



Highway 119 Near Black Hawk to Undergo Major Reconstruction

by: Jennifer Holliman
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Article Contributed on: 11/18/2010 3:07:50 PM

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Gilpin County, and the City of Black Hawk celebrated the beginning of the (SH) State Highway 119 Main Street South Project with a "ground-picking" Tuesday, November 16.

The project involves widening State Highway 119 from two to four lanes, beginning at the south end of Black Hawk and continuing south approximately 1/2 mile. Other improvements include a new bridge over North Clear Creek, straightening a curved highway segment, a new bike/pedestrian path and bridge, creek side retaining walls and rock slope cuts, an intersection reconstruction at Douglas Mountain Drive, including new turn lanes and paving six miles of State Highway 119 between the new widened segment and U.S. 6 junction.

"It's great to see a project like this finally underway," said Gilpin County Commissioner Buddy Schmalz. "It not only will benefit all those who use the highway-residents, employees and visitors alike-but it will provide a real improvement to the beauty and usability of Clear Creek Canyon, and at the same time, improve its ecology."

Traffic impacts are scheduled to begin on Monday, November 29. Work hours are 3 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Friday, with delays up to 10 minutes. However, blasting operations, primarily between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m., will require stops up to 20 minutes. A 30 mph speed limit will be in place at all times and vehicles wider than 11 feet will be restricted from traveling through the work zone.

"The City of Black Hawk is excited to see this project finally kick off," said Black Hawk Mayor David Spellman. "It will make a huge improvement for those who drive to Black Hawk for work or play."

American Civil Constructors, Inc. of Littleton, Colo., is the prime contractor. The project is scheduled for completion in summer 2012.

"We're not only celebrating the start of a highway safety improvement project but also commemorating a project that'll enhance the environment and quality of aquatic life, vegetation and wildlife along the North Fork of Clear Creek," said CDOT Regional Transportation Director Tony DeVito. "The partnerships among the numerous agencies to get to this point have been vital."

Stream restoration is also part of the project and several diverse organizations have worked together for approximately three years to improve the SH 119 corridor. CDOT, the Federal Highway Administration, CDPHE, EPA, the Silver Dollar Metropolitan District (SDMD), and a number of other agencies, have combined resources to mitigate mining impacts under Superfund, and to improve fish and wildlife habitat and transportation safety along the corridor. CDOT formed the North Clear Creek Mitigation Advisory Committee (NCCMAC) because some of the projects, especially mine cleanup, are administered by other state or federal agencies. NCCMAC has allowed various entities to share information and coordinate information gathering.

The EPA and CDPHE also are working to clean up polluted mine drainage and surface water in Gilpin County in coordination with the SH 119 project. The right of way was designed to accommodate a pipeline and a new water treatment plant to remove metals from contaminated water before returning it to the North Fork of Clear Creek. By coordinating the projects, all the agencies are saving money, improving efficiency and reducing construction impacts to motorists and the community.

"Without CDOT providing space in its right of way, we would have to locate our water treatment plant more than a mile downstream, resulting in higher construction and maintenance costs and significant delays due to funding and land acquisition challenges," said Howard Roitman, acting environmental programs director for CDPHE. "This sort of collaboration among agencies is a model of good stewardship of public funding and resources."

FASTER - Funding Advancements for Surface Transportation and Economic Recovery - is funding \$4 million of the \$15.7 million project contract. Financed by vehicle registration fees, FASTER safety funds are used for construction, reconstruction, or maintenance projects the Colorado Transportation Commission, a county or municipality determine are needed to enhance the safety of a state highway, county road, or city street. Funding also was provided by state gaming funds (\$5.3 million), the CDPHE (\$4.5 million) and the SDMD (\$2.5 million).

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