

# CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATION

## INTRODUCTION

The Collaborative Effort, a 27-member group representing varied interests of the corridor, was charged with reaching consensus on a recommended transportation solution for the I-70 Mountain Corridor. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) were active participants in this group and committed to adopt the consensus recommendation in the I-70 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS).

## VISION FOR THE I-70 MOUNTAIN CORRIDOR

The Collaborative Effort's vision for transportation in the I-70 Mountain Corridor is multi-modal. Transit and highway improvements are based on proven needs and will enhance the corridor, its environment and communities. The Collaborative Effort has not completed a corridor-wide vision for the future, thereby limiting the ability of the group to accurately determine future actions and needs. In order to adequately assess future transportation needs, local governments and communities, along with additional broad stakeholder participation, need to lead a discussion to develop a long-range corridor vision for growth, transportation, and mobility. One primary purpose of this endeavor would be used to assist in the evaluation of capacity improvements. All parties must take ownership in needed changes and continue to work together to achieve this vision.

The criteria below informed the Collaborative Effort's recommendation and will serve as criteria of effectiveness moving forward:

- The solution should improve safety and mobility for all users.
- The solution should be responsive and adaptive to broader global trends that will affect the way we make travel decisions into the future.
- The solution will meet the purpose and need and all environmental and legal requirements.
- The solution should preserve, restore and enhance community and cultural resources.
- The solution should preserve, and restore or enhance ecosystem functions.
- The solution should be economically viable over the long term.

The Collaborative Effort's solution recognizes the importance of providing meaningful recommendations, short-term direction, and the ability to adapt to future conditions and needs. The Collaborative Effort has not analyzed the potential environmental impacts of this recommendation. A comparative analysis must be made of the impacts of this alternative against all other alternatives identified in the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. The CE understands that the agencies will make this comparison as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. As soon as this analysis is complete and prior to publication in the Final Programmatic EIS the agencies shall provide a briefing to interested members of the CE of the results of this analysis.

The recommendation below captures the consensus of the Collaborative Effort.

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The recommendation for I-70 through Colorado's mountain corridor is a multi-modal solution including non-infrastructure components, a commitment to evaluation and implementation of an Advanced Guideway System (AGS), and highway improvements. A reassessment of the improvements' effectiveness and reviews of study results and global trends shall be conducted prior to implementing additional capacity improvements. Continued stakeholder involvement is necessary for all tasks conducted on the I-70 transportation system.

The following describes the components of this recommendation:

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### ***Non-Infrastructure Related Components***

Non-infrastructure related components can begin in advance of major infrastructure improvements to address some of the issues in the corridor today. These strategies and the potential tactics for implementation require actions and leadership by agencies, municipalities and other stakeholders beyond CDOT and FHWA. The strategies include but are not limited to the following:

- Increased enforcement.
- Bus, van or shuttle service in mixed traffic.
- Programs for improving truck movements.
- Driver education.
- Expanded use of existing transportation infrastructure in and adjacent to the corridor.
- Use of technology advancements and improvements which may increase mobility without additional infrastructure.
- Traveler information and other intelligent transportation systems.
- Shift passenger and freight travel demand by time-of-day and day-of-week.
- Convert day-trips to overnight stays.
- Promote high occupancy travel and public transportation.
- Convert single occupancy vehicle commuters to high occupancy travel and/or public transportation.
- Implement transit promotion and incentives.
- Other transportation demand management (TDM) measures yet to be determined.

### ***Advanced Guideway System***

An Advanced Guideway System (AGS)<sup>1</sup> is a central part of the recommendation and includes a commitment to the evaluation and implementation of AGS within the corridor, including a vision of transit connectivity beyond the study area and local accessibility to such a system.

Additional information is necessary to advance implementation of an AGS system within the corridor:

- Feasibility of high speed rail passenger service.
- Potential station locations and local land use considerations.
- Transit governance authority.
- Alignment.
- Technology.
- Termini.
- Funding requirements and sources.
- Transit ridership.
- Potential system owner/operator.
- Interface with existing and future transit systems.
- Role of AGS in freight delivery both in and through the corridor.

Several studies currently underway will provide further information to assist stakeholders with evaluation and implementation of AGS. CDOT is committed to provide funding for studies in support of the additional information needs to determine the viability of the AGS. The implementation plan included in the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement will identify roles and responsibilities,

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by the performance criteria identified by the I-70 Coalition.

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including actions and leadership required by agencies, municipalities and other stakeholders in addition to CDOT and FHWA.

### *Highway Improvements*

The Collaborative Effort recognizes that following highway improvements are needed to address current corridor conditions and future demands. These improvements must be planned considering all elements of the recommendation and consistent with local land use planning. The following safety, mobility, and capacity components are not listed in order of priority, are not subject to the parameters established for future capacity improvements identified in the latter part of this document, do not represent individual projects and may be included in more than one description. They are listed in two categories. All of the improvements in both categories are included in our recommendation. The “Specific Highway Improvements” are called out specifically for the triggers for the Future Highway and Non-AGS Transit Improvements:

### *Specific Highway Improvements*

- A six-lane component from Floyd Hill through the Twin Tunnels including a bike trail and frontage roads from Idaho Springs East to Hidden Valley and Hidden Valley to US 6.
- Empire Junction (U.S. 40/I-70) improvements.
- Eastbound auxiliary lane from the Eisenhower Johnson Memorial Tunnel (EJMT) to Herman Gulch.
- Westbound auxiliary lane from Bakerville to the EJMT.

### *Other Highway Projects*

- Truck operation improvements such as pullouts, parking and chain stations.
- Safety improvements west of Wolcott.
- Eastbound auxiliary lane from Frisco to Silverthorne.
- Safety and capacity improvements in Dowd Canyon.
- Interchange improvements at the following locations:
  - East Glenwood Springs.
  - Gypsum.
  - Eagle County Airport (as cleared by the FONSI and future 1601 process)
  - Eagle.
  - Edwards.
  - Avon.
  - Minturn.
  - Vail West.
  - Copper Mountain.
  - Frisco/Main Street.
  - Frisco/SH 9.
  - Silverthorne.
  - Loveland Pass.
  - Georgetown.
  - Downieville.
  - Fall River Road.
  - Base of Floyd Hill/US 6.
  - Hyland Hills and Beaver Brook.
  - Lookout Mountain.
  - Morrison.

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- Auxiliary Lanes:
  - Avon to Post Boulevard (eastbound).
  - West of Vail Pass (eastbound and westbound).
  - Morrison to Chief Hosa (westbound).

### ***Future Stakeholder Engagement***

Ongoing stakeholder engagement is necessary because the aforementioned improvements may or may not fully address the needs of the corridor beyond 2025, and the recommendation does not preclude nor commit to the additional multi-modal capacity improvements. As such, CDOT and FHWA will convene a committee that retains that the Collaborative Effort member profile. The committee will establish its own meeting schedule based on progress made against the approved triggers, with check-ins at least every two years. Such meetings will review the current status of all projects and will consider the following triggers in evaluating the need for additional capacity improvements.

### ***Triggers for Additional Highway and Non-AGS Transit Capacity Improvements***

Additional highway and non-AGS transit capacity improvements may proceed if and when:

- The “Specific Highway Improvements” are complete, and an AGS is functioning from the front range to a destination beyond the Continental Divide, or
- The “Specific Highway Improvements” are complete, and AGS studies that answer questions regarding the feasibility, cost, ridership, governance, and land use are complete and indicate that AGS cannot be funded or implemented by 2025 or is otherwise deemed unfeasible to implement, or
- Global, regional, local trends or events have unexpected effects on travel needs, behaviors and patterns and demonstrate a need to consider other improvements, such as climate change, resource availability, and/or technological advancements.

In 2020, there will be a thorough assessment of the overall purpose and need and effectiveness of implementation of these decisions. At that time, CDOT and FHWA, in conjunction with the stakeholder committee, may consider the full range of improvement options.

The CE recommends that the Record of Decision for the PEIS require that Tier 2 studies comply with:

- The Section 106 Programmatic Agreement,
- The Memoranda of Understanding for:
  - Stream Wetland Ecology Enhancement Project (SWEEP),
  - Minewaste, and
  - A Landscape-level Inventory of Valued Ecosystem Components (ALIVE),, and
- The Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) decision making process and guidance manual.

CDOT and FHWA also will consider the principles of the Colorado Governor Ritter’s Climate Action Plan within future environmental studies.