

## Transportation

### Highways & Bridges

#### Client

Colorado Department of  
Transportation

#### Location

Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA

## U.S. 24 West Environmental Assessment

### Project Highlights

- Extensive public involvement to understand the context for corridor improvements
- Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) approach integrating mobility, accessibility, and safety with flood reduction and recreational improvements
- Opportunities for federal agencies to improve mobility, reduce flood risk, and improve water quality in a coordinated effort



### Project Description

U.S. 24 heads west from I-25 and has a long history of serving Colorado and the communities along the corridor. As a corridor serving the vital east/west connection for the Pikes Peak region, it provides access to and from the Colorado Springs metro area and the nearby mountain communities.

The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG)—consisting of representatives from various local governments—identified U.S. 24 as a major corridor with present and future traffic congestion. Improvements to U.S. 24 are included in the regional congestion management system for air quality conformity. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) was asked to study short- and long-term strategies to address capacity and safety. CDOT and CH2M HILL began studying the corridor in 2004, with the first public meeting held in November of that year. The final result will be a coordinated implementation plan and an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the corridor.

During the first public meeting, citizens were asked to identify the critical issues along the corridor. By using CSS principles, CH2M HILL worked with participants at that public meeting and local government leaders to identify numerous issues that were then consolidated into nine critical issues for U.S. 24 West. The critical issues were:

- Needs of multiple users who have multiple objectives
- Corridor aesthetics
- Corridor's context and setting including the adjacent neighborhoods and surrounding businesses
- Economic viability
- Surrounding natural and human environment
- Safety, accessibility, and mobility
- U.S. 24 as a destination and a connector to gateways with other destinations
- Coordinated implementation
- Effective and fundable solution



These issues became the basis for the criteria used to select the alternative that best suited the corridor context.

CH2M HILL facilitated a second public meeting, which resulted in 360 different ideas on how to meet the project's goals. Those ideas were evaluated against the criteria, formed from the critical issues, to eliminate ideas with fatal flaws. Remaining ideas were then grouped into seven potential solutions, which were then analyzed against the critical issues and presented to the public for comment and discussion.

Using the analyses of the potential solutions, CH2M HILL and CDOT developed three alternatives:—the Midland Expressway, the U.S. 24 freeway, and the “no-build” alternative.

The stakeholders showed strong support for the Midland Expressway, which became the preferred alternative. The Midland Expressway improved the level of service along the corridor by adding lanes, incorporating grade-separated interchanges, and improving cross streets and connections with surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, the expressway alternative incorporated trail connections and transit improvements.

CH2M HILL, working with CDOT, evaluated design options for the Midland Expressway that met the goals for mobility, safety, and accessibility improvements while removing U.S. 24 from the 100-year flood plain. Working with CDOT and other federal agencies, concepts for creek improvements were developed that would carry the 100-year flood.

An element of the combined roadway and creek improvements included working with the community to determine how the creek improvements might look and how the land might be used after the improvements were completed. This evaluation led to the idea of a greenway along the corridor, which included trails, natural water quality treatments, trees, fountains, and parks.

The U.S. 24 planning process developed a vision for this corridor that accomplished community and agency goals. By understanding the community, its context, and its plans, CH2M HILL and CDOT developed improvements that will enhance mobility, reduce flood risk, provide new recreational amenities, connect communities with trails, and enhance the economic opportunities within the corridor.