

### THE STAGE & RAIL TRAIL

would extend some 64 miles from Salida to Leadville in Colorado's Chaffee and Lake Counties. Approximately 13 miles (20%) would be non-motorized single track and the remainder would follow open public roads and highways. This map shows the full trail divided into eight sections that are described in detail in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 5 Section Alignments, Recommendations

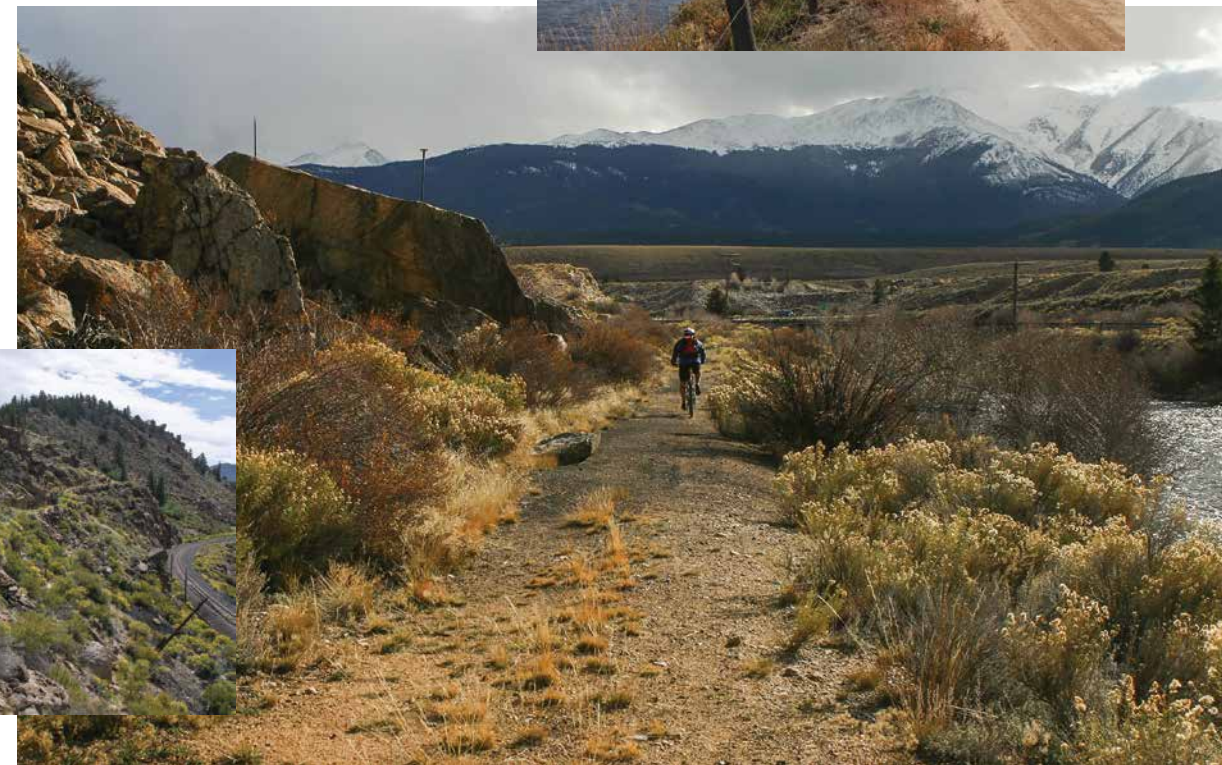
### Introduction

In addition to its efforts to understand and account for concerns of its potential management partners, interest groups and private property owners, the planning team conducted a section-by-section inventory and review of the alignments and alternatives identified in the Feasibility Study and, if indicated, pursued additional avenues. The review focused on identifying preferred and alternative trail alignments and off-trail developments in light of the following factors or criteria.



- Opportunity to follow historic routes
- Likelihood of land owner conflicts or opposition
- Opportunity/necessity to acquire access easements or purchase private lands
- Difficulty or ease of implementing proposed physical facilities and developments; safety concerns
- Opportunities for connectivity or relationship to other trails
- Presence of related natural and historic resources
- Opportunities for interpretation of on- and off-trail environmental, cultural and historic features
- Presence of sensitive wildlife, historic resources or other environmental constraints
- Anticipated required environmental and historic resources studies and permitting
- Anticipated management and maintenance obligations
- Ease or difficulty in formal designation by competent authorities
- History of support or opposition by the recommended partners

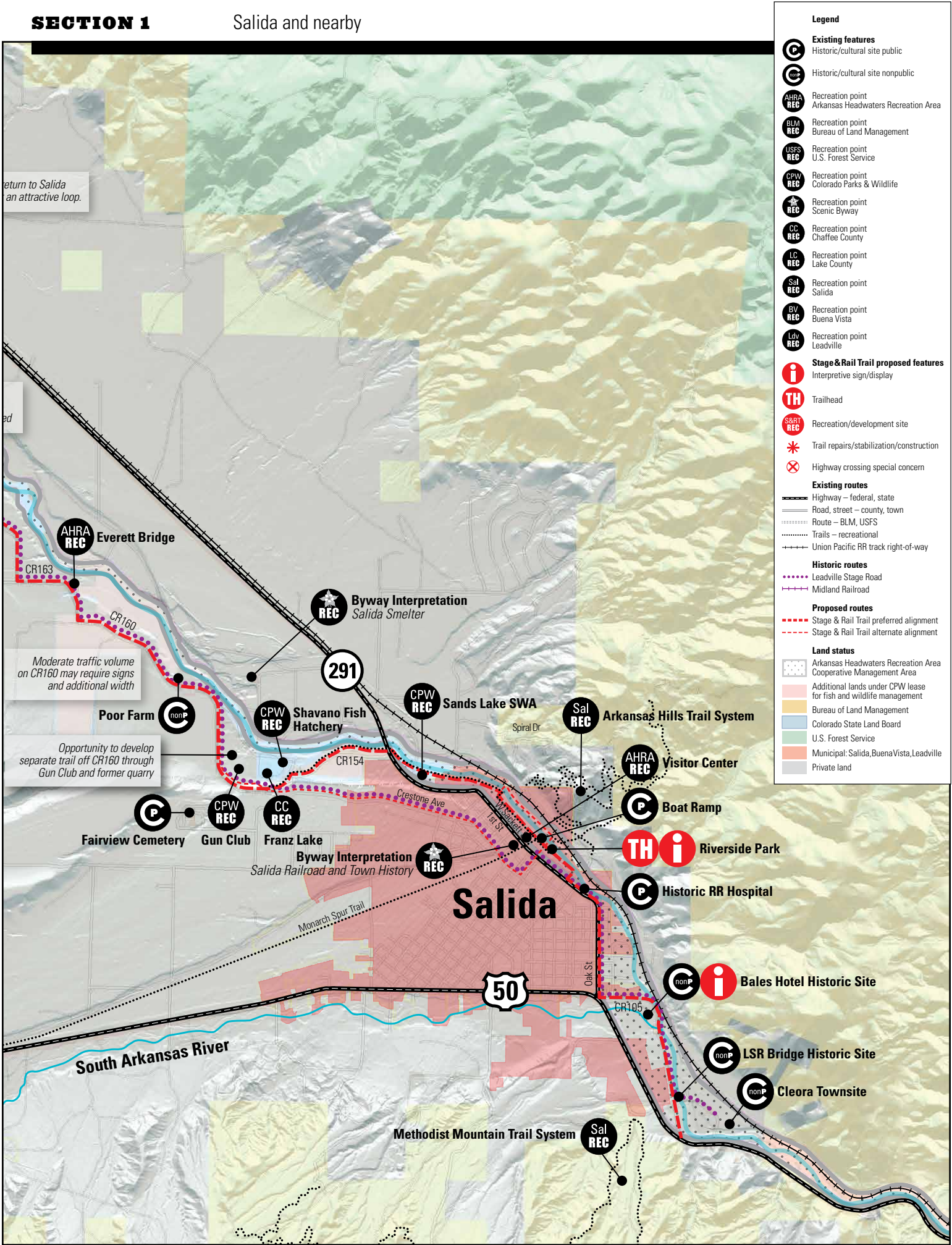
In this chapter results and analysis are presented in eight separate summaries, each dealing with approximately equal-length sections of the 64-mile long proposed trail and associated developments. The summary begins with a definition of the section's boundaries and a detailed map that displays existing historical resources and recreational sites and the recommended preferred and alternative alignments, off-trail developments, trailhead locations, location of interpretive messages and displays and anticipated historic preservation actions. It continues with identification of the recommended management partner(s) for all or segments of the section and is followed by a review of relevant features and issues. Observations on the establishment, implementation and management factors noted above are presented. The summary concludes with the planning team's assessment of priorities for implementation within the section, anticipated costs and potential funding sources.

*The proposed Stage & Rail Trail would offer a variety of ways to explore and celebrate the history and significance of the route, from an unhurried driving tour along a quiet county road where the stage road may have passed nearby (above) to an easy hike or bike ride along the actual stage road (below) where historic remnants constantly remind the visitor of the rigors of construction and travel in that earlier time. Other stretches (middle) are ideal for a beginner/intermediate mountainbiker.*





	<b>Extent</b>	Approximately 6 miles from Cleora and US50 through Salida to the junction of CR160 and CR163 (see map Section 1).
	<b>Recommended management partner(s)</b>	City of Salida within city limits and Chaffee County outside those limits
	<b>Review of relevant features and issues</b>	<p>Salida anchors the south end of the proposed S&amp;RT. It played an important role in the history of both railroad and stage routes. Initially, in the late 1860's and 1870's, when the D&amp;RG was complete only to Cañon City from Pueblo, Salida could be reached only by stage from the railhead. Later, after the D&amp;RG reached Salida, travelers destined farther north to Buena Vista and Leadville had to switch from rail to stage to complete their challenging journeys.</p> <p>The Salida community and surrounding areas provide numerous transportation-related historic resources as well as modern opportunities for trail-related recreation. The city has its own extensive and growing trail and park system and is actively supporting development of trails on adjacent public lands north and south of town. Recent GOCO grants are supporting improvements of riverfront trails and downtown park connections. Salida also hosts effective volunteer supporters of park and trail development (Salida-Area Parks, Open Space and Trails SPOT and Salida Mountain Trails SMT) that develop and maintain town and nearby trails, River Front Park and mountain bike trails originating in the city and connecting to public lands such as "S" Mountain. In partnership with AHRA, Salida has long term plans to provide a trail— the Salida Siding Trail — on the east/north side of the river that will further expand the town's trail system and connect AHRA's East park area and the downtown river front park.</p>
	<b>Factors/Criteria</b>	<p><b>Opportunity to follow historic routes</b> Good on county sections since CR160 likely to be historic route; approaching Salida the route diverges to existing and newly-developed town trails, although the alternative route follows the apparent original stage route along Crestone Avenue.</p> <p><b>Likelihood of land owner conflicts or opposition</b> Very low (no opposition thus far expressed)</p> <p><b>Opportunity/necessity to acquire access easements or purchase private lands</b> No easements or purchase required; preferred and alternative alignments lie along public roads and rights-of-way.</p> <p><b>Difficulty or ease of implementing proposed physical facilities and developments; safety concerns</b> Implementation considered relatively easy since city trails exist and are already scheduled for grant-funded improvement; Riverside Park, the proposed southern trailhead, is publicly-owned, has restrooms and picnic facilities and ample space for some increased parking and for installation of S&amp;RT trailhead and interpretive displays; within county jurisdiction, CR160 (paved) is considered to have moderate traffic volume but county staff have expressed the view that increased bicycle traffic would not pose particular safety issues if appropriate signage were installed. CR154 (paved) is low traffic volume.</p> <p><b>Opportunities for connectivity or relationship to other trails</b> Excellent since pedestrian trails already exist within county rights-of-way from the city limits to Franz Lake; also good once S&amp;RT reaches city limits where GOCO grant-funded improvement of existing town trails is underway; no other connections are anticipated on county-managed sections but there is excellent connectivity to multiple fishing access points; if Salida Siding trail developed the opportunity to connect is excellent.</p> <p><b>Presence of related historical and/or natural resources</b> Multiple historic resources near preferred and alternative alignments both within city limits and adjacent to county roads, many of which allow some public access; public fishing and wildlife viewing is accessible from several roadside fishing easements; excellent views of Mt Shavano and adjacent peaks.</p> <p><b>Opportunities for interpretation</b> Numerous and good to excellent for historic resources in cooperation with City and County partners.</p> <p><b>Presence of sensitive historic resources, wildlife or other environmental constraints</b> No sensitive wildlife concerns have been identified by CPW specialists; where present, sensitive historic resources lie outside any proposed development areas.</p> <p><b>Anticipated required environmental and historic resources studies and permitting</b> No environmental impact studies are anticipated since proposed alignments are within existing county road (CR160, 154) or city street (Crestone Ave., F St.) footprints or on established county or city trails; all proposed facilities would be located in already-developed areas.</p>
<div><div>Downtown Salida and its existing Riverside Park would be the primary southern entry point for the S&amp;RT.</div><div></div><div><div>Approaching downtown Salida the S&amp;RT would use existing popular trails along the riverfront whitewater park.</div></div></div>		





Factors/Criteriacontinued

**Anticipated management and maintenance obligations**  
There may be some increase in traffic volume but the need to increase either county or city law enforcement capacity is not anticipated; existing ordinances and regulations adequate to deal with user activities if enforced and officers trained to address user conflicts; S&RT emblems/logos need to be appropriately paced in both county and city jurisdictions as well as safety alert and S&RT directional signs and scheduled for replacement every 5 years; trailhead and interpretive signs are required at Riverside Park and interpretive signs at Bales Station and along CR160, to be replaced every five years.

**Ease or difficulty in formal designation by competent authorities**  
No long term delays or administrative challenges are seen to designation either by the city or county within Section 1.

**History of support or opposition by the recommended partners** (does not predict or presume future positions)  
City of Salida Council voiced support for both the Feasibility Study and Master Plan projects and provided cash match for each; City officials observe that the preferred alignment within city limits is consistent with on-going city trail planning. Chaffee County Commissioners have expressed support for the Feasibility Study and Master Plan projects, with cash and in-kind match. Commissioners urged attention to private land issues and citizen concerns but have thus far expressed willingness to consider trail designation on county roads within their jurisdiction.

**Priorities**  
Once designated by the managing partners, priority within the city is on installing emblems, trailhead signs and interpretive displays at Riverside Park where no additional parking or sanitary facilities are proposed; in county jurisdiction priority is to install emblems, directional signs and safety alerts on CR 160 and 154. Given the importance of safety, all safety signs regardless of responsible entity, must be in place concurrent with trail designation.

**Costs**  
No easement or land acquisition costs are anticipated in this section. The majority of the estimated section cost (\$18,375) will be associated with signage, trailhead upgrades and interpretive displays. See Appendix 2 for unit cost estimates.

**Funding sources** See funding sources in Appendix 2.



Some moderate traffic volume county roads like CCR160 and 371 and LC4 and 5 as well as busy highways US24 and 285 will need extra safety signing.



Trails now under construction along the Arkansas River within Salida would connect the S&RT to adjacent county roads and trails.



East of the Franz Lake State Wildlife Area the existing trail across the former Salida Gun Club would keep the S&RT off moderately-busy CR160 for about half a mile.



The CPW Franz Lake State Wildlife Area (above and below) and its trails offer an excellent opportunity for the S&RT to connect to exisiting popular trails and recreation areas in Section 1.



The historic “Poor Farm” (above), now a privately-owned Bed and Breakfast, adds character adjacent to the proposed S&RT along CR160.

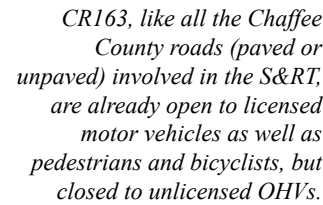




**Extent** Section 2 extends 9.5 miles from the junction of CR160 and CR163 through Big Bend, Stone Bridge, US285, and CR260 to its return junction with US285 (see map Section 2).

Primarily Chaffee County but with close coordination with AHRA where the alignment passes through AHRA Cooperative Management Agreement areas; CDOT is directly involved due to their need to make appropriate arrangements where S&RT would meet CDOT (State or Federal) right-of-ways and where the user would cross or travel along the right-of-way.

Accounts by contemporary stage road passengers suggest the historical road was probably along the river in the southern half of this stretch. They refer to passing near or through ranch properties, but it is not known if current county roads precisely followed the earlier route. From CR160/163/165 to the AHRA Big Bend Recreation site the preferred alignment on CR163 has especially scenic views of the Arkansas River and provides access to several public fishing easements. Throughout Section 2 the rights-of-way are bounded by private lands, and designation of the S&RT should avoid offering temptations to trespass either to the river or on private ranchlands. The AHRA Big Bend Recreation Site, already well-developed with parking and restroom facilities, provides public access to the river, and is approximately the site of the 1806 Christmas Camp of the Zebulon Pike expedition. CR191 between US285 and CO291 passes through privately-owned lands once known as the Kraft Ranch where an early stage station once stood. CR193 and CR260 are significant because not only were they likely the actual route of the stage road but because these county roads were (before US285 was completed in the 1950's) the main links connecting Salida and Poncha Springs with Trout Creek Pass and Buena Vista. The junction of CR 191 and CO 291 provides an option to return to Salida via CO 291 or some future off-route alternative to create a 16-mile loop. Because most of this section is a shared alignment with vehicles there will be limited opportunities for hikers or horseback riders but licensed motor vehicle use, mountain biking and some road biking are appropriate. Sections of US285 which would be used already have wide shoulders that, at least until future road improvements are scheduled, are considered appropriate to safe bicycle travel. In response to CDOT advice, the S&RT should not be formally designated when crossing or traveling along the right-of way of US or state highways such as here along US285; instead such sections would serve as undesignated connectors between segments formally designated.



### Opportunity to follow historic routes

### Likelihood of land owner conflicts or opposition

A photograph showing a dirt road that curves through a dry, hilly landscape. The hills are covered in sparse, dry vegetation. In the background, a range of mountains with significant snow cover is visible under a clear blue sky. The scene is typical of a high-altitude or semi-arid region.

### Opportunity to acquire access easements or purchase private lands

### Difficulty or ease of implementing physical facilities and developments

The only proposed developments would be within an existing AHRA recreation site where they would be straightforward to complete.

### Opportunities for connectivity or relationship to other trails

Excellent opportunity to connect or interpretively link stage road history to Pike Expedition depending on designation of the Zebulon Pike National Historic Trail, under consideration.

### Presence of related historical and natural resources

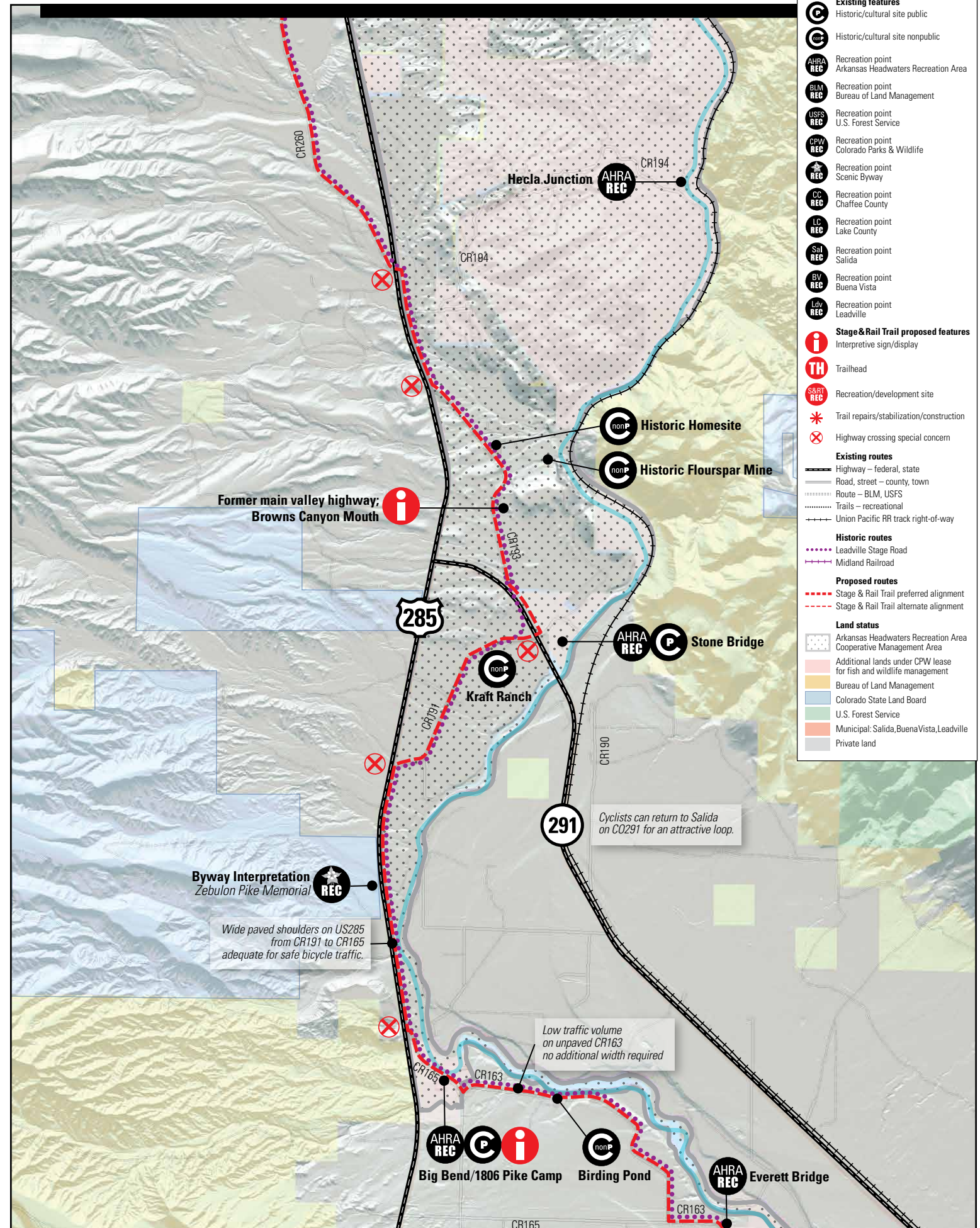
Long-established working ranches (private), Pike Expedition and Kraft Ranch (private) adjacent to preferred alignment; fishing, wildlife viewing and scenic appreciation available in several public easement sections.

### Opportunities for interpretation

Excellent as noted (Pike Expedition, Kraft Ranch, old highways).

### Presence of sensitive historic resources, wildlife or other environmental constraints

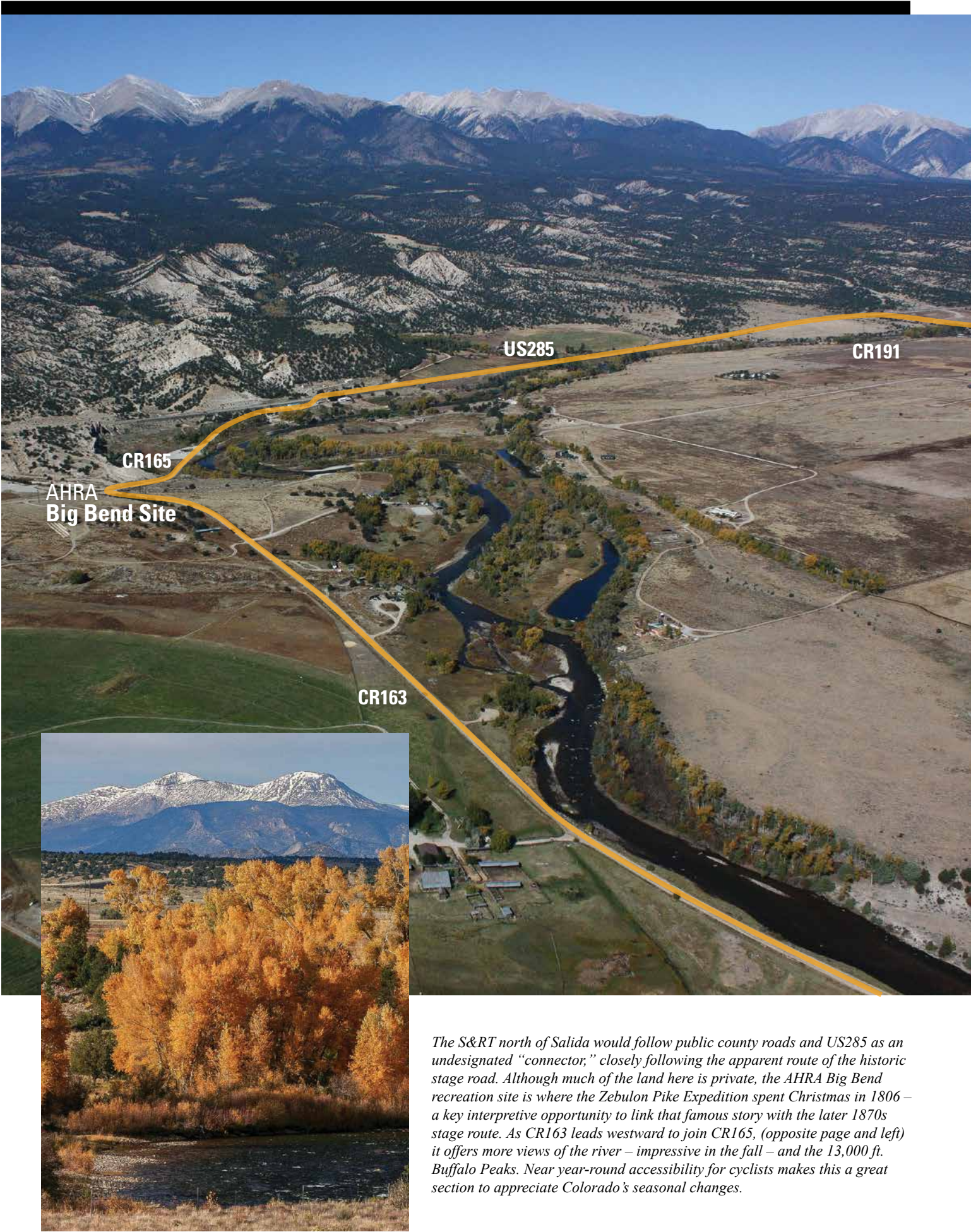
No sensitive wildlife concerns have been identified by CPW specialists; where present, sensitive historic resources lie outside any proposed development areas.





Factors/Criteriacontinued	<p><b>Anticipated required environmental and historic resources studies and permitting</b></p> <p>No environmental impact studies anticipated since proposed alignments within existing county road (CRs163, 165, 191, 193, 260) footprints; sections along US285 and C0291 would not formally be designated as the S&amp;RT (see earlier discussion of US and state highway issues) so no CDOT-mandated environmental impact studies anticipated; all proposed facilities located in already-developed areas (i.e. AHRA recreation site).</p> <p><b>Anticipated management and maintenance obligations; safety concerns</b></p> <p>May be some increase in traffic volume due to trail designation but no need to increase county or state law enforcement capacity; existing ordinances and regulations adequate to deal with user activities if enforced and officers trained to address user conflicts; S&amp;RT emblem/logo signs must be installed on county and state segments and appropriate directional and safety information signs at entry or crossing of CDOT highway connectors; trailhead sign and interpretive display required at Big Bend AHRA site must be replaced every five years.</p> <p><b>Ease or difficulty in formal designation by competent authorities</b></p> <p>No long term delays or administrative challenges seen to designation either by the county or AHRA within Section 2.</p> <p><b>History of support or opposition by the recommended partners</b> (does not predict or presume future positions)</p> <p>Chaffee County Commissioners expressed support for Feasibility Study and Master Plan projects, with cash and in-kind match. Commissioners urged attention to private land issues and citizen concerns but express willingness to consider trail designation on county roads within jurisdiction. AHRA has also expressed study support and provided in-kind and cash match but reserves judgment on accepting proposals until draft Master Plan is delivered.</p> <p><b>Priorities</b></p> <p>Once designated by the county, their priority would be installing emblems, directional and safety signs; AHRA's priority would be a trailhead kiosk and interpretive display at Big Bend Recreation Site. Priorities would also include coordinating with CDOT for the installation of appropriate state-standard safety and trail directional signs as appropriate at crossings and along its right-of-way. Given the importance of safety, all safety signs regardless of responsible entity, must be in place concurrent with trail designation.</p> <p><b>Costs</b></p> <p>No easement or land acquisition costs are anticipated in this section. The majority of the estimated section cost (\$18,225) will be associated with signage, trailhead upgrades, CDOT crossing and interpretive displays. See Appendix 2 for detailed Section 2 cost estimates.</p> <p><b>Funding sources</b></p> <p>See funding sources in Appendix 2. Because the S&amp;RT would not be formally designed along US285, CDOT might not be in a position to participate in grant-funded projects and might need to cover their commitments from budgeted funds.</p>
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Close up views of the river (below) and access to several public fishing easements are encountered on CR163.



The S&RT north of Salida would follow public county roads and US285 as an undesignated “connector,” closely following the apparent route of the historic stage road. Although much of the land here is private, the AHRA Big Bend recreation site is where the Zebulon Pike Expedition spent Christmas in 1806 – a key interpretive opportunity to link that famous story with the later 1870s stage route. As CR163 leads westward to join CR165, (opposite page and left) it offers more views of the river – impressive in the fall – and the 13,000 ft. Buffalo Peaks. Near year-round accessibility for cyclists makes this a great section to appreciate Colorado’s seasonal changes.



**Extent** Section 3 extends 6.5 miles from the junction of CR260 with US285 near Centerville to CR301 at Fishermans Bridge.

**Recommended management partner(s)** Chaffee County but in close coordination with CDOT managers. CDOT is directly involved due to their need to make appropriate arrangements where S&RT would meet CDOT (State or Federal) rights-of-way and where the user would cross or travel along US285.

**Review of relevant features and issues** Throughout Section 3 the original stage road appears to have been overlain first by county roads and eventually by US285; few clearly obvious remnants of the original route have been identified. There is little alternative but to propose the S&RT alignment entirely along US285. As has been explained in an earlier Chapter, the CDOT position is that they would not actually designate the S&RT along US285 in order to avoid lengthy delays related to environmental impact requirements but consider it as a connector between designated sections which are not along CDOT rights-of-way. They further note that in this section the existing shoulder width is considered adequate to safely accommodate shared bicycle use. Because all of this section is a shared alignment with vehicles there will be limited opportunities for hikers or horseback riders but licensed motor vehicle use, mountain biking and road biking are appropriate.

Due to its shared right-of-way with high-speed US285 the nature of the experience for cyclists will be different than in other, slower-speed shared or non-motorized sections. Nevertheless the scenery along this Scenic and Historic Byway is spectacular with its background of the Continental Divide to the west and the rugged mountain of the Fourmile area and and the newly-designated Browns Canyon National Monument to the east. The foreground is dominated by sparsely developed productive agricultural and ranch lands which form a significant part of the County’s rich heritage.

**Factors/Criteria** **Opportunity to follow historic routes**  
Uncertain; the original stage road route has not been clearly identified although the US285 route probably is near the historic route; no other choices are available.

**Likelihood of land owner conflicts or opposition**  
Considered low as long as providing a connection between designated S&RT segments does not result in trespass outside the CDOT right-of-way; not all affected private land owners have been contacted.

**Opportunity or need to acquire access easements or purchase private lands**  
Neither would be required; preferred alignment lies along US285’s well-established road surface right-of-way.

**Difficulty or ease of implementing physical facilities and developments; safety concerns**  
No developments proposed within this section; CDOT has established procedures for safety and directional signs where users coming from designated trails cross or travel along its rights-of-ways.

**Opportunities for connectivity or relationship to other trails**  
Excellent since US285 between Buena Vista and Salida is also the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway; future good opportunity because the same route is under consideration as the Zebulon Pike National Historic Trail.

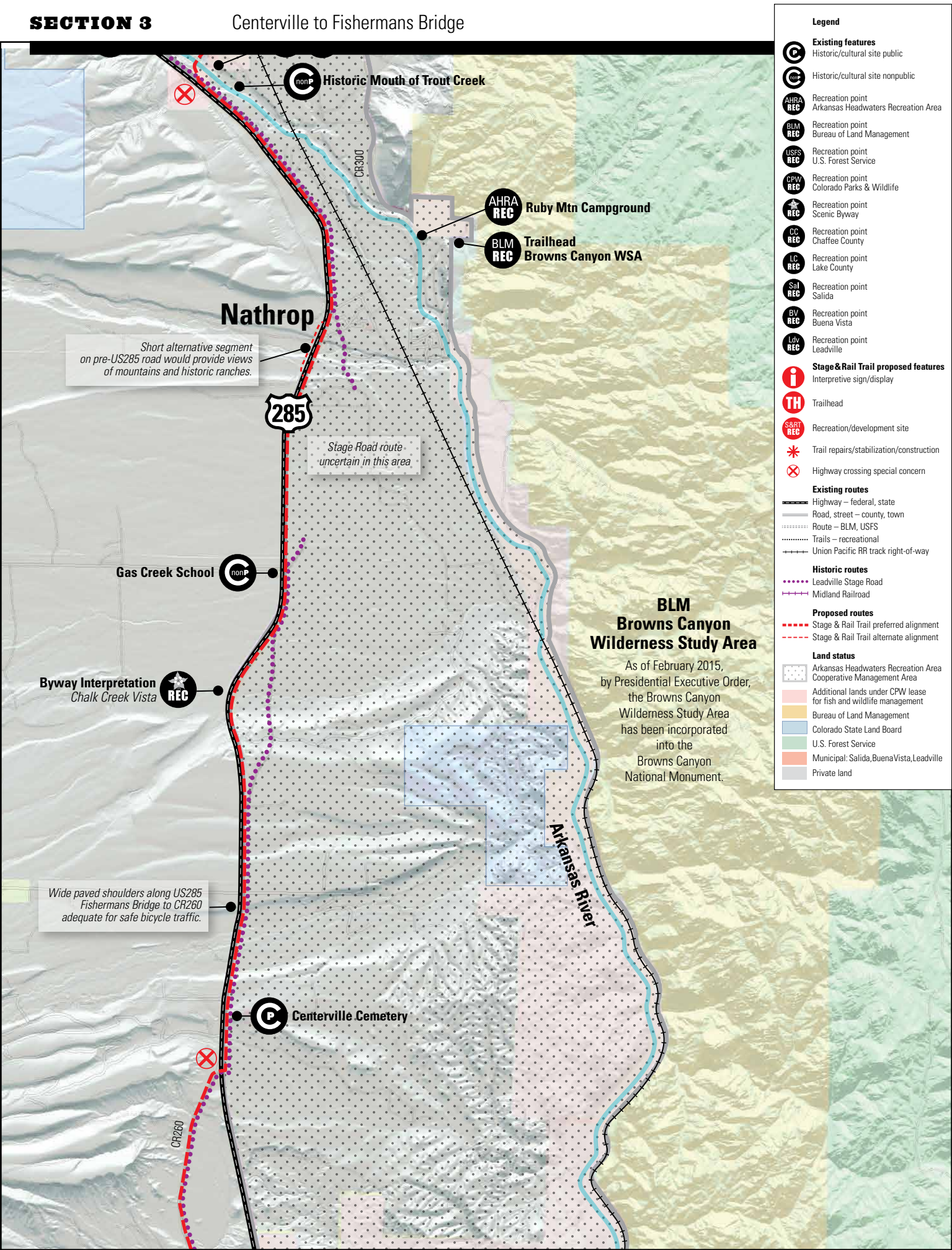
**Presence of related historical and natural resources**  
Long-established working ranches (private), Pike Expedition, Centerville Cemetery and Gas Creek Schoolhouse (private) are adjacent to preferred alignment.

**Opportunities for interpretation**  
Excellent opportunity to expand Byway interpretive elements provided respect is paid to non-public resources.

**Presence of sensitive historic resources, wildlife or other environmental constraints**  
No sensitive wildlife concerns have been identified by CPW specialists; sensitive historic resources such as the Centerville Cemetery and Gas Creek Schoolhouse lie outside any proposed development areas.

**Anticipated required environmental and historic resources studies and permitting**  
No environmental impact studies anticipated since proposed alignment would be a non-designated connector segment within existing CDOT US285 footprint.

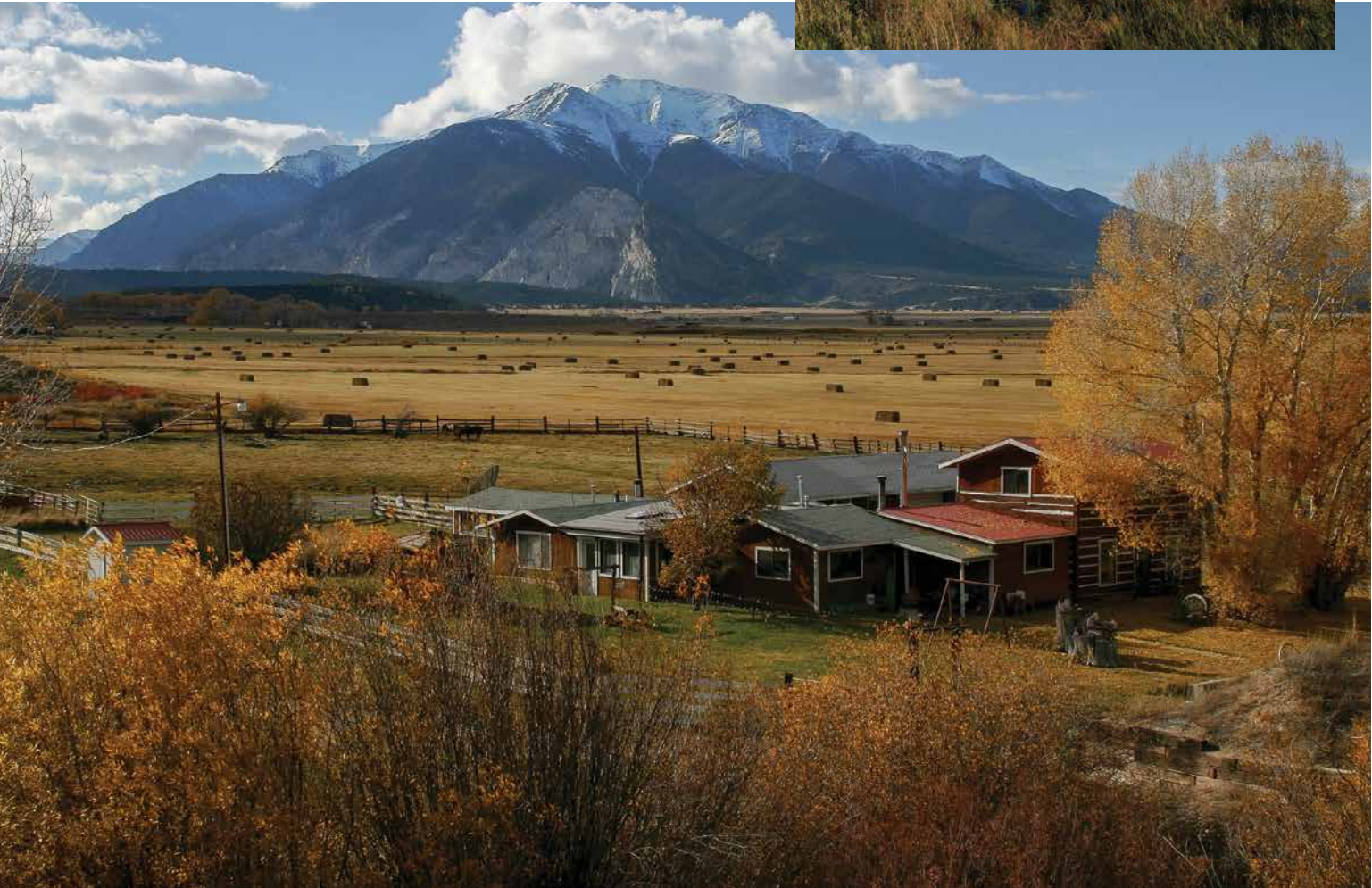
**Anticipated management and maintenance obligations; safety concerns**  
May be some increase in vehicle and cyclist volume along US285 but no need to increase state law enforcement capacity; existing state regulations adequate if enforced and state patrol officers are made aware of the S&RT; S&RT emblem/logo signs and appropriate directional and safety alert signs must be installed as per CDOT requirements where S&RT route crosses or travels along US285 as a connector; signs replaced every 5 years.





Factors/Criteriacontinued	<p><b>Ease or difficulty in formal designation by competent authorities</b></p> <p>No long term delays or administrative challenges seen for CDOT participation so long as US285 remains an un-designated connector between formally designated segments of the S&amp;RT; other than coordination, no administrative action by Chaffee County or AHRA is anticipated in Section 3.</p> <p><b>History of support or opposition by the recommended partners</b> (does not predict or presume future positions)</p> <p>Recognizing increased use by bicyclists, and consistent with state-wide policies, local CDOT officials have expressed support for this type of un-designated connector use of the proposed S&amp;RT, including within Section 3.</p> <p><b>Priorities</b></p> <p>Coordination with CDOT is essential because concurrent with formal designation of sections 2 and 4, CDOT’s priority would be to install safety and directional signs along US285 and at the junctions of US285 and CRs 260 and 301. In the long term, CDOT should take note of the S&amp;RT and incorporate any improvements or changes into its future US285 planning that would eventually allow this section to be formally designated. Given the importance of safety, all safety signs regardless of responsible entity, must be in place concurrent with trail designation.</p> <p><b>Costs</b></p> <p>No easement or land acquisition costs are anticipated in this section. The majority of the estimated section cost (\$3,775) will be associated with CDOT signage. See Appendix 2 Section 3 for detailed cost estimates.</p> <p><b>Funding sources</b></p> <p>See funding sources in Appendix 2. Because the S&amp;RT would not be formally designated along US285, CDOT might not be in a position to participate in grant-funded projects and might need to cover their commitments from budgeted funds.</p>
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Photos on these two pages were taken from the segment of US 285 in central Chaffee County that would serve as a connector between formally designated segments of the S&RT. This is one of the most scenic stretches of the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway.



This route segment passes through productive ranch lands that date back to the founding of Chaffee County and today continue the tradition of high country family agriculture.





**Extent** Section 4 extends 9 miles from and including Fishermans Bridge through Buena Vista to and including the CR371 bridge over the Arkansas south of historic Wildhorse MRR yard (see map Section 4).

**Recommended management partner(s)** Chaffee County where the alignment is along county roads and Buena Vista within its town limits, but with close coordination with AHRA because the preferred and alternative alignments pass through or along the border of its Cooperative Management Agreement area for the entire section; short connector segment along US285/24 through Johnson Village requires coordination with CDOT.

**Review of relevant features and issues** Just north of Fishermans Bridge the stage road crossed the river on a bridge or by ford and shortly farther north was serviced by a stage station named Helena (private). From Helena to south of Buena Vista, where remains of the stage road bridge have been discovered, the exact route of the stage road is uncertain, although CR301 may have been developed over that earlier route. None of the land east or west of the preferred alignment along CR301 is public, and the central segment is part of the Department of Corrections Buena Vista Complex; special restrictions on stopping may apply there. That segment however does have historical significance as the location of the Centennial Farm with structures dating to the 1880s. Throughout Section 4 care must be taken not to provide temptations to S&RT users to trespass beyond the right-of-way. The alignment of CR301 south of US285/24 is attractive mostly for its low traffic volume and scenic views west and east; there is no close approach or access to the Arkansas River. Being an unpaved but motorized route, pedestrian and horse use will be limited but slower-speed licensed vehicle and mountain bike use is appropriate.

Joining and traveling along US285/24 through Johnson Village including use of the narrow shoulder highway bridge pose some safety issues as will the junction with CR313. Visitor amenities (food, lodging, rafting companies) are available in Johnson Village and nearby to the east is a KOA and AHRA’s Collegiate Peaks Recreation Site (fee area).

An attractive and safer option would be to designate CR301 north of US285/24 to where it meets the Arkansas River and provide a bridge near where the historic stage had its bridge crossing. This would also allow interpretation of historic structures related to a stage station (non-public). Easements from at least two private landowners would have to be sought. CR313 (paved) to the town limits of Buena Vista where the county road becomes Arizona Street is currently receiving consideration for development of a pedestrian/bike shoulder or separate paved pathway. A citizens’ initiative titled Northern Chaffee County Connections (NC3) is promoting a trail on this and several other county routes that approach town limits. If such a trail were developed along CR313 it would increase the safety of this segment of the S&RT as well as provide a safer pedestrian/cycling route to school and town for Johnson Village residents.

Passage through Buena Vista on the preferred alignment (through center of town) will provide users access to main street restaurants, overnight accommodations and other services as well as opportunities to visit and enjoy public historic buildings and a museum. Use of the alternative alignment along riverfront town trails brings the trail close to the newly-developing South Main complex and its amenities as well as exposure to the river shoreline and whitewater park features.

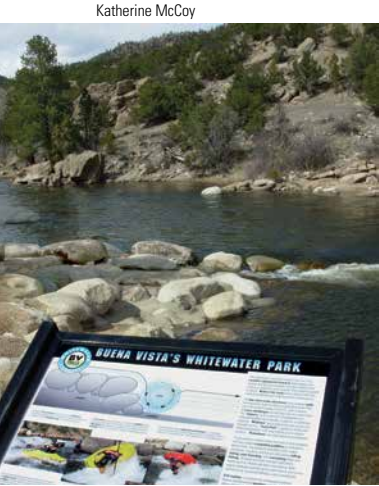
Section 4 continues as the preferred alignment passing from Buena Vista jurisdiction back to Chaffee County on CR371, which has some narrow sections requiring safety signing; after crossing the Arkansas (bridge also poses some safety concern) ends just south of the historic Wildhorse Midland RR yard (non-public).

**Opportunity to follow historic routes** Uncertain to excellent; exact stage route is not defined north of the Helena Stage Station to and across US285/24 but from south of Buena Vista and through the town to just south of Wildhorse the preferred alignment follows the historic stage route; from that point the preferred alignment begins to precisely follow the well-known route of the Midland RR, now CR371.

**Likelihood of land owner conflicts or opposition** Considered low provided that designation of the S&RT does not result in trespass outside the county or CDOT road rights-of-way, particularly where private historic resources lie nearby; not all affected private land owners have been contacted.

**Opportunity to acquire access easements or purchase private lands** None would be required; preferred alignment lies along well-established public roads and rights-of-ways.

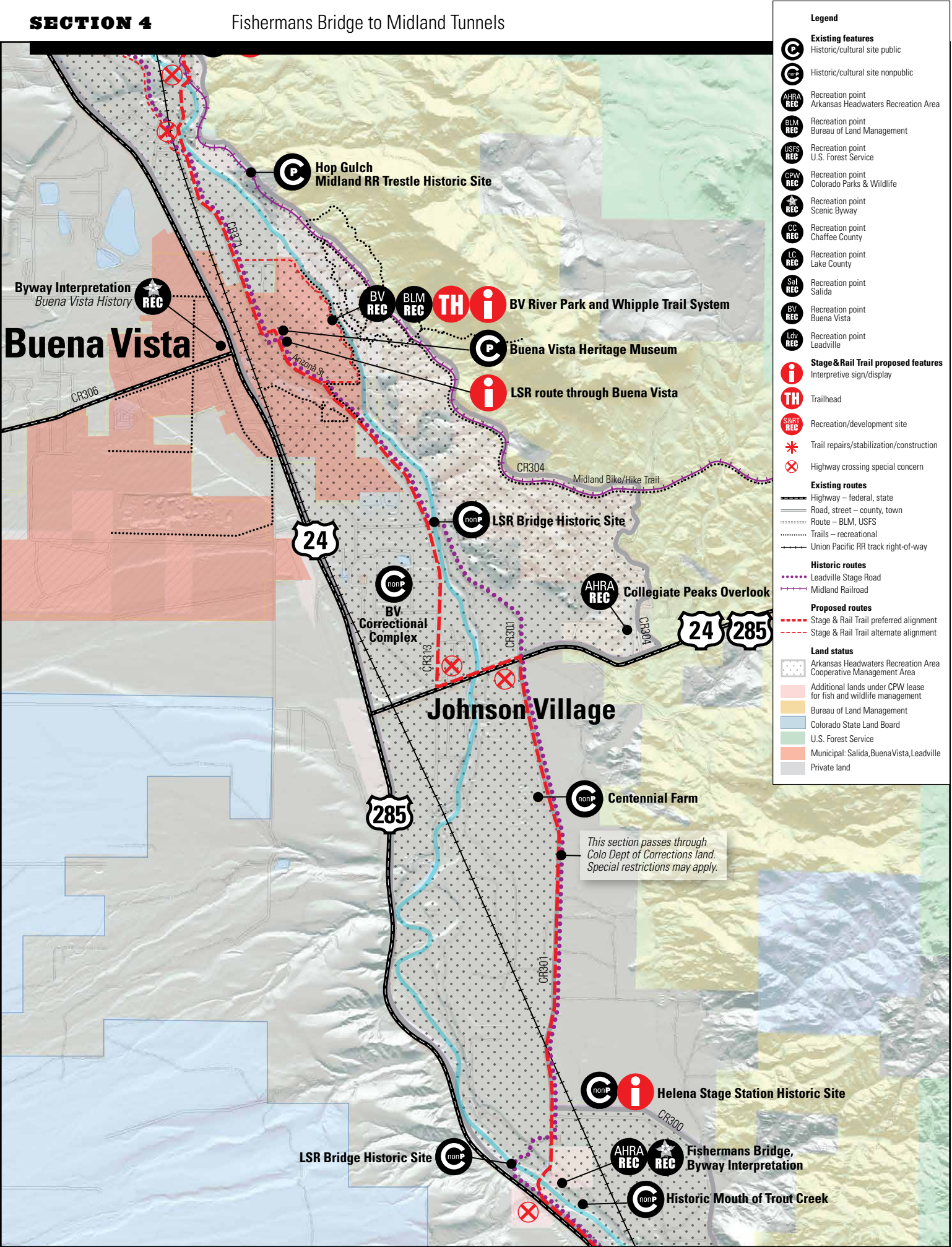
**Difficulty or ease of implementing physical facilities and developments** The only proposed developments would be within an existing Buena Vista town recreation site (BV River Park) where there are existing parking and sanitary facilities and ample additional space .



Katherine McCoy  
*The alternative S&RT alignment through Buena Vista would make a solid connection with the town's popular riverfront trail system and its whitewater park.*



Katherine McCoy  
*The preferred S&RT alignment crosses Buena Vista's East Main with an easy detour past historic 1880s Main Street buildings.*





Factors/Criteriacontinued

**Opportunities for connectivity or relationship to other trails**  
Excellent opportunity for alternative alignment to connect to existing Buena Vista Town trail system as well as to the extremely popular Town/BLM-managed Whipple Trail System east of the river and ultimately to the 18+ mile-long Midland Bike Trail from Buena Vista to Trout Creek Pass.

**Presence of related historical and natural resources**  
Except for scenic vistas the resources of Section 4 are primarily historical, including the Helena Stage Station (private), Centennial Ranch (private), stage and PPOO bridge crossings (private) south of Buena Vista and the historic downtown district of the town as well as the Midland RR Wildhorse yard (private) and RR tunnels.

**Opportunities for interpretation**  
Excellent for historic resources as noted above provided private owners are involved; may be especially valuable if made available to local school classes from the middle and high schools immediately adjacent to the proposed alignment.

**Presence of sensitive historic resources, wildlife or other environmental constraints**  
No sensitive wildlife concerns have been identified by CPW specialists; if present, sensitive historic resources lie outside any proposed development areas.

**Anticipated required environmental and historic resources studies and permitting**  
No environmental impact studies anticipated since proposed alignments lie within existing county road and town street footprints; segments along US285 would not formally be designated as the S&RT (see earlier discussion of US and state highway issues) so no CDOT-mandated environmental impact studies anticipated; all proposed facilities located in already-developed areas (i.e. a town recreation site).

**Anticipated management and maintenance obligations**  
May be some increase in traffic volume due to trail designation but no anticipated need to increase county or town law enforcement capacity; existing county, town and CDOT ordinances and regulations adequate if enforced; S&RT emblems/ logos and directional signs and safety alert signs to be acquired and installed and replaced every 5 years; one trailhead and one interpretive display proposed at the BV River Park recreational site need to be initially designed, fabricated and installed and replaced every 5 years (Town jurisdiction).

**Ease or difficulty in formal designation by competent authorities**  
No long term delays or administrative challenges seen to designation either by the county or the Town of Buena Vista within Section 4; CDOT has existing protocols regarding crossings and use of its roads by cyclists.

**History of support or opposition by the recommended partners** (does not predict or presume future positions)  
Chaffee County Commissioners expressed support for Feasibility Study and Master Plan projects, and provided cash and in-kind match. Commissioners urged attention to private land issues and citizen concerns but expressed willingness to consider trail designation on county roads within its jurisdiction. Buena Vista Trustees supported both projects, and have expressed agreement with the proposed preferred and alternative alignments within town. Local CDOT officials have expressed support for this type of un-designated connector use of the proposed S&RT, including within Section 4.

**Priorities**  
Once designated by the county, their priority would be installing S&RT emblems, directional and safety signs. Within the city limits, the priorities would be similar signs and a trailhead kiosk and interpretive display at BV River Park. CDOT’s priority would be to install appropriate state-standard safety and trail directional signs as appropriate at crossings and along its right-of-way including at the Arkansas River Bridge in Johnson Village. Given the importance of safety, all safety signs regardless of responsible entity, must be in place concurrent with trail designation.

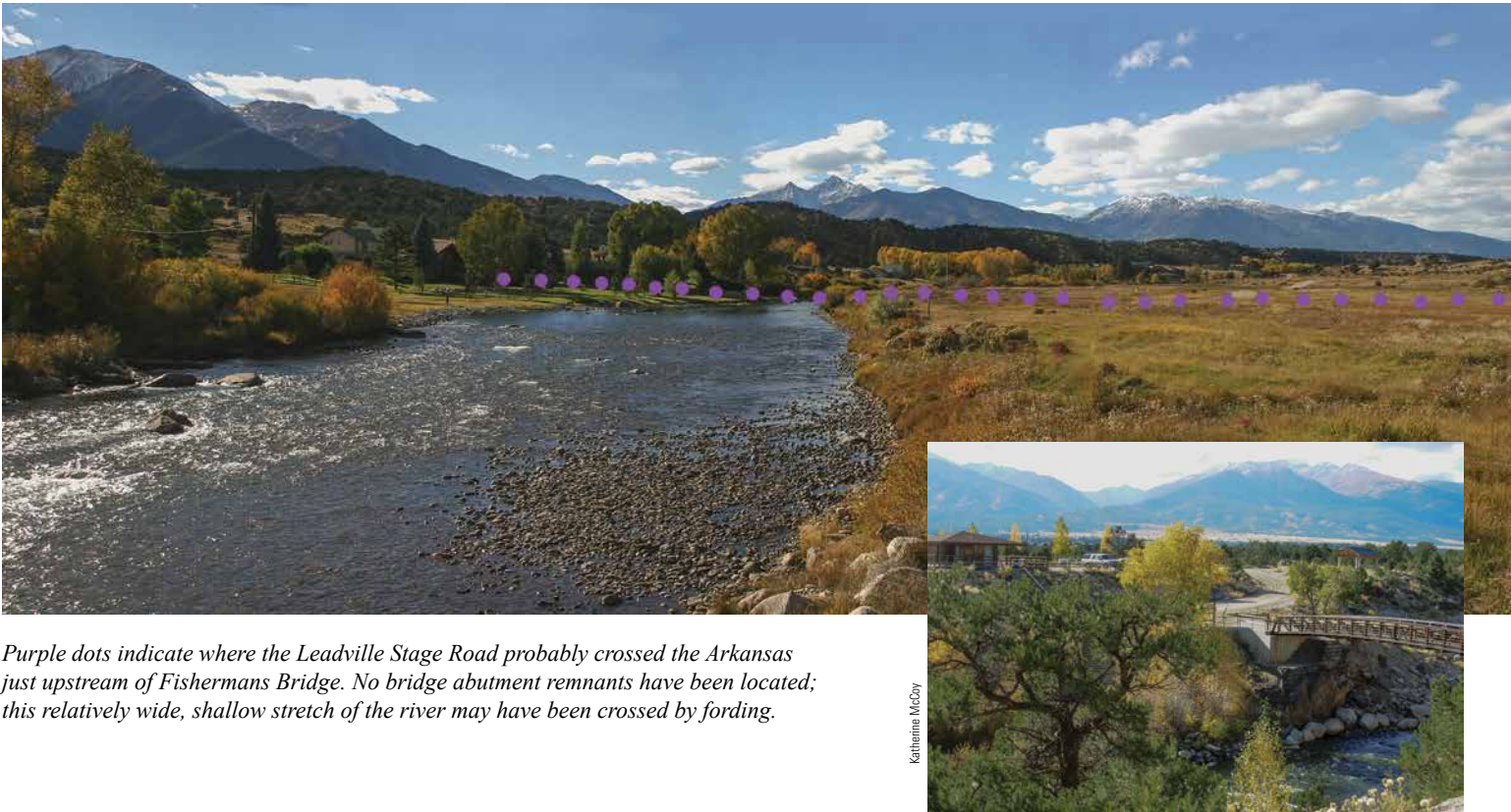
**Costs**  
No easement or land acquisition costs are anticipated in this section. The majority of the estimated section cost (\$17,475) will be associated with signage, trailhead upgrades, CDOT crossings and interpretive displays. See Appendix 2 Section 4 for detailed cost estimates.

**Funding sources**  
See note on funding sources in chapter introduction; also see Appendix 2. CDOT might not be in a position to participate in grant-funded projects and may have to cover their commitments from budgeted funds.

The alternative S&RT alignment through Buena Vista connects to Buena Vista’s Whipple Trail System trailhead (near right), accessed by the river bridge (far right). This popular trail system is the western terminus of the 18-mile Midland Bicycle Trail through the Fourmile Travel Management Area, starting at Trout Creek Pass.



The preferred (orange line) and alternative (red) alignments of the S&RT are shown on this aerial image of Buena Vista. Coming from the south, CR313 ends at Cottonwood Creek in the center where town limits begin and the preferred S&RT follows Arizona Street until it jogs to the west to join and continue northward to reenter county jurisdiction on CR371. The alternative alignment is largely on gravel trail along the river’s edge following popular segments of the town’s own trail system.



Purple dots indicate where the Leadville Stage Road probably crossed the Arkansas just upstream of Fishermans Bridge. No bridge abutment remnants have been located; this relatively wide, shallow stretch of the river may have been crossed by fording.

Katherine McCoy



**Extent** Section extends 6 miles from Wildhorse/Midland Tunnels along CR 371 to Otero Bridge (see map Section 5).

**Recommended management partner(s)** Primarily Chaffee County because the preferred alignment is along CR371 for the entire length of Section 5; with close coordination with AHRA because the preferred and alternative alignments pass through or along the border of its Cooperative Management Agreement area for the entire section.

**Review of relevant features and issues** This section is one of the two out of eight sections in which the route of the historic Colorado Midland Railroad (MRR) has been proposed as part of the S&RT – and is the origin of the “Rails” in its name. Historic fabric of that standard gauge route, which reached Leadville in 1887, is still evident in several locations in this section, notably at the faint remains of the Wildhorse RR yard (non-public), the iconic Midland tunnels, and several short sections of dry-stone retaining wall. Along most of this section the modern out-of-use but not abandoned Union Pacific tracks parallel the MRR; they are successor to the original Denver and Rio Grande RR whose narrow-gauge line reached Leadville in 1880 before the MRR. The route of the Leadville-bound stage road, which had been constructed beginning in the 1870s and was in use before either of these railroads were completed, is also visible in several segments and in cases was overlain by construction of the rails. The stage road crossed the Arkansas in two locations within this Section, and remains of those bridge abutments are still visible. All this transportation history, plus the close alignment of the old Midland route along the dramatic rapids and scenery of the Arkansas River, with the Continental Divide as a background, provide rich opportunities for public education and interpretation.

The preferred S&RT alignment follows the old Midland (CR371) in part to include that historic RR and its stories and also because the stage road, although traceable, originally had two bridge crossings (north of the Tunnels and at AHRA Railroad Bridge Recreation Site) and for long stretches lies on the river’s less accessible west bank. In the longer term, an alternative would be to reestablish a pedestrian/cyclist bridge crossing from CR371 north of the tunnels to BLM land on the west bank and from there designate the S&RT southward into Buena Vista along its original route. This would avoid safety concerns in the tunnels and the narrow segment of CR371 south of the 371 bridge. This alternative would be costly and also involve permission from the Union Pacific to make an at-grade crossing.

This Section already provides excellent access to the Arkansas River for fishing and boating; one formal AHRA camping area with parking and restrooms (Railroad Bridge) and several informal sites are popular. This segment of the river, including downstream from the Numbers put-in in Section 6 to the north, is probably the most heavily rafted and kayaked river segment after the Browns Canyon segment. Traffic along CR371 related to these activities is seasonally high.

The preferred alignment lies entirely along and within the right-of-way of CR371, an open unpaved county road. The stage road is possibly represented by an existing two-track segment about 1.5 miles long just east of CR371 near the mid-point of the Section, and is identified as an alternative alignment, passing through both public and private lands. Because CR371 is a motorized unpaved public road without significant shoulders, opportunities for hikers and horseback riders may be limited, but licensed motor vehicle and mountain bike use is appropriate.

Associated with this section, but not proposed as part of the S&RT, a segment of the historic MRR extends north from the Otero Bridge on the east bank about 0.8 mile to end at private property. Public access has been negotiated by AHRA and a recreation site with parking and river access there is called Rapid No. 4. An extensive and intact dry-stone MRR retaining wall is located within this segment, and will need preservation attention.

**Factors/Criteria** **Opportunity to follow historic routes**  
Excellent; the entire preferred alignment in this section follows the historic Midland RR.

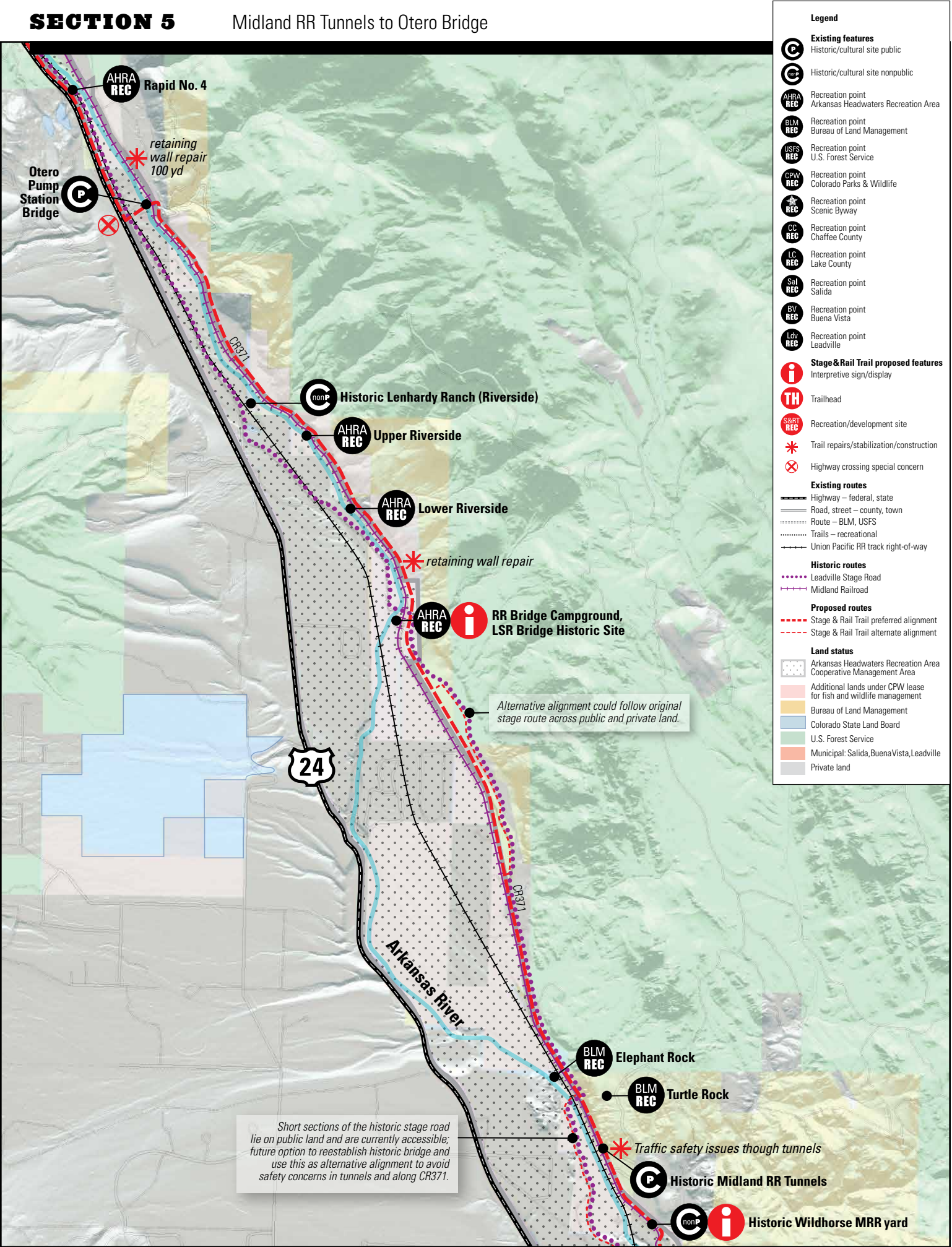
**Likelihood of land owner conflicts or opposition**  
Considered low provided that designation of the preferred S&RT alignment does not result in trespass outside the county right-of-way; not all adjacent private land owners have been contacted; concerns may be raised by private land owners if alternative alignments are to be designated, but these land owners have not been contacted.

**Opportunity or need to acquire access easements or purchase private lands**  
No easements or land purchase would be required for the preferred alignment, which lies along a well-established public road and rights-of-ways; for the alternative alignments an easement of about one mile would be required.

**Difficulty or ease of implementing physical facilities and developments; safety concerns**  
The only proposed developments would be interpretive displays that could be installed within the county right-of-way. Three significant safety issues are anticipated: 1) at the Midland Tunnels where cyclists may encounter problems from sudden passage from sunlight to darkness and the potential for unseen rutted surface or wet and icy conditions; 2) general issues of seasonally high traffic volume involving private and commercial rafting and kayaking (busses and other vehicles with trailers); 3) a particularly narrow section of CR371 south of the river bridge.



*The Midland RR Tunnels had become a local road by 1918 on modern CR371. Today’s rafters enjoy Arkansas River whitewater along the S&RT’s preferred alternative.*





<b>Factors/Criteria</b> continued	<b>Opportunities for connectivity or relationship to other trails</b> No existing or proposed trails would cross along this Section; however because BLM and Forest Service manage the lands east of nearly the entire Section there are many options for hikers and horse riders to explore public lands off-trail.  <b>Presence of related historical and natural resources</b> Historic resources are abundant, as noted, some public; natural resources are also abundant and mostly already accessible including fishing access to Gold Medal waters, bird and other wildlife viewing in this riparian corridor and on public land to the east.  <b>Opportunities for interpretation</b> Excellent for historic and natural resources as noted above.  <b>Presence of sensitive historic resources, wildlife or other environmental constraints</b> Riparian areas in general have been identified by CPW specialists as important for wildlife but no particular species (e.g. raptors, elk or Bighorn) or issues have been highlighted in this Section; a number of dry stone retaining walls associated with the Midland are present.  <b>Anticipated required environmental and historic resources studies and permitting</b> No environmental impact or historic resource studies anticipated since preferred alignment lies within existing already-disturbed county road footprint; limited studies may be required if the short alternative alignment is to be designated.  <b>Anticipated management and maintenance obligations</b> May be small increase in volume of vehicle traffic on CR371 but no need to increase county law enforcement capacity is anticipated; existing county ordinances and regulations adequate if enforced; S&RT emblems or directional signs (all county), and safety alert signs (all county) to be acquired and installed and replaced every 5 years; proposed interpretive displays (Midland Tunnels – county – and AHRA RR Bridge campground – AHRA) will need to be initially designed, fabricated and installed and replaced every five years.  <b>Ease or difficulty in formal designation by competent authorities</b> No long term delays or administrative challenges seen to designation by the county within Section 5 provided safety issues noted above are addressed.  <b>History of support or opposition by the recommended partners</b> (does not predict or presume future positions) Chaffee County Commissioners have expressed support for Feasibility Study and Master Plan projects, and provided cash and in-kind match. Commissioners urged attention to private land issues and citizen concerns but express willingness to consider trail designation on county roads within county jurisdiction.  <b>Priorities</b> Once designated by the county, their priority would be installing emblem, directional and safety signs and interpretive display at the Wildhorse Station site; AHRA's priority would be installing one interpretive display at RR Bridge campground.  <b>Costs</b> No easement or land acquisition costs are anticipated in this section. The majority of the estimated section cost (\$17,475) will be associated with signage, trailhead upgrades, CDOT crossing and interpretive displays. See Appendix 2 Section 5 for details of cost estimates.  <b>Funding sources</b> See note on funding sources in chapter introduction; also see Appendix 2.
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Early sightseers in their Model T enjoy Elephant Rock along the old Midland RR route, now CR371.



The Midland RR Wildhorse Station ca 1890, recommended as a location for an interpretive display within the right-of-way of CR371.



CR371, the proposed S&RT route, overlies the historic Midland RR grade along the scenic east bank of the Arkansas River from Buena Vista to the Otero Bridge.



The proposed S&RT along CR371 (orange line) would pass AHRA's well-developed Railroad Bridge recreation site to continue along the east bank of the river. The old stage road (purple dots) originally crossed over to the west here.



A 19th century railroad station at Riverside served the D&RG RR in the area of the historic Leonhardy Ranch.



<p><b>Recommended management partner(s)</b></p>	<p>Recommended management partner(s): CDOT as indirect partner for segments of un-designated S&amp;RT connector south of AHRA Numbers site and in the Goldcamp and Granite areas; AHRA for multiple segments on the historic stage road within its Cooperative Management Agreement area, with coordination with the State Land Board for its Tiger Lily parcel and the Pueblo Water Board for its property at Clear Creek. Chaffee County will remain an interested party due to its jurisdiction over the unincorporated community of Granite.</p>
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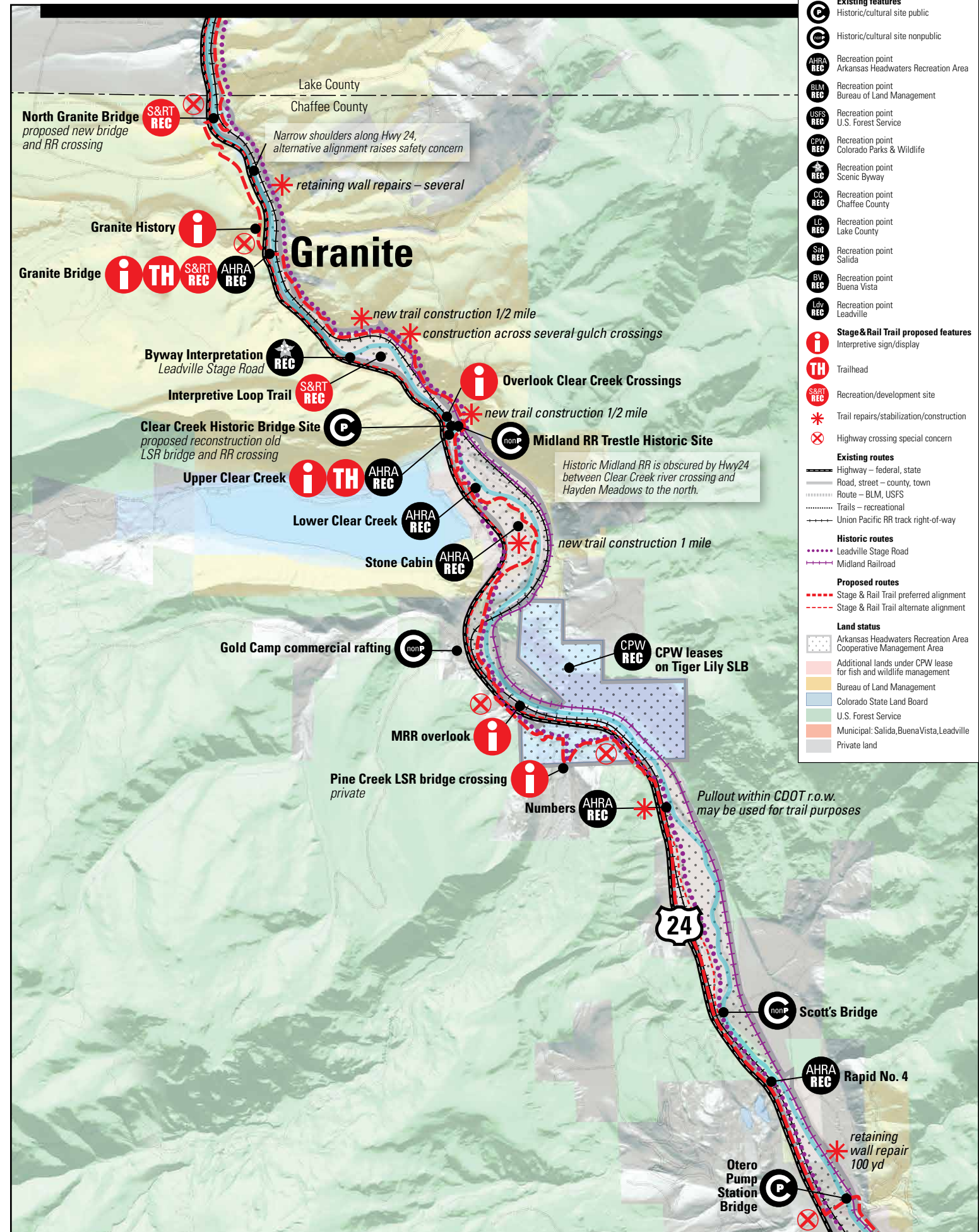
Buena Vista Heritage



At the Feasibility Study stage, the preferred alignment was envisioned not along US24 here but rather as continuing north of the Otero Bridge along the historic Midland RR route, avoiding the need for constructing a river bridge for the S&RT or crossing the modern railroad. In recognition of the concerns of private landowners and potential wildlife impacts in the segment from Otero Bridge to Clear Creek, the draft Master Plan instead recommends the preferred alignment along US24 and north through Goldcamp. A positive aspect of this recommendation is that the alignment is then along the west side of the river where the historic stage route itself was located; it can be seen from the US24 segment as the access road to the AHRA Numbers site, and north of that site the preferred alignment does actually follow the likely route of the stage road across Pine Creek and through Goldcamp. From Goldcamp to Clear Creek there are trail options involving AHRA-managed lands and property owned by the Pueblo Water Board. To accommodate this preferred alignment it is now proposed to reconstruct the original stage road bridge north of Clear Creek, providing public access to the iconic stage road pieces from there to Granite along the east bank. See photos on following pages for additional details on this and other proposed developments near Granite.

In the event that the North Granite Bridge option proves unworkable, an option previously considered – but also objected to by Granite residents – would have directed trail users along the east side of the UP railroad right-of-way, on the east bank of the river just west of the community. This alternative would have involved fencing or other buffers to separate the route from adjacent private property, and require an access or right-of-way use waiver from the Union Pacific Railroad. This option has not been shown on the Section 6 map but could be reconsidered. Yet another near-term solution pending construction of the Clear Creek bridge would be to designate an out-and-back trail from Granite southward along the stage road, discouraging any trail use north of Granite and stopping the trail just north of Clear Creek to respond to the objections of private property owners south of that area.

As noted, considerable opposition was expressed over earlier alignment options; current preferred and alternative alignments have been recommended in direct response to those concerns; hopefully, the likelihood of opposition has therefore been reduced.





**Factors/Criteria Opportunity or need to acquire access easements or purchase private lands**  
No easement would be necessary along US24 if it is considered by CDOT as an un-designated S&RT connector; an easement or lease agreement with the State Land Board may be necessary where the alignment would pass through the Tiger Lily parcel near Pine Creek; an easement or other permission may need to be pursued with the owners of Goldcamp and with the Pueblo Water Board; an easement or other permission from the BLM and CDOT, a private landowner or the Union Pacific may be needed in conjunction with expanded parking at the existing Granite bridge where the most favorable S&RT trailhead and parking location would be on the west side of US24; an easement with one or more land owners may be needed if the single track trail as part of the bypass of Granite west of US24 is designated; an easement or agreement permitting at-grade crossings of the UP RR at Clear Creek and North Granite proposed bridges will have to be sought.

**Difficulty or ease of implementing physical facilities and developments; safety concerns**  
Considerable administrative difficulty is anticipated in dealing with the Union Pacific RR in conjunction with the two at-grade crossings, and some difficulty in securing expanded parking at the existing Granite bridge; construction of two pedestrian bridges across the Arkansas will involve detailed but not highly technical engineering; construction and installation will be costly but straightforward provided that landownership and permitting issues are resolved; clearance of rubble on the existing historic stage road to accommodate a narrow single-file natural surface non-motorized trail is anticipated to be relatively simple and assumes mostly hand work to avoid disturbance of the historic integrity of the route; the effort required in designing and installing drainage and gully-crossing structures, and the restoration or stabilization of historic dry-stone walls will depend on the extent that these developments are required to maintain historic integrity, and will require the advice and supervision of trained historic preservation staff.

**Opportunities for connectivity or relationship to other trails**  
No existing or proposed trails would cross along this Section; however because AHRA, BLM and Forest Service manage lands immediately adjacent to long segments within the Section there are many options for hikers and horse riders to explore public lands off-trail.

**Presence of related historical and natural resources**  
Historic resources are very abundant, as noted, some public; natural resources are also abundant and mostly already accessible including fishing access to Gold Medal waters, bird and other wildlife viewing in this riparian corridor; north of Clear Creek to the Chaffee/Lake County line, including around Granite, elk and especially Bighorn – arising from reintroduction efforts – are closely tied to resources in the river corridor.

**Opportunities for interpretation**  
Section 6 also offers an opportunity to develop a major “off-site” interpretive experience in the form of a ¾ mile long loop foot trail on the west side of the river south of Granite near the existing Collegiate Peaks Byway interpretive display on US24. See the following two pages for photos and details.

**Presence of sensitive historic resources, wildlife or other environmental constraints**  
CPW specialists confirm the presence of elk and Bighorn as well as raptors throughout this section and express concern for possible negative impacts of increased recreational use especially if it interrupts access to the riparian zone; the historic stage road is present and would be subject to use throughout this section.

**Anticipated required environmental and historic resources studies and permitting**  
No environmental impact studies are anticipated along US24 sections if the alignment remains as an undesignated connector between designated S&RT segments; some consideration will be required to address occasional presence of Bighorn within the CDOT right-of-way north of Goldcamp and around Granite; within AHRA-managed lands, studies as per CPW requirements concerning new trails would be required, specifically at the proposed interpretive loop trail on the west bank near the Byway Interpretation display and in the area around Stone Cabin; additional analysis and possibly formal environmental study would be required in the area from Clear Creek to the Chaffee/Lake County line due to expressed concern for negative impacts on wildlife; due to the extent and significance of historic retaining walls and other physical remains, evaluation of historic (and pre-historic) resource impacts will be required as per applicable state and Federal law.

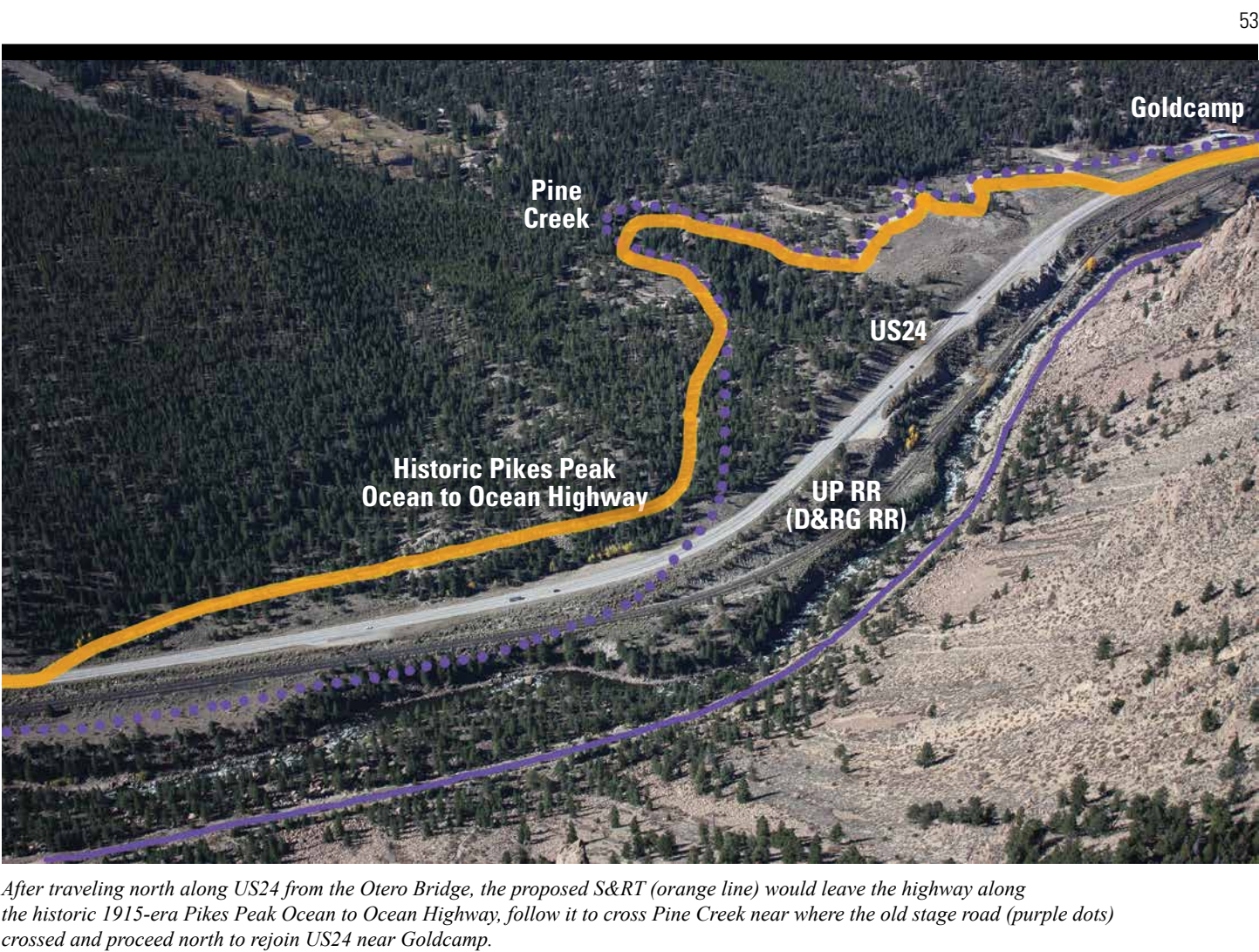
**Anticipated development, management and maintenance obligations**  
May be some increase in volume of use on US24 but no need to increase state law enforcement capacity is anticipated; existing state ordinances and regulations adequate if enforced; safety issues are anticipated at crossings and when S&RT is using un-designated but necessary connectors on US24, but these are considered by CDOT as manageable through safety messages and directional signs.



The Arkansas River bridge currently scheduled for replacement by Chaffee County.



At the Lake County line along the public BLM road that would be designated as the S&RT.



After traveling north along US24 from the Otero Bridge, the proposed S&RT (orange line) would leave the highway along the historic 1915-era Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway, follow it to cross Pine Creek near where the old stage road (purple dots) crossed and proceed north to rejoin US24 near Goldcamp.

This view of the old stage road south of Granite, with the proposed trail in orange, is just south of the major cut made by the D&RG when upgrading the narrow gauge to standard gauge in the mid-1920s. This is undoubtedly the best physically-preserved section of the of the entire 64-mile proposed S&RT, and offers some of the best perspectives of all the various transportation routes squeezed into the narrow Arkansas River corridor.





The original 1870s stage road bridge (or a somewhat later replacement) at Clear Creek was in place until removed in 1981 because of safety concerns. This bridge is proposed for reconstruction to lead the S&RT from east to west banks of the Arkansas and then follow its original route south through Goldcamp to Pine Creek.

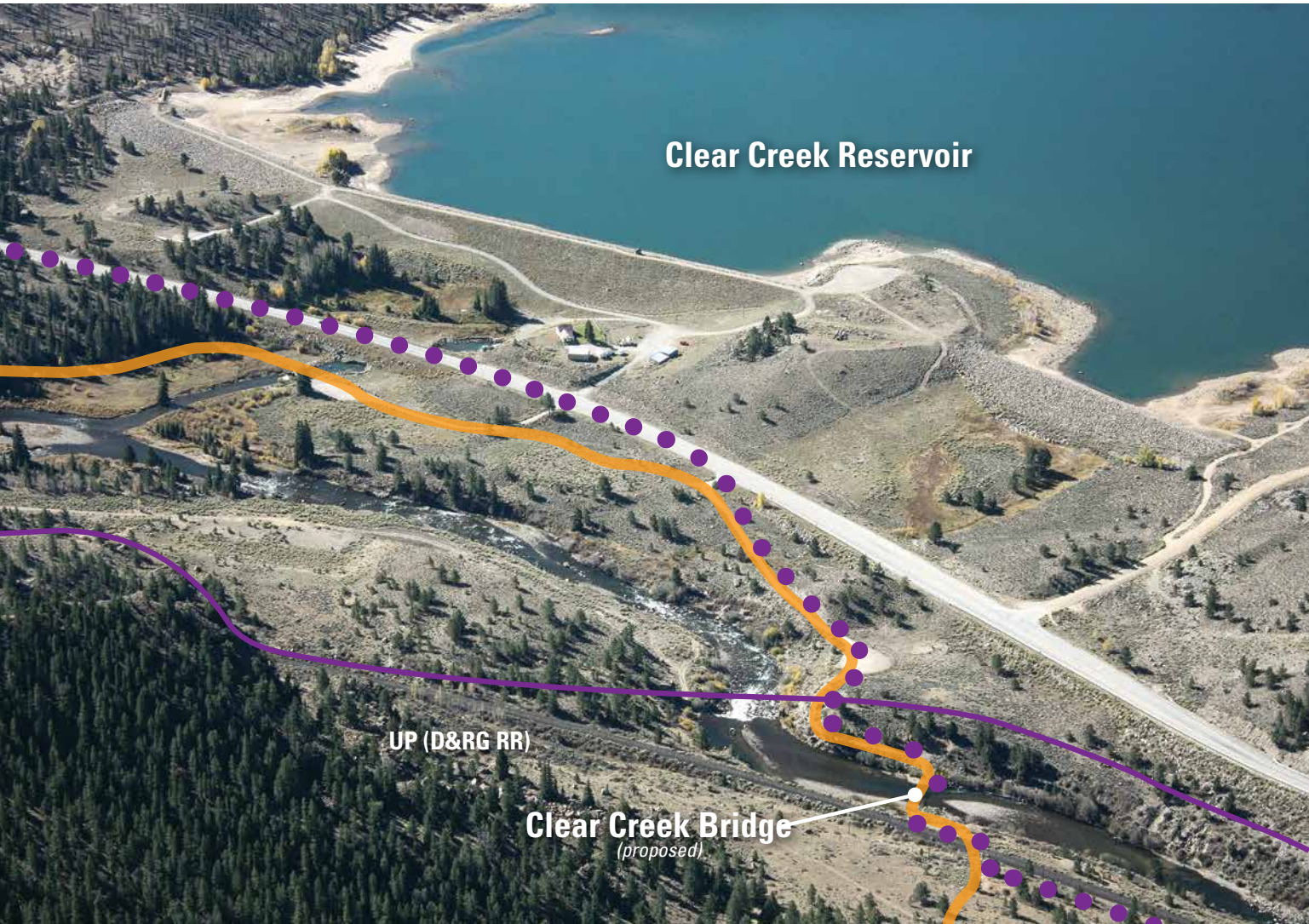


Ed Lambert Sr.

In the photos at right and below the orange line represents the S&RT crossing on the proposed reconstructed Clear Creek Bridge.



In the photo below the proposed S&RT (orange line) would come down the east bank from Granite to cross the Arkansas on a proposed Clear Creek Bridge (lower right in photo) where the original stage road bridge crossed in about 1875. It would then follow the old stage road (purple dots) a short way and diverge from it to head south on new trail to the AHRA Stone Cabin site and Goldcamp. The historic Midland RR (purple line) crossed the river just south of the old stage bridge.



**Factors/Criteria** AHRA maintenance and patrol efforts would have to be increased at the new interpretive loop and along the entire segment from Clear Creek to the Chaffee/Lake County line, including increased attention to visitor management and facility cleaning/maintenance at the proposed expanded Granite bridge parking and trailhead – but note the opportunity exists for utilizing volunteers for some of this effort; two pedestrian bridges and at-grade RR crossings would be developed and multiple S&RT emblems, safety and directional signs in CDOT connectors as well as four interpretive displays and two trailhead kiosks would be needed in the AHRA segments. Input from CPW wildlife specialists should be sought concerning possible seasonal closures; strong consideration should be given to a policy prohibiting all pets, on- or off-leash in much of this section to reduce wildlife conflicts and address concerns of local private residents.

**Ease or difficulty in formal designation by competent authorities**

No long term postponement or administrative challenges seen to CDOT’s participation by accepting use of their right-of-way as an undesignated connector. AHRA’s designation may be administratively straightforward but implementation difficult due to anticipated environmental studies, negotiations with the UP RR, and design/construction of bridges and new or to-be-cleared trail segments and gully-crossings.

**History of support or opposition by the recommended partners** (does not predict or presume future positions) Recognizing increased use by bicyclists, local CDOT officials have expressed support for this type of un-designated connector use of the proposed S&RT, including within Section 6; AHRA has also expressed study support and provided in-kind and cash match but reserves judgment on accepting proposals until draft Master Plan is delivered; Chaffee County Commissioners have expressed support for Feasibility Study and Master Plan projects, and provided cash and in-kind match; Commissioners urged attention to private land issues and citizen concerns but express willingness to consider trail designation on county roads within county jurisdiction (none proposed in Section 6).

**Priorities** Once segments connecting to CDOT right-of-way along US24 are designated, priority would be the installation of emblem, directional and safety signs; additional work would include construction of several proposed new short sections of trail, clearance of trail rubble and installation of gully-crossing structures from Granite southward and development of the expanded trailhead at the Granite bridge; secondary priority would be to initiate permitting, design and construction of the two bridges and at-grade crossings. Development of the interpretive loop could be a priority for AHRA while also pursuing the bridge projects.

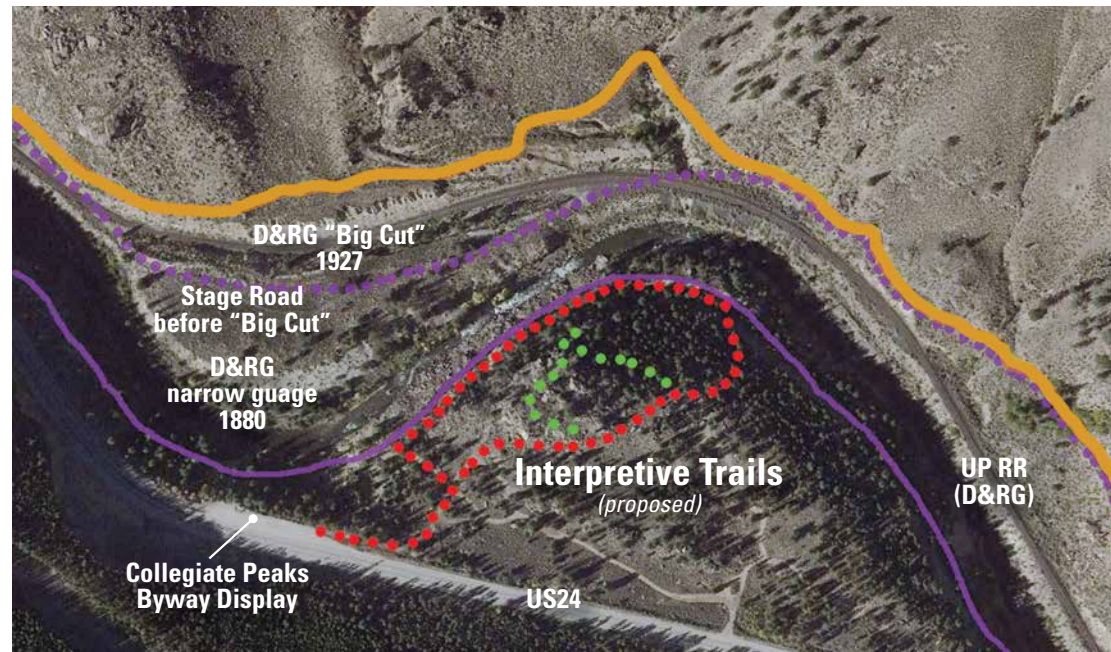
**Costs** No easement or land acquisition costs are anticipated in this section. Nearly half of the estimated \$1,171,895 cost in Section 6 is associated with the two river crossing bridges; the remainder would cover signage, parking and trailhead improvements, CDOT crossings and trail construction. See Appendix 2 Section 6 for details. The cost of the proposed off-site interpretive loop is separately estimated at \$96,250 including trail construction, overlooks, interpretive materials and redesign and reclamation of user-created camping sites and spurs. See Appendix 2 Section 6a for details.

**Funding sources** See note on funding sources in chapter introduction; also see Appendix 2. In view of the considerable costs for facility and trail development in Section 6 it is anticipated that AHRA would seek external grant funding in phases with the assistance of the S&RT Coordinating NGO. An ideal situation nation of GOCO, State Trails Program, State Historic Preservation funds and state budgeted cant labor contributions by volunteers.



The proposed S&RT (orange line) coming down from the north on the BLM road would leave the historic stage road (purple dots) and cross the UP RR and then the river on a proposed North Granite Bridge at an existing wide CDOT pullout. It might cross under US24 through a culvert and proceed south on a new trail segment to join CR398 and descend to rejoin US24 at the Granite Store. S&RT trailhead facilities and parking might be developed in association with a CDOT pullout and BLM land west of the highway; the S&RT would continue south by crossing the existing Granite Bridge to rejoin the stage road and turn south towards Clear Creek. (Note there would be little incentive to construct the North Granite Bridge until the S&RT is designated through Two Bit Gulch in Section 7.)





**A PROPOSED  
OFF-SITE S&RT  
INTERPRETIVE  
EXPERIENCE**

is a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile long loop foot trail on the west side of the river south of Granite near the existing Collegiate Peaks Byway interpretive display. It would provide visitors traveling on US24 (the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway) with a physical trail experience without having to access the designated S&RT on the river's east bank (orange line). The main loop (red dots) would descend to join the historic Midland RR (purple line) and follow it eastward through an impressive cut before circling back; an interior trail (green dots) would lead to a dramatic rocky overlook from which all elements of the S&RT could be explained: the original 1880 D&RG narrow gauge, the 1927 "Big Cut" made when the D&RG was expanded to standard gauge, the original stage road displaced by the cut, and as it turned south toward Clear Creek above the modern Union Pacific railroad.

The existing Collegiate Peaks Byway interpretive kiosks point to the historic Leadville Stage Road grade and provide turnout space for vehicular visitors.



The proposed interpretive loop along US24 south of Granite would give hikers access to an impressive Midland RR cut on the river's west bank, above, and a comprehensive view of the old stage road and D&RG RR routes on the east bank, in the panorama below.





**Extent** Section extends 9 miles from the Chaffee/Lake County line to and including Hayden Meadows (see map Section 7).

**Recommended management partner(s)** Lake County and its Commissioners for all those preferred alignment segments that follow Lake County public roads, including the undefined road south of Kobe to the county line and CR55 to the north of Kobe; AHRA for all segments within Arkansas River Ranch; close coordination between Lake County and AHRA will be necessary in the segment south of Two Bit Gulch to the Lake/Chaffee County line. Coordination and consultation with CPW wildlife specialists will be required.

**Review of relevant features and issues** Section 7, like Section 6, is rich in historical significance, scenic beauty and important for potential river access, but more administratively complex in terms of land ownership and legal access. Its northern half, north of the Kobe Bridge, is relatively free of administrative constraints, but its southern half, from Kobe south to the county line, is not.

*The 1920-era Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway crossed the Arkansas Hayden Reservoir site, and gives access to AHRA's newly-established Arkansas River Ranch Trail.*



In overview, through legal proceedings the stage road has been determined a Lake County public road from the county line north to its junction with CR55 at Kobe. The roughly 2.6 mile portion of that road south of Two Bit Gulch is considered a “non-county maintained public road” not currently open to public access. It is not passable as a through road to any type of motor vehicle because several segments have been eliminated or narrowed by river meanders and/or made untraceable by extension or overgrowth of wetlands. This unopened public road crosses or is adjacent to about 20 privately-owned parcels ranging from 3 to 40 acres within this segment. Although some land owners may favor opening this road, doing so to even minimum standards for motor vehicle access is problematic: it lies almost entirely within the 100 and 50 year flood plains, and some segments are occasionally flooded even in normal years. Segments totaling about a mile would have to be constructed as if new, passing through formally-recognized wetlands close to the river's edge that would require extensive Federal permitting and probably generation of equivalent amounts of wetlands elsewhere in mitigation. Relocation to the east above the flood plain would involve extensive cutting into steep slopes, large amounts of fill to be disposed of without contamination of the river, and require the permission of multiple land owners. Although the cost of such opening has not been estimated, it would be expensive, and involve long delays and costs associated with permitting and mitigation. Aesthetic considerations would be raised given that opening this road, especially if relocated above the flood plain, would create a substantial and permanent scar on the currently undeveloped/unoccupied east bank visible to traffic on US24 (Top of the Rockies National Scenic Byway).

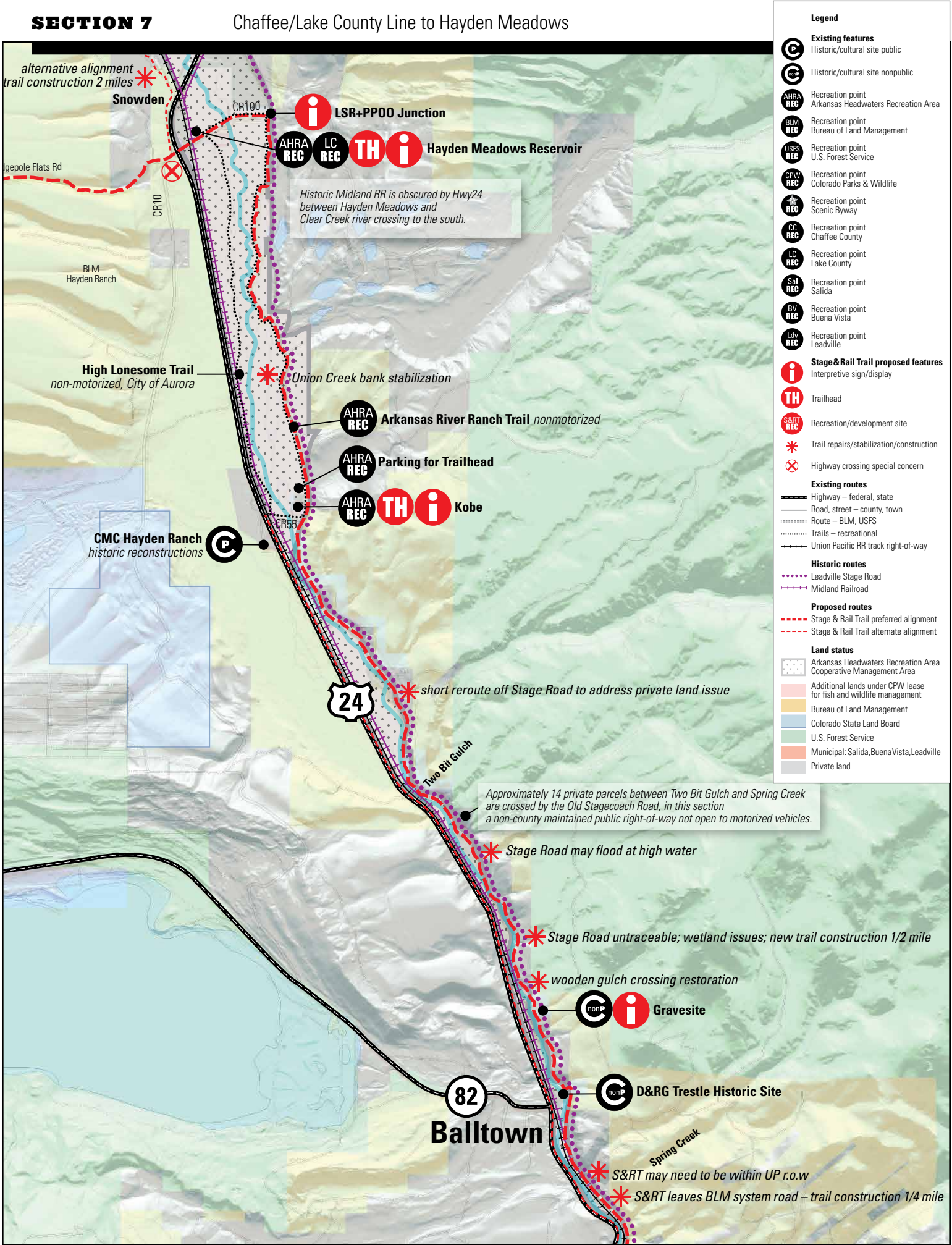
A final issue is that since a public road right-of-way already exists through this segment, no further easements would have to be obtained from adjacent private land owners if either a motorized or non-motorized route (e.g. the S&RT) were authorized. Such easements would not include the right to trespass across private lands to access the river.

Given this mix of issues it is impossible to predict what the eventual outcome in this southern half of Section 7 may be. This is regardless of whether the S&RT were designated here or not. In lieu of offering a prediction, the draft Master Plan recommends an ideal scenario, from the perspective of proponents of the long-distance trail, as follows:

Lake County would continue to take the position that it has no intention of opening the stage road to motorized public use from Two Bit Gulch south to its intersection with the open BLM route north of Granite, and that it would accept the use of that segment as a narrow non-motorized, unpaved public trail and designate it as a portion of the S&RT. A short relocation of the stage road north of Two Bit Gulch to nearer the river would be facilitated to reduce impacts on land owners in that segment. Lake County would actively support and assist the Coordinating S&RT NGO and its Board to fairly negotiate fee purchase from willing-sellers of any or all of the private parcels on the east bank south of Two Bit Gulch to Spring Creek, with the goal that such lands eventually be managed by the AHRA and remain undeveloped except for the S&RT. The price to be paid to owners would be determined through normal legal assessment procedures and should reflect the reality that a public road exists yet is problematic to open at motor vehicle standard.

North of Kobe the situation is entirely different. Most of the old stage road lies within AHRA's publicly-owned Arkansas River Ranch. In late September 2014 AHRA inaugurated its Arkansas River Ranch Trail whose extent is about 2.5 miles and incorporates the stage road from CR55 to the existing public recreation facilities of Lake County and AHRA at the Hayden Meadows recreation site. A section of stage road that passes within private property was avoided though creative cooperation with the EPA and included repurposing of heavy equipment haul roads in the wetlands previously used in mitigating heavy metal contamination of the river in this segment. Combined with the inauguration of the City of Aurora's High Lonesome trail on their lands west of the river, there is now a non-motorized 5 mile loop trail open to the public, with about two miles of the old stage road included.

The final proposed S&RT alignment in this section is a short segment running east from the stage road along the historically significant Pikes Peak Ocean To Ocean Highway to reach the Hayden Meadows recreation site, where there is extensive parking and restroom facilities already in place and which could easily be adapted to serve as a major trailhead of the proposed S&RT.





Factors/Criteria Opportunity to follow historic routes

Excellent; the preferred alignment precisely follows the apparent and legally-confirmed route of the old stagecoach road.

Likelihood of land owner conflicts or opposition

As noted above, the situation south of Two Bit Gulch is complex and there is likelihood of opposition unless affected land owners are willing to tolerate what is in effect their land-locked status; the recommended scenario which includes the opportunity to sell private parcels to a public land manager, is considered a positive step towards reducing that opposition from the Lake County and, hopefully, the private owners’ perspective.

Opportunity or need to acquire access easements or purchase private lands

As noted above, technically speaking there may be no need to acquire easements for the preferred alignment in the areas south of Two Bit Gulch; purchase of private lands from willing sellers is an option as outlined under the recommended scenario for this segment; no easements are considered necessary north of Two Bit Gulch to Hayden Meadows because the preferred alignment would lie along county roads or within AHRA-managed lands.

Difficulty or ease of implementing physical facilities and developments; safety concerns

North of Kobe the new Arkansas River Ranch Trail has already dealt with physical trail development along this portion of the old stage road and nothing further would be required except signage; only additional proposed development would be trailhead and interpretive displays at the south and north ends of AHRA’s new trail, and, as noted, there is ample parking and space for these to be accommodated. The proposed development from Two Bit Gulch to Spring Creek is a narrow trail that would face some of the wetland, river contamination and permitting issues already mentioned in the context of opening a wider motorable road, but to a much lesser extent.

Opportunities for connectivity or relationship to other trails

In effect, the stage road in Section 7 north of Kobe has already been opened as part of the Arkansas River Ranch Trail, so designation of the S&RT here would mean connecting to and sharing the existing trail; the High Lonesome trail on City of Aurora lands is also a connection; although not currently known as a trail, the Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway (PPOO) may eventually be recognized as yet another historically significant transportation route linking the same towns and counties as did the stage road and the railroads. The southern half of the proposed S&RT, north of the Lake/Chaffee County line, crosses two established Forest Service trails leading eastward into the Buffalo Peaks Wilderness Area; it also connects with the unnumbered motorized BLM system road going up Spring Creek to become FR397, which offers spectacular views from the wide bench above the east bank of the river.

Presence of related historical and natural resources

In addition to the trail itself, the preferred alignment offers access to the historic Hayden Ranch at Kobe and the PPOO route and historic bridge near Hayden Meadows; natural resources in the northern segment include fishing access to the Arkansas’ Gold Medal waters, close engagement with riparian wetlands for bird and wildlife viewing, seasonal habitat for elk, and vistas across the valley to 14ers La Plata, Elbert and Massive. The southern segment, if eventually designated, will offer a more restricted view of the narrow river canyon, fishing access (if permitted across private lands), wildlife viewing and examples of the dynamic shifts in the river which have erased some of the old route.

Opportunities for interpretation

Excellent for historic and natural resources as noted above.

Presence of sensitive historic resources, wildlife or other environmental constraints

Within the Arkansas River Ranch particular concern has been raised over wintering elk populations; riparian areas in general have been identified by CPW specialists as important for wildlife; wetlands presumably meeting the strict legal definition are extensive along the shores of the river in much of this section.

Anticipated required environmental and historic resources studies and permitting

Environmental issues have already been addressed regarding the existing Arkansas River Ranch Trail but environmental studies and in particular Federal 404 and other permitting procedures can be anticipated in conjunction with designation of the S&RT south of Two Bit Gulch, even if only a narrow non-motorized trail is to be cleared and reconstructed; where ground-disturbing activities such as reestablishing a trail where the historic route is absent, historic resource assessment will also be necessary as per state or Federal requirements.

Anticipated development, management and maintenance obligations

In the northern segment which is the Arkansas River Ranch Trail, AHRA already assumes annual maintenance obligations, and if the S&RT is designated here no additional maintenance or patrol is anticipated. S&RT emblems and directional signs would be necessary as well as three interpretive displays and two trailhead kiosks. If the segment south of Two Bit Gulch is designated and trail work completed, Lake County’s management and maintenance will have



Wetlands in the Hayden Flats are important winter range for elk, as this wide swath of tracks suggests. There may be need for seasonal restrictions on trail use.

Factors/Criteria

continued

to be extended to that segment (all the way to Spring Creek). Of particular concern will be monitoring and patrol to assure that motorized use is prohibited and that trail users do not trespass across private property to access the river. Although this Section does not include Chaffee County, it leads directly to it, and a particular concern for the S&RT would be if permitted or unauthorized motorized use in Lake County were to result in unlicensed OHVs proceeding southward into Chaffee County and onto CR397 where they are specifically prohibited by ordinance. Under the ideal scenario outlined above about one mile of essentially new narrow non-motorized unpaved trail would be constructed south of Two Bit Gulch to recreate segments of the stage road that are untraceable.

Ease or difficulty in formal designation by competent authorities

Considerable delay is anticipated in the area of Two Bit Gulch south to the county line due to unresolved issues of the public right-of-way and multiple private land parcels.

**History of support or opposition by the recommended partners** (does not predict or presume future positions)  
Lake County Commissioners have expressed support for Feasibility Study and Master Plan projects, and provided cash and in-kind match. However, this support has always taken note that the Two Bit Gulch area poses significant unresolved issues and that further public discussion will be needed before formal designation might be considered; the northern segments within AHRA jurisdiction have already been accepted without apparent opposition.

Priorities

If the S&RT were designated in the northern half of this section, AHRA’s first priority would be installation of emblems, directional and safety signs, and design and installation of trailhead and interpretive displays at both ends of the Arkansas River Ranch trail – a permanent restroom is already scheduled for the southern trailhead. First priority for Lake County would be to address problematic issues of private ownership and the public right-of-way south of Two Bit Gulch, which must be resolved before formal designation of the S&RT could be considered.

Costs

Although it is not assured that Lake County will designate the S&RT south of Two Bit Gulch as recommended, if they do there should be no need to purchase additional easements; there would be costs to obtain permits, undertake wetland mitigation and reestablish or reconstruct the Old Stagecoach road even as an natural-surfaced narrow trail not open to motorized use; S&RT emblems, directional signs and signs indicating private property would be needed. The total amount of private property which lies along this stretch is roughly 260 acres with a collective market value in excess of several million dollars. North of Two Bit Gulch and through AHRA land to Hayden Reservoir most facilities already exist but trailhead and interpretive displays specific to the S&RT would have to be added. Total section costs not including any land acquisition are estimated at \$149,870. See Appendix 2 Section 7 for details.

Funding sources

See note on funding sources in chapter introduction; also see Appendix 2. Because the northern segment is an existing, already-funded trail and already scheduled for annual maintenance, it is assumed AHRA would not need to seek extra, external funding for this segment. For the southern segment the scale of potential land acquisition and physical trail development may be beyond resources available either to Lake County or AHRA, and external grant support would need to be sought with assistance from the Coordinating S&RT NGO.

The new Arkansas River Ranch Trail through AHRA lands incorporates the historic stage road, and is recommended for eventual S&RT designation. Very different in character than the narrow canyons to the south, the stage road here offers public access to the east bank of the river as well as magnificent vistas across the Hayden Flats to the Collegiate Peaks along the Top of the Rockies Scenic Byway.





Recommended management partner(s): BLM and US Forest Service – Leadville District for their system roads in the Lodgepole Flats area and Lake County and its Commissioners for remaining segments, all of which follow Lake County public roads to Leadville city limits; because of the S&RT's proposed connection to the Mineral Belt Trail, the City of Leadville would be consulted on development and management although technically the S&RT would never enter the city itself.

Section 8, which contains the final approach of the S&RT into Leadville, is a segment full of history as well as natural beauty. Both the Denver and Rio Grande and Midland RRs had spur routes serving downtown Leadville; multi-generation ranches and lush bottomlands along the Arkansas were responsible for animal fodder and other agricultural products that fueled Leadville's boom days. The river itself is a calmer, slower meandering contrast to fast whitewater to the south, and, where public access has been negotiated, offers great Gold Medal water fishing.

Although in early concepts the S&RT would have ended at Hayden Meadows, it became clear there was support and encouragement from Lake County and Leadville officials to find a way to bring the trail into Leadville to connect with the well-established and popular Mineral Belt Trail (MBT). Therefore in both the Feasibility study and this Master Plan, the Section 8 alignment has been included. There has been frequent coordination between the planning team and Forest Service officials, Lake County Commissioners, Leadville Council and trail-user groups throughout the two projects, leading to consensus on preferred alignment and facilities. In particular – and mirroring the situations in both Buena Vista and Salida – S&RT, county and city interests have converged to ensure that connecting to this regional pathway (the S&RT) would be a strong complement to existing and planned county and municipal trails.

For various reasons, the preferred S&RT alignment departs from either the stage road or Midland RR's historic traditional routes. In the case of the stage, it appears that its 1870's path to Leadville is now overlain by US24, whose high speeds and traffic volumes coupled with narrow shoulders do not make it an attractive option for shared vehicle/cyclist use. The Midland RR's original mainline into Leadville passes in large measure through private lands. With these constraints, other options were examined, and the preferred alignment is proposed along Forest Service system roads leading west from Hayden Meadows, specifically FR130 and 130A. Subject to further study the alignment would continue on BLM Trail 130 to connect with Lake County's CRs11A, 11, 5, and 4 to meet the Mineral Belt Trail on Leadville's east town limit, at the existing south MBT trailhead and parking area along US24. A potentially viable but long-term alternative alignment would utilize the right-of-way of the Derry No. 1 Ditch. This is attractive since it would be less of a departure from the lowlands, involve little altitude gain, and retain a sense of connection with the river corridor that the trail has maintained all the way from Salida. Currently there are several entities who have interests and perhaps rights to use this right-of-way, including the City of Aurora and Lake County, and until those have been clarified its use as a trail remains only a future option.

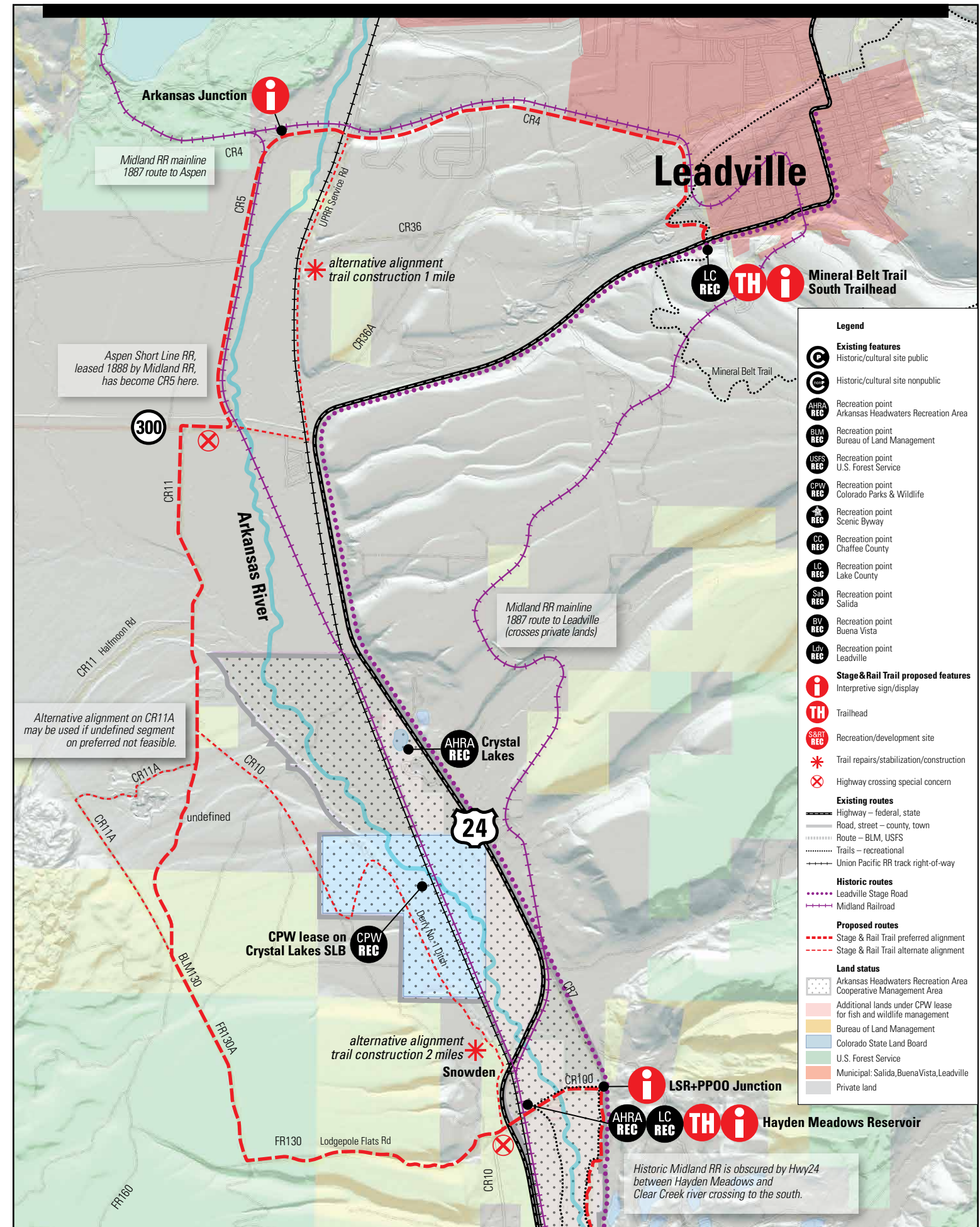
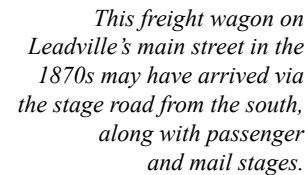
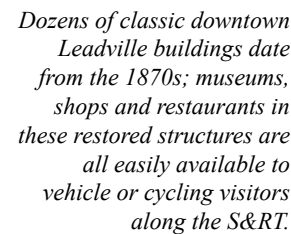
Poor in the southern section since neither the preferred nor alternative alignments could follow the historic stage or Midland RR; however as soon as the preferred alignment reaches CR5 and CR4 it would follow precisely on the Midland's Aspen Short Line or the original Midland Mainline departing Leadville to Hagerman Tunnel and Aspen.

Because the preferred alternative follows existing open BLM, Forest Service and Lake County Roads, little private land owner opposition is expected, provided there is no encouragement to trespass beyond the rights-of way. Should the Derry No. 1 Ditch alternative ultimately be adopted, it would pass through some private lands and the State Land Board's Crystal Lake parcel. (See next paragraph.)

No easements anticipated on preferred alignment; if the Derry No. 1 Ditch alternative is adopted then easements on several private properties would be needed as well as a lease agreement on the Crystal Lakes SLB parcel – according to SLB staff this would be considered in context of three previous existing leases, one with CPW, one for grazing by a private party, and one for fishing guide operations.

The only proposed facilities (trailhead kiosk and interpretive display at existing MBT parking and trailhead) would be straightforward to install.

Direct and immediate connection to the Mineral Belt Trail and eventually to the trail in the early stages of design and construction from Summit County to Leadville.





Factors/Criteriacontinued	<p><b>Presence of related historical and natural resources</b></p> <p>CR5 and CR4 are directly related to original routes or shortcuts of the historic Midland RR; choosing these as the S&amp;RT strengthens the contribution of the Midland RR's history to the entire S&amp;RT vision; natural resources related to the Lodgepole Flats forest environment and scenic views of the valley from higher elevation.</p> <p><b>Opportunities for interpretation</b></p> <p>Excellent opportunities to interpret the history of arrival of the 1887 Midland RR especially at Arkansas Junction (junction of CR5/CR4); a view eastward from Lodgepole Flats might provide an opportunity to describe the stage and railroads' approach to Leadville.</p> <p><b>Presence of sensitive historic resources, wildlife or other environmental constraints</b></p> <p>Elk habitat important in Lodgepole Flats along preferred alternative; if Derry No. 1 Ditch is to be designated there are issues with riparian habitat.</p> <p><b>Anticipated required environmental and historic resources studies and permitting</b></p> <p>No environmental studies anticipated since preferred alignments all on existing open public roads; if the Derry No 1 Ditch were designated and ground-disturbing activities proposed such as to clear a trail along the ditch itself, wildlife and historic resources must be assessed as per state and Federal requirements.</p> <p><b>Anticipated development, management and maintenance obligations</b></p> <p>No improvements or changes in standards of the BLM, Forest Service or County Roads have been identified as necessary along the preferred alignment and no increased law enforcement capacity or regulations or maintenance are anticipated. The BLM, Forest Service and County would be responsible for S&amp;RT emblems, safety or directional signs, replaced every five years; the county would also be responsible for one trailhead kiosk and one interpretive display at the MBT connection, and one interpretive display at Arkansas Junction, to be replaced every five years. CDOT would be responsible for safety signs at two highway crossings.</p> <p><b>Ease or difficulty in formal designation by competent authorities</b></p> <p>Relatively easy for FS, BLM and Lake County provided no unexpected challenges are encountered.</p> <p><b>History of support or opposition by the recommended partners</b> (does not predict or presume future positions)</p> <p>Forest Service, Leadville District officials have been involved in both studies, and expressed support for the general concept; thus far they see no difficulties in making these Forest Roads available for designation; Lake County Commissioners have similarly been participants in both planning projects and provided cash and in-kind match support, consistently working with the S&amp;RT team to identify preferred alignments consistent with and making a positive contribution to county-wide trail planning.</p> <tr><td>Priorities</td><td>If designation is made, priorities would be on the installation of S&amp;RT emblems, directional and safety signs as well the MBT trailhead kiosk and interpretive display.</td></tr> <tr><td>Costs</td><td>No easement or land acquisition costs are anticipated in this section. The majority of the estimated section cost (\$35,375 ) would be associated with signage, trailhead upgrades, CDOT crossing and interpretive displays. See Appendix 2 Section 7 for details.</td></tr> <tr><td>Funding sources</td><td>See note on funding sources in chapter introduction; also see Appendix 2. As in other Sections, the responsible partners could choose to cover these relatively modest costs from available funds or participate in a general grant-funded activity assisted by the Coordinating S&amp;RT NGO.</td></tr>	Priorities	If designation is made, priorities would be on the installation of S&RT emblems, directional and safety signs as well the MBT trailhead kiosk and interpretive display.	Costs	No easement or land acquisition costs are anticipated in this section. The majority of the estimated section cost (\$35,375 ) would be associated with signage, trailhead upgrades, CDOT crossing and interpretive displays. See Appendix 2 Section 7 for details.	Funding sources	See note on funding sources in chapter introduction; also see Appendix 2. As in other Sections, the responsible partners could choose to cover these relatively modest costs from available funds or participate in a general grant-funded activity assisted by the Coordinating S&RT NGO.
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The S&RT's northern terminus is at the Mineral Belt Trail, the popular 13-mile paved non-motorized loop that connects many of Leadville's most productive – and ultimately polluting – early mines (opposite lower).



Departing from the Old Stagecoach Road's path, unavailable north of Hayden Reservoir, the preferred S&RT alignment is along BLM and Forest Service roads traversing the Lodgepole Flats area (above).



Emerging from BLM lands the S&RT would eventually join CR11 (Halfmoon Road) to cross the Lake Fork (above) and continue on CR5 and CR4, both atop historic elements of the Midland RR.

