



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: What is the purpose of this project?

A: The purpose of the project is to improve safety at 14 specific locations along Cottonwood Pass to make the county roads safer and more functional as a vital travel connection between the local communities. Site improvements being considered include curve softening, improved sight distance, improved intersection geometry, and increased road width in areas to accommodate two vehicles in passing.

Q: What was the impetus to start this project?

A: Eagle County has been considering Cottonwood Pass improvements for a long time, especially for the Blue Hill section. The ability to move local traffic, commuters, and those such as hospital workers and emergency responders along this route is beneficial to the counties. The road system on the Garfield County side is mostly paved, but they also noticed issues impacting local traffic once additional traffic was using the pass. This became more apparent and impactful during the closures of I-70 through Glenwood Canyon during the flooding in 2021, when local traffic was using Cottonwood Pass as a local detour. Eagle and Garfield counties were spending a significant amount of money flagging and respond to incidents, and at one point the National Guard was involved. The 14 areas in this study were identified as problem areas during this time.

Q: What process is being used to guide this concept design project?

A: The [Context Sensitive Solutions \(CSS\) process](#) was used. CSS is a 6 step process designed to foster collaboration, partnerships, transportation innovation, and environmental sustainability for transportation projects. The CSS process reflected the unique context of Cottonwood Pass in design development.

Q: Who is making decisions about Cottonwood Pass improvements?

A: As part of the CSS process, a Project Leadership Team/Technical Team was formed of technical experts from multiple disciplines and agencies to focus on moving the decision-making process forward during this concept design project. This group included representatives from CDOT, Eagle County, Garfield County, Town of Gypsum, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management. This group guided decisions for the concept design project. Following this phase, work products including the summary report, concept designs, and public feedback received will be provided to Eagle and Garfield county staff. The county staff and their elected officials will ultimately determine if and when they would like to work toward implementation of safety improvements at any of the site locations.

Q: How did this project consider environmental resources?

A: This concept design project included a high-level review of environmental conditions in order to document issues to be considered by the counties with project design and construction in the future. In addition, an Issue Task Force was formed of regulatory agency staff to focus on natural resources including wetlands, water quality, and wildlife. This group included U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives. More in depth review of individual sites will be conducted if and when projects move forward with design development and construction.



Q: Will these improvements allow Cottonwood Pass to stay open year-round?

A: This is a high-altitude road that experiences heavy snow and drifting and has steep grades. While the spot improvements will improve driver safety at specific locations, the overall corridor will remain mountainous with tight curves, steep grades and narrow areas. Maintaining the road during the winter isn't planned at this time, although this is a potential long-term goal if funding can be secured.

Q: Is the project considering the amount of bicyclists using Cottonwood Pass?

A: The project team is aware that portions of Cottonwood Pass, particularly Catherine Store Road, and other area roads are frequently traveled by bicyclists. This project will not be recommending specific bicycle infrastructure, such as bike lanes. However, the improvements being considered, such as increased lane and shoulder widths at curves and improved sight distance, will benefit bicyclist as well as driver safety.

Q: Google Maps and other wayfinding apps direct travelers to Cottonwood Pass when Glenwood Canyon is closed. Can someone correct this?

A: Eagle County has been actively working with wayfinding companies to ensure Cottonwood Pass is not shown as a detour route.

Q: There are multiple routes on the south (Garfield County) end of Cottonwood Pass. How did you determine which corridor is called Cottonwood Pass and which spur gets safety improvements as part of this project?

A: Garfield County evaluated multiple routes in depth last year during the Glenwood Canyon I-70 closure events. The Catherine Store route was selected by the county commissioners after reviewing the other routes in detail. Generally, the other routes are extremely narrow (one-lane) in locations and have multiple residences directly adjacent to the roadway. Using Lower Cattle Creek Road would likely result in a full property acquisition if the road was widened to accommodate two lanes of traffic. Additionally, the intersection of Colorado Highway (CO) 82 and Catherine Store Road is currently signalized and has better visibility and roadway geometry for traffic as compared to the CO 82 intersections with other routes (CR 113 and CR 114).

Q: How will drivers know which route they should take to travel Cottonwood Pass? What will be done to keep traffic off Cattle Creek Road?

A: This project is considering modifications to the geometry of the intersection of Catherine Store Road and Cattle Creek Road (Garfield Co Site 7) to a T intersection with free-flow through movements between Cottonwood Pass and Catherine Store Road, rather than the current configuration that naturally directs southbound traffic onto Cattle Creek Road. Other improvements such as signage will be considered to direct traffic and distinguish the routes.

Q: What about traffic volumes and large trucks?

A: While the site improvements will improve safety at specific locations with improved curve geometry and increased road width to accommodate two-way traffic, the overall corridor will remain mountainous with steep grades and low speeds. There are no expected changes in average traffic volume along the Cottonwood Pass corridor from what is experienced today, with the canyon open and closed, due to the site improvements. The improvements being considered by this project would not allow access by vehicles over 45 feet in length. The current length and size restrictions on large vehicles would remain the same they are today.



Q: Can speed bumps or speed dips be installed to slow speeding traffic?

A: Speed bumps, humps, or dips are not being considered for recommendations with the site concept designs along Cottonwood Pass. A speed bump is a bump of asphalt about a foot wide, 3 to 4 inches high, and placed laterally across the travel lane. These are used in parking lots to discourage cut-through traffic. A speed hump is an elongated mound in the roadway pavement surface extending across the travel way at a right angle to the traffic flow. A speed hump is typically 3 inches in height and 12 feet or more in length along the vehicle travel path. Speed humps are intended for use on short-distance, neighborhood streets with limited through traffic, not on mainline county roads. When used, they are installed in a series, spaced no more than 500 feet apart. While they can be effective at reducing vehicular speeds between the speed humps, studies have shown that they are ineffective at reducing speeds for a notable distance beyond the approach and exit of consecutive humps. In addition, tests show that speed bumps are ineffective in controlling all types of vehicles. The driver of a softsprung sedan is encouraged to increase speed for a better ride over a speed bump, while other drivers may lose control at the same speed, which would degrade safety for drivers entering significant curves. They are also not recommended for roads with grades like those on Cottonwood Pass and speed bumps and dips introduce new issues with increased noise and impacts to drainage and plowing/maintenance.

Q: When will the improvements be constructed?

A: The timeline for construction of improvements is dependent on funding availability. Funding has not yet been secured for full design or construction. However, completing this concept design provides more information about the recommended improvements for Eagle and Garfield counties to consider in the pursuit of funding. It is possible portions of the improvements would be constructed in phases as funding becomes available.

Q: If the recommended improvements are too expensive for the counties to handle, will this become a state or federal project using infrastructure bill funds?

A: The door is open for any type of funding the counties and/or CDOT would like to pursue. Agencies submit a defined scope and cost estimate when they apply for grants. Receiving state and/or federal funding wouldn't change the type of project or improvements. Any grant money received would be passed to the appropriate county and they would be responsible for conducting final design and construction activities.

Q: Have any potential funding sources been identified?

A: CDOT applied for a Federal RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) Grant in late February 2023. This is a competitive grant program, so funds are not guaranteed (awards are expected in Summer 2023). If the application is successful, \$3.5M RAISE funds would be applied towards a Cottonwood Pass project and CDOT would contribute an additional \$1.5M of resiliency funds, for a total of \$5M to cover design and construction of improvements for Eagle County Site 2. CDOT and the counties will continue to explore grants and other funding opportunities.

Q: Why are there draft recommendations shown for Eagle County sites, but not for Garfield County sites?

A: The intent of this study has been to provide the site concepts, information, and evaluations to the counties for them to decide about priorities, funding, and next steps. At sites in Eagle County with multiple options, Eagle County staff identified a draft recommendation for the option that the County would likely move forward at the site, if funding is secured. However, Garfield County plans to take all of the information from this study to make decisions later and any future action on potential projects will be at the discretion of the Board of County Commissioners.

Q: Where can I find more information about the project and submit a comment?

A: Visit the project web page: www.codot.gov/projects/cottonwood-pass-concept-design