



# Transportation Department

2525 13th Street, Suite 203 • Boulder, Colorado 80304 • Tel: 303.441.3900 • Fax: 303.441.4594

July 2, 2015

**TO: County residents concerned about Fourmile Canyon Reconstruction**

**RE: Flood-Related Reconstruction of Fourmile Canyon Drive and Fourmile Creek**

Recently, Boulder County staff and our consultants have heard a number of questions and concerns from Fourmile Canyon residents about the current designs for flood repairs to Fourmile Canyon Drive. I'd like to take a few moments to follow-up on those questions and address some of those concerns.

**Background:** As I am sure you recall, the flood obliterated and seriously damaged large sections of the Fourmile Canyon Drive. Immediately after the flood, the county constructed a four-wheel drive jeep road to provide emergency access that aided with emergency response and recovery and provided access to residents and property owners. Shortly following the construction of the emergency access road, a temporary unpaved road, passable by two-wheel drive vehicles, was placed to give access to residents of the canyon. This temporary road, considered an emergency repair, was constructed quickly, with minimal field engineering, drainage design, or safety components, and was never intended to be a permanent road. Over the summer of 2014, we paved the repaired sections of this road to address safety and maintenance issues and to reduce dust; this is the road that is in place today. It was not built to withstand any significant flooding or to sustain the normal usage the canyon experiences, and needs to be reconstructed in its permanent condition.

**Concern: Impacts of Rock Removal:** Since much of the road was so damaged by the flood and the creek has significantly changed characteristics, permanent repair of the road means some combination of moving the road away from the creek towards the hillside, moving the road towards the creek, and/or elevating the road and installing retaining walls and armoring stream banks so that increased flows do not damage the roadway or cause increased flooding on adjacent property. For each scenario, there are trade-offs we must consider. If we build into the hillside, we will need to remove ground/rock in some areas to accommodate the road. If we build toward the creek, we must build retaining walls and reinforce the stream bank, which will affect stream flows and stream health and must be constructed to not increase flood risk to homes that lie along Fourmile Creek. There is no simple answer for what alternative is better. Both are effective means to increase resiliency, but both have environmental impacts.

To gain public input on these tradeoffs (and hear other concerns), these two concepts were presented at our initial public workshop on the reconstruction of the road and rehabilitation of the creek. The general sentiment we heard from attendees at the workshop was to, where possible, minimize intrusion into the creek and minimize use of retaining walls. The primary concerns we

heard related to the visual impact of retaining walls to residents who live adjacent to the road and creek as well as the concern that the road construction not increase flood risks to properties or residents. Based on this feedback, we asked our engineering team to focus design on minimizing retaining walls and creek impacts and to, where necessary, widen towards the hillside away from the creek. This is not always possible, as we also need to balance impacts to private access driveways and to property owners on both sides of the road and creek.

More recently, we have heard concerns about the visual and historic impact of rock removal/scaling associated with moving the road away from the creek, and more specifically, the use of wire mesh to minimize risk of falling rocks to road users. In follow up on those concerns, we have asked our geotechnical consultants to identify other potential measures to mitigate the risk of rock falling onto the road (which has long been an issue in the canyon). We have also asked our consultants to identify any measures we can take to minimize impacts to the important scenic rock features in the canyon that might be affected by the road reconstruction.

**We have scheduled a public meeting for July 28 at 5:30 at the Alfalfas' Community Room to provide an update on these issues.**

**Concern: Uphill shoulders as part of the flood repairs.**

We have heard comments about the decision to include a four-foot uphill shoulder on the flood damaged sections of road (and on the short, undamaged sections within each of the flood damaged areas). These comments have included both support for addressing historic safety concerns from the high volume of bicyclists who use the narrow, curvy road with no safe place for cars to pass, concerns that providing the uphill shoulders will encourage more cyclists to use the road, with the attendant safety concerns, feelings by some local residents that increased bicycling is an undesirable imposition on their lifestyle and community character, and that the environmental impact of the adding the shoulders are unacceptable.

It has been a county policy for many years to make our roads safer for all travelers, including bicycles. To this end, the county has adopted standards that guide our roadway design. These standards, called the Boulder County Multimodal Standards, have guided our design in Fourmile Canyon. The current design for Fourmile flood repairs include a four-foot shoulder on the uphill lane, a one-foot shoulder on the downhill lane, and two 11-foot travel lanes. In addition, we are incorporating in the design drainage improvements as well as pull outs and emergency other elements requested by emergency responders. We currently have no plans or funding to create an uphill shoulder or other improvements beyond these repairs to damaged sections of the road.

During construction, the county will do its best to work with the selected contractor to minimize and manage impacts to canyon residents. We know that construction activities in a typically quiet area can be frustrating and we'll do our best to mitigate its effects on the local population. We know that there will be travel and noise impacts during the project, but we'll employ tactics aimed at reducing disturbances and keeping them to acceptable working hours.

**FOURMILE CANYON FLOOD PROJECT SCOPES & TIMELINES**

**Lower Fourmile Canyon Drive** – This project includes two sections of Fourmile Canyon Drive: a south section from approximately 0.1 mile north of Boulder Canyon Drive to approximately .16 miles south of Poorman Road; and, a north section between Logan Mill Road and Salina Junction. The total length of the project is just over 1.4-miles. Currently, roadway reconstruction plans are at the 30% design phase, which means that land surveying has been completed and applied to the preliminary plans.

Project designs will be provided to the public again as soon as they reach 90% completion. This set will be much more refined and will include environmental survey information, including potential rock cuts, vegetation removal and re-vegetation, and creekside enhancements. To provide an additional chance to view plans, provide feedback and ask questions, the county will host another public meeting at the end of July:

### **Public Meeting to Discuss Environmental Aspects of Design & Construction**

**Tuesday, July 28**

**5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

**Alfalfa's Community Room – 1651 Broadway**

Boulder County Transportation and the engineering team will present and discuss current plans regarding potential rock and vegetation removal. In addition, we will discuss why and how rock will be removed in order to create a safer and more resilient road. A question and answer session will be held after the presentation.

**The lower Fourmile Canyon project is slated to go to construction in the spring of 2016 and last until the end of the year, weather permitting.** The majority of the roadwork is expected to be completed by the end of 2016, with some minor items such as re-vegetation and final striping being completed in the spring of 2017.

**Gold Run** – Currently, preliminary roadway design is underway for Gold Run and is expected to be complete by August of 2015. This set of drawings will be made available to the public for comment as soon as they are available and a public meeting will be held to talk about the plans and collect feedback. The date of this meeting is yet to be determined. This project is slated to begin in the summer of 2016 and last until early 2017.

**Salina Junction** – This project focuses on the area where Fourmile Canyon Drive meets Gold Run Road. Work will include a large new culvert and area drainage system that will greatly increase capacity of the drainage compared to what is currently under the road. These project plans are almost complete. Work is scheduled to begin this fall and last until early 2016.

**Wall Street/Upper Fourmile Canyon Drive** – This project focuses on the road that leads west from Salina Junction. Preliminary roadway design is underway and is expected to be complete later this summer. These plans will be shared with the public and made available for comment as soon as they are available. Comments during this phase will be incorporated, where applicable. The next set of plans (90%) will also be made available for review. A public meeting is likely to be held later this year at a date to be determined. Construction is currently anticipated to start next summer (2016) and will last through early 2017.

**Logan Mill Road Bridge** – This project will include replacing the existing, temporary culverts at Logan Mill Road and Fourmile Canyon Drive with a new bridge that is designed to withstand a 100-year flood event. Designs will soon reach the 30% phase. As soon as they're ready, they'll be made available to the public for review and comment. A public meeting is likely to be held later this year at a date to be determined. The next set of plans (90%) should be ready for review later this fall. Work is slated to begin next spring 2016 and last through the summer.

**Fourmile Creek Master Plan** – The items identified in the Fourmile Creek Master Plan are currently being incorporated into roadway plans at a conceptual design level, and will be incorporated into the road design as funding allows. Some funding has been received by the Fourmile Creek Coalition for watershed rehabilitation, and we intend to collaborate with the coalition where priority creek work will take place adjacent to the road repairs at the same time.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Comments on draft designs are welcome and will be accepted at any time during the drafting phase. Our engineers may not be able to accommodate every request, but please know that all suggestions will be taken into consideration. We want to hear from you because no one knows the area better than the people who live there. All project plans are and will be available on the current project website –

<http://www.bouldercounty.org/roads/construction/pages/canyonroads.aspx>

Keeping county roads open and safe to all users is one of our highest priority goals. If you see a current roadway condition that is unsafe, please let us know ASAP by calling 303-441-3962 or call the Sheriff's Office at 303-441-4444. You can also use the online report form at <http://www.bouldercounty.org/roads/permits/pages/roadservicerequest.aspx> and we'll do our best to remedy the situation expeditiously.

**For questions, comments and concerns about the reconstruction project, please contact:**

- Project comment form - <https://bouldercounty.wufoo.com/forms/m1omnala1bmo7n9/>
- Andrew Barth – Communications – 303-441-1032 – [abarth@bouldercounty.org](mailto:abarth@bouldercounty.org)
- Dan DeLange – Project Manager/Engineer – 303-413-7039 - [ddelange@bouldercounty.org](mailto:ddelange@bouldercounty.org)

Thank you for your thoughts on this project. Your assistance is invaluable. Have a good holiday weekend.

Sincerely,



George Gerstle  
Boulder County Transportation Director