



## Mountain towns, counties to craft I-70 plan

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WESTERN COLORADO - With the state proposing to expand Interstate 70 through the mountains and put toll booths at the Eisenhower Tunnel and the twin tunnels east of Idaho Springs, a coalition of mountain towns and counties have banded together to make its own plan.

The Colorado Department of Transportation, also known as CDOT, is about to issue a 20-year plan to reduce traffic congestion on the busy stretch of highway that runs from Denver into the mountains.

CDOT will issue the first draft of its so-called "I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement" next month. A 90-day public review and comment period will follow the release of the study, which is intended to detail ways to get more people through the mountains while not increasing traffic jams.

In preparation, the Interstate 70 Central Mountain Transportation Corridor Coalition formed this year to come up with its own traffic plan that will address the problems of each county and town along the corridor.

Members of the corridor coalition, who included representatives from towns in Eagle County, met in Glenwood Springs last week to begin crafting a traffic plan - or "preferred alternative" in government parlance - that group hopes will be considered by CDOT.

Members of the coalition will meet with CDOT Executive Director Tom Norton in Denver next month to ask for a 180-day extension of the public comment period so it can finish its plan.

To design its ideas, the coalition hopes to hire a transportation engineer and a financial consultant, for a projected cost of about \$200,000. The coalition will also ask Nolan if CDOT will pay half the cost of the project, but failing that, it will go to the member governments for half the cost and raise the remainder privately.

A key to the success of the coalition's mission is cohesiveness, said Gary Severson, administrator of the Rural Resort Region, which is overseeing the I-70 group and is itself a coalition of five mountain resort counties: Garfield, Eagle, Lake, Pitkin and Summit.

"We have Idaho Springs on the east to Glenwood Springs on the west, and we need consensus," he said. "If Tom Norton senses the coalition can work in a cooperative manner we will find some reciprocity from CDOT."

Clear Creek County, which extends from Idaho Springs to the Eisenhower Tunnel, offered its own solutions to the traffic congestion problem.

Among the solutions listed in a paper presented to the coalition meeting Thursday was an Advanced Guideway System, such as a monorail, linking the airports in Denver and Eagle.

The county also wants to see a reconfiguration of I-70 between Idaho Springs and the top of Floyd Hill to link with the Central City Parkway and the proposed Blackhawk Tunnel, a move that would eliminate many dangerous curves.

Vail, Colorado

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