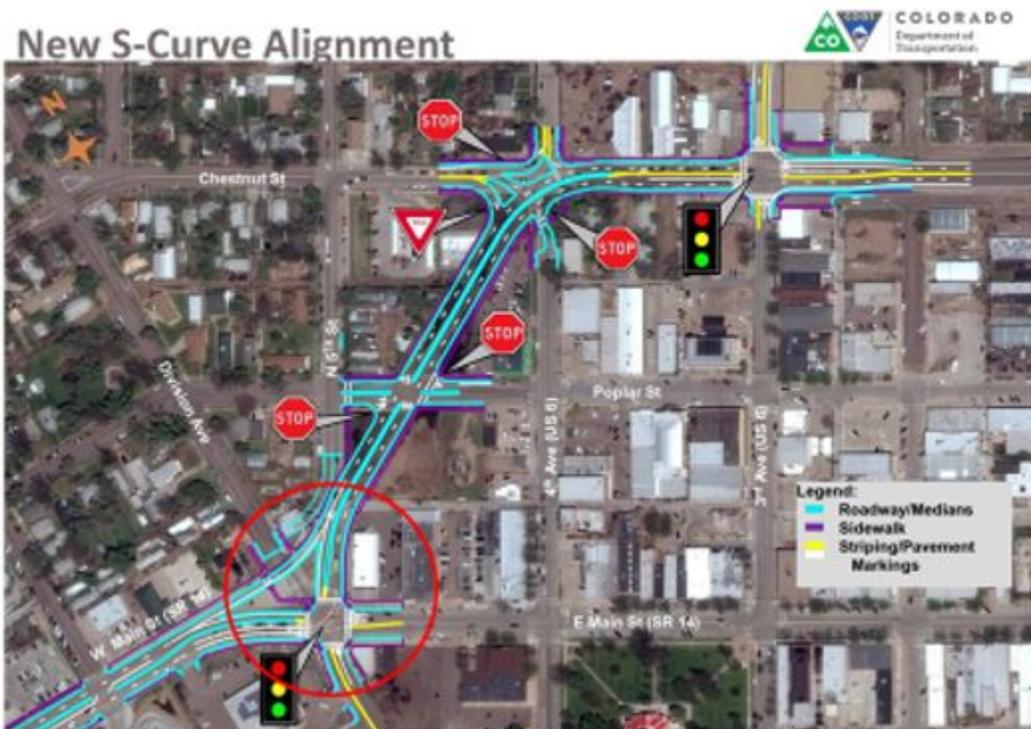
In June 2015, CDOT appointed Kiewit Infrastructure Co. as the construction manager/general contractor for making permanent repairs to US 34 between Estes Park and Loveland. Repairs include restoring bridges and retaining walls, building the roadway to be more resilient to flood damage, repairing the roadway to pre-flood conditions, replacing guardrails, and revegetating areas.

SH 14 S-Curve Bypass in Sterling among Proposed Freight Projects

Three major Colorado highways that intersect in downtown Sterling - US 6, SH 14, and US 138 - carry traffic east-west and north-south through the city in a network of two- and one-way streets that heavy truck traffic disrupts. Especially during harvest, large trucks create safety issues on the state highways because they are required to negotiate turns through residential and downtown areas. Combined with circuitous routes and a system of one-way streets, these turns hinder the movement of through and local traffic.

CDOT Region 4 has applied for \$7.652 million in National Highway Freight Program funds to accomplish a cure. Large trucks moving east-west through the city would be directed onto a bypass or S-curve alignment that uses abandoned railroad rights of way to complete a direct connection between SH 14 and US 6. The project would improve traffic flow, optimize traffic operations, and enhance safety along several streets, highways, and intersections in downtown Sterling. SH 14, a National Highway System route, then will have direct connections to both I-25 and I-76.

CDOT, the City of Sterling, and the Eastern Transportation Planning Region partnered on the solution after a citizen asked what could be done at a public meeting. The project would involve CDOT-City of Sterling ownership swaps of road segments to direct US 6 traffic onto the S-curve bypass, improved intersection geometry, highway lighting to current standards, traffic signal upgrades, and raised medians on one street to restrict left-turn movements. CDOT Region 4 plans to make up most of the rest of the \$16 million project with funds at its disposal. The Sterling S-curve is an example of the type of the freight applications that the Transportation Commission discussed on April 20 and will take action on May 18. This is the first time federal formula funds have been available for freight.



This map shows planned improvements to freight movement, connecting SH 14 (Main Street) to US 6 (Chestnut).

Updates in Brief

- **High Priority Bike Corridors Workshop:** A multi-disciplinary group of traffic and safety engineers, planners, and maintenance met at CDOT headquarters on April 17 to brainstorm possible criteria for selection of High Priority Bike Corridors in Colorado. Corridor designation is intended to assist with targeting scarce funds where they would have the most impact. Safety, connectivity, and level of use were the criteria most favored by the three small groups that met and reported what they had concluded. A procedural directive, [PD 1602.1](#), requires designation of the corridors.
- **Biking Days:** The Bike and Pedestrian Program at CDOT headquarters is preparing for two events to highlight biking. One is Bike to School Colorado! Wednesday, May 10; the other is Bike to Work Day Wednesday, June 28. For more information on the events and on other biking and walking information, see the [Bicycle and Program webpage](#).
- **Safe Routes to School List Approved:** The Transportation Commission on April 20 approved the list of [Safe Routes to Schools projects](#) that the Safe Routes to Schools Advisory Committee recommended, including a change to the approving resolution to allow staff to shift funding between infrastructure and education based on application demand. The 14 projects that were approved total \$2.5 million: \$2.219 million for infrastructure and \$280,708 for non-infrastructure projects such as educational programs.
- **Transportation Planning Toolkit:** Division of Transportation Development planning liaisons and regional planners are starting the “core curriculum” of the Transportation Planning Toolkit. The rural Transportation Planning Region’s planning commissions are beginning to receive some basic information on such topics as the planning process, revenue and funding programs, and project selection to allow for quicker and more informed decision making when it comes time to update the regional transportation plans that will look out to 2045. Presentations tailored for some, but not all, the transportation planning regions will begin in about a year.
- **Scenario Planning Peer Exchange:** Five panelists will come to CDOT on June 8 to discuss their experiences with scenario planning, a type of planning that asks the question, “What if. . .?” Scenario planning is expected to be a big part of the next planning cycle at CDOT, the first time the department has considered scenario planning on a statewide level.
- **Transportation Funding:** A bill in the Colorado Legislature, HB 17-1242, would send a ballot question to the voters to raise the state sales tax by 0.5 cents for transportation. The Transportation Commission on April 19 discussed the steps needed to develop a project list for the Legislative Council within 30 days of passage of the bill. But a day later, negotiations between the pro- and anti- sides in the legislature were reported to have broken down. For a look at the implications of HB 17-1242, see this [document](#) in the Commission packet.
- **Truck Ramps:** Among the many planned activities of the Systems Planning Section of the CDOT Multimodal Planning Branch is a research project to test if shredded tires might work better than gravel as the foundation material for runaway truck ramps in the mountains. Experience has shown that unless the gravel is replaced regularly and often, it loses its effectiveness at stopping trucks. Systems Planning is the new name of the Freight Program.
- **State Highway Freight Plan Amendment:** An amendment to the 2015 *State Highway Freight Plan* is nearing completion. The amendment was drafted to bring the plan into compliance with the most recent federal transportation authorization law, the FAST Act. The plan had been written to comply with the last federal law, MAP-21. The plan amendment will go to the Federal Highway Administration for approval in mid-May.

- **HPTE Financing Considered:** The High Performance Transportation Enterprise at CDOT is working on several project financing strategies. I-25 North between 120th and E-470 will open in early 2019, and is financed in part by bonds backed by toll revenue. Northern sections of I-25 North between Fort Collins and Denver are being actively planned for HOV/Express Lanes, but funding has not been completely finalized. On C-470, work has begun and is anticipated to open in mid-to-late 2019. C-470 will not offer HOV on the Express Lanes. The project is funded in part by a TIFIA loan and revenue bonds. Work also continues on Central 70, which is HPTE's newest public-private partnership. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2018, and the complete funding plan is yet to be decided.

Transportation Commission and STAC

- [Summaries](#) of the Transportation Commission's Jan. 18-19, Feb. 15-16, and March 15-16 meetings are posted on the STAC webpage.
- Notes from recent STAC meetings are available [here](#). The notes for the Feb. 24 meeting, however, aren't yet posted. The notes for the March 24 meeting should be included in the STAC packet for the April 28 meeting.

If you have suggestions for topics or updates to submit, please send to gail.hoffman@state.co.us. Copies of past issues of Planning Connections are available [here](#) under Planning Process.