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## US 550 Bear Creek Bridge Construction Begins

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Million Dollar Highway bridge over Bear Creek Falls near Ouray.

### *Travel Impacts Through October*

OURAY COUNTY – One of the first bridges in Colorado to be funded by FASTER legislation is one of Colorado's most historic – the Bear Creek Bridge on US 550, just south of Ouray.

American Civil Constructors, Inc., contractor for the Colorado Department of Transportation began reconstructing the Bear Creek Bridge on July 26. The new design will include a wider bridge, improved

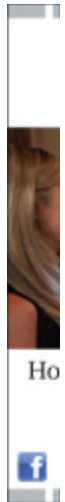
parking area, and an adjacent, cantilevered pedestrian overlook so visitors can appreciate the 200-foot drop below and take in the beauty of the dramatic Bear Creek waterfall.

The reconstruction of Bear Creek Bridge moves forward with \$5.8 million in funding from Funding Advancements for Surface Transportation and Economic Recovery (FASTER), a bill passed in the 2009 General Assembly, Senate Bill 09-108. This legislation was developed to address Colorado's structurally deficient, poor bridges and safety projects throughout the state and is protected from redirection into other state programs during a budget crunch. FASTER is funded through a rental car fee and a nominal increase in vehicle registration.

"Replacing the historic structure over Bear Creek Falls on US 550 in Ouray County is the first bridge project on the Western Slope to be funded by the FASTER legislation," said Governor Bill Ritter. "This critical project not only improves safety and mobility on Colorado's acclaimed 'Million Dollar Highway,' it provides jobs and a boost in the Colorado economy."

### TRAVEL IMPACTS

Crews will begin phase one of construction this week with no impact on traffic flows until August, at which time drivers will experience daily lane closures. From approximately 7 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday, traffic will be reduced to a single lane that will be flagger maintained



allowing for alternating traffic. This year's work involves removing a portion of the north rock face and widening the existing bridge by four feet (to temporarily accommodate a traffic shift during construction). The first phase is expected to be completed by Oct. 29, at which time construction will be shut down for the winter.



During phase two, scheduled to take place April-Nov. 2011, single-lane, alternating traffic will be directed through the widened portion of the existing bridge while the southbound lane of the new bridge is under construction. When the southbound side is complete, it will be opened to single-lane, alternating traffic and the remainder of the existing bridge will be demolished and new northbound lanes built.

There will be some full nighttime closures of the highway to enable rock anchoring activities. These closures are likely to occur in mid- to late August during Sunday through Thursday nights only, from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. Notice of nighttime closures will be sent at least five days prior.

Ouray's Bear Creek Bridge was first constructed in 1883, as part of the Otto Mears toll road. The private toll road was transferred to Ouray County around the early 1890s, though historical accounts differ on just how this took place. After the state's division of highways (now CDOT) took ownership, a new bridge was constructed in 1922, and later improved in 1962. The Bear Creek Bridge and one other Ouray County bridge received poor ratings in 2009, meaning their remaining service life is only one to six years, and their sufficiency ratings are less than 50 out of 100.

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