



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. The expected site improvements include curve softening, improved sight distance, 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](#) will be used. CSS is a 6 step process designed to foster collaboration, partnerships, transportation innovation, and environmental sustainability for transportation projects. The CSS process will reflect 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. This group includes representatives from CDOT, Eagle County, Garfield County, Town of Gypsum, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management. This group is guiding 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 then determine if they would like to work toward implementation at any of the site locations.

Q: How is this project considering environmental resources?

A: This concept design project includes 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 includes 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 at the time those 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. 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 improvements, 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 clearly distinguish the routes.

Q: When will the improvements be constructed?

A: The timeline for construction of improvements is dependent on funding availability. Funding has not yet been identified 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 money?

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 estimates when they apply for grants. Receiving state and/or federal funding wouldn't change the type of project or recommended improvements.



Q: What about traffic volumes and large trucks?

A: While the site improvements will improve safety at specific locations with smoothed curves 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: 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