

# Woodmen Road Funded by Stimulus Money

The City of Colorado Springs has successfully pursued funding for Phase I of the Woodmen Road Corridor Improvements Project under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). \$35 million from the Federal Governments "Stimulus Package" will help pay for Phase 1 of the Corridor. This phase will widen Woodmen Road between I-25 and Bell Drive to six lanes and includes the construction of the Woodmen/Academy interchange.

The project was selected in part because it is "shovel ready" for construction. This state of readiness was achieved after completion of an Environmental Assessment and design process that included a comprehensive public involvement process with neighborhoods, businesses, and commuters.

With the pending approval of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Woodmen Phase I will be let out for construction bids within the next month and construction will begin in early fall. Initially, groundbreaking was slated for an earlier start, but the specifications and construction drawings are being adjusted to comply with regulations associated with federal funding. The construction will likely last through 2011.

Some initial utility work near the Woodmen Road and Academy intersection has already begun. By moving underground pipes and relocating utility lines now, the project will be further ahead when the contractor is on board.

The City has worked extensively with local residents and businesses to ensure safer access and improve safety. Further, a special Aesthetics Committee met over several months to guide landscaping and other aesthetic design features ensuring that they fit into the neighborhood and improve the look of the roadway.

"We want to make this the "model home" of roadway projects," said Robin Kidder, the city's roadway engineering manager. "We have a full landscaping plan that will not only provide color during the changing seasons, but also is designed to be water efficient. The bridge walls along Academy Boulevard will have a stacked sandstone pattern with complementing colors for railings and traffic signals. The City is very interested in ensuring that both the improved function and new aesthetic treatments on Woodmen Road will make it a huge improvement to the neighborhoods and businesses along it, as well as to the traveling public."

The area of Colorado Springs and El Paso County has grown about 30% in population over the last dozen years. Significant new developments in the office, commercial, retail, and service industries have further urbanized this quadrant, adding more traffic. The City is now doing several roadway projects in the area to accommodate the increased traffic, ease congestion, and enhance safety. It is the City's hope that these investments, including the improvements to aesthetics and landscaping, will also have a spillover effect and generate private investment.

Many of the commercial properties along Woodmen Road are fairly new, but some have been there for over 20 years. Public investments of this magnitude can inspire older commercial properties to upgrade or even redevelop. "That's what we look for: a private investment response to our public investment," explained Kidder. "That kind of partnership is what makes communities better places to live, do business, and travel within. We want that for our city and its neighborhoods."

Access management is a key to making Woodmen Road safer. "With the number and placement of driveways and business access points that currently exists, we see too many

accidents associated with entering and exiting properties as cars slow down to make turns or enter moving lanes at a slow speed. The logical, organized, access plan will make traveling to businesses along Woodmen Road not only less congested, but safer. Anyone who has traveled this corridor over the past five years knows what I am talking about," Kidder said.

Woodmen Road and Austin Bluffs Parkway will be among the first corridors designated to improve east/west mobility in Colorado Springs. The City maintains a project website for the Woodmen Road Corridor Improvements project which includes additional information, design visualizations, and contact information. It can be seen at [www.woodmenroad.com](http://www.woodmenroad.com).