

April 25, 2024

Governor Jared Polis
State of Colorado

Shoshana Lew, Executive Director
Colorado Department of Transportation

Members of the Colorado Transportation Commission

Dear Governor Polis and Director Lew,

The undersigned stakeholders are deeply concerned and discouraged by the Colorado Department of Transportation's decision to reduce the scope of the West Vail Pass Project, specifically the eastbound "Narrows" auxiliary lane from mile marker 185-187 and the curve smoothing improvements westbound at mile marker 186.

The undersigned request CDOT leadership come to the table in a productive way to determine the best path forward to complete the project as was agreed to and supported by a long list of corridor stakeholders.

This project was a product of the I-70 PEIS Record of Decision (ROD), and the subsequent Environmental Assessment for the West Vail Pass Auxiliary Lanes. As with many components of the I-70 ROD, projects are difficult and expensive to both fund and construct. The Intermountain Transportation Planning Region (IMTPR) wrestled with how to advance projects such as Vail Pass and Floyd Hill when competing against other regional priorities. The IMTPR has a history of advancing significant projects during its nearly thirty-year history including Glenwood Canyon and Highway 82. Now, after enduring a nearly 11-year hold on I-70 projects until the PEIS concluded, we are advancing those on Interstate 70; however, regional allocated program funds alone will never support completion of a mega project such as the West Vail Pass Project.

Thanks to the actions that Governor Polis took in the U.S. House of Representatives, the I-70 corridor from Denver to Salt Lake City was designated a "Corridor of High Priority" in 2015. The then-CDOT Executive Director Shaileen Baht, said of the amendment that bestowed the designation, "This amendment rightfully recognizes what the people of Colorado already know, that Interstate 70 is not only important regionally, but nationally as well."

The West Vail Pass is also a project of significant statewide importance, so much so that the other three TPR's in Region 3 and the Mesa MPO committed "off the top" Senate Bill 267 funds so that this important project would be funded before any of these funds were distributed and prioritized amongst other Region 3 regional projects.

It is with this same determination that the undersigned request the completion of the project components currently removed from the project scope. We would like to work with CDOT leadership to determine how the project can be funded and completed as part of the current and ongoing construction efforts.

The stakeholders are very concerned that when audited by the Secretary of the US Department of Transportation Office, the reduced project will not align with the benefits promoted when awarded the

federal INFRA grant, at the time the largest grant in CDOT history. The reduced scope puts CDOT at risk of having to repay a portion of the funds, which would create more funding shortfall. Why risk this?

Vail Valley IMTPR members are considering reprioritizing the number one IMTPR project, Dowd Junction, if this would ensure completion of the West Vail Pass project as designed. Another source of funding would be to once again determine if there are some funds within Region 3, the three TPR's and Mesa MPO. Perhaps additional funding can be secured through other statewide programs or through Transportation Commission Contingency funds.

If the project bid had been significantly closer however still over the budget, there would have been additional funding allocated to award the project. We request that these funds remain available as a source of funds to complete the project. We also request that Colorado's upcoming share of federal Redistribution Funds be assigned to the West Vail Pass Project.

This project will never be cheaper to complete than it is today. Costs for remobilization, price escalation, and additional administrative costs to complete the project in the future will detract from other important projects on the horizon. We understand that additional funds will be required for the completion of the West Vail Pass project including the narrows and westbound curve straightening. Given that, we specifically ask that the Transportation Commission and CDOT headquarters provide the leadership and direction to work with corridor stakeholders in securing funding to complete this critical project.

Sincerely,



Travis Coggin, Mayor
Town of Vail

Matt Scherr, Commissioner
Eagle County

Earle Bidez, Mayor
Town of Minturn

CC:

Speaker Julie McCluskie
Senator Dylan Roberts
Representative Meghan Lukens
Senator Michael Bennet
Senator John Hickenlooper
Congressman Joe Neguse
John Cater, Federal Highway Administration