



Project Name: Down Valley Connector Trail (DVCT) Feasibility Study
Date: December 4, 2022
Re: DVCT Public Comments FAQs

PURPOSE OF THE DOWN VALLEY CONNECTOR TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

San Miguel County has been focused on reducing vehicle trips and carbon emissions, which have been created within the Telluride region for several years. We've been exploring options to increase recreational and wellness opportunities.

The County received a Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Multimodal Options Fund (MMOF) grant to see if it's possible to connect the outlying Down Valley satellite communities with the Town of Telluride via a 3-mile trail from the County's Down Valley Park in Placerville to the County's M59 River Trail just beyond the Sawpit community. San Miguel County will provide \$75K in matching grant funds for this project.

The goal for this Down Valley Connector Trail (DVCT) is to accommodate pedestrian and cyclist user groups and provide a commuter link to Telluride. In addition, an added bonus will be to link the Down Valley satellite communities to each other and provide direct access via a safer route to the County's Down Valley Park and the County's M59 River Trail. With so many logistical hurdles to address, we are conducting a feasibility study to determine if and how a trail like this may be possible.

The County has hired Otak, Inc. to conduct this feasibility study, which is underway, to construct this trail potentially. The project team is currently studying the Hwy 145 corridor to identify opportunities and constraints. The County's goal is to locate the trail within CDOT Right-of-Way (ROW) and other publicly-owned lands. Easements on private properties may be sought in a few locations. If so, the project team will initiate individual discussions with these property owners.

San Miguel County's project goal is to complete the feasibility study in early 2023 to determine if the County will seek funding sources to eventually build portions or all of this trail project in the coming years. As the County moves forward with this evaluation process, we seek public comments and ideas for project consideration.

OVERVIEW

San Miguel County has received public comments by email, phone, and in-person public community meetings (Zoom link options offered) regarding the Down Valley Connector Trail Feasibility Study.

The potential 3-mile corridor for the DVCT was divided into 5 segments of which segments 1, 2 and 4 are occupied and contain private homes and property.

To date, all comments received have been compiled and categorized by topic, with their responses below.

TOPICS

1. Use of Private Land vs. Publicly-Owned Property (CDOT ROW)
2. Safety along the Corridor
 - a. Increased traffic to the area
 - b. Speed limit along the corridor
 - c. Use of motorized vehicles or E-bikes
 - d. Consideration for the use of barriers to protect pedestrians and homes
3. Aesthetics of trail design, materials and Infrastructure considerations for trail surface types, and use of trees or barriers along the corridor
4. Privacy concerns with proximity and visibility of the trail to private property
5. Cost of trail project
6. Weather and maintenance of the trail during winter and monsoon seasons
 - a. Snow removal and water runoff concerns
7. Removal of trees and/or natural habitat to built
8. Effect/impact of trail on property values
9. Crime statistics; would this trail invite theft to the area?
10. What is the proposed enforcement method for the Multimodal trail designation
11. Wildlife impacts

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

FAQ #1: Where will this trail be located within the corridor? Is the project team considering private land or private driveways for the trail location? Is Condemnation being considered to acquire land for this project?

Response: *The intention of this project is to keep the trail entirely within existing publicly-owned property - such as the CDOT Right-of-Way and/or Bureau of Land Management property unless otherwise agreed upon by private property owners. No private driveways are under consideration for*

the trail alignment (i.e., the private frontage road located in segment 1) and aren't being considered for the trail alignment.

In some select locations where there isn't enough public Right-of-Way to fit the trail or where property owners have offered the property to improve the trail, discussions will be held to potentially acquire easements for the trail.

Lastly, condemnation is not an acceptable option for the project and is NOT being pursued or considered. The County has firmly stated it wouldn't entertain condemnation proceedings for this potential DVCT project.

FAQ #2: What is being done to improve safety along the existing SH145 Corridor? How will trail users be protected from the highway? Has a speed limit reduction been discussed with CDOT for this stretch of SH145?

Response: *This study is being funded by a CDOT MMOF grant, and they've been made aware of the safety concerns for this residential section of SH145. In sections of the trail where it is especially close to the highway, a physical barrier such as a guardrail will be proposed to keep vehicles from potentially running onto the trail.*

Moving forward, this project is a great opportunity to push for increased safety and a study of the existing speed limit in this area, and the project team will continue to voice these concerns and explore these options with CDOT.

FAQ #3: What will the aesthetics and materials of the trail be? How will the trail fit in with the existing aesthetics of the valley? Can natural surfaces be used instead of concrete for the trail?

Response: *The 3-mile corridor has several different considerations over the full length, and a single design direction or trail surface won't work in all areas of the trail. The project team is considering the aesthetics of design and taking a "low-impact" approach where the preference for the trail will be a natural surface, however, there will be areas along the corridor where drainage concerns, proximity to SH145, maintenance concerns, vehicular access, retaining walls, or other structural elements dictate that a concrete surface needs to be used in some areas.*

FAQ #4: What will the cost of building this trail be? Who will pay for it? Why should we spend so much money on a trail that may not be used by everyone in the community?

Response: *An estimate of construction cost of the project is currently being developed by this feasibility study and won't be known until the conclusion of the project in late winter/spring of 2023. The funding source of the potential construction of this project has not been identified. There are several potential funding sources available for this type of project, including grant dollars and/or a combination of multiple sources.*

The project will benefit the community by providing access within the community to the SMART bus stops, Down Valley Park, M59 River Trail, the Sawpit Mercantile, and local recreational opportunities, additionally up the valley to Telluride. This project would be a worthwhile investment in the safety and future of the Down Valley communities.

FAQ #5: Who is going to maintain the trail during winter and monsoon seasons? Is this trail going to be cleared in the winter or groomed for cross-country/Nordic skiing?

Response: *This trail would be added to the County's inventory and would therefore, be maintained by the County's Parks & Open Space department. Most likely, the DVCT would have seasonal use only, but year-round maintenance and snow removal may be considered and determined based on the capacity of existing maintenance resources should the project be constructed. The current intention is not to groom this trail for cross-country/Nordic skiing, but rather provide access to the existing M59 trail which is utilized as such. The County could consider various maintenance options for the DVCT segment if more residential areas request to keep certain trail segments open year-round.*

FAQ #6: What impact does the trail have on the natural environment? Will trees need to be removed to make way for the trail? Have wildlife Impacts along the corridor been studied?

Response: *The feasibility study includes an environmental resource survey where wetlands, wildlife, and other environmental resources will be mapped. The trail will then be routed to avoid impacting these existing resources wherever possible. With regards to trees, the trail user experience is dramatically improved by having trees adjacent to the trail. The removal of trees will be avoided wherever possible and feasible. There will likely be some impact to existing trees, and wherever this impact is adjacent to private property or homes, the property owners will be a part of the discussion on tree removal.*

FAQ #7: Will ATVs, horses, or E-Bikes be allowed on this trail? What is the proposed enforcement method for the Multimodal trail designation?

Response: *This would be a County trail under County purview and within our trail inventory system, and we run into this problem with different uses and styles of motorized "items" on our trails that aren't allowed. This is an enforcement issue and something the County is discussing internally, and something to be addressed. With new trails and allowances, we're discussing and potentially partnering with the U.S. Forest Service through their summer Recreational Ranger programs. The County is also looking within the Sheriff's department as far as deputizing certain positions and for authorization to write/issue a summons and/or a ticket.*

FAQ #8: Would this proposed trail impact/affect our property values? Is any part of the feasibility study going to address bike paths going past people's homes and what affects people's property values? Is this something that's being considered and will be studied?

Response: *Trails typically do NOT hurt property values, and many studies have shown that they enhance values. Information on this topic can be found in multi articles by [American Trails](#). Their website is one of the world's most comprehensive online sources for planning, building, designing, funding, managing, enhancing, and supporting trails, greenways, and blueways. We encourage residents to explore this website and review all publicly available information on this topic.*

FAQ #9: Would this trail invite theft and crime to the area? This proposed trail is a security issue, a safety issue, and a policing issue. Can people just stop along the path and gawk at what residents have outside and plan to steal their boat, bike, or whatever it is in their yard? Is there a possibility of adding a privacy barrier or safety fencing?

Response: *It is a common concern of trail opposition that crime will increase when a newly-proposed trail is constructed. However, statistics show this is unfounded by numerous case studies, many referenced by [American Trails](#). We certainly can't guarantee these situations won't take place, but it would be a community effort and multi-pronged approach with trail planning and design, law enforcement, County planners, and resident volunteers to create a climate of safety on the trail.*

Where the trail runs in close proximity to existing homes, screening can be considered and included as a part of the project. This screening/fencing could take the form of vegetation/trees, some type of fencing or a metal handrail mounted to the side of the trail. In addition, this trail will provide additional screening from those driving on SH145 and may provide a physical safety barrier for some homes to prevent cars from exiting the roadway and potentially entering their private property.

GLOSSARY

ADA, stands for the Americans with Disabilities Act. It was signed into law by President George Bush in 1990, and it's America's most important law regarding accessibility and civil rights for people with disabilities, including web accessibility.

BLM, The Bureau of Land Management's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of the present and future.

Multimodal Transportation and Mitigation Options Fund (MMOF), by definition, is as follows:

- (a) benefits seniors by making aging in place more feasible.
- (b) benefits residents of rural areas and Disproportionately Impacted (DI) Communities by providing them with flexible public transportation services.
- (c) provides enhanced mobility for persons with disabilities.
- (d) provides safe routes to schools for children, AND
- (e) Reduces emissions of air pollutants and Greenhouse Gases that contribute to adverse environmental effects, including, but not limited to, Climate Change and adverse Human Health Effects.

ROW – Right-of-Way is a type of easement granted or reserved over the land for transportation purposes, this can be for a highway, public footpath, rail transport, canal, as well as electrical transmission lines, oil and gas pipelines. A right-of-way can be used to build a bike and/or pedestrian trail.