



WB I-70 Peak Period Shoulder Lane

# RECREATION TECHNICAL REPORT

October 26, 2018

Categorical Exclusion

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# WESTBOUND I-70 PEAK PERIOD SHOULDER LANE

Prepared for:



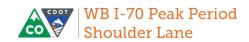
Prepared by:





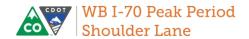
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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

CDOT Colorado Department of Transportation

CR County Road

CSS Context Sensitive Solutions
EA Environmental Assessment

EB eastbound

FHWA Federal Highway Administration

GIS Global Positioning System

I-70 Interstate 70MP Milepost

NEPA National Environmental Policy Act

PPSL Peak Period Shoulder Lane

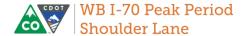
PEIS Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

ROD Record of Decision SH State Highway

US 40 U.S. Highway 40

USFS United States Forest Service

WB Westbound



## Section 1. Purpose of the Report

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), is preparing a Categorical Exclusion for proposed changes to the westbound (WB) lanes of Interstate 70 (I-70) between approximately milepost (MP) 230 and MP 243, in Clear Creek County, Colorado (Proposed Action; Figure 1). The Proposed Action includes the addition of a 12-mile tolled Peak Period Shoulder Lane (PPSL) between east Idaho Springs and the U.S. Highway 40 (US 40)/I-70 interchange in the WB direction and improvements to the State Highway (SH) 103 interchange. The Proposed Action improves operations and travel time reliability in the WB direction of I-70 in the study area. Additionally, the improvements are consistent with the *I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* (PEIS; CDOT 2011a), PEIS Record of Decision (ROD; FHWA 2011), Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) on the I-70 Mountain Corridor (CDOT 2009) process, and other commitments of the PEIS and ROD. The Proposed Action fits within the definition of "expanded use of existing transportation infrastructure in and adjacent to the corridor" included in the "Non-Infrastructure Related Components" element within the Preferred Alternative's Minimum Program of Improvements.

Clear Creek
Highway

To Winter Park

To Winter Park

To Winter Park

To Bisenhower-Johnson
Memorial Tunnels

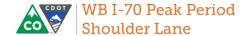
To Bisenhower-Johnson
Memorial Tunnels

To Denver

Figure 1. Project Corridor

Source: HDR 2018.

This document discusses the regulatory setting, and describes the affected environment and the impacts of the Proposed Action on parks and recreational resources within the study area. This document also identifies mitigation measures, including applicable measures identified in the I-70 Mountain Corridor PEIS, which would reduce impacts during construction and operation.



# Section 2. Summary of Recreational Resources from Previous National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Analyses

# 2.1 How were Recreational Resources Treated in the I-70 Mountain Corridor PEIS and ROD (Tier 1)?

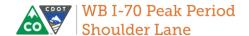
The Tier 1 PEIS and associated *I-70 Mountain Corridor PEIS Recreation Resources Technical Report* (CDOT 2011b) provided an overview of recreational resource issues from a corridor perspective. The recreational resources analysis conducted for the WB PPSL is developed to evaluate the specific improvements identified between MP 230 and MP 243, using the most current data and guidance available.

The *I-70 Mountain Corridor Final PEIS* and ROD committed to conducting specific additional analysis and coordination regarding impacts to recreational resources during Tier 2 projects. The following commitments from the PEIS and ROD are applicable to this Tier 2 project:

- CDOT will conduct further analysis of direct and indirect impacts on recreational resources during future project-specific Tier 2 processes. Additional analysis of direct impacts on recreational resources during Tier 2 processes will determine the degree and extent of impact.
- The lead agencies will continue to coordinate with jurisdictions regarding direct and indirect impacts to recreational resources, specifically with Clear Creek County and Jefferson County, as well as with the United States Forest Service (USFS) regarding the Clear Creek County Greenway Plan (2005) and USFS management activities.

The Tier 1 PEIS recognized the local communities' desire to maintain and improve trail connectivity along the I-70 corridor and maintain the many creek access points. As part of the Proposed Action, CDOT has considered approaches to incorporate and maintain current and future bike routes in the I-70 highway right-of-way, improve path connectivity, and continue to provide river access points in a manner that is consistent with CDOT and FHWA guidance. The Tier 1 PEIS and ROD suggested the following approaches be considered (which may not all be applicable to the Proposed Action):

- Refer to principles applied to the Glenwood Canyon bike path and river access (potentially applicable as a model for mitigation measures).
- Consider policies to help identify state and federal transportation funding for pedestrian enhancement and connectivity.
- Consider whether moving trails elsewhere is a more economical option to modifying the design of proposed transportation components.
- Continue to coordinate with local jurisdictions, including USFS regarding its motor vehicle facilities.



# 2.2 How were Recreational Resources Treated in the Twin Tunnels Expansion Projects (Tier 2)?

The FHWA, in cooperation with CDOT, prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for proposed changes (2012 Westbound I-70 Twin Tunnels Expansion project) to the eastbound (EB) section of the Twin Tunnels between MP 241 and MP 244 in Clear Creek County, Colorado (CDOT 2012a). The EA provided an inventory of existing and future recreational resources within the study area between MP 241 and MP 244.5.

CDOT prepared a Categorical Exclusion for the Twin Tunnels for the WB lanes of I-70 which is the same study area as the Twin Tunnels EA and FONSI (EB). Findings from this study were similar to the findings from Twin Tunnels EA and FONSI completed for the EB direction.

The EA recognized the local municipalities' primary concerns were related to the implementation of the 2005 Clear Creek Greenway Plan and the preservation of access to Clear Creek. The Clear Creek Greenway has been a priority project for the County since adoption of the Greenway Plan in 2005. The Greenway Plan incorporates existing and planned recreation elements found within the jurisdictions of Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County. Many of the recreation amenities described within the plan are located partially or wholly within CDOT right-of-way; therefore, coordination between the agencies is needed for implementation of these elements of the plan. All parties agreed that recreational properties within CDOT right-of-way were not subject to protection under Section 4(f).

Impacts associated with the Twin Tunnels projects were:

- Temporary impact to the Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail
- Temporary impact to the planned future Game Check Area Park
- Temporary impacts to Kermitts Trailhead (planned)
- Temporary impacts to river access points along Clear Creek

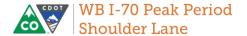
# 2.3 How were Recreation Resources Treated in EB I-70 PPSL Categorical Exclusion (Tier 2)?

The *EB I-70 PPSL Categorical Exclusion* (Tier 2; CDOT 2014a) and associated *Recreational Resources Technical Memorandum* (CDOT 2014b) provided an inventory of recreational resources along the I-70 corridor between MP 230 and MP 243. It examined opportunities to not only avoid and minimize impacts to recreational resources but also enhance these resources.

Impacts to recreational resources resulting from the EB PPSL project included redevelopment of Water Wheel Park, detour for the Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail, temporary disruption to the Colorado Bikeway and the multi-use trail on the USFS property at SH 103, and temporary disruption to the Mt. Evans Scenic Byway. Improvements to recreational resources included additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities across the SH 103 bridge and within Water Wheel Park.

Mitigation approaches for recreational resources from the Tier 1 PEIS and ROD that are relevant to this project include:

- Detours
- Phased construction



- Timing of construction activities to occur outside of peak rafting season
- Pausing construction activities when rafters are present

# Section 3. What Process was Followed to Analyze Parks and Recreation?

#### 3.1 Methodology

The location of existing and planned recreational resources and activities was determined through coordination with local jurisdictions, analysis of geographic information system data, site visits and review of the I-70 PEIS and the Tier 2 NEPA documents as well as comprehensive land use plans, and parks plans. Impacts to existing and future recreational resources are assessed based on the degree and extent of impacts and how well the project accommodates planned facilities.

## 3.2 Study Area

The study area for the WB PPSL project encompasses CDOT right-of-way along I-70 in both directions from MP 243 to MP 230 and areas immediately adjacent to the right-of-way. This study area was used to evaluate the **direct** effects of the Proposed Action.

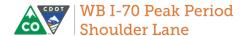
For transportation and socioeconomic impacts, the study area for **indirect** effects includes Clear Creek County and the communities of Idaho Springs, Downieville-Lawson-Dumont, and the town of Empire. This area is broadly defined and includes the communities and other areas that would be indirectly affected by the Proposed Action. The indirect effects study area includes the communities shown in Figure 2.

LEGEND
Community Boundaries

Downieville
Lawson
To EJMT 232

To EJMT
T

Figure 2. Study Area Communities



For the remaining resources, the study area for **indirect** effects generally includes a 0.25-mile buffer around the study area. This area encompasses the communities and other areas that would be indirectly affected by the Proposed Action.

#### 3.3 Regulations

There are no specific regulations that protect parks and recreational resources except for Section 4(f). Section 4(f) of the U.S Department of Transportation Act of 1966 was enacted to protect publicly owned parks, recreation areas and wildlife/waterfowl refuges, as well as historic sites of local, state, or national significance (eligible for the National Register of Historic Places) from being converted to a transportation use. There are 15 recreation properties that fit the definition of a Section 4(f) property in the study area, but none of these properties is converted to a permanent transportation use. There are temporary impacts to 5 recreational facilities. Two of these are subject to a temporary occupancy under 23 CFR 774.13(d).

Section 6(f) refers to a section of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, 78 Stat 897), which protects public outdoor recreation areas and facilities funded by the National Park Service and matching local grants. Section 6(f)(3) of the Act prohibits the conversion of property acquired or developed with grants from this fund to a non-recreational purpose without the approval of the National Park Service. Section 6(f) lands are further described in the WB I-70 Peak Period Shoulder Lane Section 6(f) No Effects Memorandum (CDOT 2018c).

#### 3.4 Public Involvement

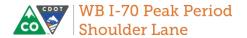
There are no specific requirements for public involvement for recreational resources; however the general public (through website comments, comments made at face-to-face public meetings and on the online public meeting) expressed concerns about recreational impacts, including:

- Will this project encourage more travel to National Forest Lands, thus straining their ability to accommodate increased visitation?
- If this project includes components of the Clear Creek Greenway, should evaluate the feasibility of putting the Greenway on the north side of I-70.

### 3.5 Agency Coordination Conducted

Local agency resources were used for the data collection. Contacts were made with Clear Creek County and Idaho Springs. The Technical Team provided the following input relative to recreational resources:

- Should minimize temporary effects to rafting, pedestrian and bicycle facilities and the Clear Creek Greenway.
- Look for opportunities to improve connections to the Clear Creek Greenway.
- The tourist economy is critical to future economic successes in Clear Creek County and Idaho Springs.



# Section 4. Description of the Proposed Action

The WB PPSL project adds an approximate 12-mile tolled PPSL on WB I-70 between the Veterans Memorial Tunnels (just west of MP 243) and the US 40/I-70 interchange (MP 232). The lane entrance begins approximately 500 feet east of the Veterans Memorial Tunnels portal. The WB PPSL maximizes the use of the existing alignment and infrastructure in order to minimize any new impacts within the study area. The 11-foot lane is open for use only during peak periods, and otherwise serves as the shoulder of the interstate. Use of the WB PPSL is prohibited for trucks, buses, or any vehicle over 25 feet long. Overhead signs showing the lane status and toll rate are located throughout the corridor and at the entrance point.

An ingress/entrance point for traffic coming onto WB I-70 from Idaho Springs is provided approximately 2,500 feet west of Exit 239. An egress point for traffic exiting to Downieville is provided about 4,400 feet east of Exit 235, and an egress point for traffic exiting to US 40 is provided approximately 4,400 feet east of Exit 232.

The WB PPSL ends approximately 1/2 mile west of Exit 232. Figure 3 illustrates the typical cross sections of the Proposed Action.

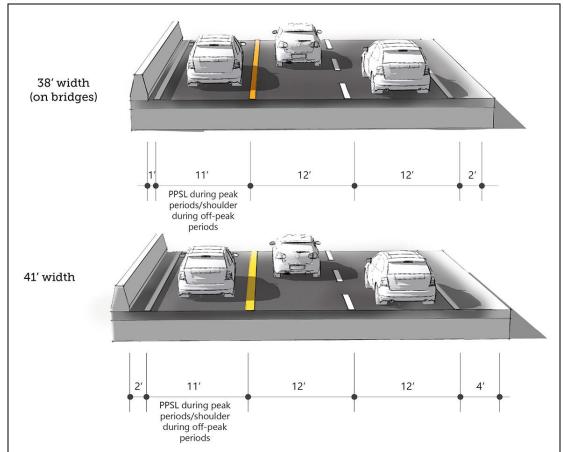
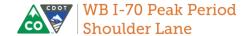


Figure 3. WB PPSL Proposed Action Typical Cross Sections

Source: HDR 2018.



#### Improvements include:

**I-70 Modifications.** The general purpose lanes and shoulder of WB I-70 are resurfaced and widened in select locations on the existing alignment between approximately MP 241.5 and MP 232 to accommodate a lane on the shoulder during peak travel periods. Drainage enhancements include a storm system for minor and major storm events and water quality facilities. At SH 103, I-70 is slightly realigned to enhance safety and improve drainage.

**SH 103 Interchange Improvements.** Ramp improvements address sight distance problems. The pedestrian sidewalk is improved by adding lighting and a decorative paving buffer adjacent to the existing sidewalk on the SH 103 bridge over I-70. This sidewalk connects to a new sidewalk buffered from 13th Avenue between the interchange ramp and Idaho Street in Idaho Springs.

**Safety Pull-Outs.** A total of seven new safety pull-outs are built—five along WB I-70 and two along EB I-70. One existing safety pull-out on EB I-70 is improved. The intention of these is to provide a space for vehicles to use if they experience a break down and for law enforcement to use.

**Rockfall Mitigation.** Rockfall mitigation measures are added at five locations to reduce the chance of rocks or other debris from falling on travel lanes or shoulders and reduce the potential for crashes and travel disruptions. Rockfall mitigation measures are included in the WB direction at MP 239, MP 238.4, MP 237.1, and MP 236.4, and in the EB direction at MP 240.3.

**Active Traffic Management.** Dynamic signage informs drivers so the WB PPSL is appropriately used to reduce congestion. This innovative design improves mobility.

**Fiber Optic Upgrades.** Fiber optics are designed to accommodate future emerging technologies for autonomous and connected vehicles, improving driver information and emergency response capabilities.

**Dumont Port-of-Entry Interchange.** Merge area improvements to the Dumont interchange acceleration lane includes restriping of I-70 to reduce merge conflicts between truck traffic and the general-purpose lane traffic.

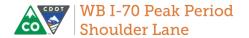


Dynamic signage

# Section 5. What are the Parks and Recreation Resources in the Study Area?

Recreational travel along I-70 is the primary contributor to peak period highway traffic, particularly during winter and summer weekends (CDOT 2011a). Recreational resources identified in the study area include paved and dirt trails, campsites, parks, ballfields, a skate park, a zipline, and Clear Creek itself, which has access points throughout the study area providing opportunities for fishing and rafting.

Management directives and planning for recreational facilities within the study area are detailed in the 2005 Clear Creek Greenway Plan and are also identified in the Draft System-Wide Master Plan (Clear



Creek Metropolitan Recreation District 2011), the *Clear Creek County Community Master Plan* (Clear Creek County 2017), and the *Envision Idaho Springs* 2017 (City of Idaho Springs 2017). These additional plans all endorse the proposals found within the 2005 *Clear Creek Greenway Plan* and defer to particular recreational development and management details outlined in the 2005 *Clear Creek Greenway Plan*.

Some of the recreational resources in the study area are subject to Section 4(f) protection. However, none of these Section 4(f) resources are permanently used by the Proposed Action. Two of them are temporarily occupied and subject to a Section 4(f) exception. Appendix A of this document contains maps showing locations of the recreational resources in the study area.

#### 5.1 Current Conditions

Table 1 to Table 3 list recreational facilities and resources by milepost.

Table 1. Recreational Resources from MP 230 to MP 239

Recreational Resource	Location	Туре			
CREEK ACCESS AREAS					
Empire Junction Spaghetti Ranch Fishing Access					
Empire Junction Creek Access	MP 232.2 (off US 40)	Creek Access—fishing			
Mile Hi Rafting Creek Access	MP 232.5	Creek Access—fishing			
White Water Kayak Park & Fishing and Boating Access	MP 232.7	Creek Access—fishing/boating			
Downieville Truck Stop Creek Access	MP 234.3	Creek Access—fishing			
Dumont Bridge Creek Access	MP 235.1	Creek Access—fishing			
Stanley Bridge Creek Access	MP 238.8	Creek Access—fishing			
Weigh Station Creek Access	MP 234.2	Creek Access—boating			
Upper Dumont Creek Access	MP 235	Creek Access—boating			
Clear Creek County Fairgrounds Creek Access	MP 235.5	Creek Access—boating			
Outer Limits Creek Access	MP 238.9	Creek Access—boating			
Spring Gulch Creek Access	MP 235.8	Creek Access—fishing			
Philadelphia Mill Site Creek Access	MP 236.3	Creek Access—fishing			
Lawson Whitewater Park Creek Access	MP 232.9	Creek Access—boating			
Lawson Tubing Creek Access	MP 233 and 233.2	Creek Access—tubing			
PARKS					
Clear Creek/Lawson Hole Whitewater Park	Alvarado Road, Lawson	Whitewater Park			
Spaghetti Ranch	Empire	Park			
Philadelphia Mill Open Space/Park	North Spring Gulch Road (milepost 236.3)	Park			

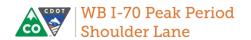


Table 1. Recreational Resources from MP 230 to MP 239

Recreational Resource	Location	Туре			
OTHER					
Clear Creek County Sportsmen's Club	3300 Stanley Road, Dumont	Fairgrounds & Gun Range			
Zipline	2525 Stanley Road, east of Dumont (MP 236.4 to 236.6)	Zipline			
Rocky Mountain Village	2650 Alvarado, Georgetown	Camp & Golf			
TRAILS					
Big Five Trailhead/Creek Access	Idaho Springs	Unofficial trailhead and creek access			
Colorado Bikeway and Downieville/Lawson/Dumont Segment	Off Street Non-Motorized trail	Biking, hiking, horseback riding trail			
Colorado Bikeway/Stanley Segment	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved) trail	Biking trail			
Colorado Bikeway/Big Five Segment	Off Street Paved Non- Motorized trail	Biking, off-road, hiking trail			
Stanley Rd/Colorado Bikeway	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved) trail	Biking trail			
West Dumont Rd	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, hiking trail			
CR 309/Colorado Bikeway/DLD Segment	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking trail			
Colorado Bikeway/Idaho Springs Segment	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking, hiking trail			
Silver Lakes/Colorado Bikeway/DLD Segment	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, hiking trail			
CR 308/Colorado Bikeway/DLD Segment	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking, hiking trail			
Alvarado Road/Colorado Bikeway/Lawson to Easter Seal Segment	Shared Roadway/Planned Paved Shoulders	Biking, hiking, motorized vehicle trail			
Virginia Canyon Road	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking trail			
Hukill to Virginia Canyon	Proposed Off Street Non- Motorized	Biking, off-road, horseback riding, hiking trail			
Hukill Gulch	Off Street Non-Motorized	Biking, hiking trail			
Trail Creek Road	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking trail			
Fall River Road Bikeway	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking trail			

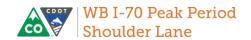


Table 1. Recreational Resources from MP 230 to MP 239

Recreational Resource	Location	Туре
Turkey Gulch Road	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking trail
North Spring Gulch Rd	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking trail
Mill Creek Road	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking trail
Red Elephant Trail	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, off-road, horseback riding, hiking, motorized vehicle trail
Red Elephant Hill	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, off-road, horseback riding, hiking, motorized vehicle trail
Red Elephant Spur	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, off-road, horseback riding, hiking, motorized vehicle trail
Red Elephant 4	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, hiking trail
Silver City Road	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, off-road, horseback riding, hiking, cross-country, snowshoe, snowmobile, motorized vehicle trail
Spring Creek Trail	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, off-road, horseback riding, hiking, cross-country, snowshoe, snowmobile, motorized vehicle trail
Silver Creek to Blue Ridge Rd	Off Street Non-Motorized	Biking, hiking trail
Blue Ridge	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, off-road, horseback riding, hiking, motorized vehicle trail
Blue Ridge Road	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, hiking, motorized vehicle trail
Hidden Valley Road	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking, motorized vehicle trail
Pack Trail	MP 232 (970 feet north of I-70)	Hiking trail

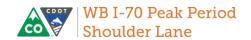


Table 2. Recreational Resources from MP 239 to MP 240

Recreational Resource	Location	Туре
Charlie Tayler Water Wheel creek access	MP 239.9	Creek Access-fishing
Chicago Creek access	MP 239.7 (I-70 eastbound, SH 103 on ramp)	Creek Access-boating
Anderson Park	Idaho Springs	Park
Citizens Park	1545 Miner St., Idaho Springs	Park
Charlie Tayler Water Wheel Park	1675 Water St., Idaho Springs	Park
Macy/Ruth Mill Park	655 Colorado Boulevard, Idaho Springs	Park
Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District	1130 Idaho Street, Idaho Springs	Recreation Center
Playing Field	932 Miner Street, Idaho Springs	Playing field
Carlson Elementary School	215 13th Ave., Idaho Springs	School with playground
Rocky Mountain Whitewater Rafting	MP 239.7 (just north of SH 103 ramp)	Outfitter/tours
Colorado Bikeway/Big Five Segment	Off Street Paved Non-Motorized	Biking, off-road, hiking trail
Colorado Bikeway/Idaho Springs Segment	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking, hiking trail
Virginia Canyon Rd (279)	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking, horseback riding, hiking trail
Mt. Evans Scenic Byway	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking trail
Idaho Springs Trail	Off Street Non-Motorized (Dirt Road)	Biking, off-road, hiking trail
Water Wheel to Forest Service	Off Street Paved Non-Motorized	Biking, off-road, hiking trail
USFS Prospector Trail	Off Street Non-Motorized	Hiking trail
Pine Slope Rd	On Street Shared Roadway (Dirt Road)  Biking, motorized vel	

Table 3. Recreational Resources from MP 240 to MP 242

Recreational Resource	Location	Туре	
Courtney-Ryley-Cooper Park Creek Access	MP 240.5	Creek Access -fishing	
Courtney-Ryley-Cooper Park Boating Access	MP 240.4	Boating	
Clear Creek Rafting Creek Access	MP 241.9	Boating	
Creek Access(Unknown)	MP 241.6	Creek Access -fishing	
Idaho Springs Skateboard Park	3340 Riverside Dr., Idaho Springs	Skateboard park	

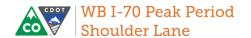
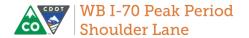


Table 3. Recreational Resources from MP 240 to MP 242

Recreational Resource	Location	Туре
Shelly/Quinn Fields	101 E. Idaho Springs Road, Idaho Springs	Ball field
Courtney-Ryley-Cooper Park	2350 Colorado Boulevard, Idaho Springs	Park
Heritage Park	2312 Miner St., Idaho Springs	Multi-purpose park
Indian Hot Springs Campground	302 Soda Creek Road, Idaho Springs	Campground
Idaho Springs Visitor Center	2060 Miner Street, Idaho Springs	Visitor Center
Argo Gold Mine & Mill Museum	2350 Riverside Drive, Idaho Springs	Mine and Museum
A & A Historical Trails Outfitters	MP 240.0	Outfitter/tours
Raft Masters	MP 240.8 (in Idaho Springs)	Rafting Outfitter/tours
Rocky Mountain Quad Squad	MP 240.9 (in Idaho Springs)	Rafting Outfitter/tours
Clear Creek Rafting	MP 241.9	Rafting Outfitter/tours
Colorado Bikeway/Idaho Springs Segment	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking, hiking trail
Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail	Off Street Paved Non-Motorized	Biking, off-road, hiking trail
Scott Lancaster Memorial Bikeway	On Street Shared Roadway	Biking trail
Game Check Area Park	Just west of Veterans Memorial Tunnels	Park
Connection to Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking, hiking trail
Gilson Gulch Loop	Off Street Non-Motorized	Biking trail
Virginia Canyon Rd	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking, horseback riding, hiking trail
Soda Creek Road	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking trail
Montane Drive	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking trail
Pine Slope Road	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	Biking trail

**Recreational Facilities/Sites Adjacent to I-70.** Existing recreational facilities in the study area adjacent to I-70 include the Easter Seals' Rocky Mountain Village Camp and disc golf course on the western edge of the study area, as well as the Spaghetti Ranch Park on the eastern side.

There are numerous creek access points including put-ins for Mile Hi Rafting and other companies and Clear Creek/Lawson Hole Whitewater Park. Two outdoor outfitting companies, Wide Open Adventure and Liquid Descent Rafting, also operate within the area. The Upper Dumont and the Dumont Bridge creek access points are located on the south side, along with the Clear Creek Fairgrounds and Clear Creek



County Sportsmen's Club and gun range. A privately owned and operated zipline is located further east on the north side of Stanley Road south of I-70.

The recently completed Philadelphia Mill Site (part of the Fishing is Fun Project) includes trail access to the creek for streamside fishing, parking, shelter, restrooms, and handicap accessible fishing platforms. It is located adjacent to Spring Gulch Road.

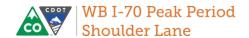
There are numerous recreational facilities near the I-70/SH 103 interchange immediately adjacent to I-70. These include the Gold Digger Stadium playing field and Rocky Mountain Whitewater Rafting on the north side of I-70, as well as the Clear Creek Ranger Station, Charlie Tayler Water Wheel Park, and creek access points on the south side. The Shelly/Quinn baseball fields are located adjacent to I-70 on the south side, farther east from SH 103.

**Paved and Natural Surface Trails That Cross I-70.** Parts of the Clear Creek Greenway run through the study area and are on-street in some areas. The Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail, which connects Idaho Springs and the junction of I-70 and US 6, functions as part of this greenway. The Colorado Bikeway runs parallel to I-70 both to the north and south, throughout the study area.

There are numerous trails within the study area that cross I-70, including:

- The Berthoud Pass Research Corridor, which is the western-most trail.
- The Red Elephant Spur and the Mill Creek Road/Bikeway 261, which join the Colorado Bikeway north
  of I-70.
- The North Spring Gulch Road/Bikeway 271, which joins the Colorado Bikeway south of the Philadelphia Mill Site.
- The Turkey Gulch Road, which joins the Colorado Bikeway at Stanley Road south of I-70.
- The Fall River Road/Bikeway 275, which ends at I-70 just west of MP 238
- The Trail Creek Road/Bikeway 136, which joins the Colorado Bikeway at approximately the same location south of I-70.
- The Hukill Gulch Trail, which ends along the westbound I-70 lanes on the western side of Idaho Springs.
- The Big Five Trailhead (unofficial), which is located just south of I-70 near Stanley Bridge.
- The Idaho Springs Trail, which runs from SH 103 and joins the Colorado Bikeway just west of the SH 103/I-70 interchange.
- The Mt. Evans Scenic Byway (including the new 10-foot wide sidewalk along the bridge over I-70), which follows SH 103 and joins the Colorado Bikeway north of the I-70/SH 103 interchange.
- The Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail, which runs south of I-70 near the eastern edge of the study area.

A trailhead for the Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail is located within the study area at the Shelly Quinn ball fields on the eastern edge of Idaho Springs. Another trailhead is at the Game Check Area Park.



Creek Access Adjacent to I-70. Clear Creek is a prominent recreational feature in the study area and is used for fishing, boating, and rafting. Numerous rafting outfitters are located along the I-70 corridor and offer tours. There are numerous formal and informal creek access points within the study area. Of these access points, 15 are located within the CDOT right-of-way. There are 10 fishing access points, 9 boating access points, 3 tubing access points, and 6 rafting outfitters located within the study area. The highest volume of rafting trips occurs from mid-May through early September, and each rafting outfitter runs between three to nine trips per day.

**Section 6(f) Properties.** The Colorado Department of Transportation Online Transportation Information System (CDOT OTIS) was surveyed on January 8, 2017 for any properties developed with Land & Water Conservation Fund grants. One property, Georgetown Lake, is located just outside the indirect study area at MP 229. The project will not directly or indirectly impact Georgetown Lake. No other Land & Water Conservation Fund properties were identified within the study area (CDOT 2018c).

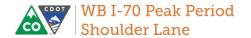
#### 5.2 Future Conditions

Planned recreational resources (trails or parks) are summarized in Table 4. These resources and planned improvements to existing recreational resources are discussed in greater detail below.

Table 4. Anticipated Future Conditions of Recreational Resources in the Study Area

Property Name	Location	Information/Amenities
Open space area	Idaho Springs—just east of the Skate Park	Located north of the Greenway and I-70, in City ownership. Adjacent to Clear Creek.
Proposed Virginia Canyon Open Space Area	Idaho Springs	Proposed park to be developed for hiking and mountain biking with connections from the Clear Creek Greenway and Virginia Canyon Road/Central City.
Proposed Clear Creek Greenway Trail	Idaho Springs/Clear Creek County	Planned trail along Clear Creek as part of the 14-mile Clear Creek Greenway. Plans include numerous trailhead locations, such as by west of the Clear Creek Rafting Company in East Idaho Springs, at the Skate Park, two along Colorado Boulevard, one by City Hall and one along SH 103.
Proposed Peaks to Plains Trail	Jefferson County	4-mile segment of the Peaks to Plains Trail along Clear Creek and US 6 in Clear Creek Canyon

As outlined in the 2005 *Clear Creek Greenway Plan,* the Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail is envisioned as a wholly off-street biking trail from east of Idaho Springs to the Kermitts (now Two Bears) Trailhead at I-70 and US 6. Plans are in progress to design and build a 14-mile segment of the Clear Creek Greenway from Hidden Valley to Empire Junction, directly through Idaho Springs. Portions of the Greenway exist, as previously described in Section 5.1 of this document. Other portions have received funding for construction to begin in 2018 and others will be developed over the next 10 or more years. At completion, the Greenway will weave together existing segments of multi-use trails with new links, and establish a defined recreational trail network connecting the municipalities and distinct area along the I-70 corridor.



This resource is a major attraction for Clear Creek County residents and is a growing resource for residents of the Denver metropolitan area because of easy accessibility.

The Clear Creek County 2017 Community Master Plan has several goals related to recreation and open space. One is to "Provide a high quality regional and connected open space, parks, trails, and recreation facilities system that is treasured by residents and attracts additional recreation users from outside Clear Creek County." The recreational mission for Clear Creek County is similar to this goal—to "provide regional and connected open space, parks, trails, and recreational facilities that will provide economic benefit to the county while maintaining, preserving, and showcasing the environment and history of the county for its residents and visitors." Specific plans are to support the implementation of the Clear Creek Greenway, support Open Space purchases of parcels with high recreational value, provide interconnectivity between county and Forest Service trails, look for opportunities that blend heritage tourism with recreation, and create a Recreation Resource Management Plan.

Within the city limits of Idaho Springs, two segments of the Clear Creek Greenway have received construction funding and will begin construction later in 2018. The Idaho Springs portion will extend from the Water Wheel Park in the west along Clear Creek to the city limits on the east. This will provide a critical non-motorized connection that is currently lacking. At present, bicyclists and other recreationalists must navigate along unsafe, disconnected, and often traffic-congested roads through Idaho Springs. The Greenway will address these issues.

Figure 4 depicts Idaho Springs' land use and community character map which illustrates existing park and open space areas.

The Courtney-Ryley-Cooper Park is the city of Idaho Springs' main park. It is presently undergoing expansion and eventual redevelopment in tandem with the Clear Creek Greenway and Colorado Boulevard projects.

Virginia Canyon Open Space is located along the Idaho Springs northern hillside. It is a 7,400-acre parcel planned to be developed with 10 to 15 miles of mountain biking trails.

Other park and recreational property plans include:

- Trailheads at Exit 239, SH 103 south of I-70, City Hall, Courtney-Ryley-Cooper Park, Colorado Boulevard at Exit 241, Skate Park, and CR 314.
- Potential park near Pine Slope (south of Clear Creek), park west of Shelly/Quinn ball fields.
- Paved shared roadway or separated trails along CR 314 and on the new Fall River Road bridge.
- Proposed trail connections between the Greenway and CR 314 and between the Greenway and the Virginia Canyon Open Space.

Clear Creek County and Jefferson County have formed a joint municipality development of the "Peaks to Plains" trail network that will ultimately intersect with the Greenway Plan and be part of a 65-mile trail network. In 2017 one mile of this trail was completed within Clear Creek County.

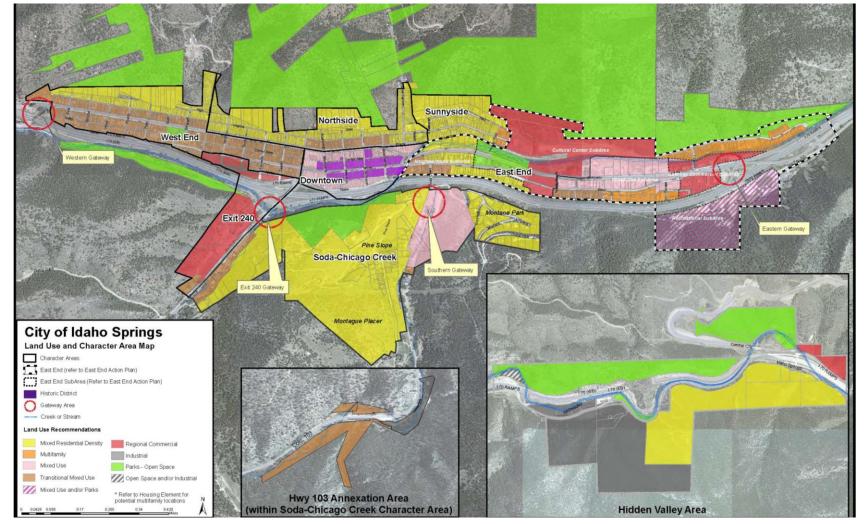
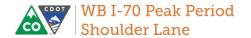


Figure 4. Idaho Springs Land Use and Community Character Map

Source: 2017 Envision Idaho Springs.



# Section 6. What are the Environmental Consequences?

## 6.1 How Does the Proposed Action Affect Recreational Resources?

#### **6.1.1 What Direct Effects are Anticipated?**

The Proposed Action improves mobility for motorists using the transportation system to access recreational features in Clear Creek County and points farther west. It also improves mobility for private companies using I-70 and the frontage road system to access Clear Creek for rafting purposes. It enhances recreational facilities in the study area. The Proposed Action also is consistent with recreational goals of Clear Creek County and Idaho Springs.

Existing and planned future recreational facilities anticipated to be permanently directly affected include:

- Crossing of Greenway Trail under I-70 (just south of Idaho Springs City Hall). The Greenway Trail currently crosses under I-70 at the bridge just east of SH 103 (Figure 5). The Proposed Action changes the striping on the bridge over the trail, allowing for three lanes in the WB direction during peak periods. The Proposed Action also narrows the shoulder width, bringing traffic closer to both sides of the bridge. This situation may result in snow or ice being thrown over the railing to the trail below during plowing operations. Mitigation for this possible impact is discussed in Table 6.
  - The Proposed Action also replaces the pavement with concrete, replaces the existing lighting with LED lights, removes the chain link fence between the trail and the slope under the bridge abutment, and removes the chain link fence between the trail and Clear Creek. The slope is improved by digging out the dirt behind the barrier and replacing it with cobble. Pedestrian railing that matches the pedestrian railing currently in place at Water Wheel Park is also added.
- Idaho Springs Gold Digger Football Stadium. The Proposed Action adds 7 feet of pavement adjacent to the stadium (Figure 6). Traffic moves 9 feet closer because there is an auxiliary lane from the Exit 240 to Exit 239 in this vicinity. No right-of-way is required because all widening is in CDOT right-of-way; however, trees between I-70 and the play field are removed. The cross section for the Gold Digger Stadium is illustrated in Figure 7.
- East Idaho Springs Trail Box Culvert Crossing Under I-70. Located just west of the Idaho Springs baseball fields, as shown on Figure 8, this existing box culvert is extended north by 4 feet and pedestrian lighting and drainage improvements are added. The added lighting is a beneficial impact to this recreational facility. Drainage is improved by creating a cross slope across the bottom of the existing box culvert. Safety is improved for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Figure 5. Greenway Trail under I-70



Figure 6. Idaho Springs Gold Digger Football Stadium



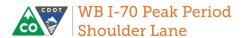
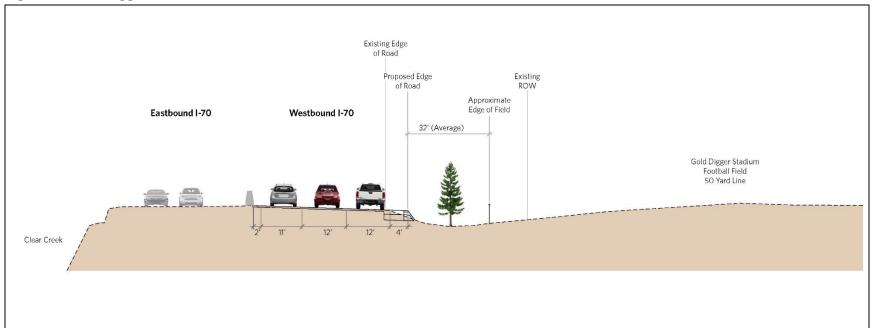


Figure 7. Gold Digger Stadium Cross Section



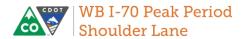
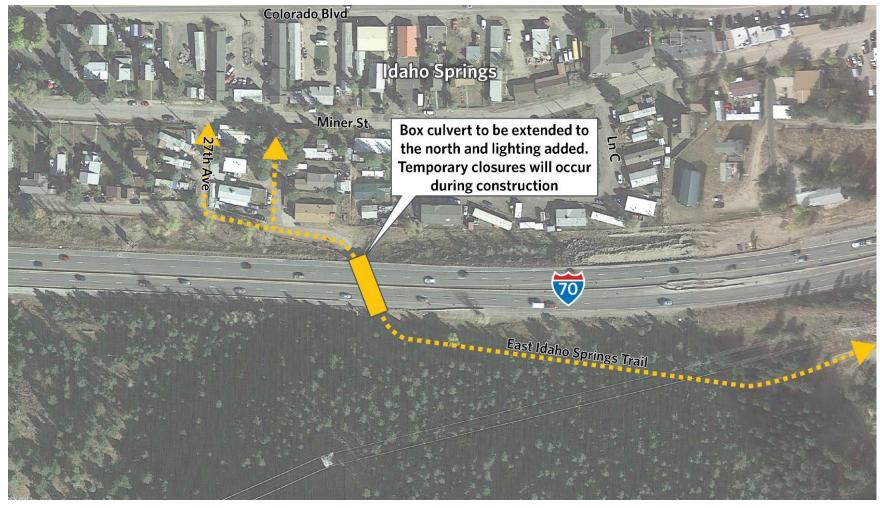
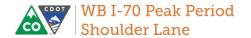


Figure 8. East Idaho Springs Trail Box Culvert Crossing



Source: HDR 2018.



#### **6.1.2 What Indirect Effects Are Anticipated?**

The Proposed Action changes views from various recreational resources. Users of the Greenway through Idaho Springs may see views of the retaining walls below westbound I-70. The culvert extension for Spring Gulch Road may be visible to users of the Philadelphia Mill Site Park, although the extension occurs on the north side of I-70.

Indirect effects to local recreation are anticipated. Because traffic congestion is anticipated to decrease, mobility and access is enhanced. This may result in increased visitation to local recreational destinations, such as the Clear Creek Greenway and Clear Creek itself. Clear Creek County is anticipating this economic boost to its local economy.

A similar effect may occur to National Forest lands along I-70. As traffic congestion is lessened, more recreational trips may occur to National Forest lands. The U.S. Forest Service is concerned about possible adverse effects (including to the sustainability of the natural resource due to increased human presence) of increases in visitation to National Forest lands. Because the Proposed Action improvements are temporary in nature, this effect is likely to also be temporary. CDOT is working with the U.S. Forest Service and Clear Creek County to alleviate adverse effects of increased visitation. Table 6 (page 26) contains more details regarding mitigation.

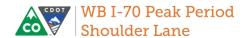
#### 6.1.3 What Effects Occur During Construction?

The construction of the Proposed Action results in temporary effects to recreational access and recreational facilities. Increases in noise, dust, and visual impacts from construction activity temporarily degrade the recreational experience in the study area. Recreational facilities that are temporarily affected include:

- Hukill Gulch Trail. This trail is accessed from the westbound lanes just west of Idaho Springs. Access
  to this gulch and trail is maintained during construction, but construction activity including noise and
  dust temporarily affects the user experience.
- Planned Greenway extension from Stanley Road north to connect to Fall River Road. Changes to
  the off-ramp from westbound I-70 to the Fall River Road interchange temporarily affect this planned
  Greenway extension. Informal parking in this area is also temporarily affected, as periodic closures of
  the parking area and the off-ramp during rock blasting are likely. The trail along Fall River Road is
  considered a multiple use property and is primarily used for transportation purposes, so not protected
  by Section 4(f).
- East Idaho Springs Trail Box Culvert Crossing Under I-70. Located just west of the ballfields, this box culvert is extended north by 4 feet with pedestrian lighting and drainage improvements added. To accommodate this, a 3-month closure is needed. Users are detoured to the Exit 241 bridge over I-70. This temporary impact is considered a temporary occupancy of this Section 4(f) property. Concurrence has been received from the Official with Jurisdiction over this property.
- Mt. Evans Scenic Byway (including the 10-foot sidewalk on the SH 103 bridge), which follows SH 103 south to Echo Lake (Figure 9). Improvements to the SH 103 off-ramp from I-70, including drainage improvements, and adding the raised patterned concrete adjacent to the 10-foot sidewalk require closures or detours which affect pedestrian and bicyclists using the Mt. Evans Scenic Byway. Access restrictions may occur. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic will be detoured during construction,

Figure 9. Mt. Evans Scenic Byway





which is anticipated to last approximately 1 month. Across the bridge, portions of the 10-foot sidewalk are likely to be closed. For detours, traffic will be detoured to Exit 241, resulting in approximately 4.5 miles of out-of-direction travel. The designation of a road as a scenic byway is not intended to create a park or recreation area within the meaning of Section 4(f). The reconstruction of the Mt. Evans Scenic Byway in this location does not trigger Section 4(f).

• Improving Trail Access at Water Wheel Park. Trail access from the parking lot near Idaho Springs City Hall which includes reconstructing the asphalt segment (under I-70 along Clear Creek) with a concrete sidewalk to tie into the existing concrete trail on the east end of Waterwheel Park. The chain link fence along the trail is replaced with a pedestrian railing to match the railing at Water Wheel Park. The historic boundary of the Water Wheel is not touched and all changes are within CDOT right-of-way. However, there is a recreation impact during reconstruction due to short durations of closure up to one month. During construction, access to the Water Wheel Park trail is closed to construct a manhole for the Chicago Creek Sanitation District sanitary sewer line. This manhole reconstruction is located at the existing sanitary manhole in the trail approximately 500 linear feet to the west of Water Wheel Park. Bicyclists and pedestrians traveling to Water Wheel Park from the west can access the park through a 0.5 mile detour north over the SH 103 bridge and along Idaho Street to the trail that crosses under I-70 just south of City Hall to Water Wheel Park. The temporary impact to this Greenway Trail is considered a temporary occupancy of this Section 4(f) property. Concurrence has been received from the Official with Jurisdiction.

#### 6.1.4 Would There be Cumulative Effects?

When combined with other reasonably foreseeable future projects—such as the Floyd Hill project, the completion of the Clear Creek Greenway, the Fall River Road Bridge, the redevelopment of the Argo Mine and Mill, the parking garage in Idaho Springs, and the completion of Colorado Boulevard in Idaho Springs—and with continued population growth in the Denver metropolitan area, additional traffic to the mountains on I-70 to access recreational areas is expected. The contribution of the Proposed Action to this additional traffic is minimal because the project is interim and only improves travel time during peak periods.

The additional traffic bringing recreational visitors to recreational sites in Clear Creek County and Idaho Springs is encouraged by the County and the City, because this improves their ability to attract and expand the tourist industry. However, the ability of USFS lands to handle the additional recreational visitors could be affected. CDOT is working with USFS to identify any mitigation needed for this impact, which was documented in the I-70 Mountain Corridor PEIS. Table 5 presents a summary of potential impact to non-historic Section 4(f) properties by the Proposed Action.

Table 5. Summary of Non-Historic Section 4(f) Properties and Potential Impact

Resource	Purpose and Function	Potential Impact	Section 4(f) Use
Big Five Trailhead/Creek Access	Unofficial trailhead and creek access	The trailhead may receive indirect effects of noise. It is located south of Clear Creek along SH 103; therefore, improvements to the SH 103 on-ramp do not affect the trailhead/creek access from I-70. There are increases in noise, dust, and visual	No use because there is no transportation use.



Table 5. Summary of Non-Historic Section 4(f) Properties and Potential Impact

Resource	Purpose and Function	Potential Impact	Section 4(f) Use
		impacts from construction activity.	
Crossing of Greenway Trail under I-70 (just south of Idaho Springs City Hall).	Multi-use trail	May receive indirect effects of noise or snow from I-70	No permanent use however the temporary impacts are considered a temporary occupancy and subject to an exception under 23 CFR 774.13(d).
Idaho Springs Gold Digger Football Stadium	High school football stadium	The proposed action includes removal of trees between I-70 and the playfield	No use because no conversion to transportation use.
Fall River Road Bikeway	On Street Shared Roadway (Paved)	During construction, construction equipment will hinder the use of the road for bicyclists. Parking may be affected.	Not Section 4(f) because on-road shared roadway trails are not Section 4(f) resources because the trail use is incidental and secondary to the primary use of the resource as a transportation facility.
Hukill Gulch Trail	Hiking trail and access to the Hukill mine	No impact to trail access.	No use because no conversion to transportation use.
East Idaho Springs Trail Box Culvert Crossing Under I- 70	Culvert that runs under I-70 just west of the ballfields	Box culvert extended north by 4 feet causing a 3-month closure.	The temporary impact to the trail is considered a temporary occupancy under 23 CFR 774.13(d).
Mt. Evans Scenic Byway (with 10-foot sidewalk on bridge)	Byway and on-road bicycle route (paved)	Detour and closures during construction.	Not Section 4(f) because Scenic Byway designation is not intended to create a park or recreation area within the meaning of Section 4(f).

# Section 7. What Mitigation Is Needed?

## 7.1 Mitigation

Table 6 presents mitigation approaches for recreational resources that are relevant to this project.

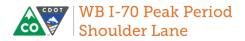
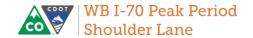


Table 6. Mitigation Tracking

Mitigation Category	Impact from NEPA Document	Commitment From Mitigation Table In Source Document (Use Exact Wording from Table in Source Document)	Responsible Branch	Timing/Phase of Construction Mitigation to be Constructed
Recreation/ Cumulative	Cumulative impact of transportation improvements affecting recreational travel	CDOT and FHWA will continue discussions as appropriate through the Collaborative Effort regarding increased recreational visitors.	CDOT Environmental and CDOT Engineering	Pre-Construction
Recreation	Snow plows throwing snow on Clear Creek Greenway	Snow plow operating measures will identify areas where plows are directed to push rather than throw snow.	CDOT Maintenance	Post Construction
Recreation	Pedestrian/bicyclist access and mobility during construction	Pedestrian and bicycle access will be maintained during construction to the extent practicable or a detour will be provided.	CDOT Engineering and Contractor	During Construction
Recreation	Pedestrian/bicyclist effects and access restrictions may occur during construction	Roadway and work zone conditions will be communicated to travelers using websites, pre-recorded messages, and other similar mechanisms.	CDOT Engineering, CDOT Public Involvement, and Contractor	During Construction
Recreation	Trail closures and detours during construction	Trail closures and detours will be clearly signed and advance notice will be given.	CDOT Engineering and Contractor	During Construction



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http://www.co.clear-creek.co.us/index.aspx?NID=218



Appendix A.

# Recreation Resource Location Maps

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