



ENTRANCE TO ASPEN

SNAPSHOT—WHERE ARE WE NOW?

SO WHERE ARE WE NOW? WHAT HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED?

The Entrance to Aspen issue has been voted on and discussed in this community for at least the last 36 years. Although no unified, major solution to Aspen's traffic problem has been implemented, milestones have occurred on this issue.

What is the 1998 Record of Decision?

In 1998 the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published a Record of Decision (ROD) on the Entrance to Aspen. The ROD lays out what both organizations support as a plan for the Entrance to Aspen, which is known as the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative is a combination of highway and intersection improvements, a transit system and an incremental transportation management program. The highway component consists of a two-lane highway that follows the existing alignment up to the Maroon Creek Bridge, at which point it crosses the Marolt-Thomas property. A connection to Main Street occurs at 7th Street. The transit component includes a light rail system but if local support and/or funding didn't exist for the light rail, two exclusive bus lanes would be allowed in addition to the two lanes for general traffic.

What has been done since the ROD to improve the transportation system to and from Aspen?

Elements of the Preferred Alternative have been implemented. They include:

- Maroon Creek Roundabout
- Pedestrian overpasses over Maroon Creek Road and Castle Creek Road
- Truscott Intersection (utility, intersection and pedestrian improvements)
- Harmony Road (pedestrian underpasses and intersection improvements)
- Realignment of Owl Creek Road and new signals at SH82 and Buttermilk
- Conveyance of Right-of-Way (CDOT acquired easement across Marolt for two-lane and light rail ONLY in exchange for Mills Ranch property to be used as open space)
- Maroon Creek Bridge Replacement (underway)
- SH 82 Access Management Plan (traffic study from Smith Way to Cemetery Lane)

Why do CDOT and the FHWA have to be involved?

Because highway 82 is a State Highway that also receives federal funding, both organizations have to be involved in the decision making process. SH 82 is part of the National Highway System. In addition, SH 82 crosses federal waters (Maroon Creek and Castle Creek), which mandates the FHWA be involved. While City of Aspen voters can veto or accept whatever ballot issues arise related to the Entrance to Aspen, the State and Federal Governments' process is to produce a Record of Decision with a Preferred Alternative that identifies and mitigates environmental impacts.

Can any possible solution to the Entrance to Aspen cross the Marolt-Thomas Property?

In a 1996 election, Aspen voters authorized City Council to convey the Right-of-Way across the Marolt and Thomas Properties *for a two-lane highway and a corridor for light rail*. If the Marolt and Thomas Properties are to be used for any other purpose (four lanes of traffic or two lanes of traffic and two dedicated bus lanes as examples) then the question must go back to City voters because there is NOT approval to use the open space for anything other than two lanes of highway and light rail.

Where does the money invested in this issue come from?

There are various sources for the money that has so far been invested in transportation and the Entrance to Aspen. In 1993 Pitkin County voters approved a 1/2 cent use tax to fund Mass Transportation improvements. The Elected Officials Transportation Committee (made up of elected officials from Snowmass Village, Aspen and Pitkin County) agreed that the funds from the 1/2 cent tax could be used to increase and improve bus service, for park and ride facilities, to acquire Rights-of-Way for transportation and for additional projects which fit the general framework of financing, constructing, operating or maintaining a mass transportation system in the county. Currently the EOTC has \$11,816,601 in its coffers. The City of Aspen and Pitkin County have also used their funds for various components of the Entrance to Aspen.

Most recently the EOTC dedicated \$200,000 for the reevaluation of the 1997 Entrance to Aspen Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) This reevaluation is to be released November 16th at 5 p.m. at the EOTC meeting in Aspen's City Council Chambers. This meeting is open to the public and will be televised on CGTV Channel 11.

What is the reevaluation of the Entrance to Aspen FEIS?

The 1997 Entrance to Aspen Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) which led to the 1998 Record of Decision (ROD) was reevaluated late last year as required by CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. This reevaluation was necessary before any further construction or design improvements as laid out in the 1998 ROD could be made. The Engineering firm of HDR Engineering, Inc. completed the reevaluation to assess whether any changes had occurred in the project design concept or scope and/or whether any regulatory or environmental changes had occurred since the FEIS and ROD were published in 1998, and whether those changes would result in any new or additional environmental impacts not previously identified and evaluated in the EIS.

The resources that were reevaluated to assess if significant changes had occurred were:

Social Environment: neighborhood impacts, relocation of right-of-way impacts, recreational impacts, impacts of travel patterns and access, parking impacts, public safety impacts, land use impacts, environmental justice.

Economic Environment: economic base, commercial growth trends, employment, income, housing.

Physical Environment: air quality, water quality, upland and floodplain vegetation, wetlands, fisheries, wildlife, wild and scenic rivers, floodplains, threatened and endangered species, historical resources, archaeological resources, paleontological resources, historic and recreational resources, farmlands, noise and vibration, visual character, potential hazardous waste sites.

There were three possible outcomes that the lead agencies could have determined based on the results of the reevaluation:

1. Existing, previously approved environmental studies and project decisions remain valid and 1998 Record of Decision stands.
2. Some changes had occurred in the environment and an alternative solution for the Entrance to Aspen other than the one selected in the 1998 ROD would be preferred. The alternative found to be the most suitable would have to have been fully evaluated in the Final EIS and a revised ROD would have been prepared and circulated for public view.
3. Significant changes had occurred and an additional environmental impact document would be required to move project forward, meaning the project had substantially changed in ways that would have resulted in new or significant impacts not previously identified. A supplemental EIS could identify additional Entrance to Aspen alternative solutions that were not previously noted.

On November 16th CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) confirmed the Preferred Alternative from the 1998 ROD is still valid (option 1 above). The results were announced and discussed at the Elected Officials Transportation Committee meeting on November 16th.