



SMALL CITIES/RURAL COMMUNITIES PROJECT OF THE YEAR: TRANSPORTATION

Sandstone Underpass

Managing Agencies: Town of Vail, Colorado; Colorado Department of Transportation

Primary Contractor: Kraemer North America

Primary Consultant: Felsburg Holt & Ullevig

Nominated By: Colorado Chapter

Since the early 1980s, an additional I-70 underpass to enhance community connectivity and traffic flow between the Vail and West Vail interchanges has been discussed. In 1993, the idea went through a public process as a part of the Vail Transportation Master Plan (VTMP). From that point forward, the underpass became a common theme in numerous Vail Master Plans, including: the Vail Lionshead Master Plan (1999); the Vail 20/20 Strategic Vision Plan (2007); the VTMP Update (2009); the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) long-range Statewide Improvement Plans since 1996; and the I-70 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and Record of Decision.

It was identified that an additional I-70 underpass would provide the following: a safe vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle crossing of I-70; additional reserve capacity at the two primary I-70 interchanges in Vail; enhancements to transit service routing and connectivity; improved emergency response routing; and water quality improvements for discharges to Gore Creek.

Between 2004 and 2009 the Town of Vail underwent a period of unprecedented development and redevelopment, which prompted the reevaluation and update of the VTMP (2009). The anticipated new growth was



projected to strain the Town's existing transportation infrastructure; specifically the Vail and West Vail interchanges. Both of the interchanges are vital to Vail's connectivity, as they are the only means of crossing I-70 for three miles along the commercial and resort core areas of Vail and are the only nearby points to access I-70, the main artery within the Vail Valley. Straining the interchanges to operational failure would paralyze Vail's transportation network. Such failures have occurred in the recent past during peak visitor times when Vail has been also overwhelmed with additional traffic from Vail Pass closures,

causing all traffic, transit, emergency services and general town services to go to "gridlock" in this area.

The reevaluation led to the design and construction of the Sandstone Underpass beginning in 2012 with its completion in 2017. In a joint effort, the Town of Vail and CDOT worked with Felsburg Holt and Ullevig to prepare design plans, and Kraemer North America to construct the Sandstone Underpass.

As mentioned above, specific benefits of the underpass included both multimodal connectivity and congestion/operational performance.