

Department of Public Works

Engineering Division

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Board of County Commissioners

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TO: El Paso County Planning Commission
Timothy L. Trowbridge, Chair

FROM: Alissa Werre, Project Manager
Joshua Palmer, County Engineer

RE: MP-245 Adoption of the South Powers Extension Corridor Preservation
Plan and Access Control Plan into the El Paso County Master Plan

Commissioner District: All

First Planning Commission Hearing Date:	07/16/2026
Second Planning Commission Hearing Date:	09/03/2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The El Paso County Department of Public Works requests adoption of the South Powers Extension (SPE) Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study and Access Control Plan (ACP) into the Your El Paso County Master Plan as a component of the Major Transportation Corridors Plan. The SPE is a critically needed transportation corridor for the southern portion of El Paso County and the greater Colorado Springs area. The SPE PEL Study and ACP together establish the corridor preservation footprint, recommended alignments, access management framework, and phasing plan needed to guide future design construction of a southern extension of Powers Boulevard (aka CO 21) from Mesa Ridge Parkway (aka CO 16) to Interstate 25 (I-25).

Since 1963, Powers Boulevard has been planned as a bypass for I-25 along the eastern edge of Colorado Springs. As one of Colorado's 28 strategic corridors and a vital element of the

National Highway System, Powers Boulevard is critical in supporting local, regional, and national mobility. The SPE will complete the Powers Boulevard corridor by connecting Mesa Ridge Parkway to I-25 south of Fountain, serving five major military installations, the Colorado Springs Municipal Airport, Peak Innovation Park (approximately 30,000 jobs), and the Southern Colorado Rail Park (approximately 8,000 jobs).

El Paso County, in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), prepared the PEL Study and ACP following a long history of planning and research into the SPE. With accelerating growth in the Fountain area and El Paso County, a clear vision and corridor preservation footprint were needed to provide the ultimate realization of this I-25 connection. The PEL Study followed the FHWA PEL process through four formal coordination points and resulted in recommended alignments E3 and H3, a Corridor Preservation Footprint, and an Access Control Plan to be adopted through an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) among El Paso County, the City of Fountain, and CDOT.

The SPE is planned to be phased, beginning with the E3 alignment extending Powers Boulevard to I-25 at Mile Post (MP) 125.6, and ultimately the H3 alignment connecting to I-25 at MP 121.2. The corridor is designed to accommodate 4-6 travel lanes, multimodal facilities, utility corridors, and resiliency elements within a preserved right-of-way of 330 to 380 feet.

A. REQUEST/AUTHORIZATION

Request: Adoption of the South Powers Extension Planning and Environmental Linkages Study and Access Control Plan (PCD File No: MP-245).

B. EFFECT OF APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER PLAN

Colorado Revised Statute C.R.S. § 30-28-106 et. seq. provides that it is the duty of the Planning Commission to make and adopt the County Master Plan. The Statute requires careful studies to be made prior to plan adoption.

If adopted by the Planning Commission, the South Powers Extension Planning and Environmental Linkages Study and Access Control Plan will become a component of the Your El Paso County Master Plan, providing the policy framework for corridor preservation, access management, and phased development of the South Powers Extension within El Paso County, and the City of Fountain.

The South Powers Extension PEL Study and ACP are legally considered advisory. The documents will be utilized to evaluate and inform development proposals and land use and 1041 permit applications along the SPE corridor; serve as a foundation for corridor preservation decisions; coordinate regional and local initiatives; inform Capital Improvement Programs and grant applications; and be an information source for policy makers, developers, and citizens. Adoption into the Master Plan provides the framework for El Paso County and partner jurisdictions to consistently apply



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access spacing and corridor preservation standards as development occurs along the corridor.

C. APPLICABLE RESOLUTION

N/A

D. GENERAL LOCATION

The South Powers Extension corridor is located east of I-25 and south of Mesa Ridge Parkway/CO 16, within the City of Fountain and unincorporated El Paso County. The 14.2-mile study corridor extends from the southern terminus of existing Powers Boulevard (aka CO 21) at Mesa Ridge Parkway south to the El Paso/Pueblo County line, with recommended alignments connecting to I-25 at MP 125.6 (Alignment E3) and MP 121.2 (Alignment H3).

E. BACKGROUND

What is required by Colorado Revised Statute?

Counties are authorized to prepare comprehensive plans as a long-range guiding document for a community to achieve its vision and goals. The Planning Commission is charged with preparing the master plan. The comprehensive plan (or master plan) provides the policy framework for regulatory tools like zoning, subdivision regulations, annexations, and other policies. A comprehensive plan promotes the community's vision, goals, objectives, and policies, establishes a process for orderly growth and development, addresses both current and long-term needs, and provides for a balance between the natural and built environment. (See C.R.S. § 30-28-106) Elements addressed in a comprehensive plan (master plan) may include: recreation and tourism (required by state statutes), transportation, land use, economic development, affordable housing, environment, parks and open space, natural and cultural resources, hazards, capital improvements, water supply and conservation, efficiency in government, sustainability, energy, and urban design. The statutory basis regarding master plans is included as an attachment.

Development of this Plan

EPC Department of Public Works was the lead in developing the South Powers Extension PEL Study and Access Control Plan. The project team included El Paso County, CDOT, and FHWA, supported by consultants Wilson & Company, Inc. Engineers and Architects; Muller Engineering Company; Bachman PR; and Pinyon Environmental. Coordination was conducted through four FHWA coordination points, an Executive Oversight Team, a Technical Team with representatives from CDOT, the Cities of Fountain and Colorado Springs, PPACG, and Mountain Metro Transit, and a Project Management Team led by El Paso County.



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In developing the SPE PEL Study and ACP, the project team was committed to an open and transparent public engagement process. This included virtual stakeholder meetings, a Virtual Public Open House, an interactive project website with comment forms and mapping tools, and direct outreach to property owners along the proposed corridors. Letters of support were collected from FHWA, CDOT, and local agency partners.

The community engagement process is detailed in the PEL Study document. A Public Open House was held in Winter 2024 to present the Recommended Alignments and gather final public input. Post-recommendation refinements to both E3 and H3 alignments were made based on property owner feedback to minimize residential impacts.

What does this Plan include?

The South Powers Extension PEL Study and Access Control Plan together provide a comprehensive planning framework for the corridor. The PEL Study includes:

- An Introduction and description of the PEL Study process, study area, and project vision
- Existing and Planned Conditions, including planning context (regional plans, land use, military facilities), transportation context (traffic operations, safety analysis, transit, freight), and environmental context (floodplains, water resources, wildlife, cultural resources, air quality, and environmental justice)
- Purpose and Need, documenting the need to advance local and regional mobility and incorporate multimodal opportunities, informed by traffic data, safety analysis, and regional growth projections
- Alternatives Development, Evaluation, and Recommendations, including a three-tiered evaluation of nine alignment alternatives resulting in the recommended E3 and H3 alignments with Corridor Preservation Footprints of 330 feet and 380 feet respectively
- Phasing and Funding, identifying nine phased project segments with available federal, state, local, and private funding opportunities
- The Access Control Plan (ACP), establishing access management standards, typical section options, proposed interchange locations, and access spacing requirements of one mile minimum, adopted through an IGA among El Paso County, the City of Fountain, and CDOT
- Appendices including Letters of Support, FHWA Coordination Points documentation, the FHWA PEL Questionnaire, Existing Conditions Report, alternatives analysis materials, ACP plan sheets with recommended access locations and restrictions, and the ACP IGA



What will this Plan be used for?

If approved, the South Powers Extension PEL Study and ACP will guide agencies' decisions regarding corridor preservation along the SPE alignment. The ACP, implemented through the executed IGA, will require that future development and access along the corridor be consistent with the established access spacing and design criteria. The PEL Study will serve as the foundation for future National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation as individual phases are funded and advanced to design. The documents will be utilized to evaluate and inform development proposals, land use, and 1041 permit applications along the corridor; inform Capital Improvement Programs and grant applications; and provide policy guidance to El Paso County, the City of Fountain, and CDOT as the corridor develops over time.

F. STATUS OF MAJOR ISSUES

Public comments and concerns included:

- The goals of the plan are for a well maintained infrastructure, a transportation system that is efficient and reliable, for improved safety and for a system that is fiscally responsible and optimized.
- That the County should spend money to upgrade roads, for new road connections and widening roads, for improved intersections and for multimodal improvements.
- Comments in support of the plan included safety improvements, improvements to areas of growth, for road improvements in general, for improved roadway connectivity and for connections to public transportation and park and ride lots.
- Comments in opposition were too much focus on cars, to focus more on maintenance of existing roads, to light passenger rail, and an east/west connection of Terrel Dr. from Towner to Marksheffel Road.

These comments and concerns were thoroughly considered and addressed through alignment refinements incorporated into the South Powers Extension PEL Study and ACP. The E3 alignment was shifted to avoid acquiring up to 13 residential properties, and the H3 alignment was refined to reduce impacts to ranchland, homes, and a conservation easement along Fountain Creek. All parties from whom comments were received during the course of the PEL Study have received responses to their comments, and comments were tracked for consideration in future design phases.

G. APPROVAL CRITERIA

1. EL PASO COUNTY MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY AND POLICY PLAN COMPLIANCE

South Powers Extension PEL Study and Access Control Plan will be a component of the Your El Paso Master Plan.



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2. COMPLIANCE WITH COUNTY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

The procedures performed in completion of the South Powers Extension PEL Study and ACP are consistent with documented County policies and guidelines.

3. OTHER FACTORS

C.R.S. § 30-28-106 et. seq. governs adoption of a county master plan. The statute allows the Planning Commission to adopt new or amended County Master Plans “in whole or in parts”.

The South Powers Extension PEL Study and ACP will become the guiding planning documents for corridor preservation and access management for the SPE corridor within the Your El Paso County Master Plan. C.R.S. § 30-28-106 et. seq. allows the Planning Commission to adopt new or amended County Master Plans “in whole or in parts.” The SPE PEL Study and ACP will be utilized to inform development proposals, guide right-of-way preservation decisions, and provide the foundation for future NEPA environmental review and design engineering as phases of the corridor are funded and constructed.

H. PUBLIC COMMENT AND NOTICE

The public was invited to engage at each phase in the development of the South Powers Extension PEL Study and ACP. This included development of a project website, press releases, social media posts, surveys that requested public comments, stakeholder group meetings, and emails to interested parties, the military installations and other individuals and organizations.

Legal Notice for both Planning Commission hearings was published in *The Gazette* on July 3rd, 2026.

The draft Plan is available for public review online on the project webpage at: <https://www.southpowersstudy.com/> and is also accessible through the Public Works Department webpage at: <https://publicworks.elpasoco.com/road-bridge-planning/>

Additional certifications are required after adoption by the Planning Commission

I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adoption of the South Powers Extension Planning and Environmental Linkages Study and Access Control Plan with the following conditions and notations:

CONDITIONS

1. C.R.S. 30-28-109 requires the Planning Commission to certify a copy of the Master Plan, or any adopted part or amendment thereof or addition thereto, to the Board



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- of County Commissioners and to the Planning Commission of all municipalities in the County. The Planning Commission's action to amend the Master Plan shall not be considered final until a minimum of ten (10) complete sets of the final documents are provided and such documents are certified by the Chairman of the County Planning Commission and distributed as required by law.
2. Upon adoption by the El Paso County Planning Commission, the effect of this document is adoption of the South Powers Extension Planning and Environmental Linkages Study and Access Control Plan into the Master Plan for El Paso County as a component of the Major Transportation Corridors Plan.

NOTATIONS

1. Certification of the documents to the municipalities within the County pursuant to Condition No. 1 above is determined to be satisfied upon transmittal of summary information and maps along with a clear description of the locations where the complete documents are available for inspection, along with an offer to provide a given municipality a complete copy of the documents if requested. The transmittal may be in the form of a digital copy.
2. In approving this document, it is understood that minor editorial and formatting changes will be made in conjunction with the final publication process. These modifications may include pagination, correction of typographical errors, clarifications, insertion of photographs, insertion of references and/or corrections to factual information, or inclusion of comments and modifications associated with the Planning Commission hearings. In no case will substantive changes be made to the text without reconsideration by the Planning Commission.

J. ATTACHMENTS

South Powers Extension PEL Study and Access Control Plan
Legal Notice



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**MASTER PLAN
SOUTH POWERS EXTENSION PLANNING AND ENVIROMENTAL LINKAGES STUDY
AND ACCESS CONTROL PLAN**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on July 16, 2026, at 9:00 A.M. in the Second Floor Hearing Room of the Pikes Peak Regional Development Center located at 2880 International Circle, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80910, or at the time or place to which the hearing may be adjourned, a public hearing will be held by the Planning Commission of the County of El Paso, State of Colorado on the application described below.

The proposed South Powers Extension Planning and Environmental Linkes Study and Access Control Plan may be viewed online at the following web address: **<https://epcdevplanreview.com>**, searching file number **MP245**.

The El Paso County Department of Public Works requests adoption of the recommendations of the South Powers Extension Planning and Environmental Linkages Study and Access Control Plan into the Your El Paso County Master Plan. With adoption, these Plans will become the principal plans for further implementation of South Powers Boulevard in El Paso County. Additional information about the planning process may be found at: <https://www.southpowersstudy.com/>

Dated at Colorado Springs, Colorado, this 29th day of June 2026.

THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF

EL PASO COUNTY, COLORADO

BY /s/ Carrie Geitner Chair