



Q: What is the purpose of this project?

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

Q: What is the project area?

A: The I-70 West Vail Pass Auxiliary Lanes study area is between mile posts 180 in East Vail (at the East Vail exit) to slightly east of mile post 190 (at the Vail Pass exit at the top of the pass). The study area also incorporates the Vail Pass Recreation Trail and the adjacent roadside environment.

Q: What kinds of improvements are being considered?

A: While the PEIS recommended the implementation of auxiliary lanes between mileposts 180 – 190, this isn't the only solution that will be considered. This Environmental Assessment (EA) study also analyzed other improvements to determine if they met the project purpose and need as a stand-alone alternative or as an element of a packaged alternative.

Q: What is an auxiliary lane?

A: Auxiliary lanes are lanes located between interchanges used in addition to general purpose lanes to provide operational or safety benefit. Auxiliary lanes are added and dropped at adjacent interchange ramps. As opposed to freeway lanes extending through interchanges, the purpose of auxiliary lanes is not to add capacity.

Q: Why is this study needed? Wasn't an environmental study already completed for West Vail Pass?

A: A broad-scale National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis of the entire I-70 Mountain Corridor, called the I-70 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (I-70 PEIS), was completed in 2011. This study recommended additional of auxiliary lanes up and down the west side of Vail Pass. During the PEIS effort, in 2006/2007, an Environmental Assessment (EA) study began to identify the transportation needs on West Vail Pass and evaluate alternatives to address the needs. The project was halted due to the ongoing PEIS and lack of funding. The current study will allow the EA to be completed, which will identify and analyze safety and operational improvements on West Vail Pass.

Q: Will this study consider a train along I-70?

A: The PEIS identified an Advanced Guideway System (AGS), or train, as a long-term improvement along the I-70 Mountain Corridor. The *Top of Vail Pass Area of Special Attention Report* notes that highway lanes and the AGS will be designed as separate, independent alignments. Highway and AGS improvements are expected to be constructed at different times and will be planned and designed to be compatible with each other, regardless of highway configuration.

Q: Will the project require private property acquisition?

A: Based on the current conceptual design, at this time no permanent private property acquisitions are anticipated within the project area. Temporary easements may be required for utilities and/or construction. Actual right of way impacts will be determined during a future design phase.





Q: What level of analysis was conducted to identify the Proposed Action? How will all of the Core Values be considered?

A: Initially, two levels of evaluation were planned. Level 1 screening focused on identifying fatal flaws related to the project's Purpose and Need, and involved a high-level analysis of potential traffic and safety benefits of each identified alternative. Based on the Level 1 screening, only one alternative met the Purpose and Need criteria. Therefore, the Level 2 evaluation was not conducted. The criteria developed for Level 2 incorporates important consideration of the project's Core Values, so these criteria will be used during the design option consideration process. Tradeoffs are inherent in any project. For example, a certain trail alignment may benefit user experience but have increased impacts to vegetation. Public input is requested to help prioritize the Core Values as they relate to design options.

Q: What are design options?

A: The layout of the Proposed Action is very conceptual and currently in draft form. At this time, the Proposed Action identifies roadway design elements (e.g., number and width of lanes). Many other improvements need to be combined with the roadway design to complete the preliminary design of the Proposed Action. These additional improvements are referred to as design options, and include among others, the Vail Pass Recreation Trail alignment through the project area, wildlife habitat connectivity accommodations, and water quality improvements.

Q: Is public input being considered? What opportunities exist to provide comments?

A: Yes, public input will be considered throughout the NEPA study and during subsequent final design efforts. Public input is a key component of the NEPA process, and your input will help shape the details of the project design. At this time, public input is being requested regarding the Level 1 screening, Proposed Action, and prioritization of Core Values to be considered during design option development. Public input will be considered by the project team as the Proposed Action's design options are refined. A third and final public meeting will be held near the end of the NEPA study to gather public input regarding the EA before a decision is made by FHWA.

Q: What happens at the end of this study?

A: FHWA will determine that either, 1) the project has no significant impacts and can move forward into design of the Proposed Action or 2) there are significant impacts and additional environmental analysis is required. CDOT will work to secure funding for the next phase of study or design.

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 construction. However, completing the NEPA study provides more information about the recommended improvements for CDOT to consider in the pursuit of funding.

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

A: Visit the project web page: www.codot.gov/projects/I-70-West-Vail-Auxiliary-Lanes

