

square feet, which would allow for an accessory structure of up to 4,154 square feet. However, in June 2020 the applicant received administrative relief approval for the building to exceed this size. The living quarters part of

the building will be occupied by immediate family members on a permanent basis; the rest of the building will be used as a garage and storage space.

After a brief staff presentation, the commissioners

voted unanimously to recommend the request for approval. The application is now scheduled to be heard at the Oct. 13 BOCC meeting.

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### Colorado Department of Transportation, Sept. 17

## I-25 South Gap project: safety, cost-effectiveness, reliability

By Jennifer Kaylor

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) conducted a Telephone Town Hall Sept. 17 to discuss progress on the I-25 South Gap construction project that will bring improvements to the 18-mile stretch of highway between Monument and Castle Rock. Colorado State Patrol (CSP) Capt. Larry Oleski reminded motorists of safe driving practices that are critical if everyone is to reach his or her destination safely and on time. A panel of CDOT and Kraemer North America representatives provided updates and overviews of their respective areas of expertise. The interactive town hall granted callers the opportunity to ask questions of the representatives.

### CSP needs your help

Although 27 Castle Rock CSP troopers are dedicated to keeping the I-25 corridor safe, they must also cover other needs in Arapahoe and Douglas counties. "We need your help, plain and simple" stated Oleski. Rapidly changing traffic conditions and narrower lanes and shoulders amplify the dangers along the corridor.

Oleski emphasized the need for drivers to heed all warning and speed limit signs and to remain vigilant. Allowing plenty of space between your vehicle and the one ahead is crucial to avoiding accidents as well as a four-point, nearly \$200 fine. "Troopers will write tickets to drivers who follow too closely," he stated. At 60 miles per hour, cars move 90 feet per second. An average reaction time of 1 1/2 seconds calculates to only 135 feet before a driver can steer away or brake to prevent a collision.

Each minute that a lane is blocked due to a stalled or crashed vehicle equals four minutes of delay, therefore it's critical for drivers not to stop along the corridor, Oleski asserted. If your car can be moved, exit the highway using the nearest off ramp. If not, a courtesy patrol canvasses the corridor daily and is specifically dedicated to towing disabled vehicles.

The area's September snowfall serves as a reminder to use wisdom when traveling in the winter. Adequately clean your car of snow to ensure good visibility, check the condition of your tires, and slow down.

CDOT Project Director Paul Neiman added that the project is paying for additional enforcement on state Highway 83.

### Project overview

September marked the second anniversary of the project, reported CDOT's I-25 South Gap Project Director Paul Neiman. Much work remains, and CDOT maintains an expected completion date of 2022. The project's

overall goal is to increase safety by transforming the Gap with wider shoulders, an express toll lane for each direction, wildlife crossings, reconstruction of bridges, and a climbing lane for trucks cresting Monument Hill. The CDOT and Kraemer project team meet on alternate weeks with first responders and agency representatives from Douglas County, Arapahoe County, and the Tri-Lakes area to share safety information.

When asked why the project deconstructed the full 18 miles instead of working in stages, Neiman explained that, except for the Gap's northernmost 6-mile tip which was almost complete, the remaining work was being addressed as one phase to save time and money. Contractors need to do more than one thing at a time such as using materials from one area to fill in earthwork and dirt in another area. The goal is to use the most efficient and cost-effective process and, "Really, the quickest way to deliver the least amount of impacts is just to get in there and get it done," said Neiman.

### Making progress

Kraemer Project Manager Mike Blasi reported on the progress of various aspects of the project. Of the five bridges slated for reconstruction, the Spruce Mountain Road bridge was nearly complete, the Upper Lake Gulch Road bridge was 25% complete, and the bridges at the Plum Creek Parkway and Greenland Road interchanges were about halfway done. The design for the County Line Road bridge was nearly complete, and construction was expected to begin in early spring 2021. Blasi anticipated that during County Line's reconstruction, the road would remain open, but ramp closures should be expected. Other metrics included completion of 40% of the paving, installation of almost 9,600 linear feet of new fiber-optic cable to support modernized technology and seven miles of new drainage pipe, and initiation of the four wildlife crossings plus more than half of the 27 miles of deer fencing.

Addressing a question about the wildlife crossings, Blasi described them as passing under the highway and "in the 100-foot range." The four locations are Monument Hill's mile post 162, just north of County Line Road, just north of Greenland Road, and at the old rest areas. The section of I-25 that passes over Plum Creek serves as an unofficial crossing.

As winter weather approaches, the crews will continue to work on the wildlife crossings as well as bridges and median walls. Motorists should continue to expect overnight lane closures, some intermittent closures of

I-25, and various ramp closures.

### Express lanes and information access

Several questions focused on the express toll lanes, which CDOT's Denver Metro Region Communications Manager Tamara Rollison addressed along with her overview of keeping in touch with the project. CDOT considered more than 100 configurations for improving the Gap corridor, one of which was the addition of an express toll lane for each direction. Note: OCN covered the Feb 8, 2018 CDOT listening session that included the express toll lane as an option (see [www.ocn.me/v18n3.htm#cdot](http://www.ocn.me/v18n3.htm#cdot)).

Rollison explained that studies and experience have proven express toll lanes to provide a level of travel reliability that additional general-purpose lanes do not. Express lanes not only reduce travel time for those using them, they reduce travel time for those in the general-purpose lanes. She confirmed that the express lanes would be free to vehicles with three or more occupants but the 2018 estimate of \$2.25 per trip—a price that would be reviewed before the project's completion—was the lowest in Colorado. The toll revenues would be used to pay for operations and maintenance of the express lanes and for tolling equipment and installation. Rollison maintained that the toll lanes would exist for the foreseeable future.

For motorists wishing to be informed about the latest developments, Rollison provided several ways to stay in touch:

- Sign up for text alerts by texting I25GAP to 21000. Generally, CDOT will send a text alert for major impacts along I-25 and when a crash closes both lanes of a direction on I-25.
- Sign-up for email updates at [i25gap@codot.us](mailto:i25gap@codot.us). Weekly e-blasts are sent on Fridays for a look ahead at the next week.
- Check the website at [i25gap.codot.gov](http://i25gap.codot.gov) for project background, photos, and the list of planned construction impacts.
- Follow the project on Facebook at I25SouthGap-Project. This is the best place to receive impact information and it is updated daily along with the website.
- If you have a question, you can call the hotline at 720-745-5434.

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### NEPCO, Sept. 12

## NEPCO continues virtual meetings

By Sharon Williams

The Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations (NEPCO) met virtually by Zoom tele-conferencing on Sept. 12. Having to cancel the March and May meetings due to COVID-19 concerns and not being able to meet at the Monument Town Hall, which has been closed to public meetings and gatherings, the board of NEPCO has successfully turned to Zoom meetings.

NEPCO represents over 45 homeowners associations, including 9,000 homes in the local area. Areas include Tri-Lakes, Gleneagle, and Black Forest. Its purpose is to encourage planned development and a free exchange of ideas in a public platform, protect the property rights of its members while working with a wide range of area government branches, and act as a point of contact regarding land use matters that impact the quality of life in Northern El Paso County.

### Board members give reports

Greg Lynd, president of NEPCO, opened the meeting by introducing the other board members, who in turn gave their reports. Honorary Associate members include: District 20 State Rep. Terri Carver, Our Community News, and local fire protection districts. The board recommended that El Paso County commissioners' po-

sitions be nominated as Honorary Associate members. They would include Holly Williams, District 1, and Stan VanderWerf, District 3. There were not enough members present for a quorum, so they will have a formal vote by email to the membership.

### Transportation and Land Use Committee

There have been over 32 land use reviews so far in 2020. A recent project that has been approved by the county Planning Commission is the Santa Fe Park rezoning of 64 acres at northeast corner of Baptist Road and Old Denver Highway. NEPCO's concerns include traffic, dark sky compliant lighting (meant to minimize glare) and crossing safety for the highly used Santa Fe Trail. There will be at least six vehicle crossings of the Santa Fe Trail among several of the new projects approved between Baptist Road and State Highway 105.

Other projects that have been reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission with NEPCO's remarks taken into consideration are Redline Pipeline Office/Warehouse in the Wolf Business Park Filing 2 and Freedom Car Wash near Walmart. NEPCO recommendations are regarding lighting and traffic.

### Guest speaker

Lynd introduced Scot Cuthbertson, executive director of the county Public Works Department. Cuthbertson

gave a PowerPoint presentation through Zoom that gave an overview of the expansive responsibilities and assets that Public Works takes care of. Some of the duties include: highway and street maintenance, asphalt repairs and gravel grading, drainage, signage, signals, striping, mowing, sweeping and snow removal. The county has over 2,200 miles of paved roads and 2,000 miles of gravel road. To request pothole repairs on streets or mowing in ditches and side roads, go online to Citizens Connect El Paso County ([citizenconnect.elpasoco.com/#/homepage](http://citizenconnect.elpasoco.com/#/homepage)) and submit a service request. Be sure to include an email address and contact information in the request and they will send an email when the job is done.

### Call for new board members

NEPCO will hold elections in November. Three board positions are expiring and a member-at-large position is available. The Transportation and Land Use Committee chairman position will be open.

To join NEPCO as a homeowners association, apply at [nepco.org/JoinNEPCO/Membership-Application](http://nepco.org/JoinNEPCO/Membership-Application).

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The next meeting will be conducted virtually via Zoom at 10 a.m. Nov. 14.

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### Woodmoor Improvement Association, Sept. 23

## Board begins five-year trail and open space improvement plan

By Jackie Burhans

The Woodmoor Improvement Association (WIA) board met on Sept. 23 to announce the start of a five-year plan

for trails and open space improvement, discuss a grant received to create a defensible corridor on Woodmoor Drive, and provide updates on the Safe Routes to School

project.

### Trails and open space improvement

Bert Jean, director of Common Areas, announced that