



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 Thomas-Marolt 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 will the results of the reevaluation of the Entrance to Aspen FEIS be?

The 1997 FEIS is currently being reevaluated as required by CDOT and the FHWA. This reevaluation is required in order to proceed with ANY construction or design improvements as laid out in the 1998 Record of Decision (ROD).

The Engineering firm of HDR Engineering, Inc. is undergoing the re-evaluation to make sure that nothing has significantly changed since the FEIS was completed in 1997. The work is scheduled to be completed on November 16th. There are three possible outcomes:

1. Existing, approved FEIS and project decisions remain valid and 1998 Record of Decision stands.
2. A decision is made to approve an alternative other than the one approved in the 1998 ROD. The alternative must have been fully evaluated in the FEIS and a revised ROD would be prepared and circulated for public view.
3. An additional environmental impact document is required to move the project forward. The project has substantially changed in ways that may result in new or significant impacts not previously identified. The affected environment has changed, resulting in potential new or significant impacts not previously identified. A supplemental EIS could identify additional alternatives.