

Citizens For A Safe Highway 9

C/O The Grand Foundation
P. O. Box 1342
Winter Park, Colorado 80432

The Colorado Highway 9 Safety Improvement Project

Background

Colorado Highway 9 has long been recognized as a dangerous traffic corridor. The existing road template is narrow with no paved shoulders. The vertical and horizontal alignment limits safe site distances and the wintertime daily migration of wildlife from their primary water source on the west side of the highway to the primary winter range on the east side has contributed to high collision rates. During the last 20 years, there have been nearly 600 vehicle collisions resulting in 200 injuries and 16 fatalities. In the last 8 years, over 450 animals have been killed.

The Highway 9 Safety Improvement Project began in early 2011 when Grand County entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with CDOT to complete the engineering design (detailed plans and specifications) for much needed improvements to a 10.6 mile segment of Highway 9 between Green Mountain Reservoir and the Colorado River, near Kremmling. Key to the IGA was the commitment by Grand County to provide up to \$805,000 to fund the CDOT design effort. Similarly, CDOT agreed to absorb a portion of the in-house administrative costs for the design. The financial commitment by Grand County was made possible by a contribution from a private party – Blue Valley Ranch.

The purpose of this design partnership was to develop a "shovel ready" project that could quickly move to construction when highway funding might be available from federal and/or state sources. After extensive planning, with input from local interests and the CDPW, the project design is currently in its final review stages.

In February 2013, CDOT announced a new and innovative funding program - ***Responsible Acceleration of Maintenance and Partnerships (RAMP)***. This program encourages partnerships between CDOT and other governmental (or private) entities. The RAMP program presented a rare opportunity to obtain funding for this much needed project. However, in order to be eligible for RAMP funding, the partner entity is required to provide a minimum of 20% of the project cost. Based on its design, CDOT has prepared a detailed estimate of the probable construction cost - \$46 million. The minimum contribution from the partner would therefore be \$9,200,000. After subtracting the \$805,000 previously contributed by Blue Valley Ranch for the CDOT engineering design and another \$140,000 donated by Blue Valley Ranch for right-of-way acquisition, the required partner "match" would be about \$8,255,000.

Raising the Required Matching Funds

Raising \$8.26 million in less than three months was a daunting task. However, the effort received a major boost when Paul Jones, owner of Blue Valley Ranch, tendered a "challenge grant", committing to match local fund raising efforts by up to \$4 million. There still remained a need to raise the remaining \$4.26 million.

In April, 2013, a group of concerned citizens was formed (*Citizens For A Safe Highway 9*) and aggressively took on the job of promoting the project, stressing the need for safety improvements and wildlife mitigation on this dangerous highway corridor. As a result of numerous public and private meetings, media promotion, personal contact and mass mailings, the response to this project has been overwhelming.

Letters of Support

To date, the project has received 373 letters of support. Review of these letters offers clear insight as to the importance of this project to the public that regularly uses this highway and which is concerned about the safety of travel.

Governmental Support	11	Grand County, Summit County, Jackson County; Town of Kremmling, Town of Silverthorne, Town of Winter Park, Town of Fraser, Town of Granby, Town of Grand Lake; Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife; USDA.
Businesses	82	Includes local businesses in Grand, Summit and Routt Counties; numerous wildlife and environmental groups; local Chambers of Commerce; Recreational business interests;
Private Individuals	280	

The Letters of Support were received from a wide geographic area:

Grand County:	43.2%
Summit County:	14.8%
Routt County:	9.1%
Other Local Counties:	1.0%
Denver / Front Range:	14.5%
Out of State:	4.8%
Other / Unknown	12.6%

Pledged Financial Support

To date, the committed financial support for the project has been beyond the committee's wildest expectations. Based on the financial pledges received, the Highway 9 Safety Improvement Project has been able to secure the required 20% "match" of \$9.2 million.

Governmental: (\$3,444,003)	7	Grand County (\$3,073,503); Summit County (\$250,000); Town of Kremmling (\$40,000); Town of Silverthorne (\$70,000); Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife (\$5,000); Kremmling Fire District (\$500); West Grand School District (\$5,000).
Businesses: (\$200,330)	35	Pledges ranging from \$20 to \$100,000.
Environmental: (\$216,000)	4	Friends of Lower Blue River (\$1,000); Middle Park Habitat Partnership (\$5,000); Muley Fanatic Foundation (\$10,000); Trinchera Blanca Foundation (\$200,000).
Private Individuals: (\$5,348,212)	133	Individual pledges ranging from \$10 to \$100,000 + Blue Valley Ranch (\$4,945,000).
Total Pledges:		\$9,208,545

Application Process

Applicants seeking funding under the RAMP program were required to submit a "Pre-Application" form by May 1, 2013. The Pre-Application process was used by CDOT to determine if the proposed projects generally satisfy the Primary and Secondary selection criteria to be considered eligible for possible funding. Criteria included (1) Critical Need; (2) Total costs and funding plan; (3) Leveraging of funds (20% local match); (4) Consistent with the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); (5) Economic benefits, etc. CDOT data indicates that approximately 245 Pre-Applications were submitted from around the state

Proposed projects that satisfactorily met the required criteria were invited to submit a "Detailed Application" by July 1, 2013. This process expanded on the Pre-Application and provided more detailed description of the proposed project design and addressed: (1) Traffic mobility benefits; (2) Safety benefits; (3) Benefits to existing roadway assets (pavement, drainage, bridges, etc.); and (4) Detailed description of project costs and how funding will be provided through "public-public" partnerships.

The Highway 9 Project was notified that all of the criteria of the Pre-Application were satisfied and accordingly, the Detailed Application was submitted to CDOT. Key to the advancement of the project to this next step in the process was the overwhelming public support of the project and demonstration that the required minimum match (\$9.2 million) had been raised by local governments, businesses and private interests as described above.

Next Steps

The RAMP funding program is a state-wide program and naturally attracted significant interest from various entities seeking means to fund a variety of highway improvement projects. According to preliminary data from CDOT, 151 applications were approved to complete and submit the Detailed Application.

Region 1 (Denver Metro):	36
Region 2 (Southeast Colorado):	19
Region 3 (Northwest Colorado):	34
Region 4 (Northeast Colorado):	46
Region 5 (Southwest Colorado):	16
Total Applications (non-CDOT)	151

Based on conversations with CDOT staff, the total estimated cost of all the "partnership" applications is over **\$1.7 billion**, greatly exceeding the available funding of about \$750 million over the five year RAMP program (*Available funding for "public-public" partnerships is estimated to be about \$125 million in FY 2014 and from \$125 to \$150 million annually in FY's 2015 – 2018*).

Competition for the limited available funds will be intense. During the months of July and August, 2013, each project will undergo technical review in each Transportation Region and preliminary ranking of the projects by a panel of subject matter experts (bridge, traffic, planning, environmental and project delivery) will occur. By late August, 2013, the RAMP Sponsor Coalition (made up of CDOT Senior Management Team members) will develop a *Program of Projects* (for FY 2014) taking into account the project rankings and considerations of non-technical factors such as geographic and urban/rural equity and the ability to fund the project.

In September, the *Program of Projects* will be reviewed by the State Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC) and finally considered by the Transportation Commission (TC) on September 19, 2013.