

US 34 Big Thompson Canyon Permanent Repair Project

Among the 32 permanent repair projects being done on highways statewide is a 21-mile section of US 34 in the Big Thompson Canyon between Estes Park and Loveland.

US 34 Project Goals

Following the Governor's directive to "build back better than before," the US 34 Team has identified the following goals for the project:

Tier 1

- Build a safe system that meets the needs of the traveling public and stakeholders
- Build a more resilient roadway in harmony with the river and ecological systems
- Coordinate and collaborate with other agencies and stakeholders to maximize mutual benefits, goals and outcomes and to ensure that corridor improvements that are compatible with one another don't preclude future investments
- Complete the roadway project by the end of 2017

Tier 2

- Maximize system improvements within the allotted project budget
- Minimize life cycle maintenance costs and provide a quality product
- Implement an effective public outreach and communication plan
- Minimize inconvenience to the public and residents along the corridor, and maximize safety for workers, residents and the public

What does this project entail?

This project will entail removing and replacing much of the temporary asphalt, embankment fill and temporary channel protection that was put in place in late 2013 as part of the temporary repair process. The permanent repair project will also involve:

- Repairing bridges and retaining walls
- Making the roadway more resilient to flood damage by moving the roadway alignment onto more solid bedrock where it is appropriate to do so, elevating the roadway if necessary, and/or armoring the banks of the river with riprap material to help protect the roadway
- Restoring the roadway to pre-flood conditions with full-width travel lanes and shoulders
- Replacing guardrails
- Re-vegetating areas

Will bike shoulders be added to US 34?

CDOT is working with the Federal Highway Administration Emergency Relief program to rebuild US 34 and make the corridor more resilient to future natural threats. Current design discussions include 6' shoulders wherever possible throughout the corridor to support increased safety for all travelers (including bicyclists) as well as wildlife and recreational users. It is believed that these widened shoulders will help facilitate bike movement. CDOT will also look at the possibility of uphill shoulders to maximize vehicle and bike movement.

Widening the roadway in the narrows section is not recommended by CDOT at this time due to cost and geologic constraints. A separated bike path within the roadway right-of-way is not an eligible use of Federal Highway Emergency Relief (FHWA ER) funding. FHWA ER funding is CDOT's primary source for rebuilding the roadway

(and bridges) within the canyon.

Although CDOT has limitations within the corridor, we are committed to coordinating with and not precluding the activities of other stakeholders' rebuilding/repair efforts throughout the US 34 corridor.

How will CDOT handle permanent private access bridges?

CDOT is working with Larimer County, the Federal Highway Administration, CWCB and others to develop an Access Management Plan and identify resilient rebuilding options and funding sources to assist private property owners in regaining permanent access to their properties. All access permits issued to date are temporary. All access points will be reviewed as part of the permanent repairs for US 34.

Why is this work being done?

The repair work done in 2013 following the flood was temporary in nature and done to restore access to homes in the canyon and re-open routes to Estes Park and Loveland as soon as possible. These emergency repairs were temporary in nature, however, and many of the repairs made in 2013 were not adequate to meet long-term transportation needs. For instance, lane widths are reduced in some areas from pre-flood conditions and emergency pull-out shoulders are narrower in some areas and missing altogether in other sections of US 34.

When will this work be done?

Construction work will likely begin in late 2015 and be complete in 2017. The Colorado Department of Transportation plans to announce a Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC contractor) in the spring of 2015 and this contractor will work with CDOT throughout the summer and early fall to further design plans before beginning physical construction.

What is CM/GC construction?

In the CM/GC process, a contractor is brought in to provide feedback during the design phase before construction starts. This will allow the contractor to work with the designer and CDOT, Central Federal Lands and other project owners, to identify any potential risks and develop cost projections and refine the project schedule based on these risks. Involving the contractor during the design phase offers these benefits:

- The contractor can suggest new innovations, best practices and cost-saving measures while identifying potential schedule risks based on years of proven experience doing the work.
- This process encourages the owner and contractor to collaborate and consider all options or approaches that reduce time and cost.
- By working together to identify potential schedule risks up front, the owner can better understand these and work with the contractor to mitigate them based on the contractor's feedback.
- The contractor can provide comments and feedback to help improve the design, minimizing the potential for issues during construction and change orders that can drive up project costs.
- The contractor can begin planning the construction schedule during the design phase, enabling the team to see how various construction activities will impact traffic and adjust the schedule accordingly to minimize impacts.

Staying informed

We will keep community members updated throughout construction using a variety of outreach methods including e-mail updates, variable message signs and information hotline recordings. Anyone wanting more information on the US 34 Big Thompson Canyon project is encouraged to use these resources:

Website: www.codot.gov/projects/floodrelatedprojects/us-34-big-thompson-canyon-1

Information hotline: 720-263-1589

Email: us34floodrepairs@cig-pr.com