

## Powers Boulevard EA frequently asked questions (FAQ's)

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**Note:** Links to documents “for further information” will be added to the FAQs when the EA is uploaded on to the website.

### **1. Why did you choose Powers Boulevard for traffic capacity improvements? Other corridors make more sense since the growth is happening farther east.**

Three other eastern corridors were considered in the environmental assessment, including Marksheffel Road, Banning-Lewis Parkway and the proposed Prairie Falcon Parkway Express toll road. Additional capacity is needed in several corridors to serve development on the east side of the city. Additionally, because most traffic on Powers Boulevard is local traffic, increasing capacity on other corridors would not sufficiently decrease congestion on Powers.

### **2. Powers is only congested at peak times right now. Why are you completing this study now?**

The purpose of the Central Powers Boulevard project (from Woodmen Road to State Highway 16) is to reduce *current and future* traffic congestion on Powers Boulevard between Woodmen Road and State Highway 16. About seven miles of Powers Boulevard are considered congested today.

The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments 2035 Regional Transportation Plan has identified the need for additional transportation capacity on Powers Boulevard. The need for a freeway on Powers has been verified in a number of other studies, including the City of Colorado Springs' East-West Mobility Study (2002) and the Powers Boulevard Mode Feasibility Study.

An environmental assessment (EA) must be completed in order for the project to be eligible for federal construction funding.

### **3. What, exactly, is the action being proposed?**

The proposed action will include the following:

- Upgrade the road to a 6-lane freeway for 11 miles from Woodmen Road to Milton E. Proby Parkway.
- Preserve right-of-way for future interchanges that anticipate a 4-lane freeway on the approximately 6-mile stretch between Milton E. Proby Parkway and State Highway 16. Although this segment will remain as an expressway for now, preservation will lessen future right-of-way impacts.
- Build 11 new grade-separated interchanges between Woodmen Road and Milton E. Proby Parkway, so that motorists on Powers Boulevard will no longer have to encounter stoplights.

### **4. What factors and issues did you study in the environmental assessment?**

The EA considered current and future social, economic and environmental impacts along the Powers Boulevard corridor. These factors and issues (resources) include:

- Traffic and access issues

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- Social, economic and land use factors
- Air and water quality
- Noise
- Community issues
- Construction impacts
- Wetland issues
- Ecological resources
- Cultural resources
- Cumulative effects of the proposed action
- Other issues and factors (including hazardous materials, paleontological resources, and energy)

### **5. How were property owners, businesses and residents involved in the process?**

The Proposed Action was determined through a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that included an extensive public involvement process. This consisted of continuous dialog with:

- residents, property owners and business owners along the corridor, and
- local, regional, state and federal agencies.

Communication occurred through:

- nine public open houses
- the project website
- project telephone hotline
- eight newsletters mailed to addresses along the corridor
- subsequent meetings with those most directly affected by the proposed action
- updates upon request to City Council and others

### **6. Why does it need to be a freeway? Why can't you just widen or enhance the expressway?**

Compared with an expanded expressway, a freeway with interchanges will handle significantly more traffic within a comparable transportation corridor width.

The expanded expressway, also defined as the "enhanced expressway" alternative, would have required additional through-lanes and turn lanes at key intersections, thus affecting more properties than a freeway would. It would also leave remaining at-grade intersections extremely congested, due to heavy left-turn movements.

The analysis determined that the enhanced expressway would not meet the project's purpose and need.

### **7. Why not consider other types of transportation, like the light rail they have in Denver?**

This was a common question during the alternatives development process. As part of the environmental assessment, various transportation modes were evaluated based on the characteristics of the Powers Corridor. The mode feasibility study began with a list of 20 types of transportation technologies, including rail, bus and bus rapid transit, and carpool lane alternatives, as well as highway and roadway

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improvement actions. This evaluation, called the Powers Boulevard Mode Feasibility Study/Corridor Assessment, found that although many of the strategies studied would help alleviate congestion, roadway capacity improvements is the only one that could provide sufficient capacity to meet predicted travel demand along the corridor.

### **8. How and when will the Proposed Action be built?**

This is a long-term project. The proposed action is expected to be built in phases because funding will not likely come in one lump sum. Funding would be received over many years; the project would be implemented in logical, constructible pieces.

- Key project timeline estimates include the following:
  - The EA is anticipated to be available for review by March 2010.
  - One public hearing to occur during the 30-day review period.
  - The FHWA will then issue a decision, which is anticipated in 2010.
  - The construction of the proposed action will occur over time as funding becomes available, based on Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) regional prioritization.
  - The Powers Boulevard/Airport Road interchange is the first priority in the PPACG long-range plan. CDOT plans to have the project ready as soon as construction money becomes available.

### **9. How will my access change? How will I get to where I want to go?**

Based on when construction takes place in any given segment along Powers Blvd., access will change in some areas. Although access will still be provided through a frontage road system, several cross-streets that currently have direct access to Powers Boulevard would no longer have direct access under the Proposed Action. These cross-streets include:

- South Carefree Circle
- Waynoka Road
- Victor Place
- Omaha Boulevard
- Aereoplaza Drive
- Astrozon Boulevard
- Triple Crown Way

Travelers would be still be able to cross under Powers Boulevard at South Carefree Circle, Aeroplaza Drive and Astrozon Boulevard

Turnaround ramps and frontage roads would be provided in the few locations where there is sufficient demand for this movement.

### **10. How will the Proposed Action affect traffic in residential areas near the corridor?**

CDOT recognizes that the Proposed Action will change traffic patterns, and that increased neighborhood traffic is a concern to the community. In general, the Proposed Action would improve traffic on cross-streets, and there would be little incentive for motorists to leave Powers Boulevard to cut through neighborhoods to seek faster routes. If no improvements were made to Powers Boulevard, congestion

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would likely cause increased cut-through traffic in nearby neighborhoods, especially to Rio Vista Drive and Tutt Boulevard.

The Proposed Action would decrease congestion at the intersections that presently generate cut-through traffic and reduce the incentive to make cut-through trips. Additionally, the planned southbound frontage road along Powers Boulevard would provide a new, more appropriate route for some of the traffic.

### **11. Will this affect noise levels along the corridor?**

The Proposed Action will be likely to increase noise levels along the corridor for several reasons, including the increase in traffic and travel speeds. All of the factors were taken into account while calculating future noise levels for the Proposed Action. Eight locations are proposed for noise walls that would range in height from 8 feet to 18 feet. Aesthetic designs have not been determined, and walls would not be provided if the affected neighborhoods do not want them.

### **12. What about the air quality along the corridor?**

With the implementation of the Proposed Action, Powers Boulevard would carry many more vehicles per day but with less delay than is experienced today. Compared with the No-Action Alternative at the busiest, most congested intersections, the Proposed Action would provide emissions reductions due to improved traffic flow. CDOT will mitigate construction impacts associated with the Proposed Action, in compliance with any applicable permit requirements, at a minimum.

### **13. How will right-of-way be acquired?**

The proposed action was developed to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts, including the acquisition of highway right-of-way for future construction of the project. Reconstructing Powers Boulevard as a freeway would require acquisition of additional highway right-of-way from land adjacent to the existing expressway, particularly in the vicinity of proposed interchanges where freeway ramps or frontage roads are needed.

Although most right-of-way acquisitions required are small slivers of existing property, 23 duplexes, 1 freestanding residence and 14 commercial buildings will have to be acquired entirely. Based on the current funding outlook, these acquisitions are not expected to occur before the year 2020.

The state follows a set of federally mandated procedures to acquire property. Depending on the circumstances, this may also include procedures to assist in relocating residents and businesses.

Some land has already been purchased for right-of-way near the Powers Boulevard/Airport Road intersection. CDOT saved money in this area by buying vacant land before development could occur.

### **14. How will the construction affect access to homes and businesses?**

Construction may temporarily affect access to businesses and residents. During the environmental assessment, strategies were developed to address access changes and construction impacts. The project team will work with property owners to minimize the effects of construction.

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Construction is not likely to happen immediately. Once the environmental process is finished, prioritized portions of the project can move into design, and then into construction when funds become available. The Proposed Action is expected to be built in phases because funding will not likely come in one lump sum. Funding would be received over many years; the project would be implemented in logical, constructible pieces.