

US 34 Big Thompson Canyon flood recovery project

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What agencies is CDOT working with to rebuild US 34?

The key agencies that CDOT is working with on this project include the general contractor (Kiewit Construction), US Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), US Forest Service (USFS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Larimer County, City of Loveland, Town of Estes Park, Big Thompson River Restoration Coalition (BTRRC), Colorado Department of Natural Resources (CDNR), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), Colorado Division of Water Resources and Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Last, but certainly not least, CDOT is also working with business owners, property owners and residents along the US 34 corridor to address various issues.

What section of US 34 is being reconstructed?

The entire project corridor will span about 23 miles from just east of Lake Estes near mile marker 65 to mile marker 88 near Devil's Backbone in Loveland. About 15 miles of US 34 through the canyon will be evaluated for complete reconstruction while other areas of roadway that suffered little to no damage will be evaluated for upgrades and safety improvements.

What will the project cost and where is the money coming from?

CDOT spent \$34 million on the temporary repairs and it is estimated it will take more than \$50 million to build the roadway back to the way it was before the 2013 flood and \$80 to \$100+ million to bring the roadway up to better standards and make it more resilient. This project will be 100 percent funded with Federal dollars. About 80 percent of the money will come from Federal Emergency Relief funds and 20 percent will come from the Federal Lands Access Program.

Are there restrictions on how the Emergency Relief (ER) funds can be used?

There are restrictions on how the Federal ER funds can be spent. They can be used for highway work, work to protect the highway and additional repair work in areas that were impacted by the contractor doing the emergency repair project. These funds cannot be used to repair flood damage that isn't directly related to repairing or protecting the roadway. Also, the ER funds cannot be used to repair or enhance fish or wildlife habitats, for restoring private property or for landscaping.

Are there funding resources for doing the work that cannot be done with Federal ER money?

There are other funding sources that could possibly be used for work that is not eligible for Federal ER funds. These sources include Community Development Block Grant – Emergency Relief fund, state funds, private grant programs and the National Resources Conservation Service funds. It is CDOT's goal to coordinate and collaborate with other agencies and stakeholders to maximize the improvements that can be made.

What traffic impacts (i.e. closures or detours) will be associated with this work?

We know there will be traffic impacts and CDOT will make every effort to keep them to a minimum. During some operations such as rock blasting, the road will be completely closed for a certain amount of time and there could be other times when the roadway is reduced to one lane of travel. CDOT will have

more definitive information on the traffic impacts by late summer or early fall 2015, and we will communicate these with the public so people can plan accordingly.

When US 34 is rebuilt, will there be turn lanes, passing lanes and pullout areas incorporated?

As the roadway design plans are developed, CDOT will be evaluating the most appropriate places to incorporate turning lanes, passing lanes and pullouts taking in consideration accident data and safety concerns along US 34.

Are bike lanes being incorporated along the corridor?

CDOT will not be adding separate lanes designated specifically for cyclists. However, CDOT is looking at widening the shoulders to 6 feet wherever possible which would enhance safe bicycle travel through the canyon.

Will the alignment of US 34 change from what it is now following the temporary repairs?

CDOT is looking at ways to make the roadway more resilient to better withstand the impacts of future flooding events. The alignment of US 34 could shift. In areas where it is not feasible to shift the roadway, CDOT will look at other ways we might be able to make the roadway more resilient.

Will a new floodplain map be available?

CDOT is working with CWCB, FEMA and Larimer County to develop the information needed to update the floodplain maps. CDOT will provide the necessary technical data and submissions to Larimer County in regards to the floodplain, but FEMA is the agency that determines whether or not a new floodplain map is issued.

How might the new floodplain map affect me financially?

When new maps take effect and are officially adopted, if your structure is mapped into a high-risk area and you have a mortgage with a federally-regulated lender, you will need to purchase flood insurance. If your property is mapped into a low-or moderate-risk area, you are not required to purchase or maintain insurance, but FEMA still encourages it. You can find more information on flood hazard maps through Larimer County by visiting <http://www.larimer.org/engineering/Floodplain/LTFP3.pdf>

Will the course of the river be changed as part of this project?

The course of the river might change. CDOT is taking a systematic approach to the canyon and is looking at the roadway and river in conjunction with other agencies like the BTRRC, CWCB, CPW, USFS and others who are sharing their expertise on how to rebuild a more resilient US 34 with consideration of the river.

Will CDOT widen or deepen the river to create more room for the river to flow?

Many different options will be evaluated regarding the future shape of the river in coordination with CWBC, FEMA, USFS, Larimer County and BTRRC. Impacts to the road, fish habitat function and overall capacity of the river are all being considered.

Will there be any bathroom facilities or rest areas developed in the corridor?

The City of Loveland will provide public restroom facilities at Viestenz-Smith Park. Larimer County is considering these type of facilities in conjunction with their assessment of recreation and conservation opportunities along the Big Thompson River and the North Fork. To view the draft plan developed from this assessment or to provide feedback, visit <http://www.larimer.org/bigthompsonplan/>.

Will CDOT be acquiring additional right-of-way?

CDOT's first priority is to do the work within the existing right-of-way. This might not be possible in all areas, however. Where CDOT identifies the need to acquire right-of-way, we will work directly with the affected property owners.

Is there any plan to improve mobile phone service throughout the canyon?

Although there are no plans at this time to improve service, CDOT is open to working with any communication company that is interested in installing more fiber or incorporating other improvements to enhance mobile phone service.

Will crews be working around-the-clock or on weekends?

Work hours have not yet been determined. CDOT will work with representatives from Kiewit Construction and necessary agencies to develop project specific traffic management plans, lane closures and allowable hours of operation taking into consideration public impacts. Public notification of the work hours will be highly publicized and communicated directly to residents and property owners.

Will there be future meetings or ways we can get updated information?

Prior to construction starting in late 2015 or early 2016, we will conduct another series of public meetings to share additional information with the community. Throughout the project we will also have a variety of ways of reaching the community. This includes the project website, hotline, email updates and roadside signage.

What do residents do when they see rocks falling in the corridor?

The corridor is still experiencing some instability and rocks may fall. If you notice such activity, please call the CDOT hotline at 720-263-1589.

If you have a question that isn't addressed here or an issue that affects a specific parcel of property along US 34, we encourage you to send an email to the project team at us34floodrepairs@cig-pr.com. You might also find answers to your questions by viewing the presentation posted at <https://www.codot.gov/projects/floodrelatedprojects/us-34-big-thompson-canyon-1>