



## Southern Mountain Loop

Highway 12 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study



COLORADO  
Department of Transportation



### Summer 2019 Newsletter



#### YOU ARE INVITED - Public Meeting

Please attend to learn more about the Southern Mountain Loop Hwy. 12 Planning and Environmental Linkages Study and provide feedback.

**Date: Wed., Sept. 18**

**Time: 5:30 - 7 p.m.**

**Location: Trinidad State College**

**Pioneer Room (located on the south end of the Sullivan Center building)  
600 Prospect Street, Trinidad, CO 81082**

For special ADA accommodations to participate, please call 719/488-5908 and if you require Spanish language translation to participate in this meeting, call 303-578-2505 at least 48 hours in advance.

For more information email: [SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com](mailto:SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com)

#### Collaborative Planning Process for Road & Trail Improvement Options on Colorado's Scenic Highway of Legends Designed to Spur Tourism

The South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) are developing options for transportation improvements on Colorado's Scenic Highway of Legends (SHOL) Byway (stretching roughly 82 miles between Walsenburg and Trinidad along US 160 and CO 12). This corridor has additionally been identified as the Southern Mountain Loop (SML) of the Colorado Front Range Trail (CFRT) - a planned multi-purpose trail from Wyoming to New Mexico along the Front Range.

#### JOIN US FOR UPCOMING ACTIVITIES Coffee Chats

The public is invited to learn more about this study by attending upcoming coffee chats. These chats are opportunities for you to meet with the Study Team members to learn more about the study and share your thoughts about opportunities within the corridor.

##### Community coffee chats

11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 20  
The Stonewall Shopping Bag  
6689 State Hwy. 12, Weston, CO 81091

2 - 4 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 20  
Cuchara Dog Bar  
34 Cuchara Avenue, Cuchara, CO 81055

5 - 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 20  
Walsenburg La Plaza Inn  
118 W 6th St, Walsenburg, CO 81089

Noon - 1 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 21  
La Veta Library  
310 S. Main Street, La Veta, CO 81055

3 - 6 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 21  
Moose Social Club  
308 W Main St, Trinidad, CO 81082

8:30 - 10:30 a.m., Thursday, Aug. 22  
La Veta Paradise Coffee  
305 S Main St, La Veta, CO 81055

Noon - 2 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 22  
Serendipity Coffee House  
528 Main St, Walsenburg, CO 81089

#### SCHEDULE

- Existing conditions assessment - Completed by Late Summer 2019
- Alternative analysis - July 2019 through Summer 2020
- Upcoming stakeholder meetings - Sept. 2019, Feb. 2020 and



"While tourism has had a positive impact to date, our two-county tourism economy has lagged behind other regions within the state," said Walt Boulden, Executive Director of South Central Council of Governments. "A renewed vision and investment plan for the corridor, entailing highway safety, bicycle/recreational trail, and byway-related infrastructure improvements, can be a driving force in realizing the full potential of our region."

The improvement options are being developed to produce a comprehensive investment plan to serve locals, visitors and all users. It will integrate highway safety with bicycle/recreational trail and byway-related improvements. This project will work with community stakeholders from Trinidad to Walsenburg to analyze and develop a range of improvements resulting in a blueprint for future improvement projects.

- May 2020
- Public meetings - Sept. 18, 2019 and Spring 2020
- Coffee Chats - Aug. 20 through Aug. 22, and Fall 2019

**PEL Study Completion:  
Summer 2020**

**FOLLOW THE PROJECT - SIGN-UP FOR SML PEL STUDY ENEWSLETTER**

Send an email to [SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com](mailto:SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com) and request to be added to the e-newsletter distribution list.

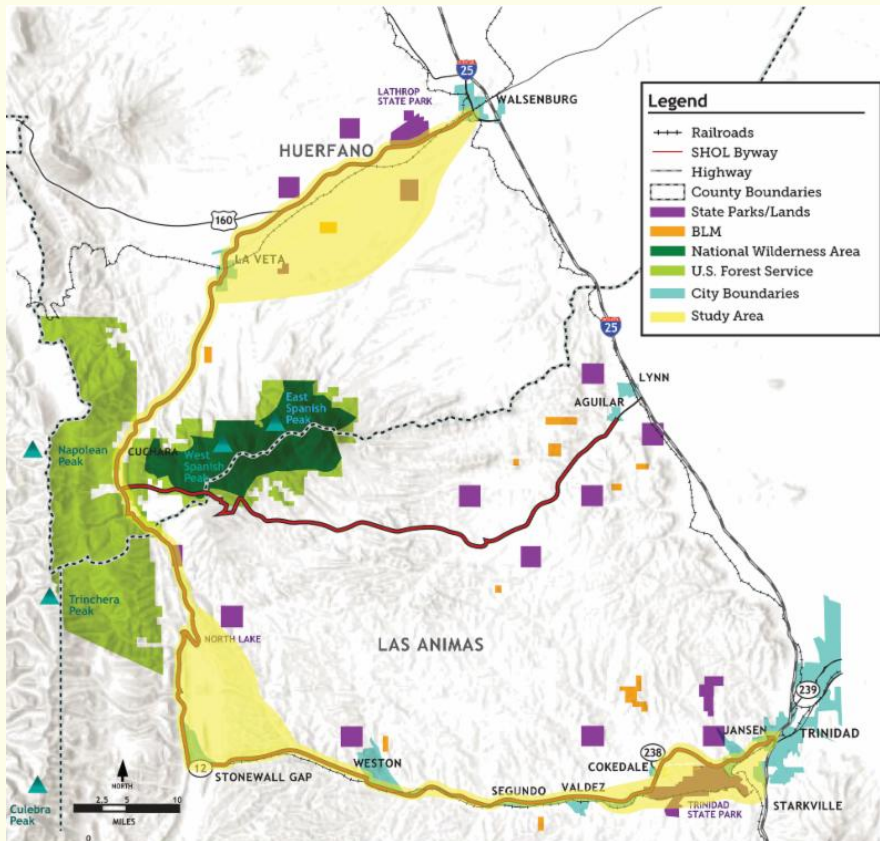
### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the PEL study is to enhance the region's economy through a long-term investment plan for highway safety, bicycle/multi-use trail, cultural, and ecotourism infrastructure improvements along the Scenic Highway of Legends. Completing the Southern Mountain Loop segment of the Colorado Front Range Trail, the goal is to balance the protection and promotion of the Spanish Peaks Country according to local community values and goals.

**Integrated transportation-related improvements are needed to address:**

- **Safety** - Existing roadway alignments and substandard shoulder widths, combined with higher bicycle usage and localized pedestrian areas, create potentially unsafe conditions for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians along the corridor.
- **Regional and Local Bicycle/Multi-Use Trail System** - The ability for bicyclists, pedestrians, and other users, both regional and local, to move through and within the corridor is needed.
- **Connections and Access to Recreational Facilities** - Highway, bicycle, and pedestrian connections between local activity centers, recreational facilities, and byway-related amenities are needed to improve community interactions and access to a range of activity types.

### Understanding The Study Area



[Colorado Front Range Trail \(CFRT\) Master Plan](#)

[Huerfano County Trails Master Plan 2011](#)

[Byways \(SHOL\) Master Plan](#)

Centered along the corridor, extending from Walsenburg to Trinidad, the Study Area encompasses the Scenic Highway of Legends (SHOL) and the range of alternative off-highway bicycle/trail routes including parallel and adjacent county roads and the Iowa Pacific and abandoned Elk Mine railroads. The Study Area is located in Huerfano County and Las Animas County. Features include the towns or communities of: Cuchara, La Veta, Segunda, Stonewall, Trinidad, Walsenburg and Weston.

[South Central Regional Transportation Plan](#)

[Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#)

[City of Trinidad Comprehensive Plan - 2017](#)

**SCENIC HIGHWAY OF LEGENDS  
BYWAY INFORMATION**

[Colorado Department of Transportation](#)

[Spanish Peaks Country](#)

### Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study Process

A PEL is defined as "an approach to transportation decision-making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the planning stage to set the stage for subsequent more detailed project development, design, and construction." The PEL process is intended to lead to better decision-making and reduce the duplication of efforts in subsequent planning, development, and implementation of projects, including securing funding.



The PEL study works with the public and community stakeholders to identify the various transportation deficiencies and needs along the Southern Mountain Loop (SML) corridor. The focus of this step is to understand the desires and values of communities along the corridor, how the transportation system currently functions, how it impacts communities, and how it can be

improved now and in the future. Once these are identified, a series of alternatives are developed to address the needs. The ability of these alternatives to meet project needs will be evaluated and considered, along with the effects on the communities and environment.

Some of the considerations:

- Are there locations with numerous vehicular crashes?
- Are there recurring types of vehicular crashes or patterns of crashes?
- What are other safety concerns along the corridor?
- What kind of highway improvements would address the safety concerns?
- What is the best location and configuration for a regional bicyclists/pedestrians trail, either along the highway or on a separate alignment?
- How might a trail system better connect communities and provide access to recreational areas along the corridor?
- How would byway-related improvements, such as cultural or scenic pull-offs, provide new attractions for visitors and connect with the trail improvements?

After the PEL study is complete, CDOT and the local agency SCCOG will have a documented set of projects and an implementation plan, which they will use to identify funding for project design and implementation.

### Stakeholders Agree to Collaborate -- Endorse PEL Study Team Charter



In mid-June the Project Stakeholders met at Cuchara Mountain Resort to discuss the study. The stakeholders were asked what they want to see for an enhanced corridor, how to create buy-in for the study's recommendations, and what key issues are critical to moving the corridor forward.

South Central Council of Governments Executive Director Walt Boulden, provided an explanation of the study area, existing conditions, terrain, natural resources, corridor issues, alternatives, evaluation process, and project goals. Boulden explained, "this is your opportunity to provide input to the study vision, participate in the planning effort, build local excitement, and work together to get traction in attracting visitors to enjoy the corridor. The result will be a better corridor for our residents and a stronger local economy for everyone."

The group discussed:

- Goals for Success
- Safety Issues
- Better Connections
- How Public Infrastructure can Promote the Region
- Byway - Cultural Experience

Stakeholders finished the day by endorsing the PEL Study Team Charter. *We the undersigned acknowledge and agree to the Southern Mountain Loop Highway 12 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Team Charter. We are committed to working as a team by following through on commitments and helping one another toward a successful project outcome.*

[CLICK HERE](#) to review the June 19 Stakeholder Meeting Summary.

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