

Glenwood Canyon route approved

On February 20, 1976, A.J. Siccardi, Division Administrator for the Colorado Division of Federal Highway Administration notified E.N. Haase, Chief Engineer for the Colorado Division of Highways that the Glenwood Canyon route had been approved for Interstate 70 between Glenwood Springs and Gypsum. This action followed years of study and discussion beginning with a public hearing held in Glenwood Springs in 1963 at which the Canyon route was discussed.

The decision will not only allow designs within the Canyon to proceed, but will enable construction of I-70 to be extended west of Eagle where the freeway presently ends. Design of I-70 from Gypsum to Eagle was essentially completed in 1968, but construction has been delayed pending a decision on the location of I-70 west of Gypsum.

By late summer of this year a contract for the first segment west of Eagle should be underway. Before the end of the year, a second contract will extend grading of I-70 westerly to Gypsum. Surfacing contracts will be awarded in 1977. Present schedules call for additional contracts to Dotsero and to the east end of Glenwood Canyon during 1977. The freeway should be completed from the east end of the Canyon to Eagle by the fall of 1978.

Newsletter to be issued monthly

In order to keep everyone informed as to the events and progress of discussions relating to development of design of I-70 through Glenwood Canyon, the

Division of Highways will issue this newsletter monthly. Distribution will be widespread locally.

Those of you wanting to be placed on a mailing list for a personal copy, please drop a note to: District Engineer, Box 2107, Grand Junction, Colorado 81501.

Send your suggestions and comments to the same address. A sampling will be published each month as space permits.

Is the highway needed?

Get a map of the state of Colorado. Heavy up all east-west arterials across Colorado West. You will find these to be US 40 to the north, I-70-US 6 across the central portion of the state, US 50 across the south central part, and US 160 across the south of Colorado. Our mountainous terrain prohibits development of other routes. The I-70 corridor is a vital transportation corridor since none other is possible across central Colorado.

Over 10,000 vehicles traveled through the Canyon one day last August. Average vehicle counts for every day of last August exceeded 8,000. If present trends continue, by 1996 over 21,000 vehicles will travel through the Canyon on an average August day. Peak days will far exceed the average.

Accident rates in the Canyon average over three times those experienced on typical two lane rural roads in Colorado. Accident rates are in the range of ten times those experienced for completed sections of interstate freeways in Colorado.

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Canyon segment studied for years

Planning for I-70 through western Colorado began nearly two decades ago when the segment from Denver to Cove Fort, Utah, was added to the Interstate System in the late fall of 1957. The most direct route between these two cities generally followed along existing US 6 highway except for the westerly end in Utah. In February, 1957, the Colorado Department of Highways hired the firm of Lionel E. Pavlo Engineering Company to determine the most feasible route location from Denver to Dotsero. The Pavlo recommendation confirmed location of I-70 in the US 6 corridor. Subsequent to the issuance of the Pavlo report, the Colorado Department of Highways began design and construction of I-70 west of Denver, in the Eagle River Valley, near Grand Junction, and in the Glenwood Springs area.

Activity in the Glenwood Springs area began in 1963. During July of 1963, a public hearing was held covering the tunnels and the No Name area of Glenwood Canyon. Another public hearing followed during March of 1964 for the area from Canyon Creek west of Glenwood Springs to the tunnels in the Canyon. The first construction contract in the area was awarded in May, 1966, for relocation of the D&RGW Railroad west of Glenwood Springs. Additional construction over a period of years has resulted in the completion of I-70 from the No Name Interchange in Glenwood Canyon westerly to the Town of Silt.

The area referred to as Glenwood Canyon begins just east of the City of Glenwood Springs and continues easterly for about 14 miles. I-70 has been completed through the westerly 1.5 miles of this section.

Approval to begin preliminary engineering for route location studies of the remaining 13 miles was granted by the Federal Highway Administration, (FHWA) (then

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Bureau of Public Roads) in June of 1966. For the next several years the project was given low profile effort, although it was far from being dormant. Numerous contacts between other Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as property owners, utility companies, and others were made to determine any potential conflicts within the project area. Mounting concern over the effects of constructing a four-lane highway through the Canyon became evident and the 1968 General Assembly of the Colorado legislature passed a joint resolution requesting that the Highway Commission establish a Citizens' Advisory Committee to assist in the design of I-70 through Glenwood Canyon. Project efforts began to accelerate with the formation of this committee in January of 1969. The committee, composed of seven private citizens (both professional and lay persons) and assisted by technical advisors from U.S. Forest Service, BLM and others, held their first meeting in April of 1969. Additional meetings were carried on for several years.

Examination of all feasible route locations revealed two major alternatives — Glenwood Canyon and Cottonwood Pass. Detailed studies of these two alternatives began in 1969.

Again numerous meetings and field reviews were held. The original termini of the Glenwood Canyon route was extended easterly to near the Town of Gypsum and westerly to the Glenwood Interchange on I-70 to provide a common end termini for both routes and a basis for comparative evaluations. Right of Way activity in the Gypsum area ceased in June of 1970, pending the final route selection.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) required additional and more comprehensive studies in the field of social, economic, and environmental effects