



Mountains have their own traffic ideas

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SUMMIT COUNTY - In Clear Creek County, trucks pulling out from the weigh station grind immediately into an uphill crawl, slowing traffic streaming toward western Colorado.

Moving that station to a less obtrusive place is one of the ideas a coalition of towns and counties along I-70 has proposed for dealing with traffic on the freeway, and it's part of larger batch of concepts the group, known as the Interstate 70 Mountain Corridor Coalition, delivered to state transportation officials this week.

The coalition is calling for quick action to relieve the most congested stretches while also planning for some form of mass transit, such as buses or even a monorail, between Golden and Glenwood Springs. The final plan for I-70 must also include air, bicycle and foot travel, the coalition said.

The coalition also said solutions should be phased to deal with the worst problems first; among the most pressing:

- Relocation of the Downieville truck port of entry weighing station.
- A "slow-moving vehicle" plan.
- Incentives to spread out peak traffic.
- Alternate recreation schedules and enhanced traveler information.
- A mountain parking plan.

The Colorado Department of Transportation, also known as CDOT, last year released the voluminous first draft of a report on freeway improvements. The agency is scheduled to make a final in about a year.

Handing in the mountain coalition's ideas just another step in a long process, not a final resolution, said Joann Sorenson, of the Clear Creek I-70 task force.

"We're going to have to keep riding CDOT," Sorenson said. "There are no guarantees that they are going to accept this."

Below are the phases of the mountain coalition's plan for I-70.

Phase 1

The first sequence of construction is in Clear Creek County, where the coalition identifies sections to improve:

- Auxiliary lane, milepost 259 to milepost 253;

- Six-lane highway improvements from Floyd Hill to the east end of Idaho Springs;
- New westbound lane, or bore, through the Hidden Valley Tunnel;
- New eastbound lane, or bore, through the south side of the Twin Tunnel;
- New eastbound lane, or bore, through the Floyd Hill Tunnel;
- Auxiliary lanes from Downieville Junction to Empire Junction/ U.S. 40 interchange;
- Curve safety at Fall River Road;
- Interchange improvements from Morrison through Empire Junction.
- The coalition's first sequence also includes curve safety improvements in Dowd Canyon and west of Wolcott, in Eagle County.

Phase 2

Addresses construction from Bakerville to Glenwood Springs, including major improvements to the Eisenhower Tunnel. The sequencing allows for time to evaluate impacts from the first phase:

- Six-lane improvements from Bakerville to the tunnel;
- Interchange improvements and ramp-metering at Loveland Pass/Loveland Ski Area. • West of the Eisenhower Tunnel, new auxiliary lanes from the Vail Pass interchange to Vail's east entrance and interchange improvements in Silverthorne, Frisco, Copper Mountain and west to Vail, Gypsum and Glenwood Springs.

Phase 3

Addresses the remaining concerns in Clear Creek County, with the exception of Idaho Springs and Dumont and Downieville area, with more evaluation needed before tackling the tough, narrow terrain in Clear Creek Canyon, where residents hope to minimize impacts to their towns:

- Auxiliary lanes from the Georgetown interchange to Silver Plume, built in the most environmentally sensitive design possible, as well as specified noise and visual mitigation, preservation of a continuous bike path and no widening of highway footprint in the Silver Plume and Georgetown National Historic Landmark District;
- Six-lane improvements from Silver Plume to Bakerville/Herman Gulch.

Phase 4

Includes the "critical" transit mode, which must move both people and goods, and might not follow the same path as I-70. The coalition said CDOT must commit funds to planning for transit right from the beginning, with spending on transit for the corridor to climb up to 40 percent in 25 years.

A final I-70 plan must also include aviation mode, as well as alternate routes, including other regional east-west highways.

Vail, Colorado

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