

Introduction

1. What is this document and its purpose?

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) (lead agencies) prepared this Revised Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Revised DPEIS) to provide reader-friendly, concise information about the major findings of the I-70 Mountain Corridor National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This Revised DPEIS is referred to as “this document.”

This document replaces the 2004 Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (2004 Draft PEIS). The 2004 Draft PEIS serves as a basis for the information in this document; where appropriate, detailed information from the 2004 Draft PEIS is summarized. The 2004 Draft PEIS is available online at the following website: <http://www.i70mtncorridor.com>. The 2004 Draft PEIS is also available by request to one of the lead agency representatives listed in the abstract of this document.

This document’s chapters and sections reference technical reports. These technical reports provide updated information collected before and since the 2004 Draft PEIS. The **References** section contains a full list of these reports. These technical reports are available on the attached CD, at the following website: <http://www.i70mtncorridor.com>, and by request.

This document is the first tier of a Programmatic NEPA process. It is a stand-alone document that addresses the same topics as the 2004 Draft PEIS and brings the data and analysis up to date, under Council on Environmental Quality regulation 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1502.9(a). This document analyzes alternatives developed since the Notice of Intent was issued in January 2000. This document includes the alternatives evaluated in the 2004 Draft PEIS, the Preferred Alternative, and the No Action Alternative. This document is responsive to comments received during and since the comment period on the 2004 Draft PEIS. A comment-by-comment response will not be provided.

Commenters who believe that comments made on the 2004 Draft PEIS are still valid and not addressed in this document may resubmit comment(s) on this document during the comment period. Responses to comments on this document will be provided in the Final PEIS.

2. What is a Programmatic NEPA process?

The Council on Environmental Quality allows NEPA decisions to be made through a phased process. This process is referred to as programmatic or tiered decision making. This phased decision-making process provides for a broad level decision to inform more specific decisions using a programmatic or tiered approach. While the terms “programmatic” and “tiered” environmental impact statements are often used interchangeably, there is a difference in application. A programmatic environmental impact statement is a way of considering a program of improvements that resemble a planning process resulting in a number of projects, some with potentially different purposes and needs. A tiered environmental impact statement, on the other hand, addresses one large project with one overall purpose and need too cumbersome to analyze in a traditional environmental impact statement.

In this programmatic process, the lead agencies have identified a program of transportation improvements. To carry out these improvements, Tier 2 processes will be needed, which will be developed with their own specific purpose and need, to solve specific transportation problems consistent with the Tier 1 decision.

Both levels of decision making, the broad level (Tier 1) and the specific or Tier 2 decisions, require that alternatives and impacts are understood at an appropriate level of detail for that decision. A broad level

Introduction

(Tier 1) decision is the projected outcome for this document and will not directly result in construction or impacts. This decision informs and refines the future, more detailed decisions using a Tier 2 NEPA process that will result in construction and impacts. A Tier 2 process also involves understanding the alternatives and impacts using the approach established by the NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality. It also requires lead agencies to establish a project-specific purpose and need, consider and evaluate alternatives, and understand and disclose the impacts of the alternative(s) to make the decisions regarding activities that lead to construction. An environmental impact statement, an environmental assessment, or a categorical exclusion document Tier 2 processes.

3. Why are the lead agencies doing this document?

Many changes have occurred within the I-70 Mountain Corridor and the State of Colorado since the lead agencies issued the Draft PEIS in December 2004. In 2007, CDOT convened stakeholders from the I-70 Mountain Corridor to work together to reach consensus on needed transportation solutions. This consensus-building process was a great success, bringing together a diverse group of representatives from every user group of I-70 and resulting in the Consensus Recommendation.

This document allows the lead agencies to address changes since the issuance of the 2004 Draft PEIS. In addition, this document concisely communicates to the public the basis for identifying the Preferred Alternative, which is the Consensus Recommendation. This document provides the public an opportunity to comment on an up-to-date, more understandable document. This document includes the decision-making process, the Preferred Alternative, and other changes, such as the removal of the \$4 billion threshold and an inclusion of the 50-year horizon developed from the foreseeable transportation needs of the Corridor.

4. What changed since the 2004 Draft PEIS and how were comments received on the 2004 Draft PEIS addressed?

Consistent themes emerged from the comments received on the 2004 Draft PEIS. Highlighted below are common concerns expressed by the public that influenced the approach to identify a preferred alternative and proceed with this document. The Colorado Department of Transportation modified the process to complete this document and revised the content of the document in response to these comments.

- Numerous comments surrounded the use of the \$4 billion threshold for defining the reasonableness of the preferred grouping of alternatives analyzed in the 2004 Draft PEIS. The comments asserted that this threshold was an arbitrary way to screen alternatives and unfairly biased against Transit Alternatives. In addition, comments reflected that a \$4 billion threshold as the basis for the Preferred Alternative was inappropriate and was unfairly limited the alternatives for a multimodal solution on the Corridor. The lead agencies agreed that, for the Tier 1 decision, the ability to fund the alternative should not be the basis of a preferred alternative. The Colorado Department of Transportation modified the approach for identifying a preferred alternative to include a collaborative stakeholder process) and did not use a cost threshold in the decision making.
- Concerns were expressed about the transparency of the NEPA process used for the project. The Colorado Department of Transportation developed a transparent process with stakeholders and used the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions process to assist identifying the

• A primary area of comment on the 2004 Draft PEIS was the need for a longer-term horizon with full consideration of solutions for the long term. In response to these comments, the lead agencies decided to change the future timeframe to year 2050, looking at the need for improvements and possible alternatives to address that need.

Preferred Alternative and move the documentation process forward. See **Appendix A** for a summary of the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance.

- Questions were raised about the connectivity and segmentation of the western and eastern project termini. The western terminus is Glenwood Springs, based on the reduced level of congestion experienced west of Glenwood Springs. The eastern end terminates at a point on the existing I-70 alignment where mass transit systems do not exist today. The eastern terminus for the project is the C-470 interchange because of the change of travel patterns from highly recreational west of this location to highly urban to the east. **Chapter 1** clarifies this.

The basis of the termini established by the purpose and need focuses on problems that need to be addressed. The length between the termini is sufficient and provides the ability to address environmental matters on a broad scope without restricting consideration of alternatives for reasonably foreseeable needed transportation improvements. Projects connecting eastward may proceed separately and likely have a different purpose and need than this process.

- Numerous comments were received about funding information provided for transit and the cost estimating methodology. This document includes updated costs for the alternatives and an updated funding chapter.
- In response to the concerns expressed about climate change, this document contains information about energy consumption, the uncertainties associated with future oil supply, and possible future changes in travel associated with those trends.
- This document includes anticipated environmental impacts on wildlife, water quality, geologic hazards, mineral resources, noise, cumulative, community, and historic resources. Each resource section in **Chapter 3** discusses impacts anticipated during construction.
- In response to questions about mitigation commitments made in the 2004 Draft PEIS, this document contains information about mitigation strategies and planned processes for determining how these strategies are incorporated into Tier 2 processes and activities.

In addition to comments received on the 2004 Draft PEIS, other changes affected this process and are included in this document. These include:

- How alternatives are defined. For example:
 1. The Bus in Guideway Alternatives extend from the Eisenhower Tunnel west to the Eagle Airport.
 2. A single preferred alternative is identified.
 3. Transit Alternatives are defined to be representative of the range of possible technologies that fit within the performance specifications identified in **Chapter 2**.
- The *Gaming Area Access Environmental Impact Statement* is no longer part of the No Action Alternative. The *Gaming Area Access Environmental Impact Statement* is no longer proceeding, and the Central City Parkway Project has been constructed.
- Changes in laws, such as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, requiring that FHWA define prudent and feasible alternatives for Section 4(f) evaluations. New regulations for complying with Section 4(f) were published and are found at 23 CFR 774.
- Changes in some of the environmental and community resources located along the Corridor. **Chapter 3** of this document contains updated information.

The Rocky Mountain Rail Authority has completed a study of the potential for high-speed rail along the I-70 Corridor. The results of this study were released in March 2010.

Introduction

Following the 2004 Draft PEIS public review period, CDOT undertook a higher level of involvement with representatives of cities and counties and other interests along the Corridor. The Colorado Department of Transportation:

- Formed a Collaborative Effort team to identify a preferred alternative,
- Developed a Context Sensitive Solutions process to be used as the I-70 project is defined and specific projects are identified,
- Developed a Programmatic Agreement, which is included in **Appendix B**, identifying how Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act is applied to historic properties for Tier 2 NEPA processes, and
- Formed a Project Leadership Team to keep the process moving forward.

The public may comment on any aspect of this document. However, lead agencies would specifically like to hear the views of the public on factors relating to these decisions on the travel mode, capacity and general location because these aspects of the decision will not be revisited at Tier 2.

A coordinated effort combining results from the Project Leadership Team, the lead agencies, and Issues Task Forces focused on incorporating specific issues into the process. **Chapter 6** of this document defines and describes in more detail the Project Leadership Team and Issues Task Forces groups and activities.

5. What decisions are addressed programmatically at Tier 1 and what decisions will be addressed at Tier 2?

The decisions regarding the transportation solution at the first tier include travel mode, capacity, and general location. This document presents alternatives for this Tier 1 decision. These decisions will not be revisited during Tier 2 NEPA processes unless other laws, such as the Clean Water Act, require revisiting them. The public may comment on any aspect of this document, but the lead agencies would specifically like to hear the views of the public on factors relating to these decisions because these decisions will not be revisited at Tier 2. Although mitigation strategies are proposed at Tier 1 based on potential impacts, additional and specific mitigation measures will be developed at Tier 2.

The analysis of transit modes in this document is made with a representative technology for purposes of including a reasonable range of transit alternatives for broad decision making. Detail regarding a choice of technologies is not available for this Tier 1 decision and will be developed during the Tier 2 process consistent with the mode decision from this Tier 1. Transit technology decisions will be made during Tier 2 processes. The transit modes considered at Tier 1 include Advanced Guideway System, steel wheels-on-steel rail, and bus in guideway

What are the transit modes?

Advanced Guideway System – A fully elevated guideway system that uses new technologies capable of performing in the difficult and challenging I-70 Mountain Corridor weather and terrain conditions, with 7 percent grades and sharp curves. The Advanced Guideway System is based on a magnetic levitation system, to represent this type of advanced technology for the first tier level of planning.

Steel Wheels-on-steel Rail – An on-grade electrically powered facility with elevated sections where needed. The type of rail system represented in the PEIS is based on design characteristics similar to the mountain railroads operating in Switzerland developed by the Swiss Federal Railways.

Bus in Guideway – A separated guideway for buses, assumed to be located in the median of I-70. Buses are equipped with guide wheels to permit a narrow guideway and safer operations. While no specific bus technology has been identified, this alternative is representative of various options of rubber tire transit operating in a separate guideway.

Tier 2 NEPA processes will refine alternatives, specific alignment, design, and mitigation decisions consistent with the Tier 1 Record of Decision, which is the final decision document for the first tier process. For the first transit-focused Tier 2 NEPA process, the transit technology decision will be made

and then incorporated into subsequent Tier 2 NEPA processes. The technology decision may influence other decisions, such as station location or maintenance facility location.

Subsequent Tier 2 processes will define and evaluate alternatives, alignment, interchange design, exact station locations, exact location of the transportation improvements, location of design or mitigation elements and bike paths, among other things. Tier 2 processes will also evaluate design details and specific environmental and community impacts. Specific mitigation commitments associated with impacts will be identified and agreed to at Tier 2.

Tier 2 NEPA processes may consider tolling and non-tolling alternatives. The public will have an opportunity to comment on all of these decisions during the Tier 2 NEPA processes.

6. What has been the decision-making process to get to the Preferred Alternative?

The decision-making process to identify a preferred alternative resolving the problems on I-70 is based on analysis and consensus. The Colorado Department of Transportation identified a representative group of stakeholders from the Denver metropolitan area and the I-70 Corridor to participate in a facilitated process to reach agreement on a recommended preferred alternative to address the transportation problems. The lead agencies agreed to adopt the alternative identified by full consensus of the Collaborative Effort team as the Preferred Alternative in the I-70 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. As members of this team, the lead agencies participated in the consensus process, ensuring that the Consensus Recommendation met purpose and need, state and federal laws, regulations, and policies. As a result, the lead agencies are able to adopt the Consensus Recommendation as the Preferred Alternative. **Appendix C** contains the Consensus Recommendation.

A consensus agreement is one that all group members support, built by identifying and exploring all parties' interests by developing an outcome that satisfies these interests to the greatest extent possible.

The decision-making process relied on consensus, meaning that everyone around the table had to compromise by reviewing analysis results, deliberating issues and reaching understandings all members could live with. The full report of the Collaborative Effort team is located on the I-70 website and is entitled the *Close Out Report for the Collaborative Effort*.

The Collaborative Effort team identified criteria for the Preferred Alternative and deliberated on how to address the purpose and need for the project with various transportation solutions. The Preferred Alternative is unique in its adaptive management approach to meeting transportation needs and relies on a strong multimodal and long-term vision approach to moving people.

Chapter 6 of this document describes in more detail the various roles of the different groups involved in the decision-making process.

7. What happens after the Tier 1 Record of Decision (Implementation Plan)?

The lead agencies, in collaboration with project stakeholders, developed an implementation process for the multimodal Preferred Alternative of the I-70 Mountain Corridor Tier 1 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

The implementation process describes how projects are prioritized to carry out the Tier 1 decision, describes how the Tier 1 decision is carried out through the statewide planning process, and defines what Tier 2 processes are and options for how components of the Preferred Alternative can move forward.

Introduction

A Record of Decision for this programmatic environmental impact statement does not mean that the Preferred Alternative will be constructed. Funding constraints limit CDOT's ability to fully implement the Preferred Alternative. Unless additional revenue sources are secured, it is difficult to complete the identified high-priority projects, as well as the other components of the Preferred Alternative. **Chapter 5, Financial Considerations**, contains more information. Even when funding is identified for a portion of the Preferred Alternative, a Tier 2 NEPA process is necessary to move into the final design and construction phases.

What is a Tier 2 NEPA process?

The Tier 2 NEPA process supports the Tier 1 decision and has independent utility, operational independence, and constructible use. In the case of this project, the Corridor is subdivided into projects that have the above characteristics and can be funded. Examples of Tier 2 processes in this case include, but are not limited to, interchanges, portions of interchanges, auxiliary lane(s), transit, and highway capacity with logical end points. Tier 2 processes require an individual NEPA class of action ranging from categorical exclusions, environmental assessments, or environmental impact statements depending on the size, scope, and context of individual projects. Tier 2 processes move the Tier 1 Preferred Alternative forward and reflect the Tier 1 decision regarding mode, general corridor location, and capacity.

- **Independent utility** means that a project is usable and a reasonable expenditure even if no additional transportation improvement in the area is made.
- **Operational independence** means that the project can operate effectively and completely on its own.
- **Constructible use** means that the project can be constructed and provides an independent benefit.

How is the class of action determined for Tier 2 processes?

Transportation projects vary in type, size, complexity, and potential to affect the environment. The lead agencies will work together to determine the class of action for Tier 2 processes. To account for the variability of project impacts, NEPA and 23 CFR 771.115 allow three basic "classes of action." The class of action determines how compliance with NEPA is carried out and documented:

- Class I – An environmental impact statement is prepared for projects that will cause a significant adverse effect on the environment.
- Class II – A categorical exclusion is prepared for projects that cause minimal social, economic, or environmental impact.
- Class III – An environmental assessment is prepared for larger-scale projects that do not meet the requirements for a categorical exclusion or those for which the significance of the environmental impact is not clearly established. If the project will have significant impacts, an environmental impact statement must be prepared.

Regardless of class, all environmental studies adhere to the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance developed for the I-70 Mountain Corridor, which includes commitments to the SWEEP and ALIVE mitigation agreements.

What activities can be done to prepare for Tier 2 processes?

Because Tier 2 processes cannot proceed without the potential for identified funding, CDOT may initiate a feasibility study. Feasibility studies position CDOT to prepare for future funding opportunities and make meaningful improvements to the I-70 Mountain Corridor as soon as possible. Feasibility studies allow for a detailed understanding of the improvements needed and solidify approaches to deliver construction projects in a way that is adaptable to the amount of available funding. These studies may be

a prerequisite to detailed Tier 2 processes in cases where the problem, context, or potential solution is complex, or the scope of a potential project is so great that funding or financing the construction is not available.

The focus of these studies is to:

- Understand the detailed social and environmental limitations of the project area
- Develop criteria to compare alternatives
- Develop feasible alternatives to support the Tier 1 decision
- Evaluate the feasible alternatives
- Consider phasing opportunities

These feasibility studies provide an understanding of how a project could be phased to ensure that the lead agencies are prepared to implement Tier 2 NEPA processes as efficiently as possible. The feasibility studies provide assurance that Tier 1 alternatives are not precluded, and that Tier 2 NEPA processes have independent utility, are operationally independent, and have constructible use. Feasibility studies will proceed using the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions process.

Why are Tier 2 processes necessary?

The Tier 1 decision is general for mode, location, and capacity. The level of detail for design is not available to make site-specific decisions for the transportation solution. Many assumptions about the design and footprint were made to compare the impacts of the Tier 1 alternatives for the Tier 1 decision. Tier 2 processes are necessary to identify specific environmental impacts, site-specific alternatives, alignments, technology, and transportation solutions for projects contained in the Preferred Alternative. Specific mitigation measures are identified to avoid or minimize the impacts of the transportation solution and to enhance impacted areas. All components of the Preferred Alternative require a Tier 2 process.

What are the currently identified high-priority components of the Preferred Alternative?

High-priority components currently identified for the Preferred Alternative are as follows:

- Advanced Guideway System – Improves mobility, reduces congestion, and has public support
- Non-infrastructure Improvements (that is, Intelligent Information Systems, Travel Demand Management, etc.) – Improves mobility, has public support, and enhances safety
- 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 – Improves mobility, reduces congestion, enhances safety, and has public support
- Empire Junction (US 40/I-70) improvements – Improves mobility and has public support
- Eastbound auxiliary lane from the Eisenhower-Johnson Memorial Tunnels to Herman Gulch – Improves mobility, enhances safety, and has public support
- Westbound auxiliary lane from Bakerville to the Eisenhower-Johnson Memorial Tunnels – Improves mobility, enhances safety, and has public support

In addition to high-priority components, what other components are identified in the Preferred Alternative?

The Preferred Alternative includes 26 interchange projects, 4 curve safety projects, 12 auxiliary lane¹ projects, specific safety and capacity improvements, and truck operations improvements. See **Chapter 2** for specific information.

What are the considerations for prioritizing Preferred Alternative components?

Although the Preferred Alternative does not distinguish priority among subsequent specific components, CDOT, in collaboration with the Project Leadership Team and stakeholders, developed the following non-weighted considerations for prioritizing projects:

- **Greater magnitude and cost** – The Colorado Department of Transportation acknowledges that some projects are greater in magnitude and cost with long lead times and superior benefits. These long-term projects need a higher priority to move forward.
- **System quality** – Projects that improve and address system quality such as bridge service life or pavement quality have higher priority. Measurable factors are maintenance Level of Service, bridge inventory (functional deficiencies, structural deficiencies, and remaining service life) and the pavement management system.
- **Maximize cost/benefit** – Projects that maximize benefit versus cost will receive a higher priority. Projects that include benefits to performance, operations, economics, environment, and maintenance relative to the costs of financial investment and environmental impacts have higher priority.
- **Funding availability** – Projects that maximize public and private funding availability have a higher priority. This includes where public and private funding opportunities are enhanced and local match money is available.
- **Improve mobility** – Projects reducing corridor congestion and improving mobility have a higher priority when improvements benefit the volume to capacity ratio, Level of Service, delays, travel times, throughput, and queuing.
- **Safety** – Projects that address safety have a higher priority. Safety is generally measured by a Weighted Hazard Index, high number of animal vehicle collisions, and curve deficiencies. Crash reports can be used to enhance this information.
- **Public support** – Projects with greater public support have a higher priority. Information will be gathered from comments on this document, I-70 Coalition input or other similar groups, county

What are the components of the Preferred Alternative?

The Preferred Alternative identifies three groups of projects to meet short-term transportation needs: Advanced Guideway System, non-infrastructure components, and highway improvements. These projects will move forward into detailed project development as funds are identified consistent with Colorado's long-range Statewide Transportation Plan.

The Preferred Alternative also includes a process (triggers) for assessing the progress of improvements and needs on the Corridor. The process is based on a set of conditions established through the stakeholder consensus and are part of the decision-making process affecting the implementation and prioritization of projects. These conditions include mandatory decision points (2020 and 2025) for assessing progress in the Corridor.

¹ Updated analysis resulted in the addition of one interchange (Wolcott). This was added after the Consensus Recommendation was adopted in 2008. Ongoing coordination will occur with the Collaborative Effort as the analysis is updated and new information becomes available.

coordination meetings, I-70 Mountain Context Sensitive Solutions Team meetings, Collaborative Effort meetings or similar group, and public involvement in the planning process.

- **Environmental mitigation** – Projects that best mitigate impacts on the built and natural environment, avoid impacts, and offer more mitigation opportunities and enhancement opportunities have a higher priority.

What activities can occur before the Record of Decision?

Some planning, design, construction, and maintenance activities can take place before signing a Record of Decision. These activities are “early action projects.” Early action projects must be common elements to all the Action Alternatives identified in **Chapter 2** and have a clear need. Early action projects must demonstrate that they have logical termini and independent utility and cannot restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements (23 CFR 771.111(f)). Additionally, if the No Action Alternative is selected, these projects are still needed. Early action projects include:

- Empire Junction (US 40/I-70) improvements – Improves mobility and has public support.
- I-70/Silverthorne interchange – Has public support.
- Eagle interchange – Improves mobility.
- Minturn interchange – Enhances safety.
- Edwards interchange – Improves mobility.
- Black Gore Creek and Straight Creek Sediment Control – Provides environmental mitigation.
- I-70 Wildlife Fencing – Enhances safety.
- Clear Creek Sediment Control Action Plan – Provides environmental mitigation.

How do prioritized components of the Preferred Alternative advance?

All components of the Preferred Alternative, including transit, must go through the established planning process. Because the transportation planning process identifies and prioritizes projects, the components will be defined into projects. Transportation planning in Colorado is conducted through 15 transportation planning regions. Transportation planning regions with urbanized areas of 50,000 people require formation of a metropolitan planning organization. Federal regulations require each state to develop a long-range (20+ year) Statewide Transportation Plan and a short-range (six-year) Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The long-range Statewide Transportation Plan includes corridor visions and strategies implemented by programming priority projects into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. All federally funded and regionally significant projects are identified in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program is updated every four years using the Project Priority Programming Process (4P) guidance adopted by the Colorado Transportation Commission. To facilitate the 4P process, each CDOT engineering region meets individually with transportation planning regions in their area to discuss project selection and prioritization within that transportation planning region. The purpose of the Transportation Planning Region meeting is to review funding availability, the projects in the current Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, and requests for new projects.

After meeting with each transportation planning region, CDOT regions hold a joint meeting with all of their transportation planning regions to elect and prioritize projects for the entire CDOT region in applicable programs when funding is available. Projects are selected in cooperation with local officials from the transportation planning regions based on a set of criteria developed to address or improve a particular mobility, safety, or system quality need on the transportation system. During the prioritization process, transportation planning regions and metropolitan planning organizations not wholly contained in one CDOT region may plan and conduct a joint prioritization meeting.

Introduction

Metropolitan planning organizations develop their own Transportation Improvement Program included without modification into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Non-urban transportation planning regions do not develop a Transportation Improvement Program because their projects are included directly in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Statewide Transportation Improvement Program projects are consistent with the corridor visions and strategies identified in the long-range, fiscally-constrained Statewide Transportation Plan.

For additional information on the planning process refer to CDOT's website at the following link: <http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/statewide-planning/planning-process.html>.

What is the current significance of the I-70 Corridor in the long-range Statewide Transportation Plan?

On August 15, 1996, the Transportation Commission adopted the Strategic Transportation Project Investment Program, otherwise known as the "7th Pot." The I-70 Mountain Corridor is one of the 28 statewide strategic projects. The primary objectives of the 7th Pot Projects is to identify projects of statewide significance that were too large to implement and expedite the completion of these transportation projects. Currently, no money is identified for these priorities. See **Chapter 5, Financial Considerations**, for further discussion.

What is the relationship between identified project priorities and the planning process?

The implementation process outlined in this document does not supersede the CDOT planning process. It is a tool to inform the planning process regarding priorities on the Corridor.

How is the Tier 1 decision implemented through the planning process?

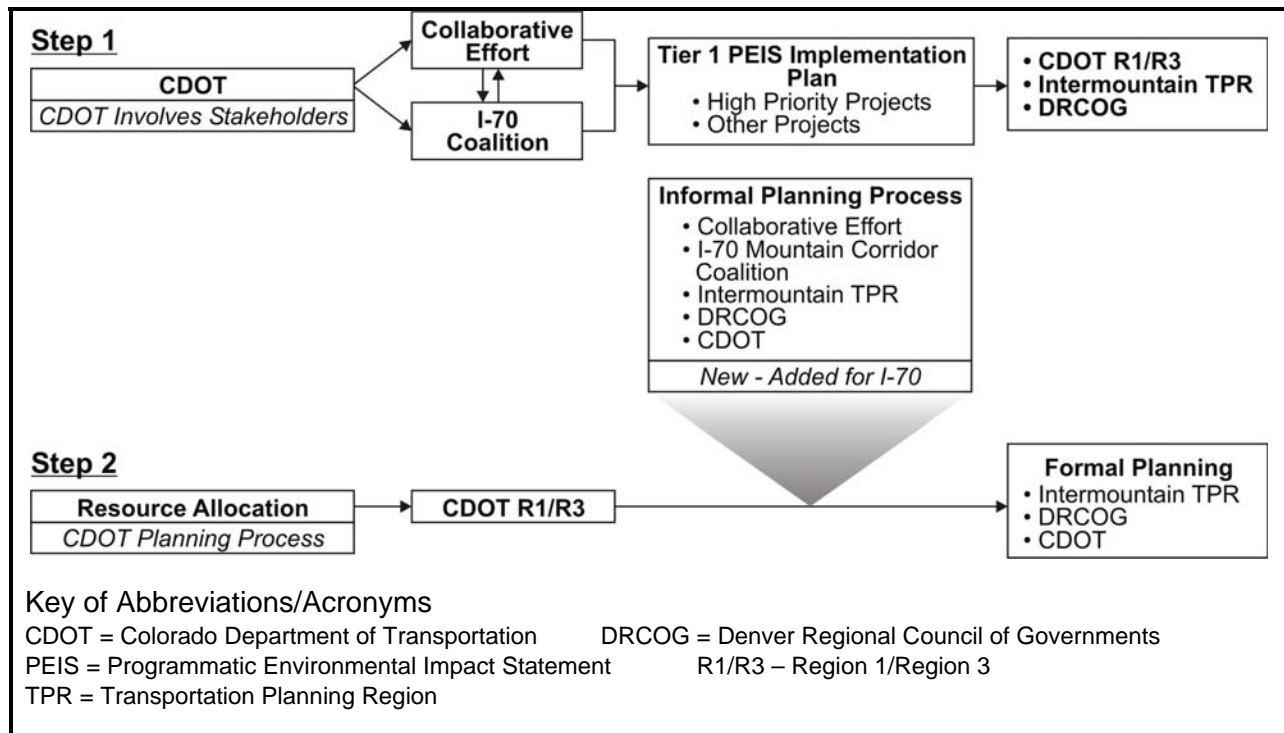
The Tier 1 decision identifies general capacity, mode, and location for transportation improvements in the Corridor and establishes the framework for future project-level activities. The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program includes funds for feasibility studies, Tier 2 processes, design, or construction phases before a project is initiated. Funds for the completion of a project identified in the Tier 2 NEPA process must be reasonably anticipated in the long-range Statewide Transportation Plan. Sequencing, funding, and construction of projects within the Corridor are balanced among other statewide priorities and needs.

The Colorado Department of Transportation and the stakeholders will:

- Guide and monitor the implementation of projects in the Corridor; and
- Assess the Corridor's needs and priorities for recommendations by the Collaborative Effort, including assessments of larger projects for feasible options to phase and implement through planning and Tier 2 processes.

Step 1 in **Figure I-1** indicates the implementation process outlined in this document. The Colorado Department of Transportation and the stakeholders will communicate the priorities identified from the Preferred Alternative with the appropriate transportation planning regions and metropolitan planning organizations. As noted in Step 2, CDOT will work directly with the planning partners to facilitate the integration of the Collaborative Effort and other interested stakeholders into the formal 4P process identified on page 9 of this **Introduction** under the question, "How do prioritized components of the Preferred Alternative advance?"

Figure I-1. Planning Process



The I-70 Mountain Corridor Coalition is a group of more than 30 local governments and businesses who formed in 2004 to address Corridor transportation issues (<http://www.i70solutions.org>).

How can this implementation process change?

The considerations for priorities can change or be elevated in consultation with the stakeholders. The Preferred Alternative includes convening the Collaborative Effort or a stakeholder group with similar composition every two years to identify considerations and priorities for the Corridor.

What is CDOT's role for implementing the Preferred Alternative?

The Colorado Department of Transportation is committed to advancing all elements of the Tier 1 decision through the federally mandated planning process. The Colorado Department of Transportation will pursue current and future priorities identified through stakeholder engagement in this process regardless of mode, including Advanced Guideway System and non-infrastructure improvements. The Colorado Department of Transportation will work with stakeholders to identify additional funding and innovative approaches to construct the Preferred Alternative.

Can the Preferred Alternative be built in its entirety?

Funding constraints limit the ability to fully construct the Preferred Alternative at one time. The Preferred Alternative includes a process for reassessing the effectiveness of built improvements and a review of study results and global trends before implementing additional capacity improvements. The Colorado Department of Transportation has committed to continuous stakeholder involvement (such as the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions and Collaborative Effort teams) for all tasks and projects conducted on the I-70 Mountain Corridor.

Introduction

The Colorado Department of Transportation acknowledges that some projects are greater in magnitude and cost with long-lead times and high benefits. Despite not having identified funding for constructing these projects, CDOT commits to pursuing pre-Tier 2 processes (such as feasibility studies) for these types of projects to keep them moving forward and find ways to phase them. **Chapter 2** of this document provides more information on Preferred Alternative phasing.

What happens in the 2020 decision point of the Preferred Alternative?

A thorough assessment of the overall purpose and need and effectiveness of implementation of these decisions will be performed. At that time, the lead agencies, in conjunction with stakeholders, may need to consider a full range of alternatives considered in the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and revisit the Tier 1 decision if necessary.

What happens in the 2025 decision point of the Preferred Alternative?

If the Advanced Guideway System cannot be built by 2025 and the Specific Highway Improvements from the Preferred Alternative are complete, CDOT, in consultation with stakeholders, can implement additional needed highway and non-Advanced Guideway System capacity improvements.

8. What is Context Sensitive Solutions and how does it work with future NEPA processes and other decision-making on the Corridor?

In 2008, the lead agencies and other signatories executed a Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (Programmatic Agreement) among the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Glenwood Springs Field Office, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer regarding implementation of the Interstate 70 Mountain Corridor Project, September 2008, in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. In this agreement, developed over several years, the lead agencies committed to initiate, before Tier 2 undertakings, development of design guidelines and historic context(s) for the I-70 Mountain Corridor. The guidelines are consistent with the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions and CDOT's *Policy Memo 26*. The intent of the engineering design criteria, aesthetic guidelines, and the historic context is to guide all future undertakings on the Corridor.

The Colorado Department of Transportation initiated the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions process to provide effective guidelines for future planning, design, construction, and maintenance projects along the 144-mile Corridor.

The Colorado Department of Transportation initiated the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions process to provide effective guidelines for all future planning, design, and construction projects along the I-70 Corridor. Context Sensitive Solutions is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. Context Sensitive Solutions is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist.

For the I-70 Mountain Corridor, a Context Sensitive Solutions Corridor Team was established to assist in the development of a context statement, core values and principles, a six-step Context Sensitive Solutions process, design criteria, and a Historic Context Report. An interactive website, <http://i70mtncorridorcss.com> includes all of this documentation.

9. How were the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidelines developed?

To develop the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidelines, the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Project brought together a multidisciplinary, multi-interest stakeholder group to discuss, debate, and capture what they respect and will work to preserve in the Corridor. The lead agencies worked with state and federal agencies, counties, towns, the National Forests, ski corporations and resorts, residents, business owners, truckers, and commuters to develop the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions design guidelines. This inclusive group of stakeholders became the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Team.

Through meetings, the Corridor Team developed processes, such as the 6-Step Decision-Making Process, to use on future studies, designs, and construction projects so that planners, designers, and contractors incorporate Corridor values into their decisions. These are documented in the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance.

The first Corridor Team meeting was held October 26, 2007. Additional Corridor Team meetings were held in December 2007, March 2008, October 2008, and September 2009.

In addition, an I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Project Leadership Team was formed at the onset of the Context Sensitive Solutions process. Their mission was to make sure the Context Sensitive Solutions process moved forward, included the appropriate stakeholders, and developed aesthetic guidelines as directed in the Programmatic Agreement.

The I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance is the result of the stakeholders' passion and commitment to build world-class improvements along Colorado's I-70 Mountain Corridor. Broad groups of stakeholders came together to make sure that transportation improvements enhance the Corridor by applying the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance on future NEPA processes and decisions made about the Corridor.

The 6-Step Decision-Making Process

Step 1: Define Desired Outcomes and Actions

Step 2: Endorse the Process

Step 3: Establish Criteria

Step 4: Develop Alternatives or Options

Step 5: Evaluate, Select, and Refine Alternatives or Options

Step 6: Finalize Documentation and Evaluate Process

10. How is the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance to be used?

The lead agencies committed to stakeholders that the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance will be used on all future Corridor projects. Specifically, projects will have a Project Leadership Team, use the 6-Step Decision-Making Process, and comply with the design criteria for engineering and aesthetic guidelines.

The I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance provides direction, guidance, and resources to future planners, engineers, designers, and Corridor stakeholders about how decisions are made about Corridor improvements. To maximize ease of access, transparency, and future flexibility, CDOT posted the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance on an interactive website that:

- Presents the Corridor Context Statement and Core Values;
- Delineates the decision-making process to be used;
- Defines the design criteria and guidance;

Introduction

- Organizes Corridor environmental data on maps;
- Indexes the 2004 Draft PEIS data by mile marker;
- Provides tools, templates, photographs, exercises, and ideas for project managers;
- Makes available all Corridor agreements;
- Captures years of stakeholders' comments and concerns; and
- Contains links to other relevant materials.

11. What additional information is included in the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance?

As an element of the Context Sensitive Solutions process, several Working Groups were formed to address specific issues along the Corridor. The conclusions of these Working Groups are included in the I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions Guidance and are available for all future Corridor planning, design, and construction projects.

Stream and Wetland Ecological Enhancement Program (SWEEP)

The SWEEP program focuses on efforts to integrate water resource needs (such as water quality, fisheries, wetlands, and riparian areas) with design elements for construction activities and long-term maintenance and operations of the transportation system. The working group developed a Memorandum of Understanding among the lead agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Clear Creek County, Clear Creek Watershed Foundation, Upper Clear Creek Watershed Association, Eagle River Watershed Council and Colorado Trout Unlimited. The Memorandum of Understanding establishes the management framework to assure protection of water resources throughout the life cycle of projects in the I-70 Mountain Corridor.

The lead agencies are working toward finalizing the SWEEP Memorandum of Understanding. **Appendix D** of this document contains the draft SWEEP Memorandum of Understanding. The lead agencies are working to have the Memorandum of Understanding finalized to include with the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

A Landscape Level Inventory of Valued Ecosystems (ALIVE)

The ALIVE Working Group addresses issues related to improving wildlife movement and reducing habitat fragmentation in the Corridor. The ALIVE Working Group established an inventory of linkage interference zones where evidence suggests that the highway impedes important wildlife migration, movement, and dispersal. The lead agencies established a Memorandum of Understanding with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management for a program that focuses on identifying and addressing critical ecosystem habitats connections across I-70. **Appendix E** provides the ALIVE Memorandum of Understanding.

Historic Context Working Group

The Historic Context Working Group developed a Multi-Property Document Form for the I-70 Mountain Corridor. This document is to be used in all future NEPA documents as part of the Section 106 process. The Multi-Property Document Form supports the consistent preservation of historic resources in the communities along the Corridor during planning, design, and construction of future projects.

Aesthetic Working Groups

The Aesthetic Working Groups were formed to assist the Corridor and consultant teams in preparing the aesthetic guidance. Four working groups formed around four geographic design segments that collectively represent the entire I-70 Mountain Corridor. The four design segments are:

- Front Range Foothills
- Mountain Mineral Belt
- Crest of the Rockies
- Western Slope Canyons and Valleys

For each segment, objectives and strategies were developed to guide the future improvements.

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