



April 2020 Newsletter

Study Overview



The South Central Council of Governments and Colorado Department of Transportation are studying the Scenic Highway of Legends (SHOL) byway. 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 (CRFT), along the byway. The CRFT is a planned multi-use trail by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife along the Front Range from Wyoming to New Mexico. This study, being conducted as a Planning and Environmental Linkages study, will determine a master plan of future projects to improve highway safety and provide a multi-use trail.

Recommended Highway Safety Improvements

Providing only highway safety improvements would not fully address the needs of the byway. To fully accommodate all non-motorized users, such as bicyclists and pedestrians of varying abilities, and to provide trail connections to the communities and attractions along the byway, trail improvements are needed in addition. The trail could be located along the byway, either attached to the roadway or separated yet within the CDOT right-of-way. In some locations, it may be advantageous to better fulfill the goals of the CFRT, to locate the trail off the byway. Such instances include along an existing railroad corridor or within the San Isabel National Forest. Regardless, highway safety improvements would be included with the trail to fully meet the needs of the byway.

The recommended highway safety improvements include:

- Improved highway signage, pavement striping, and pavement rumble strips.
- More detailed study of wildlife crossings and crash mitigation at four locations.
- Wider and continuous roadway shoulders.
- Upgraded signage and roadway shoulder at the curve southeast of North Lake.

STUDY LOCATION



Extending from Walsenburg to Trinidad, the project Corridor traverses west around the Spanish Peaks and over Cucharas Pass, providing views of the peaks throughout.

The 82-mile project Corridor begins on the west side of Walsenburg and extends west along US 160 to the SH 12 intersection. From the intersection with US 160, the Corridor continues south along SH 12 and passes through the town of La Veta over Cucharas Pass (elevation 9,938 feet) to the village of Stonewall, and then heads east through multiple small communities, terminating in Trinidad at Interstate 25 (I-25).

INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION-RELATED IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED TO ADDRESS:

- **Safety** - Existing roadway alignments and deficient shoulder widths, combined with higher bicycle usage and localized pedestrian areas, create 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 not adequately accommodated.
- **Connections and Access to Recreational Facilities** - Trail connections to local activity centers and recreational areas do not currently exist and allow for community interactions and access to a range of activity types.

PEL STUDY SCHEDULE

- Implementation Plan - May/June 2020
- Public Open House - July 2020
- PEL Report - August 2020

WHAT IS A PEL STUDY?

- Planning-level study for transportation issues and

- Upgraded signage and a curb-and-gutter roadway section within Segundo and Jansen.
- Upgraded signage at the US 160 railroad crossing in Walsenburg.
- Modifications at the Santa Fe/Main Street intersection in Trinidad.
- Sidewalk and pedestrian crossing(s) improvements in La Veta, Cuchara, and Stonewall.

Recommended Trail Alternatives Screening

The trail alternatives recommended from the initial screening have been studied in more detail ([CLICK HERE](#) Fact Sheet No. 2 for initial screening findings). The alternatives include various combinations of on-highway and off-highway trail options beginning and ending at Lathrop State Park to the north and Trinidad Lake State Park to the south. All trail alternatives include highway safety improvements.

Further analyses of the alternative trail routes were performed regarding terrain, connections to communities and trailheads, and property considerations. Each was then evaluated regarding how well it solves the needs of the byway, its potential impacts to the environment, and its general feasibility for construction. A comparative screening of each alternative's overall benefits and impacts was then performed to form the Recommended Alternatives - those alternatives that address the project needs and have relatively higher benefits and lower impacts. Each Recommended Alternative will move forward into more detailed analyses and review in future studies after the PEL Study is completed.

Alternatives Evaluation Factors

Needs:

- Are the safety problems improved?
- Are trail accommodations for non-motorized users provided?
- Are trail connections to communities and recreational attractions provided?

Environmental:

- Are impacts to existing environmental resources avoidable?

Implementation:

- Are the trail improvements affordable?
- What is the relative ease of trail construction?

- environmental concerns along a corridor.
- Decision-making tool for "projects".
- Enables CDOT and local agencies to advance projects into next steps based on priorities and funding.
- Next steps would include funding, NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) Studies, public meetings, design, and permitting, before construction of a project could begin.

COLORADO FRONT RANGE TRAIL AND LOCAL TRAIL PLANNING

CFRT by the Numbers



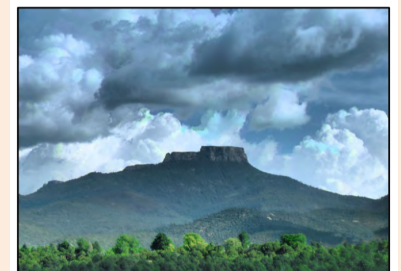
295 Miles of Completed Trail
93 Miles of Planned Trail
488 Miles of Envisioned Trail

At Completion: 876 Trail Miles with 110 Trailheads

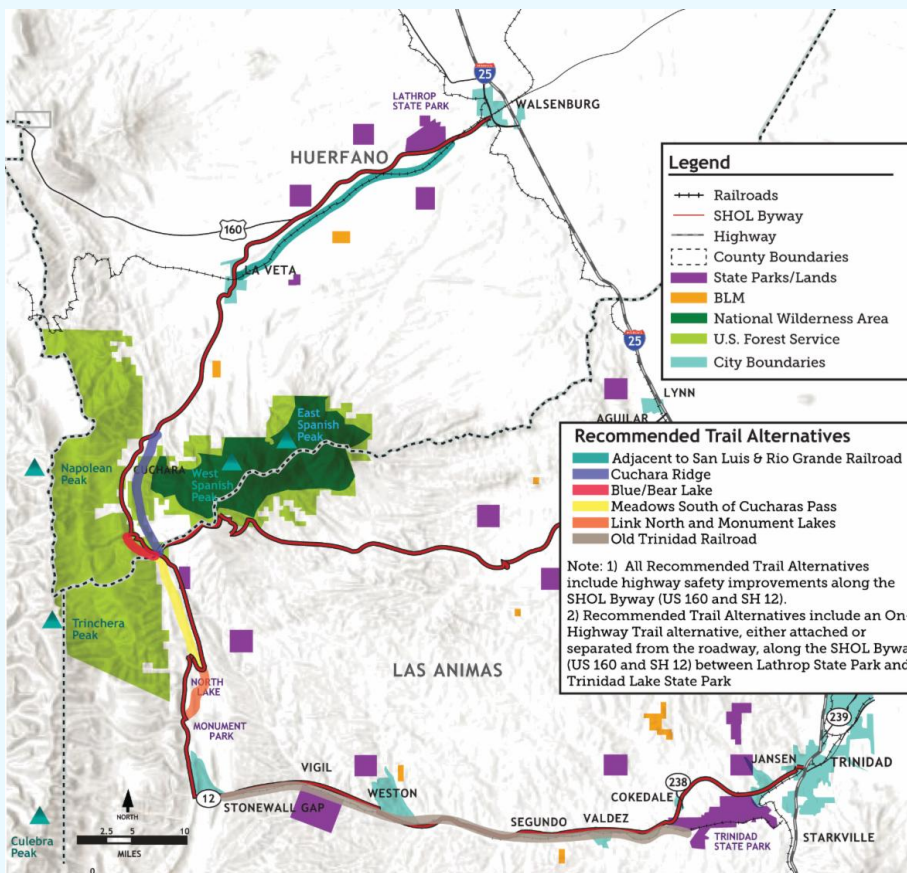
Source: Colorado Department of Natural Resources, <https://cdnr.us/#/trail/trail1>

In 2003, Colorado State Parks, with the support of the citizens of Colorado and stakeholders, initiated the Colorado Front Range Trail (CFRT) to promote and connect the Front Range communities and recreational assets. Upon completion, the CFRT will be an 876-mile shared-use trail that stretches from Wyoming to New Mexico along Colorado's Front Range, providing a continuous connection between population centers and existing and planned trail systems. It will serve as a key non-motorized linkage between communities, landscapes, parks and open space, recreation attractions, and other points of interest along the Front Range. As such, it will be an important recreational and transportation resource and will support Colorado's tourism, heritage, health and economy. The CFRT Master Plan and Implementation Plan were completed by Colorado State Parks in 2007.

This Master Plan envisions the CFRT being located along the Scenic Highway of Legends Byway (i.e., the Corridor) between Walsenburg and Trinidad. In addition to the CFRT Plan, trail and open space plans by Huerfano County, La Veta and Trinidad provide guidance for the consideration of local trail improvements within the Corridor. These plans emphasize the connectivity of local attractions, such as population centers, natural resources, and amenities, by a trail system. Lathrop and Trinidad Lake State Parks have established trail systems and steady visitation.



Located adjacent to Trinidad, the recent acquisition of the Crazy French Ranch property will provide public access to Fisher's Peak and surrounding areas (Photo: User:Xnatedawgx).



Multi-use Trail Route Alternatives
(For More Detailed Study Following the PEL Study)

Vista Segment (Walsenburg to La Veta)	Alpine Segment (La Veta to Vigil)	Mining Segment (Vigil to Trinidad)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Along Highway (Attached or Separated) Adjacent to Existing SLRG Railroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Along Highway (Attached or Separated) Ridge East of Cuchara to Cucharas Pass Blue/Bear Lakes to Cuchara Pass Meadows South of Cucharas Pass Link North and Monument Lakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Along Highway (Attached or Separated) Along Old Trinidad Rail Line

The Trinidad Lake State Park trail system is envisioned to connect with the recently acquired Crazy French Ranch - a 30 square-mile conservation area around Fisher's Peak just south of Trinidad. On September 12, 2019, the Governor of Colorado signed an executive order to establish a Colorado State Park on this property.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER AREA STUDIES

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

[Huerfano County Trails Master Plan 2011](#)

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

[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](#)

Scenic Highway of Legends Byway Features

The byway provides visitors, travelers, and local residents the opportunity to learn about the region's rich history, experience its world class geologic landscapes, and make personal connections with nature. For many, enjoying this awe-inspiring landscape depends on amenities such as scenic pull-offs and interpretive signage. One traveler noted, "You can't help but feel something here."

A number of new byway-related features are included in the study's recommendations. These amenities include new scenic pull-offs, restrooms, and visitor centers in La Veta, Cuchara, and Stonewall. Each site will be integrated with the Colorado Front Range Trail and include wayfinding signage, trail information, and in some locations, a bike repair station. A new wayside park with picnic tables, shade shelters and toilets is also recommended along US 160 just west of SH 12.



Example amenity site with three interpretive sign panels, shown under construction.

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

Send an email to SouthernMountainLoop@gmail.com and request to be added to the e-newsletter distribution list.

HOW TO STAY INVOLVED?

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
 Website: <https://www.codot.gov/library/studies/co-12-sml-pel>
 Phone: 719-427-1078

What's Next

The PEL Study will produce a master plan of highway safety, trail, and byway-related projects for more detailed study, design, and with funding, construction. Based on the Recommended Alternatives, the study's next step is to develop an overall Implementation Plan to identify and prioritize the individual projects. This plan will help CDOT and local agencies advance the program of projects towards construction. It will include guidance for sponsoring agencies on trail funding, oversight, and maintenance considerations. The study's recommendations will be presented at a public open house in early summer and documented in a final report to be released to the public. Continue to check the project website for new information about the study.

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