

1 Chapter 5 – Agency Coordination and Public 2 Involvement

3 This chapter describes the agency coordination and public involvement conducted during the
4 United States Highway 24 (US 24) Environmental Assessment (EA). Agency coordination and
5 public involvement included agency and public scoping, public open houses, neighborhood
6 organization and small group meetings, workshops, newsletters, website postings, and media
7 information. The project team encouraged open communication and was responsive to all
8 groups and individuals interested in the project. Special effort was made to reach minority and
9 low-income residents within the study area.

10 The US 24 project utilized Context Sensitive
11 Solutions (CSS), a collaborative, interdisciplinary
12 team approach that involves all stakeholders to
13 develop a transportation facility that reflects
14 community values, is sensitive to environmental
15 and community resources, and meets the purpose
16 and need for the project. As a result of this
17 approach, community residents and other
18 partners were able to play an important role in
19 shaping alternatives, design options, mitigation,
20 and the Proposed Action. The influence of this
21 approach on the Proposed Action is described in **Chapter 2, Alternatives**, and in the Colorado
22 Department of Transportation (CDOT) publication *Shifting Gears: 51 ways the community shaped the
23 solution for US 24 West* (CDOT, 2009).



24 Coordination with local, state, and federal agencies occurred throughout the project to ensure
25 compliance with agency policies and procedures, transportation planning requirements, National
26 Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requirements, and accurate resource identification
27 and impact evaluation.

28 5.1 Agency Coordination

29 The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), CDOT, and the consultant team met and
30 corresponded with resource management agencies to solicit comments and identify agency
31 issues and concerns related to the project. These scoping meetings were conducted at the onset
32 of the project to initiate ongoing coordination. Agencies that participated in scoping included:

- 33 • City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Service Department
- 34 • City of Colorado Springs' Trails, Open Space & Parks Program staff
- 35 • Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- 36 • Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW)
- 37 • Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)
- 38 • United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- 39 • United States Environmental Protection Agency

40 The FHWA, CDOT, and the project team have also worked closely with local agencies
41 including:

- 42 • City of Colorado Springs
- 43 • City of Manitou Springs
- 44 • Colorado Springs Utilities
- 45 • El Paso County
- 46 • Federal Emergency Management Agency
- 47 • Mountain Metro Transit
- 48 • Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG)

49 Formal consultation with the Colorado SHPO is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of
50 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. In addition to the scoping meeting and
51 letters sent to all agencies, consultation with the Colorado SHPO has included these additional
52 steps: consultation on the boundaries of the Area of Potential Effect (APE), which resulted in
53 no objections from the Colorado SHPO; submittal of the determination of eligibility of historic
54 resources, which resulted in concurrence from the Colorado SHPO; and submittal of the
55 determination of effects to historic resources, which also resulted in concurrence from the
56 Colorado SHPO. Records of this correspondence are included in **Appendix H**. Mitigation for
57 impacts to historic properties will be developed in consultation with the Colorado SHPO and
58 other consulting parties. This agreed upon mitigation will be documented in a Memorandum of
59 Agreement, included in **Appendix H**. Additional information on the Section 106 process can be
60 found in **Section 3.4, Historic Properties**.

61 Formal consultation with the USACE was conducted to fulfill the requirements of Section 404
62 of the Clean Water Act as well as promote discussion about Fountain Creek floodplains. In
63 addition to the scoping meeting and letters sent to all agencies, consultation with the USACE
64 has included these additional steps: three visits to Fountain Creek, eight meetings with USACE
65 staff, submittal of the Wetland Delineation Report and jurisdictional determinations, and
66 informal coordination regarding potential impacts and permitting requirements. Coordination
67 with the USACE will continue through final design and permitting.

68 Coordination with the CDOW explored issues such as wildlife populations and habitat as well as
69 wildlife movement and corridor use. In addition to the scoping meeting and letters sent to all
70 agencies, consultation with the CDOW has included these additional steps: two visits with
71 agency staff and informal coordination regarding potential impacts and mitigation measures.

72 The consultant team spoke with the Colorado Springs Police Department in the early phases of
73 the project to provide information about the project and identify any safety and emergency
74 response concerns. The department provided input that contributed to the design of the
75 Proposed Action, such as identifying the need for standard shoulders throughout the US 24
76 corridor.

77 **5.2 Community Coordination**

78 **5.2.1 Executive Leadership Team**

79 The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) was formed to represent local jurisdictions and provide
80 policy recommendations regarding funding, maintenance, and ownership responsibilities. The
81 ELT also assisted with formal actions required by respective councils, boards, and/or
82 commissions for project support. The ELT met 12 times from 2005 through 2008. The ELT

83 consisted of representatives – typically at the level of City Councilor/County Commissioner,
 84 City Manager/County Administrator, or Executive Director – from FHWA, CDOT, the City of
 85 Colorado Springs, City of Manitou Springs, Colorado Springs City Council, Manitou Springs
 86 City Council, El Paso County Commissioners, Colorado Springs Utilities, and PPACG. A
 87 complete list of ELT members is included in **Appendix E**.

88 **5.2.2 Technical Leadership Team**

89 The Technical Leadership Team (TLT) was formed to guide technical decisions involving data
 90 gathering and analysis, review technical documentation, provide support and insight with respect
 91 to agency issues and regulations, assist with the development and screening of alternatives, and
 92 facilitate coordination with agency staff and ELT members. The TLT met 29 times from 2004
 93 through 2008 as alternatives were developed and evaluated. TLT members consisted of
 94 representatives – typically at the level of Planning Director, Traffic Engineer, Roadway
 95 Engineer, and similar positions – from FHWA, CDOT, the City of Colorado Springs, City of
 96 Manitou Springs, Manitou Springs Economic Development Council, Colorado Springs Utilities,
 97 El Paso County, and PPACG. A complete list of TLT members is included in **Appendix E**. The
 98 TLT meetings were discussed during ELT meetings to keep ELT members informed about the
 99 technical work on the project.

100 **5.2.3 Aesthetic Working Group**

101 The Aesthetic Working Group provided community input to the look and feel of future US 24
 102 corridor elements. This group was formed after the major elements of the Proposed Action were
 103 known, thereby providing the group with knowledge of the possible visual changes and
 104 opportunities for aesthetic treatments.

105 The participants, whose work is documented in *US 24 I-25 to Ridge Road Aesthetic Guidelines*
 106 (THK, 2009), met three times in 2008 and 2009. Meetings were held in a workshop format and
 107 attendance varied. In general, participants represented CDOT, El Paso County, City of Colorado
 108 Springs, City of Manitou Springs, Colorado Springs Utilities, PPACG, Organization of Westside
 109 Neighbors, Old Colorado City Historical Society, Friends of Red Rock Canyon, the Trails and
 110 Open Space Coalition, Gold Hill Mesa, local residents, and business owners.

111 **5.2.4 Midland Greenway Advisory Committee**

112 The Midland Greenway Advisory Committee helped guide the master planning process for the
 113 Midland Greenway. The Committee provided technical expertise, support, and insight on how
 114 right-of-way acquired for improvements could be used to develop a greenway along Fountain
 115 Creek. The greenway concept was recognized as an opportunity to provide community benefits
 116 related to recreation, water quality, flood risk reduction, and aesthetics. The committee met
 117 seven times in 2007 and 2008, and its work resulted in the *Midland Greenway Master Planning*
 118 *Process, Final Report* (CDOT, 2007), discussed in more detail in **Section 3.5, Parks, Trails, and**
 119 **Recreation Resources** and in **Chapter 4, Section 4(f) Evaluation**. Committee members
 120 represented CDOT, El Paso County, the City of Colorado Springs, City of Manitou Springs,
 121 Colorado Springs Utilities, PPACG, Old Colorado City Historical Society, Friends of Red Rock
 122 Canyon, the Trails and Open Space Coalition, and Gold Hill Mesa. A complete list of Midland
 123 Greenway Advisory Committee members is included in **Appendix E**.

124 **5.2.5 Fountain Creek Restoration Project**

125 During the planning for the US 24 corridor, representatives from CDOT, the City of Colorado
 126 Springs and its Stormwater Enterprise Program, and Gold Hill Mesa worked together to develop

127 a master plan and fund major improvements to a 0.6-mile section of Fountain Creek that lies
 128 between 8th Street and 21st Street. The restoration improved water quality, reduced erosion of
 129 contaminated mine tailings, reduced flood risk, and reestablished riparian vegetation along
 130 Fountain Creek. Cooperating partners included local agencies, private businesses, and non-profit
 131 organizations. The project was completed in April 2010.

132 **5.3 Public Involvement Activities**

133 Public involvement was conducted using the principles of CSS throughout the development of
 134 this EA to ensure communication with all stakeholders occurred. The process examined multiple
 135 alternatives with multi-disciplinary teams so the Proposed Action would represent a project with
 136 an understanding of the landscape, the community, and the valued resources.

137 The first public activity in a CSS process is to discuss and gain agreement on the process
 138 planned for selecting the Proposed Action. The three-step screening process, as discussed in
 139 **Chapter 2, Alternatives**, was the foundation for communication with the stakeholders. This
 140 approach resulted in widespread public awareness of the project and opportunities for timely
 141 input to project decision making. Participants included interested citizens, property owners,
 142 business owners, and the general public.

143 **5.3.1 Public Open Houses**

144 Open houses were designed to give individuals time to discuss
 145 specific project-related issues with project team members.
 146 Stations staffed by team members were set up for each issue
 147 presented. Nine open houses were held between 2004 and
 148 2008 with more than 1,200 total participants. The dates and
 149 locations of each public open house are included in
 150 **Appendix E**. All of the open houses were held at the West
 151 Center for Intergenerational Learning in Colorado Springs.



152 **5.3.2 Public Workshops**

153 Public workshops were gatherings of stakeholders with a
 154 structured agenda and a defined outcome. Workshops were
 155 designed to set overarching project goals and visions with
 156 stakeholders of diverse backgrounds. Three public workshops
 157 were held in 2008 and 2009 to review concepts and design
 158 options for the Midland Greenway. A complete list of public
 159 workshops is included in **Appendix E**.



Public meetings were well attended

160 **5.3.3 Neighborhood Organizations and Small Group** 161 **Meetings**

162 Meetings with neighborhood organizations and other small groups were events where
 163 community members could participate in project-related discussions to develop project
 164 alternatives consistent with local land use and in harmony with the natural and built
 165 environment. These meetings gathered neighbors to discuss specific issues affecting where they
 166 live, work, and play. Events were small, usually with fewer than 30 participants. These meetings
 167 typically began with a short presentation on a specific neighborhood issue and progressed to
 168 dialog with project team members. These meetings helped the project team understand a

169 neighborhood’s positions, goals, and needs. They also identified project elements that would be
170 valued as a lasting asset to the community.

171 The project team held 25 meetings with neighborhood organizations and other small groups
172 between 2005 and 2008. This included a series of 13 meetings with the Organization of Westside
173 Neighbors. Meetings were also held with the Trails and Open Space Coalition, Friends of Red
174 Rock Canyon, Skyway Homeowners Association, Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce, and
175 Manitou Springs Kiwanis, among others. A complete list of neighborhood organizations and
176 small group meetings is included in **Appendix E**.

177 **5.3.4 Outreach to Minority and Low-Income Populations**

178 Focused outreach was conducted to identify and engage minority and low-income stakeholders
179 in the decision-making process. To determine the location where outreach should be
180 concentrated, the project team evaluated demographic data, conducted interviews with local
181 businesses, and contacted housing and human services agencies. Based on this information, the
182 project team determined that outreach to minority and low-income populations should be
183 provided to all residences and business owners within 0.5 mile of the US 24 corridor. Focused
184 outreach included the efforts listed below.

- 185 • Spanish translation and hearing-impaired services were offered at all public meetings.
- 186 • Newspaper ads included telephone numbers for Spanish translation and information.
- 187 • Newsletters and public scoping meeting invitations were mailed in English, with an offer of
188 translation into Spanish upon request.
- 189 • Invitations to eight of the 10 open houses were published in *Hispania*. Most ran twice,
190 2 weeks and 1 week prior to the open house.
- 191 • To ensure that both renters and property owners were included in public involvement
192 activities, the mailing list included property owners identified in the county assessor’s
193 database as well as renters identified from United States Postal Service stops within 0.5 mile
194 on each side of the US 24 corridor. The mailing list was updated after each public meeting.
- 195 • To ensure public involvement activities included a broad representation of the study area,
196 the project team conducted focused outreach following the fourth open house in 2005. The
197 team used sign-in sheet addresses and a geographic information system to map participants’
198 locations. The project team recognized two neighborhoods had not participated in any
199 public involvement activities, including the A-1 Mobile Home Park. To encourage
200 participation, flyers (with information in both English and Spanish) were hand delivered to
201 this community announcing subsequent open houses.
- 202 • Prior to the fourth open house, flyers with information in both English and Spanish were
203 delivered to addresses along Colorado Avenue, where several churches, commercial
204 establishments, and the Goodwill Industries are located.
- 205 • All of the open houses were held at the West Center for Intergenerational Learning in
206 Colorado Springs, which is co-located with the Billie Spielman Center. The Billie Spielman
207 Center provides family stabilization services, help with utilities and gas vouchers, and serves
208 as a community center for the Westside Neighborhoods.

- Coordination with Native American tribes occurred in 2008 and 2011. **Section 3.13.3, Native American Consultation** provides details regarding the outreach and coordination with Native American tribes.

5.3.5 Outreach to Businesses

The project team held 14 meetings with business organizations between 2005 and 2008. This included meetings with the Chambers of Commerce in Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs, the Colorado Springs Regional Economic Development Corporation, and the Manitou Springs Economic Development Council. Meetings were held with other business groups including the Old Colorado City Association and Colorado Springs Downtown Business Partnership. A complete list of meetings held with business organizations is included in **Appendix E**.

The project team worked closely with the Gold Hill Mesa developer throughout the project. As discussed in **Section 5.2.5, Fountain Creek Restoration Project**, Gold Hill Mesa was a partner in the Fountain Creek Restoration Project, which stabilized mine tailings within the Fountain Creek floodplain. CDOT also coordinated with Gold Hill Mesa to improve access to the re-development. As a result of this coordination, the Proposed Action was designed to accommodate a connection to Gold Hill Mesa across US 24 at 15th Street. The developer of Gold Hill Mesa also plans to build a trail along Fountain Creek that would serve residents of the area and connect to the Midland Greenway.

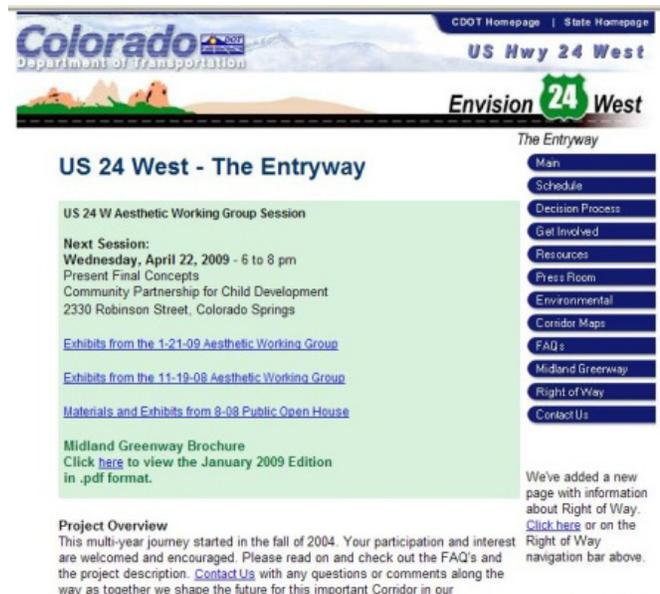
5.4 Public Information Program

The public information program used a dedicated project website, telephone hot line, press releases, media contacts, newsletter mailings and notices, and other tools to disseminate information to the public.

5.4.1 Project Website

A project website (www.coloradodot.info/projects/us24west) was developed in 2005 to provide the public with access to reports and documents, newsletters, announcements of upcoming meetings, and meeting summaries. The public was able to submit comments and questions, sign up for the mailing list, and request information online. The website is active, averaging nearly 1,000 hits per day since its inception. The website will announce the locations where the public can view a paper copy of the EA; in the future, this website will be used to announce the development and availability of a Decision Document for the project.

During the public comment period, this EA will be posted on the website to provide an opportunity for the public to read and provide comments.



The project website has received millions of hits

252 **5.4.2 Media Relations**

253 Project information was regularly provided to local newspapers, television stations, and radio
 254 stations. In addition to interviews, the project team issued 15 press releases to eight newspapers
 255 in the region, including the *Gazette*, *Westside Pioneer*, *Independent*, and *Hispania*.

256 The media provided extensive coverage during the project. In all, eight newspapers from
 257 Colorado Springs to Cripple Creek printed more than 170 stories from 2004 through 2010, the
 258 majority of which were printed in the weekly *Westside Pioneer*, which focuses on the area in which
 259 the project is located.

260 **5.4.3 Mailings and Notices**

261 A project mailing list containing more than 4,000 names and addresses was developed and
 262 maintained throughout the project. The mailing list included property owners, elected officials,
 263 media representatives, homeowners associations, business owners, and other interested citizens.
 264 Those on the project mailing list received four newsletters in 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2008; a
 265 postcard in March 2008; and the Midland Greenway brochure in January 2009.

266 **5.5 How the Community Helped Shape the Proposed Action**

267 Community residents and other partners played an important role in shaping the Proposed
 268 Action, including:

- 269 • Members of the community provided observations about their community’s context that
 270 they wanted considered during project implementation. These included unique features such
 271 as Fountain Creek and sensitive resources like the Midland Terminal Railroad Roundhouse.
- 272 • Business owners emphasized the importance of maintaining 26th Street access to Old
 273 Colorado City.
- 274 • Agency staff on the TLT provided suggestions on technical elements related to congestion
 275 relief.

276 A few specific examples of how the community helped shape the project are summarized in
 277 **Exhibit 5-1**.

EXHIBIT 5-1
 How Community Ideas Shaped the Proposed Action

Ideas from the Community ¹	Element or Feature in Proposed Action
Improve major intersections to make them operate better and improve the ability for neighborhood traffic and pedestrians to cross US 24.	All intersections would be rebuilt to improve traffic operations for US 24 as well as the cross streets. Signalized intersections would provide adequate turn lanes and acceleration/deceleration lanes, and signals would be timed to provide uniform traffic progression for US 24. New interchanges at 8th Street and 21st Street would improve traffic flow for all movements at these locations. All intersections and interchanges would accommodate bicycles and pedestrians.

EXHIBIT 5-1
How Community Ideas Shaped the Proposed Action

Ideas from the Community ¹	Element or Feature in Proposed Action
Do not destroy Fountain Creek.	A greenway master plan for this segment of Fountain Creek was developed in cooperation with the neighborhoods and various state and local partners that includes the construction and reconstruction of trails, habitat improvements, and other amenities (CDOT, 2007). CDOT would implement some improvements under the Proposed Action, while other entities would provide improvements that are within their authority as funds become available.
Do not touch the historic Midland Terminal Railroad Roundhouse.	The proposed interchange at 21st Street would avoid the Midland Terminal Railroad Roundhouse.
Do not overload Colorado Avenue by moving traffic off US 24.	By improving traffic flow on US 24, commuters and regional travelers would be less likely to divert to Colorado Avenue as an alternate route around congested intersections.
Add a park-and-ride lot that could be used for both transit and off-site parking for neighborhood events.	Although not an element of the Proposed Action, a park and ride could be accommodated on CDOT right-of-way and may be built by others on the northeast corner of US 24 and 31st Street.
Elevate US 24 to go over Ridge Road to make it safer for trail users and wildlife to enter the Red Rock Canyon Open Space and provide a trail connection from Midland Trail to the Open Space.	US 24 would be elevated to go over Ridge Road, which would remain at ground level for easier access to the Open Space by non-motorized travelers and wildlife; Ridge Road would be reconstructed and would accommodate a connection from the Open Space to the Midland Trail.
Make bridges over Fountain Creek friendly for pedestrians, bikes, and horses.	Bridges and trails would be designed to accommodate these users.
Leave underpass at I-25 into America the Beautiful Park open to bikes and pedestrians.	Midland Trail underpass of I-25 would remain open and not be impacted by the Proposed Action.
Avoid encroaching into Fountain Creek near Safeway.	US 24 west of 31st Street would be shifted south to avoid impacting Fountain Creek south of Safeway.

¹ Ideas from participants at Open House #3 on April 14, 2005; TLT meetings; project website; and telephone hotline.

278 **5.6 Remaining Agency Coordination and Public Involvement**

279 FHWA and CDOT are providing this EA for agency and public comment. A 45-day comment
 280 period will begin with the publishing of the EA. Within the comment period, CDOT will
 281 conduct a Public Hearing. An announcement of the public hearing will be sent to all individuals
 282 on the mailing list. The public hearing also will be advertised in newspapers, websites,
 283 neighborhood newsletters, and flyers distributed throughout the study area. Interested
 284 individuals can attend the public hearing to provide comments or learn more about the EA
 285 study and its recommendations.

286 Efforts will be made to notify and include minority and low-income populations in the public
 287 hearing for the EA. The public hearing will be advertised in *Hispania* and on community
 288 websites, neighborhood newsletters, and flyers. Telephone numbers for information and Spanish

289 translation will be included. Translators will be available upon request at the public hearing for
 290 the EA.

291 The document can be obtained and comments can be provided at the public hearing, on the
 292 project website (www.coloradodot.info/projects/us24west), or mailed to US 24 EA Comments
 293 c/o Wilson & Company 5755 Mark Dabling Boulevard, Suite 220, Colorado Springs, Colorado
 294 80919-2200.

295 Copies of the EA will be available for public review at:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Pikes Peak Library District – Old Colorado
City Branch
2418 West Pikes Peak Avenue
Colorado Springs, CO 80904
(719) 634-1698 | CDOT Region 2, North Program Office
1480 Quail Lake Loop, Suite A
Colorado Springs, CO 80906
(719) 227-3200 |
| Pikes Peak Library District – Penrose Branch
20 North Cascade Avenue
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
(719) 531-6333 | CDOT Headquarters (Public Relations Office)
4201 East Arkansas Avenue
Denver, CO 80222
(303) 757-9228 |
| Pikes Peak Library District – Ute Pass
Branch
8010 Severy
Cascade, CO 80809
(719) 684-9342 | FHWA Colorado Division Office
12300 West Dakota Avenue, Suite 180
Lakewood, CO 80228
(720) 963-3000 |
| Rampart Library District – Woodland Park
Branch
218 East Midland Avenue
Woodland Park, CO 80866
(719) 687-9281 | Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments
15 South Seventh Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80905
(719) 471-7080 |
| Manitou Springs Public Library
701 Manitou Avenue
Manitou Springs, CO 80829
(719) 685 – 5206 | City of Colorado Springs, City Clerk Office
30 South Nevada Avenue # 101
Colorado Springs, CO 80903-1802
(719) 385-5901 |

296 Reviewing agencies will be provided a copy of the EA document, and individual meetings will be
 297 held with agency representatives if requested.

298 After the review period ends, all comments will be addressed in a formal response and issued
 299 with the final decision document on the project. A notice will be mailed to the entire mailing list
 300 at the end of the study to inform agency and public stakeholders of the study’s conclusions and
 301 next steps.