



MEETING OF THE
PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
BOULDER COUNTY, COLORADO
AGENDA

Thursday, September 26, 2024, 6:30 p.m.
Third Floor Hearing Room
County Court House
1325 Pearl Street, Boulder

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Last Month's Minutes
4. Presentations
 - 4.1 Boulder to Erie Regional Trail (BERT) Plan
Staff Presenters: Tonya Luebbert, Regional Trails Planner, Community Planning & Permitting and Justin Atherton-Wood, Principal Planner, Parks & Open Space

Action Requested: Information Only
 - 4.2 Cultural and Natural History School Programs
Staff Presenters: Angela Borland, Natural History Program Specialist and Jim Drew, Agricultural Heritage Center Volunteer Coordinator

Action Requested: Information Only
 - 4.3 Update on Soil Health Activities
Staff Presenter: Mike Foster, Agricultural Resources Division Manager

Action Requested: Information Only
5. Public Comment Period for Items Not on Agenda
6. POSAC Members Comment Period for Items Not on Agenda
7. Director's Update
8. Adjournment



MEETING OF THE PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOULDER COUNTY, COLORADO

Regular Meeting Minutes

August 22, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

Third Floor Hearing Room

County Court House

1325 Pearl Street, Boulder

Members Present: Janet George
Tony Lewis
Trace Baker
Paula Fitzgerald
Jackson Moller
Kristine Johnson
Derek Turner
Drew Adams

Members Excused: Carol Byerly

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1. **Call to Order**
 2. **Roll Call**
 3. **Approval of Last Month's Minutes**

Moved by Paula Fitzgerald

Seconded by Trace Baker

Tony Lewis and Jackson Moller abstained.

APPROVED

4. Presentations

4.1 Adler-Fingru – 2024 Xcel Easement Taking

Staff Presenter: Don Durso, Land Officer

Action Requested: Recommendation to BOCC

Q: Can the bore pit in the center of the property be retained with this easement?

Response: Yes, it should be about 5x5 feet.

Q: What types of disturbances to wildlife or introduction of noxious weeds could result from this work?

Response: Concerns from other workgroups wasn't high when they were consulted, but we'll have those staff come out to the site and make recommendations. We have seed that can be spread after the work is complete.

Q: If at some future time maintenance requires the surface to be disturbed, will the same requirement for reclamation still be in place?

Response: Yes; theoretically they shouldn't need to disturb the surface again, but if there is a reason for it, we would issue them a temporary access easement with conditions of restoration.

Q: What is your formula for negotiating what Xcel pays? Is staff time considered?

Response: We are looking at \$35k per acre for unirrigated land, so that is what is was based on. Our county attorney had previously determined we cannot charge for our staff time because that is considered part of our public service.

Moved by Paula Fitzgerald

Seconded by Janet George

APPROVED

4.2 Boulder County Comprehensive Plan Overview

Staff Presenter: Aaron Clark, Land Officer

Action Requested: Information Only

Q: You said the Comp Plan is advisory in nature. I see both "does", "should", and "shall". How are those interpreted?

Response: I see "shall" as "you need to do this", although the Plan it does not have the force of law.

Q: A section of the Plan is a Telecommunications element that mentions cell towers, etc. Is there a similar concern for energy distribution, such as powerlines or solar and wind farms, is that addressed anywhere in the Comprehensive Plan?

Response: These questions relate to how the Boulder County Planning & Permitting department manages the county's reaction to requests. It's usually part of a larger planning process.

Q: Is there a ranking of Real Estate acquisition priorities, or do you use a matrix of land acquisition goals?

Response: They are looked at on a case-by-case basis, and all open space priorities bear equal weight. One property might be really important for a trail connection, and another might have three or four values that makes that property really special.

Q: When the list was determined, was it based on staff or community input?

Response: These are pieces of the Comp Plan that came through a community process in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The county occasionally does community surveys. The Open Space element was updated a few years ago and we did a large public input process for that at that time. We don't do a rank order because we want to do all of it. The Long Range Planning division at CP&P makes the determination for when the elements get updated.

Q: Can we have a presentation from CP&P about Comprehensive Plan updates?

Response: I will make that request.

Public comments: None

5. **Public Comment Period for Items Not on Agenda**

Molly Hardman, rural Boulder County. She stated that she has always supported the mission and purpose of Parks & Open Space, but she does not support the Red Hill elk hunt. She doesn't feel safe in her neighborhood while the hunt is happening. She has not received a response to her inquiries to learn the science behind this decision.

6. POSAC Members Comment Period for Items Not on Agenda

Jackson Moller: Carol Byerly has an author hour at the Boulder Bookstore on Sept. 3 to discuss her book *Mosquito Warrior*.

Derek Turner: Will POSAC get an update on the current budget requests to get a better understanding of the BCPOS decision-making process?

Response: Janis Whisman will pass POSAC's request to Therese Glowacki. Our department starts budget discussions early in the year. In September, all department budget requests are presented and then in November the commissioners start making those decisions. The county passes the budget by the end of the year.

Tony:

- Perhaps the annual POSAC retreat is a good time to learn about the BCPOS budget.
- I'd like to thank staff for today's site visit to Heil Valley Ranch. It was very informative.
- Congratulations to Trace Baker and Conrad Lattes for each being chosen to receive a Parks & Open Space Conservation Award. The ceremony will be on Sept. 18.
- There may not be a quorum for the September 26 meeting because several members will be gone.
- Update on farm working housing: A group is meeting on Sept. 9 and Tony will report back to POSAC.
- Regarding the comments from Molly Hardman, I hope that someone on staff will reply to her questions. It's always the desire that public inquiries will be responded to.

7. Director's Update

BCPOS does have a standard to reply promptly to public inquiries. Staff will look into what happened in Molly's case.

- The Boulder County fair had a record-breaking year with more than 160,000 in attendance.

- Trailhead work at both Stearns Lake and Hall Ranch continues with significant improvements with drainage and accessibility.
- Youth Corps finished another very successful season with over 120 youth.
- The Anne U. White trailhead restroom is in place and operational.
- On Aug. 1, Education & Outreach helped make sure Nederland's 150th Anniversary celebration weekend went well, with a kickoff event at the Nederland Mining Museum, in partnership with the Nederland Area Historic Society, the Nederland Public Library, and the Buffalo Bill Museum in Golden.

8. Adjournment

7:35 p.m.

This is only a summary of the meeting. The meeting video is viewable on the [POSAC webpage](#).



Parks & Open Space

5201 St. Vrain Road • Longmont, CO 80503
303-678-6200 • POSinfo@bouldercounty.gov
www.BoulderCountyOpenSpace.org

PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Time/Date of Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 26, 2024

Location: Boulder County Courthouse
1325 Pearl Street, Third Floor, Boulder

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| TO: | Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee |
| FROM/PRESENTER: | Justin Atherton-Wood, Principal Planner, Parks & Open Space Tonya Luebbert, Regional Trails Planner, Community Planning & Permitting |
| AGENDA ITEM: | Boulder to Erie Regional Trail (BERT) Plan |
| ACTION REQUESTED: | Information Only |

OVERVIEW

Since 2019, Parks & Open Space has been participating on the Steering Committee for the Boulder to Erie Regional Trail (BERT) Plan as led by the Regional Trails Program in the Department of Community Planning & Permitting. The draft BERT Plan ([BERT webpage](#)) is currently available for public comment and being shared throughout the community. The proposed plan is going before the Board of County Commissioners on October 10, 2024 for approval. At the September POSAC meeting, CP&P staff will be sharing an overview of the draft plan with POSAC as described in their attached memo. BCPOS staff will also be available to discuss the department’s collaboration with the CP&P staff in planning for the BERT as outlined below.

DISCUSSION

The concept of the BERT has been envisioned in adopted plans such as the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Master Plan for decades. The BERT has also been established as a top-five priority for the Regional Trails Program since the Countywide Transportation Sales Tax was first approved in 2001. As envisioned, the BERT would serve as a major regional trail corridor. As such, it would provide an alternative for commuters to make connections along the corridor without using cars. It would also provide abundant recreational opportunity itself while also improving access to open space areas, including BCPOS’s Walden Ponds Wildlife Preserve and the planned Prairie Run Open Space.

The proposed alignment is located along an unused rail line on property owned primarily by BNSF Railway and generally within the Boulder Creek corridor. The corridor is largely rural in nature with gravel extraction, open space, agriculture, and rural residential uses predominating. As such, there are a number of environmental resources designated by the Environmental Resources Element in the planning area including Critical Wildlife Habitat, a High Biodiversity Area, Rare Plant Areas, Riparian and Wetland Areas, as well as other designations (see page 22 of the BERT plan). These ERE-designated resources are present mostly on lands on the western side of the project area located between 61st Street and

Highway 287. Most of the lands are owned and managed by the City of Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Parks Department and lie immediately adjacent to the corridor owned by the railway. The nest of a number of raptors and other migratory birds lie along this riparian corridor that influence management of the adjoining open space lands and are an on-going consideration in the planning for the BERT.

East of Highway 287, the planned trail corridor is farther from the creek and characterized more by rural residential uses. Some areas are also in the process of being annexed into the Town of Erie and utilized for residential development.

In terms of BCPOS lands within the planning area, there are two Open Space properties both leased for agriculture and located near Highway 287. They are MMS Partnership, located west of Highway 287; and Leyner 2, located immediately east of Highway 287. The land owned by BNSF Railway, within which the BERT would be located, bifurcates these parcels. Current agricultural practices take the land ownership pattern into account i.e., location of fields, roads, fences, and irrigation ditches. Since these properties are managed for agriculture, they are closed to public use.

However, there are two County Open Spaces near the BERT corridor that are or will be managed for public use. They are Walden Ponds Wildlife Preserve and Prairie Run Open Space. The opportunity for connecting with trails and amenities at Walden Ponds would likely occur by utilizing existing connectivity with Sawhill Ponds, an OSMP-managed open space. Sawhill Ponds is located between and adjacent to both the proposed BERT corridor to the south and Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat to the north.

As POSAC members may recall, BERT was a consideration in the management planning process for Prairie Run Open Space. BCPOS continues to collaborate with the Town of Erie and CP&P on making potential connections between BERT, trails planned for Prairie Run, and trails and other amenities being considered by the Town of Erie.

Since 2019, Parks & Open Space has been participating on the project's Steering Committee as led by CP&P. BCPOS staff have appreciated the opportunity the Steering Committee has provided as a venue for working collaboratively with the many partners we are consistently engaged with to support the success of the natural systems present in Boulder County while also seeking opportunities to provide community access to natural areas. In this area of the county, City of Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Parks Department (OSMP), the Town of Erie, and the Colorado Department of Parks & Wildlife (CPW) are important partners in the process. We appreciate that this planning effort has brought our agencies together to study a range of alternatives for the location of the trail in addition to supporting a robust public process that has included a Community Working Group. This work is making apparent the trade-offs at play in making a decision about the planned location of the trail and revealed the work that remains as the project moves into the design phase.



Community Planning & Permitting

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PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Time/Date of Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 26, 2024

Location: Boulder County Courthouse
1325 Pearl Street, Third Floor, Boulder

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| TO: | Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee |
| FROM/PRESENTER: | Tonya Luebbert, Regional Trails Planner, CP&P |
| AGENDA ITEM: | Boulder to Erie Regional Trail (BERT) Plan |
| ACTION REQUESTED: | Information Only |

This memo provides an update on the Boulder to Erie Regional Trail (BERT) planning process. This effort, led by Boulder County’s Community Planning & Permitting Department, evaluates conceptual alignments and identifies a preferred alignment for further consideration for an east-west multi-use trail connection between 61st Street in Boulder and East County Line Road in Erie. The planning process began in 2019 and is now in its final stages. The BERT Plan & Appendices are currently available for public review on the BERT webpage boco.org/BERT, and the plan will go before the Boulder County Board of County Commissioners on October 10, 2024.

Project Overview:

- **Key Plans:** The trail connection is identified in the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan, Boulder County Transportation Master Plan, Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan, and OSMP Visitor Master Plan.
- **Timeline:** The project began in 2019 and initially focused on the RTD-owned right-of-way (formerly a Union Pacific Rail line) but the project scope was later expanded to consider and evaluate additional alignments outside the rail corridor with the goal of minimizing environmental impacts. The planning process included seven phases, from initial data collection to the final plan.

Stakeholder and Public Engagement: Extensive stakeholder and community input went into the creation of the BERT Plan.

- **Steering Committee:** The Steering Committee for the BERT Plan consisted of representatives from County Community Planning & Permitting, Boulder County Parks & Open Space (BOCO POS), Boulder County Public Works (BOCO PW), City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP), City of Boulder Transportation & Mobility, Town of Erie, Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW), Regional Transportation District (RTD), and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT).
- **Community Working Group:** Community members volunteered to contribute their time and input to the development of the BERT Plan. Members included adjacent landowners, equestrian users, and representatives from local trails groups, cycling groups, and environmental groups (BCNA & Audubon Society).

Claire Levy County Commissioner Marta Loachamin County Commissioner Ashley Stolzmann County Commissioner

- **Public Engagement Opportunities:** Four neighborhood workshops, three public meetings, and two online surveys, one that was statistically valid, were conducted to gather input.

Initial Conceptual Alignments & Alignment Evaluation: *(pages 34-119 of the BERT Plan)*

Conceptual alignments were developed within the RTD ROW, along with additional routes along Valmont/Isabelle Road and on OSMP lands. Multiple options to cross Hwy 287 were also considered. Evaluation criteria were also developed through extensive stakeholder collaboration to serve as a foundation for the evaluation of the alignments and for the selection of a preferred alignment for further consideration.

Preferred Alignment for Further Consideration: *(pages 124-159 of the BERT Plan)*

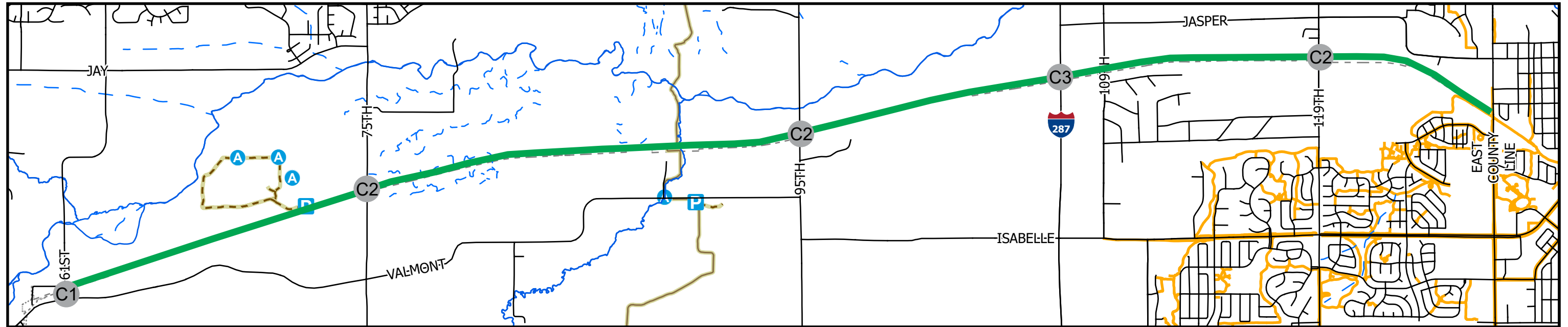
Alignment 1B, located within the RTD right-of-way (ROW), was selected for its safety, user experience, and minimal impact on adjacent properties. However, there are still environmental concerns as high-value ecological resources adjacent to the alignment require careful consideration and protection. If the plan is approved, environmental impact minimization and mitigation opportunities will continue to be evaluated in coordination with CPW and open space agencies during the next phases of the BERT project. While environmental resources west of Hwy 287 require more detailed analysis, the project team recognizes the eastern segment of the BERT has fewer environmental concerns and technical complications. In addition, some segments are likely to be constructed as part of planned residential development in Erie.

Next Steps: *(pages 173-174 of the BERT Plan)*

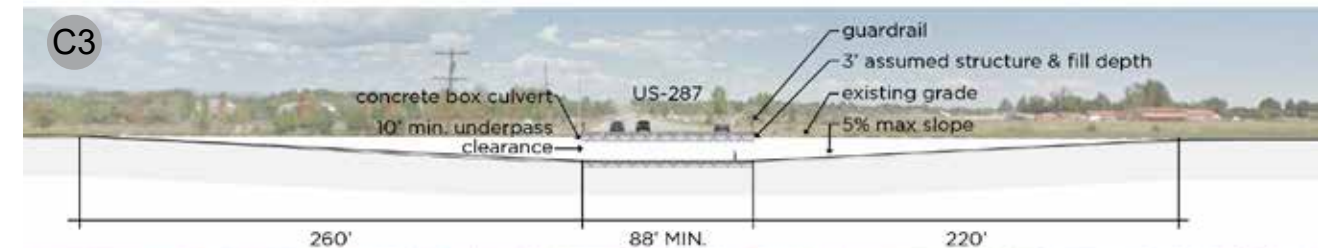
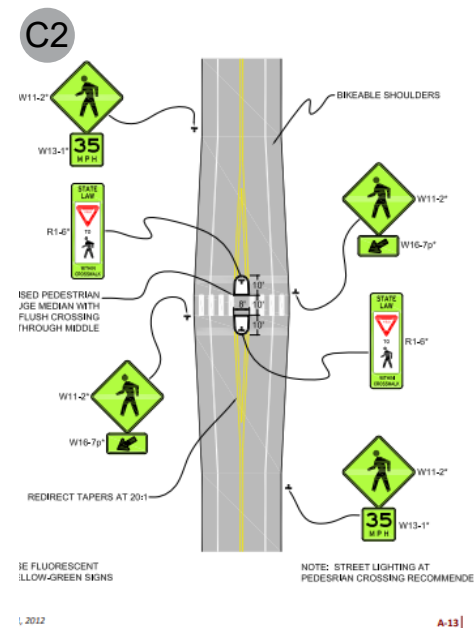
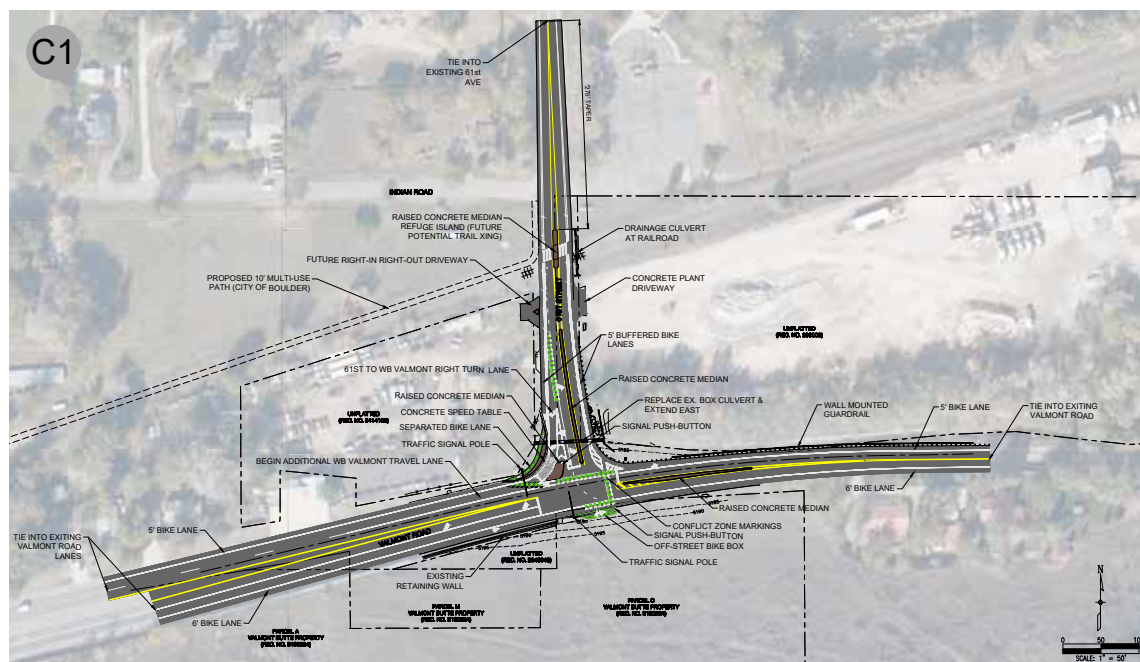
Following completion of this planning phase of the project and approval of a preferred alignment, funding sources and potential phasing will be identified, and engineering design will begin with environmental, cultural, topographic, and geotechnical surveys. Throughout the next phases of the project, Boulder County will work on obtaining all the necessary approvals and permitting. It is possible that the trail could be built in sections as funding and other opportunities allow.

PREFERRED ALIGNMENT FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION DESCRIPTION

ALIGNMENT 1B - The preferred BERT trail alignment for further consideration is a 10ft wide soft surface trail located in the RTD row off of the rail bed, unless there is a wetland avoidance advantage gained by locating on top of the existing railbed. It crosses 75th, 95th, and 119th with Boulder County multi-modal standards crossing A-13 (crossing C2 below), crosses Hwy 287 with an underpass (crossing C3 below). 109th is crossed with a traditional crosswalk due to lower traffic volumes.

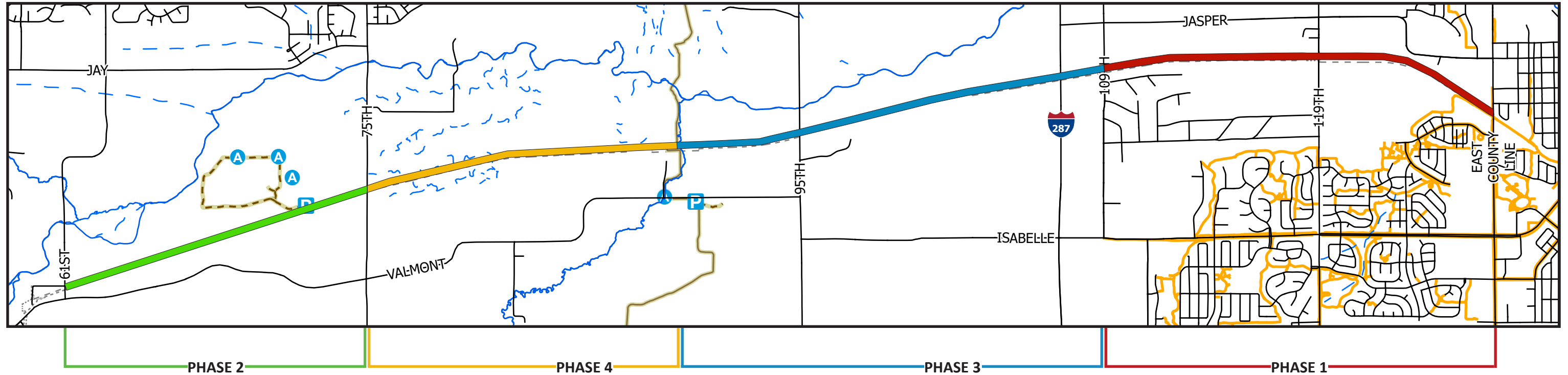


Crossings



PHASING PLAN

It is possible that the BERT could be constructed in phases. Survey, 30% design, and construction documents could be completed for the entire corridor with bid packages included in the final construction document set for the four construction phases identified. These proposed phases can be seen below.



DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

CONSTRUCTION PHASES

SURVEYS FOR ENTIRE CORRIDOR

- Topographic
- Environmental
- Cultural
- Geotechnical

30% DESIGN FOR ENTIRE CORRIDOR

DESIGN FOR EACH PHASE

- Construction documents for entire corridor with bid packages for each construction phase

PHASE 1: E COUNTY LINE RD - 109TH

- Fewer resources & technical complications
- Lower cost - not likely to be on rail bed, no wetlands likely, no retaining wall needed
- Some segments already planned

PHASE 2: 61ST - 75TH

- Similarly low level of technical complications
- More resource considerations
- Wet areas present, particularly close to 75th st.
- More costs likely due to wetland mitigation and possibility to locating trail on rail bed
- If wet areas are indeed wetlands, there will also be permitting needs

PHASE 3: TELLER WHITE ROCKS TRAIL - 109TH

- Largely straightforward section for construction
- Underpass to incur significant costs and additional agreements, permitting, design and engineering needs

PHASE 4: 75TH - TELLER WHITE ROCKS TRAIL

- Additional resources considerations, including discussion of nest recommendations and mitigation
- Wetlands likely and mitigation likely needed for water flow
- Higher costs associated with mitigation
- Adjacent agricultural operations and movement to consider



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PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Time/Date of Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 26, 2024

Location: Boulder County Courthouse
1325 Pearl Street, Third Floor, Boulder

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|--------------------------|---|
| TO: | Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee |
| FROM/PRESENTERS: | Angela Borland, Natural History Program Specialist and Jim Drew, Agricultural Heritage Center Volunteer Coordinator |
| AGENDA ITEM: | Cultural and Natural History School Programs |
| ACTION REQUESTED: | Information Only |

This informational presentation will broadly cover the how department's education and outreach team reaches school aged audiences. Topics covered include the structure of the team, Parks & Open Space museums and properties utilized, the types of programs offered, and how volunteers contribute to educational programs.



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PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Time/Date of Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, June 27, 2024

Location: Boulder County Courthouse
1325 Pearl Street, Third Floor, Boulder

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|--------------------------|--|
| TO: | Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee |
| FROM/PRESENTER: | Mike Foster, Agricultural Resources Division Manager |
| AGENDA ITEM: | Update on Soil Health Activities |
| ACTION REQUESTED: | Information Only |

The Agriculture and Water Resources Division within Parks & Open Space (POS) manages approximately 25,000 acres of agricultural land and leases them to private farmers/ranchers to help steward those properties.

A significant focus of the Division has been on improving soil health on BCPOS leased agricultural properties and will be for the foreseeable future. Staff will provide an overview of soil health and some of the key activities the Division is doing to advance this work.

Since this effort began in 2023, nearly \$800,000 in grants and pilot efforts have been invested on 4,200 acres of ag lands. Some of the key initiatives include: application of compost on approximately 1,400 acres, growing cover crops on 600 acres and installing approximately 2 miles of fencing to facilitate livestock grazing.

Staff will provide additional details about some of the key accomplishments and early trends in this effort.