

# The Economic Impacts of High-Speed Transit in the I-70 Mountain Corridor

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## Background

The I-70 Mountain Corridor is one of the most challenged in Colorado. It is also one of the most important to our state's economy. It is the primary access to our state's \$62.5 billion recreation economy and critical to the shipment of goods in and through our state.

A plan to increase capacity, improve accessibility and mobility, and decrease congestion in the I-70 mountain corridor was developed by the Federal Highways Administration and the Colorado Department of Transportation in 2011. That plan was based on stakeholder input and included 3 components: non-infrastructure improvements, highway expansion, and a high-speed transit system. The plan called for a study on the technological and financial feasibility of high-speed transit in the corridor. This study was completed in 2014 and found that technologies exist that could work in the geographically constrained and weather challenged corridor, and that funding was not available at the time.

A broad cross-section of stakeholders in the corridor felt it was important to understand more about the economic impact of high-speed transit in the corridor. These stakeholders included:

- City and County of Denver
- City of Idaho Springs
- Clear Creek County
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Eagle County
- I-70 Coalition
- Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation
- Black Hawk Silver Dollar Metropolitan District
- Summit County

They hired noted Colorado economist Patty Silverstein and her firm, Development Research Partners, to conduct the study, the same firm that conducted an earlier study on the costs of congestion in the I-70 corridor. She

utilized surveys, one-on-one interviews and existing CDOT studies and technical data to conduct the study. It analyzed only the direct economic impacts, or business-to-business and consumer-to-business spending patterns. No indirect or economic multiplier effects were included, so the analysis is conservative and represents the low end of potential benefits.

### Conclusions

The study found that high-speed transit will result in \$711.7 million more in economic activity and \$45.8 million in new tax revenue in the I-70 Mountain Corridor, every year. Specifically, high-speed transit would:

- Generate 4.2 million new visitors to the corridor who would produce \$548.6 million in new spending and create 4,660 new jobs with wages totaling \$153.3 million;
- Enhance business activity in the corridor which would generate \$131.6 million in new spending, 1,560 new jobs and \$64.7 million in new wages;
- Result in the addition of 3,350 new residents in the corridor who would generate \$31.5 million in new spending and create 208 new jobs, producing \$9.2 million in new wages; and
- Generate \$12.5 million in new property taxes, \$31 million in new sales taxes, and \$2.3 million in new lodging taxes.

In addition, high-speed transit would result in travel cost savings for commuters of \$8.4 million, \$3.3 million for new visitors, and \$1 million for residents of the corridor. Further, the additional visitor and resident spending associated with a high-speed transit system will foster the development of 1,360 new residential units and 2 million square feet of commercial space with a combined value of nearly \$1.2 billion.

The Economic Impacts of High-Speed Transit in the I-70 Mountain Corridor study can be found at [www.i70solutions.org](http://www.i70solutions.org), Reports/Studies tab, under Additional Reports.

