

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 14, 2007
TO: PPACG Board of Directors
FROM: Craig Casper, Transportation Director
THROUGH: Robert MacDonald, Executive Director
SUBJECT: US 24 Greenway Project Briefing

ACTION REQUESTED: Information Only

SUMMARY:

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) will present information on the status of the US 24 West Environmental Assessment (EA). The project boundaries are Interstate 25 on the east and east Manitou Avenue on the west. This three to four year EA will study short- and long-term strategies to address capacity issues and explore all reasonable and feasible solutions to address existing and future transportation needs in the corridor. The vision for the project is to integrate improvements into the community fabric, while providing safety, accessibility and mobility.

As part of this effort, CDOT is working to create a greenway companion project along Fountain Creek. There are three concepts for greenways: creekwalk, gateway, and restoration. The final solution identified will be composed of varying amounts of each of these general concepts. CDOT will provide a briefing for the U.S. 24 Greenway Project.

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION:

During the September 2006 Board meeting the US 24 EA was confirmed as a priority project. This action reaffirmed the July 2006 and November 2003 actions stating it is a priority. This is the fourth update of this project.

BACKGROUND:

A greenway is an integrated solution for connecting roadway improvements with non-motorized trails, for using floodplain enhancements to improve water quality and aesthetics, and to connect local amenities with local businesses (trails with restaurants, for example). CDOT is committed to the planning of a greenway that integrates the local transportation systems and adds lasting value to the community

US 24 has a long history of serving Colorado and its adjacent communities. The corridor is a vital east/west connection for the Pikes Peak region providing mobility for cars, bikes, pedestrians, animal mobility corridors, and Fountain Creek. The US 24 solutions are being designed to meet critical issues established by the stakeholders, addressing mobility, the environment, the community, local economics and construction. While planning for US 24 is addressing these critical issues, it has become apparent that there are many systems at work in

the corridor. These include the roads, trails, bus routes, the creek, shopping, restaurants, parks and open space. These systems are and must remain interconnected; a solution for US 24 should integrate with recommendations that help solve flooding, connect trails, and improve access to local businesses.

This approach has led to the idea of a greenway, which is typically defined as a stretch of undeveloped land close to an urban area that is kept for community use. This greenway could include trails, natural water quality treatments, trees, fountains, places to play and areas to discover. It will be designed to carry a 100-year flood so surrounding homes and businesses will not be damaged. Additionally, the greenway can optimize resources such as local, state and federal dollars by combining improvements and resources. Construction of elements using a variety of funds and accomplishing different goals can be done concurrently if planned for in advance. Examples include:

- CDOT raising the bridges to prevent flooding and city trails being built underneath without street crossings
- Water quality treatments being built to clean the water in Fountain Creek and the roadway runoff

CDOT has formed a Midland Greenway Advisory Committee to assist with development of the greenway concept. This committee is composed of technical representatives and other interested stakeholders from the region. The mission of this committee is to “develop a community vision and conceptual plan for the “Midland Greenway; build community support for the Midland Greenway; and identify funding and management responsibilities.”

Historically, Fountain Creek has served as the east/west corridor connecting the plains and the mountains in the Pikes Peak region. The greenway will be a focal point and an asset of Colorado Spring’s West Side. This will create gateways to the mountains, the metropolitan area, and neighborhoods. By connecting local and regional destinations, the greenway will make the West Side a truly “walkable community.” The greenway will also focus on Fountain Creek and provide a safe and fun environment for both residents and visitors. Improving Fountain Creek will enhance the area for residents, business owners and visitors.

The following represent the development principles for the greenway plan:

Something for everyone

The greenway will have active and passive uses. It will be a gathering place for many types and sizes of groups and it will include elements such as paths, trails, parks, recreational opportunities, interpretive opportunities and business opportunities.

About the community

From the history of the area to its present day mixed-use, the greenway will tell the story of the West Side. The planning, management and maintenance of the greenway will be a community success and a template for other projects within the Pikes Peak region—a true community partnership.

A gateway

The greenway will help to aesthetically define the West Side as well as announce a gateway to the community and to the mountains. It will convey to travelers on US 24 that this is a place and not just a passageway.

A destination

The greenway will be a regional destination, hosting events and encouraging people to stop. It will be a stopping place along local and regional trails and will encourage development of compatible adjacent businesses.

A connector

The greenway will provide connections to existing business districts, local attractions and to the West Side's parks and open spaces. Key elements to be connected on the west side include Garden of the Gods, Old Colorado City, Manitou Springs, Red Rocks open space and the Midland Trail. It will also bind together local and regional trails.

A natural place

The greenway will fit the area and blend in with its surroundings. Its appearance will change with the seasons, and vary along its course. The natural design will make sustainability the first goal and will facilitate its role in improving water quality and managing the floodplain.

Below is an example of a gateway concept between 26th street and 21st street with a pedestrian walk along 24th street that could serve the farmers market.

