

## TUNNEL MONITORING

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LOVELAND PASS - One by one, the counter clicks away. In a control room above the Eisenhower Tunnel on Interstate 70, Colorado [Department of Transportation](#) monitors traffic as it moves east and west.

In recent years, the traffic counter has been working overtime.

Each year since the state started monitoring the number of vehicles passing through the tunnel the number has increased 3 percent on average. Last year, 11.73 million vehicles went through the tunnel.

With the increased traffic comes an increase in congestion. On several occasions during the past few years, traffic has come to a halt in the tunnel.

"We don't want gridlock in the tunnels so that if somebody has a [medical emergency](#) that we can't get emergency services to them," Stacey Stegman, a spokesperson for CDOT, said.

To avoid having that happen, CDOT uses video monitors in the tunnels to watch for backups or vehicles that have broken down that cause congestion. When those backups occur, CDOT stops additional traffic from entering the tunnel.

"When traffic starts [backing up](#) and backing into the tunnel we stop traffic," Stegman said. "We don't let anymore cars into the tunnel because we want to hold people until the tunnel can clear."

Stegman says the stoppages typically only last 15 to 20 minutes.

A common misconception is that the stoppages are caused by a buildup of [carbon monoxide](#) in the tunnel as a result of the heavy traffic. That is very rarely the case. The tunnels are very well ventilated with fans and are closely monitored for carbon monoxide levels. Those levels rarely rise to anything close to a dangerous level.

The state would like to make major improvements to the tunnels and other problem areas of I-70, but that will have to wait until the economic picture improves.

"We're looking at improvement for I-70 that are going to range into the billions and right now, when we barely have enough to even manage our snow removal program in Colorado. It's tough," Stegman said.

To see how traffic is moving on I-70, you can visit [www.goi70.com](http://www.goi70.com).

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