

Woodmen Road Corridor Phase 2 Project Notes

Why are we building this phase of the project?

In the spring of 2002, the City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County began the Woodmen Road Corridor Improvement Project. The combined city and county corridor extends between Interstate 25 and US Highway 24 and was determined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to be the best method to address traffic needs. The purpose and need for the improvements is explained in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the corridor and stated as follows:

“The purpose of the proposed improvements to Woodmen Road is to reduce the existing traffic congestion by making traffic flow more smoothly throughout the corridor now and in the future to the year 2030.”

The proposed action from the EA called for six continuous lanes (three in each direction) from I-25 to Powers Boulevard and four continuous lanes (two in each direction) from Powers Boulevard to US 24. Improvements to the Woodmen Road and Academy Boulevard intersection and the Woodmen Road and Union Boulevard intersection were included in the proposed action.

Both El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs have made significant progress towards implementing the project. El Paso County completed all the improvements for the six miles of Woodmen Road east of Powers Boulevard in 2009. The City of Colorado Springs completed the western segment of Woodmen Road (Phase 1), from I-25 through Academy Boulevard, in 2012. Phase 2A, the current phase between Academy Boulevard and Lexington Drive, will complete the widening of Woodmen Road so that there are six lanes from I-25 to Powers Boulevard. This phase of the project includes a continuous flow intersection (CFI) at the intersection with Union Boulevard. Phase 2A is expected to improve traffic capacity issues in the corridor through the next 20 years.

Why don't you use the money to fix potholes instead?

The Woodmen Road Corridor Improvement Project has been a regional priority for decades. The corridor plan was officially endorsed by the Colorado Springs City Council, the El Paso County Commissioners, and the Pikes Peak Regional Transportation Authority (PPRTA). In addition to their endorsement, they have also provided specific funds to complete the project. The majority of the funding for this phase is coming from the PPRTA Capital Projects fund. Woodmen Road improvements were specifically listed on the PPRTA ballots approved by voters in 2004 and 2013. In addition, there is federal grant money and Colorado Springs general fund money included in the budget for this phase of the project. Recently, voters passed Ballot Item 2C which is a temporary 0.62 percent sales tax dedicated solely to road repairs and does not impact PPRTA funding. In addition, PPRTA revenue funds roadway resurfacing and maintenance, concrete repair, pothole repairs and drainage projects under the maintenance portion of the PPRTA tax. In short, funding is specific to this project and cannot be used for maintenance of roadways, but the City and PPRTA have other means to fund maintenance projects.

Why not build the grade-separated interchange now?

The project cost is in line with past PPRTA funded projects completed by the City. In addition to building the continuous flow intersection (CFI), two miles of Woodmen Road are being widened to six lanes. These additional lanes are needed now. The majority of the construction cost is to complete the two miles of widening. If a grade-separated interchange at Woodmen Road and Union Boulevard intersection were included now, the cost would be over double the current construction cost which could delay the project. The at-grade CFI option is expected to address traffic issues in the near-term (see the next question) and occupy the same approximate footprint as an interchange so that the land is secure for future expansion, if necessary.

Why was a Continuous Flow Intersection (CFI) design chosen instead of building an interchange?

An interchange is the ultimate solution if traffic on Woodmen Road increases at the rate seen in the 1990's and 2000's as development occurred on the City's east side. The traffic demand needed to make an interchange the only acceptable option is not expected to occur until after 2035, but this estimate is dependent on large-scale, region-wide assumptions of growth and may not be realized. A CFI allows the City and PPRTA to address immediate traffic needs and provides sufficient capacity to last through the foreseeable future. The cost of an interchange would also be over double that of a CFI not including the costs involved with maintenance of a large bridge structure.

What measures will be implemented to deter drivers from seeking alternative routes through neighborhoods during construction?

We will monitor traffic patterns once construction begins and respond accordingly as needed.

Are turn lanes adequate to not impede non-turning traffic?

Turn lanes and deceleration lanes are designed to accommodate observed and projected traffic and turning volumes, as well as posted speed limits. During construction, we will work to provide as much turn lane capacity as reasonable and balance against space needed for work and workers' safety. When work is complete, turn lanes should have sufficient length to store vehicles waiting to turn although these vehicles may need to begin braking when they are still in a through lane.

Will emergency vehicles have access during construction?

Yes, emergency vehicles will have continuous access through the Woodmen Road and Union Boulevard intersection and adjacent residences and businesses during construction.

What is the final landscaping plan for this phase of the project?

Landscaping along Woodmen Road will match the theme constructed with Phase 1 near Academy Boulevard, including: irrigated trees, decorative grasses, and cobble stones alongside the street and within medians. Narrow median areas will have a textured concrete surface stained with a shade of reddish-brown. Retaining walls will have a faux-stone texture. Areas away from the road, including hillsides where excavation is needed to accommodate the road, will be seeded with a native grasses.

How are pedestrians accommodated during Phase 2A?

There are sidewalks and bicycle lanes included on both sides of Woodmen Road in Phase 2A (from Sam's Club to Lexington Drive). The CFI signal will be designed with pedestrian crossings on all four corners. The trail connection between the Cottonwood Creek Trail and Skyline Trail is included through a combination of this project and a separate City Parks and Recreation project north of Shrider Road. During construction, pedestrians will be directed by signs to the south or north of Woodmen Road onto alternative routes.

How long will the project construction take to finish?

Construction is anticipated to take place over 18 months with an estimated completion date of December 2017. An overview of the project schedule (by segment) will be available on the project website.

How do I keep informed of activities on the project?

The project website will be updated as work progresses. You can sign up for Email Traffic Updates by signing up on the Website or email the project at: WoodmenRd@PublicInfoTeam.com or call the project hotline at 719-900-5960.

Who is responsible for the project?

The project is funded by the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority and a federal grant. It is managed by the City of Colorado Springs Engineering Division. The City hired AECOM (formerly URS) to prepare the design of the project and provide inspection services during the project construction. Wildcat Construction Company was selected as the contractor for the construction.

What can I expect in terms of construction delays in driving the corridor?

Traffic delay was a serious issue before construction began and will not be improved until construction is complete. The project team is committed to finding a balance between traffic flow, construction schedule, and the safety of workers and the public. The team is committed to maintaining business and residential access. All businesses along the corridor will be open for your patronage. In general, during peak travel times in the morning and afternoon, two through lanes will be maintained in both directions of Woodmen Road and Union Boulevard. Additional lane closures will occur during off-peak times during the middle of the day and at night (see the question about night work).

What is the speed limit throughout the project corridor during construction?

The project team's goal is to maintain a safe work area for both workers and the traveling public. One of the elements of this plan is to reduce the speed limits through construction work zones. Speed limits will be clearly signed and we appreciate your cooperation by observing the reduced speeds that are posted. The posted speed limit on both Woodmen Road and Union Boulevard will generally not be less than 30 mph during construction.

What are the work hours? Will there be night work?

The majority of the construction will occur between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. However, there are some construction activities that will occur at night to minimize the impact to traffic impacts on Woodmen Road. Current night work plans are for a maximum of 60 nights over the 18 months of construction. The project team's goal is to minimize inconvenience to the traveling public and adjacent residents.

Direction on who should address specific questions on the project

Media inquiries should be directed to Kim Melchor with City Communications so she can arrange for interviews with the right person.

ROW or Easement Questions should be directed to Mike Chaves with City Engineering or Jeff Perret with TRS.

Utility questions should be directed to Adam Baker with CSU or Clyde Pikkaraine with City Engineering.

Questions on how the CFI works should be directed to Steve Vander Giessen with AECOM.

Questions on the details of the construction phasing or schedule should be directed to Doug Coffee.

If you do not know the answer to a specific question offer to find the right person to answer the question.