



Purpose

The purpose of the project is to improve safety and operations on Eastbound and Westbound I-70 on West Vail Pass.

Need

This project is needed to address safety concerns and operational issues due to geometric conditions (steep grades and tight curves) and slow-moving vehicle and passenger vehicle interactions that result in inconsistent and slow travel times along the corridor. The I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) identified safety and mobility issues on West Vail Pass related to speed differentials due to slow-moving vehicles. (*Mobility is defined as the ability to travel along the I-70 Mountain Corridor safely and efficiently in a reasonable amount of time.*)

- **Safety Concerns:** A high number of crashes occur along the corridor related to speed, tight curves, narrow roadway area, and inclement weather/poor road conditions. Speed differentials between passenger vehicles and slow-moving vehicles causes erratic lane changes and braking maneuvers resulting in crashes and spin outs. Emergency response is hampered by vehicular speeds and lack of roadway width to provide room for emergency vehicles to pass.
- **Operational Issues:** The steep grades and resulting speed differentials causes slow and unreliable travel times through the corridor. Tight curves also cause drivers to slow down. The corridor is frequently closed by vehicle incidents, due to lack of width to maintain a single lane of traffic adjacent to emergency responders, resulting in substantial traffic backups and delays. During winter months, the travel lanes and shoulders are severely impacted by snow accumulation, impacting the overall capacity of the corridor. (*Operations is intended to describe the flow of traffic at desirable speeds given the geometric and prevailing weather conditions.*)

The Purpose and Need is specific to the transportation aspects of a project funded by the Federal Highway Administration. The Purpose is the statement of what the project expects to accomplish, but not the solution (e.g. to relieve congestion, but NOT to add a lane). The Need establishes that there is a problem; it is factual, based on data, and supports the Purpose statement. Elements that are important to a project but not appropriate for the Purpose and Need can be included as project goals and used to evaluate alternatives.
