



## **Background Information**

### **What is the history of this segment of US 24?**

US 24 has a long history of serving Colorado and the communities along it. The corridor provides a vital east/west connection for the Pikes Peak region and is the only major access to the mountains between US 285 in Denver and US 50 through Pueblo. This corridor provides transportation access for many purposes including recreational and gaming access, daily commuter traffic, residential and business access, and intra-city east/west trips.

The corridor functioned as a local street in the 1920's and 30's by using Colorado Avenue, Cascade Avenue and Platte Avenue. US 24 was named the Midland Expressway when the current roadway was improved and opened for traffic in 1964. By 1968, US 24 was built from west of Manitou Springs to Cascade, and reached Woodland Park by 1977. US 24 became US Business 24 through Manitou Springs in 1976. Today, the Midland Expressway is 6.5 miles long and extends from the west Manitou Ave. interchange to Interstate 25.

Since 1964, only safety improvements and maintenance items have been accomplished on this segment of US 24. In the mid-1990's, amid increased congestion and demands for improvements, the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments commissioned a study of the US 24 Corridor from Colorado Springs to Woodland Park. The focus of the study was to develop a prioritized list of short- and long-range improvements.

These projects were then scheduled in the State's Transportation Improvement Program. Available funds allowed for completion of projects such as shoulder work, intersection and access improvements, acceleration and deceleration lanes, and widening the highway to four lanes between Woodland Park and Divide.

The project to address capacity and safety in the US 24 Corridor has been scheduled in the 2001-2006, 2002-2007 and the 2004-2009 TIP. This project is set to address those issues by conducting an Environmental Assessment of the corridor from Manitou Springs to Interstate 25.

### **What prompted the study of US 24?**

The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) — consisting of representatives from various local governments — identified US 24 from I-25 west as a major corridor with present and/or future traffic congestion and included it in the congestion management system. CDOT was asked to study short- and long- term strategies to address capacity and safety. CDOT and its consultant team began studying the corridor in 2004, with the first public meeting in November 2004. The final result will be a plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) of the corridor.

## **What happens to the highway if no action is taken?**

US 24 was built in the mid-60s and was designed to handle 35,000 – 40,000 cars per day. As congestion increases, the ramifications can be severe, and include any or all of the impacts listed below.

- Traffic in the corridor will exceed the highway’s capacity for more hours each day, increasing delays for people traveling through or across US 24 West. For example, at the 8<sup>th</sup> Street intersection, there are currently five hours each day in which the intersection exceeds the threshold volume considered to provide acceptable levels of service. Furthermore, during three hours out of the day, the volumes at this intersection are close to the maximum capacity of the intersection. The projected 2030 volumes indicate that there will be twelve hours in the day in which both of these threshold volumes are exceeded.
- Drivers will look for alternative routes resulting in increased traffic in adjacent neighborhoods.
- Traffic delays cause an increase in air pollution. In fact, an idle car emits 6x as much pollutants as a moving vehicle.
- Tourists and local residents will begin to avoid the corridor, ultimately hurting some businesses in the area.

## **What is the vision for this section of US 24?**

A community vision for the corridor was developed using input from stakeholders, who have endorsed this vision statement:

“Our Vision for US 24 West improvement will integrate into the community fabric, while providing safety, accessibility and mobility.

The plan must...

- begin with the existing conditions and current plans for the corridor,
- recognize the distinct character of segments along the corridor,
- address the needs of the multiple users of multiple modes,
- enhance the corridor aesthetics, and
- provide access to destinations and gateways.

The US 24 improvements must...

- protect and enhance neighborhoods and cultural resources,
- support economic vitality in the adjacent areas,
- avoid and minimize adverse impacts to the natural and human environments, and
- provide way-finding systems that guide users and that identify the US 24 corridor.

Meaningful stakeholder involvement in the US 24 process, as measured by the stakeholders, is necessary to gain endorsement of the improvements and support for coordinated implementation.”