



Pikes Peak Area
Council of Governments
Communities Working Together



South Powers Boulevard: Roadmap To A Connected Transportation Freeway System in El Paso County

Many cities have beltways, loops, or bypasses to enhance travel times, increase safety and trip reliability, reduce congestion or serve as a truck route to improve multimodal mobility around large population centers. While El Paso County is the second most populous county in Colorado, there is no connected major highway that compliments the region's only interstate, I-25.

In the mid-1960's, local, county, regional and state planners recognized the need for secondary loop around the I-25 corridor to provide connectivity, alternative route for closures, military access and to prepare for the tremendous growth seen over the decades.

Since 1963, Powers Boulevard was planned as a by-pass alternative for I-25 along the eastern edge of the City of Colorado Springs. As one of the State of Colorado's 28 strategic corridors and a key element of the National Highway System, Powers Boulevard is a critical corridor supporting local, regional and national mobility. It is a critical component of the Region's Congestion Management Plan, provides access to five major military installations, will be the major North/South thoroughfare for the rapidly developing eastern edge of the city and provides direct access to the City of Colorado Springs Airport.

Powers Boulevard is planned to be a four- to six-lane facility, approximately 36 miles in length, with its northern and southern termini both connecting with I-25. It is planned as an access-controlled facility, with interchanges about one mile apart. Ultimately it is intended to be a grade-separated freeway.

Cooperative planning for Powers Boulevard was formalized in the early 1980's through an Intergovernmental Agreement among El Paso County and the cities of Colorado Springs and Fountain together with the Colorado Department of Transportation that created the Major Thoroughfare Task Force (MTTF). The MTTF acted, as a recommending body to the three jurisdictions regarding implementation of the plans for location, design, access, engineering, construction and other related matters pertaining to the Powers Boulevard corridor as well as other major transportation corridors. Early planning for Powers Boulevard included identification of a corridor alignment, access control plan and conceptual cross section.

Due to this early and cooperative planning, the central corridor, between Woodmen Road and Platte Avenue/US 24, was completed in 1988. Extensions to the south (to Fountain Boulevard in 1995, to Fontaine Boulevard in the 1990's, and to Mesa Ridge Parkway in 2002) and to the north (to SH 83 over the period from 2000 to 2005) followed as these areas developed. The region has and will continue to make improvements with improved intersections, grade separated interchanges and road widenings.

In 2000, a Feasibility Study determined the preferred corridor plan and alignment for the planned extension of Powers Boulevard south from Fontaine Boulevard to a connection with I-25. The corridor plan defines the appropriate phasing and next steps for the implementation of completing Powers Boulevard to the South. The study was led by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Transportation, El Paso County and the City of Fountain. These agencies formed the Project Management Team.



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In October of 2004, CDOT/EPC/Colorado Springs IGAs (between Interquest Parkway/SH83 and Mesa Ridge Parkway/SH 16) were finalized and in 2007 Powers Boulevard became State Highway 21 (SH21) as part of a broader swap of the state highway facilities for the then local Powers Boulevard. CDOT prepared an Environmental Assessment for Powers Boulevard (2010) to provide a framework for future corridor planning and investments between Woodmen Road and Mesa Ridge Parkway/SH16. After an Environmental Re-Evaluation of Powers Boulevard between Voyager Parkway and I-25 in 2019, the ultimate connection to the north is currently advancing as a mostly local metropolitan district initiative. The north segment and I-25/SH21 interchange will be added to the state highway system.

Why is More Planning Needed Now?

- In the Pikes Peak region, the completion of Powers Boulevard continually ranks as the top transportation priority by citizens and local agencies alike.
- Given the many decades that it took to get the central and northern sections of Powers built and the rapid growth occurring in the region, planning for the south connection ensures that the region can meet the needs of the future, without sacrificing the present.
- El Paso County together with its municipal partners, through its 1041 and land use processes can ensure that utilities, right-of-way, and access are planned along the corridor and coordinated with development needed for Powers South so that utilities will not need to be relocated thereby saving money and accelerating the future construction of the corridor.
- The region can provide predictability to the development community for land use planning, the adjacent transportation network which support effective and efficient development. This ensures that the region is proactive in the planning process and simplifies project collaboration across local and state agencies and public stakeholders. The region can develop a plan for future funding which could include federal, state, local, PPRTA or other multi-jurisdictionally funded projects.
- The region can develop a multi-jurisdictional agreement and a process for flexibility that considers phasing options and ensures a cohesive vision for the region.
- The future corridor provides the region multimodal opportunities as it could serve as route for Bustang, Mountain Metro Transit, Fountain Municipal Transit and other private providers. The route can be planned to serve trail crossing or new trail locations.
- South Powers must be constructed to support the economic vitality of the region, or development and growth will be hindered.
- The future corridor for South Powers Boulevard is currently located in unincorporated EPC and for the near term will be primarily owned and maintained by EPC, however growth and annexation continue to occur at a rapid rate. As with other segments of Powers Boulevard, the roadway is anticipated to transform from a county roadway to a freeway and become part of the state highway system and a multijurisdictional approach is key to continuing to implement Powers Boulevard vision for the Pikes Peak Region.

Project Need

The need for the proposed project is evidenced by a history of local and regional planning for the completion of the roadway to serve existing and future travel demands.

Regional partners (El Paso County/Fountain/Colorado Springs/CDOT/PPACG) are looking for an opportunity to fund a Powers South Corridor Study to help preserve right-of-way, plan for limited access



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for the freeway standard, and provide predictability to development by further refining the preferred alignment. This would be a corridor study/PEL which includes an access management plan that continues the effort of a feasibility study completed in 2004. The estimated cost is between \$800,000-\$1,500,000 depending on the ultimate scope. Completing this planning effort will allow for future design efforts.

Regional Plans That Include Powers South Extension

- 1968: A Highway Needs Study for the El Paso County Colorado Springs Area shows an eastern loop.
- 1970: Pikes Peak Regional Land Use Plan, adopted by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs.
- 1971: General alignment is shown in the update of the Colorado Springs’ Regional Major Thoroughfare Plan.
- 1987: The South Powers was depicted on EPC’s Major Transportation Corridors Plan.
- 1993: Federal, State and local planning processes includes recommendation of Powers Boulevard as part of the National Highway Systems designation. The National Highway System Map includes Powers Boulevard.
- 1999: Future Public Transportation Rapid Transit Corridors.
- 1999: South Powers Existing Conditions Report.
- 2000: The South Powers Boulevard Feasibility Study and will identify a preferred alignment for the southernmost segment of the Powers Boulevard/SH 21 corridor with ultimate direct connection to I-25.
- 2007: City of Fountain Traffic Master Plan.
- 2016: El Paso County Major Transportation Corridors Plan continues to show the need in this latest update.
- 2020: PPACG 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan.

Powers Planning Timeline

1968: A Highway Needs Study for the El Paso County Colorado Springs Area shows an eastern loop.

1970: Pikes Peak Regional Land Use Plan, adopted by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs.

1971: General alignment is shown in the update of the City's Regional Major Thoroughfare Plan.

1971: The City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County land use policies require master planning and platting actions to dedicate the right-of-way for an expressway and prohibit access to the corridor except at planned major street crossing at approximately one-mile intervals.

1973: El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs adopt formal resolution affirming the desires of both agencies to design and construct Powers Boulevard to no less than expressway standards.

1980: The City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County agree to cooperate in planning, surveying, design, funding and construction of Powers Boulevard.

1984: METEX (a consortium of private developers) sign agreement with local governments to construct seven miles of Powers Boulevard between Woodmen Road and Platte Avenue.



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1987: Major Transportation Corridor Plan was adopted as an element of the El Paso County Master Plan, including Powers Boulevard.

1989: City of Colorado Springs bond issue is approved by citizens to authorize construction of two miles of Powers Boulevard between Fontaine Boulevard and Drennan Road.

1992: Agreement is signed between CDOT and City of Colorado Springs to advance the Powers Boulevard bond proceeds to accelerate two miles of Powers Boulevard construction between Platte Avenue and Fontaine Boulevard.

1993: State and local planning processes for ISTEA includes recommendation of Powers Boulevard as part of the National Highway Systems designation. The National Highway System Map released by the Secretary of Transportation on December 9, 1993 includes Powers Boulevard.

2000: El Paso County completes construction of Powers Boulevard from Fontaine Boulevard to Mesa Ridge Parkway/SH16 with federal funding which was match by El Paso County Road and Bridge funds.

2000: The South Powers Boulevard Feasibility Study identified a preferred alignment for the southernmost segment of the Powers Boulevard/SH 21 corridor with ultimate direct connection to I-25.

2001: Powers Boulevard/Platte Avenue Interchange constructed.

2009: Powers Boulevard/Woodmen Road Interchange constructed.

2010: Powers Boulevard (SH21) Environmental Assessment between Woodmen Road and SH 16.

2012: Powers Boulevard (State Highway 21) converts from an expressway to a four-lane freeway between Research Parkway and Old Ranch Road.

2014: Added acceleration, deceleration and auxiliary lanes on State Highway 21 (Powers Boulevard) between Constitution Avenue and Galley Road.

2016: Widened and improved safety along Powers Boulevard (State Highway 21/US 24) between Fountain Boulevard and Platte Avenue.

2017: Powers Boulevard and Old Ranch Road Interchange constructed.

2018: The left turn lanes were eliminated at Powers Boulevard and Omaha Boulevard and extended northbound left-turn lanes at Palmer Park Boulevard to reduce collisions.

2018: Powers Boulevard and Research Interchange Value Engineering Design Study.

2019: Powers Boulevard (SH21) Environmental Re-Evaluation between Voyager Parkway and I-25.

2020: The northern connection to I-25 is partially funded by a local metropolitan district and is currently under construction.

Summer 2020: Powers Boulevard and Research Parkway Interchange construction expected to begin.



South Powers Boulevard Preferred Alignment (2000 Feasibility Study)

