

I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

On June 16, 2011, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) signed the Record of Decision approving the Preferred Alternative for the I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). The FHWA approval marks the end of nearly 20 years of study and discussions about improvements for the I-70 Mountain Corridor. Both FHWA and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) (the lead agencies) are indebted to thousands of individuals and organizations that helped us craft a Preferred Alternative that best meets transportation needs while balancing impacts to Corridor communities and natural resources. “Together the agencies and stakeholders have come a long way from where we started,” said Clear Creek County Commissioners. “[We] look forward to... moving forward on projects as a cooperative partner.”

The recent decision approves a broad (Tier 1) program of transit, highway, safety, and other improvements on the 144-mile route between Glenwood Springs and the western edge of the Denver metropolitan area. Implementing the approved improvements will increase capacity, improve accessibility and mobility, and decrease congestion along the Corridor. The decision provides a framework for implementation of specific projects in the Corridor as funding allows.

What is the PEIS Preferred Alternative?

The PEIS Preferred Alternative for the 144-mile I-70 Mountain Corridor between Glenwood Springs and the western edge of the Denver metropolitan area consists of non-infrastructure components, an Advanced Guideway (transit) System, and a flexible program of highway improvements.

- Non-infrastructure components are strategies to encourage changes in travel patterns without construction, such as bus service in mixed traffic and programs for improving truck movements.
- The Advanced Guideway System is a train that provides service between the Eagle County Airport and the C-470/Jeffco Government Center light rail station. The specific technology has not yet been determined and requires further study. CDOT’s Division of Transit and Rail is initiating the Advanced Guideway System study and expects to complete the study in about 18 months.
- Highway improvements include a range of improvements (referred to as Minimum and Maximum Programs) that adapt to future trends. The Minimum Program includes 3-lane highway capacity in Dowd Canyon and between the Twin Tunnels and Floyd Hill; new bike trails and frontage roads; other improvements such as curve safety and interchange improvements; and additional auxiliary lanes in select locations. The Maximum Program includes the Minimum Program improvements plus 3-lane highway improvements between the Eisenhower-Johnson Memorial Tunnels and the Twin Tunnels, and additional curve safety and interchange improvements.

How does the PEIS influence future Corridor projects?

The signing of the Tier 1 decision means that CDOT can move into Tier 2 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes and begin to implement specific projects in the Corridor. Tier 2 NEPA processes approve specific projects and reflect the PEIS Preferred Alternative decision regarding mode, general location, and capacity. They will be required for all projects in the Corridor and may be preceded by feasibility or technical studies when potential solutions or funding scenarios are complex.