

# The Plan for I-70 Congestion

## THE PROBLEM

The I-70 mountain corridor is critically important to Colorado's economy and quality of life. As the only east-west interstate in Colorado, it serves as a virtual "main street" for local residents and small businesses and is vital to intrastate and interstate commerce, moving 11,000 tons of commercial goods through the state and delivering goods to thousands of businesses within the state every year. It is also the main gateway to skiing, hiking, and all the other recreational activities that Coloradans love and that contribute billions to our state's economy.

Congestion at peak times on I-70's mountain corridor creates hours-long traffic jams, frustrating travelers, harming local communities and small businesses, impeding commerce and creating serious safety issues. With **Colorado's population projected to increase by more than 50 percent from 2015 to 2050**, the problem is only going to get worse. It is estimated that **travel times on the already notoriously gridlocked highway could triple by 2035**.

The good news is *there is a plan* for fixing I-70.

## THE PLAN

The plan for I-70 was issued by the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) in a Record of Decision (ROD) in June of 2011.

The plan is a product of a years-long and unprecedented consensus-based effort incorporating extensive engineering analysis, research, and debate among a diverse group of over two dozen stakeholders in the region. The plan is an innovative, multimodal solution that calls for **both high-speed mass transit AND highway widening**.

Some progress has been made in implementing this plan. Since it was issued:

- The Veterans Memorial Tunnels east of Idaho Springs have been expanded
- The eastbound Mountain Express Lane has been built
- Other improvements to the highway have been made with more to come, including a westbound Mountain Express Lane, and westbound lane widening and redesign at Floyd Hill

However, these alone are not enough. As the analysis determined, highway improvements must be done in conjunction with high-speed mass transit. **One without the other will not suffice; both are needed to meet the long-term needs of this critical corridor.**



When the plan was developed, there was a perception that high-speed mass transit was something far off in the future. However, it is rapidly becoming a present-day reality. New high-speed mass transit technologies are on the cusp of being built in Colorado and are expected to be operational in just a few years, putting Colorado on the map as ground zero for a revolution in transportation technology.

## OPPORTUNITIES/STATUS

Good progress is being made on highway improvements; more must be done, however, on the transit side to fully address the challenges on I-70 and plan for growth.

This plan is the most effective way to increase capacity, improve accessibility and mobility, and decrease congestion in the corridor.