



# Southern Mountain Loop

Highway 12 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study



Fact Sheet No. 4 | July 2020



## Study Overview

The South Central Council of Governments and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) are studying the Scenic Highway of Legends Byway, an 82 mile corridor between Walsenburg and Trinidad along US 160 and State Highway 12. The purpose of the project is to improve highway safety and provide a regional and local multi-use trail, completing the Colorado Front Range Trail (CFRT), along the byway. The CFRT is a planned multi-use trail by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) along the Front Range from Wyoming to New Mexico. This study, being conducted as a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study, will determine a master plan of future projects to improve highway safety and provide a multi-use trail.

## Study Recommendations – A Long-term Program of Byway Improvements

The study identified the byway's transportation-related needs and opportunities for the improved safety and accommodation of travelers and recreationalists who live in and visit the region. Based on these needs, a master plan of integrated improvements was recommended. The study's goals of improving safety for all travelers, providing a well-connected multi-use trail, preserving and promoting the region's natural environment and communities, and complementing the byway's continued development provided the basis for these recommendations. This master plan includes:



### Highway Safety Projects

A program of corridor-wide safety projects entailing upgraded signage and pavement treatments; wider and continuous roadway shoulders; safer roadway alignments and roadside treatments in several local areas; and safer pedestrian crossings within La Veta, Cuchara and Stonewall.



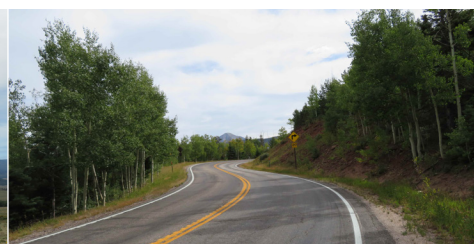
### Multi-use Trail Projects

A selective and narrow range of trail alternatives to be studied further either fully along the byway, attached to the highway or separated but within CDOT right-of-way, or along new routes independent of the byway in local areas. These local off-highway trail alternative routes, to be studied further following the PEL Study, are along existing railroads, within the San Isabel National Forest, or along portions of the byway too steep to accommodate all bicyclists and pedestrians.



### Byway Amenity Projects

A program of new or improved byway features including scenic pull-offs, visitor centers with restrooms and traveler information, and interpretive signage to enhance the byway experience for travelers and visitors.



## Moving Forward – Implementing the Program of Projects

Funding is the key trigger for advancing the recommended projects. However, due to funding limitations, all projects cannot move forward at once. A strategic and itemized approach to delivery is needed – one based on individual project priorities identified through partnerships and by leveraging available opportunities. With this approach, the full build-out of the recommended projects can be accomplished over time while providing incremental benefits to the region as each project is completed.

Engagement and coordination with the public and local communities will continue to be integral to delivering the recommended projects. The PEL Study is not the final opportunity for local stakeholders to provide input and be engaged. It is the first step in a series of future engagement opportunities.

Continued coordination and partnerships with all sponsoring and cooperating agencies will be necessary for securing funding, advancing the projects into planning or design, and maintaining the improvements. It is envisioned that each project, in varying degrees, will entail multi-agency coordination and funding. The next steps would entail:

## Project Implementation

- **Independent and Integrated** – All projects need to have independent function and purpose, while still being integrated and coordinated with one another.
- **Priorities** – Projects need to be phased logically to address the greatest needs, provide the highest benefits, and connect with one another sequentially.
- **Trail Oversight** – A coordinated and organized approach between CDOT, CPW, the byway, the local communities, and other partnering agencies is needed to fund, build, operate and maintain the trail improvements.



*Implementing the PEL Study project recommendations will include additional opportunities for public input and engagement.*



### Highway Safety Projects

Under CDOT's leadership, as funding is identified and regional priorities allow, safety projects can move forward into design. Each project would be coordinated with the trail alternatives. In addition to other considerations, which projects advance first could depend on where the safety benefits would be the greatest.



### Multi-use Trail Projects

Through regional coordination, as funding is secured, additional, more-detailed local planning and environmental studies can be performed for the trail alternatives. Which study moves forward first will depend on the partnerships, the sources and amount of funding, and connecting the trail to communities and byway attractions.



### Byway Amenity Projects

Led by the byway in coordination with CDOT and others, as funding is secured, individual projects can move forward into design and construction. Byway projects will be prioritized based on incrementally improving the traveler's experience as they are built.

## The Completion of the Study

A final report for the PEL Study, which documents the study's decision making and agency coordination, will be published and will be available for public review on the project website. It will present planning-level details on the project recommendations and provide guidance on the next steps. This report will enable each project to move forward independently by the sponsoring agencies and will be incorporated into the additional, more-detailed study of the trail alternatives. Continue to check the project website for new information about the study and to review the report.



## How to stay Connected?

Your input is important to us. You can provide comments or be informed of upcoming events by visiting the project website, sending us an email, or giving us a call.

**Email:** [SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com](mailto:SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com)

**Website:** [www.codot.gov/library/studies/co-12-sml-pel](http://www.codot.gov/library/studies/co-12-sml-pel)

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