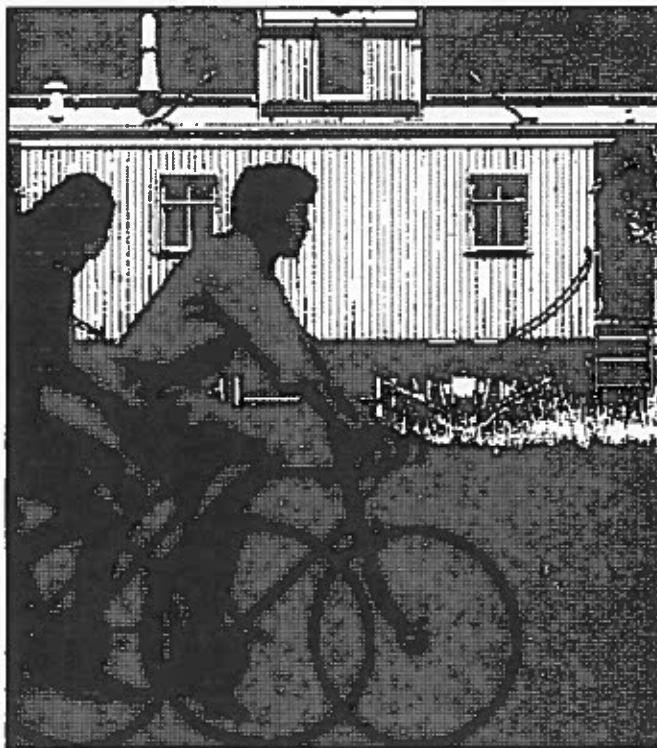


Heart of the Rockies Historic Corridor Great Outdoors Colorado Legacy Project Concept Paper

January 6, 1997



**Submitted by Colorado State Parks
on behalf of
A Corridor Partnership of Towns and Counties,
State and Federal Agencies, Citizens, and
Non-profit and Community Groups**



HEART OF THE ROCKIES HISTORIC CORRIDOR

Legacy Project Summary Information

1. **Project Sponsors:** Colorado State Parks on behalf of a corridor partnership.

2. **Primary Sponsor:** Colorado State Parks

Address: Colorado State Parks
1313 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80203

Contact Name: Tom Easley
Title: Great Outdoors Colorado Liaison
Telephone #: 303-866-3203 ext. 318
FAX #: 303-866-3206

3. **Project Partners:** Primary partners are listed. In addition, several organizations and individuals have committed cash or in-kind contributions to the project (*see page 12 and Attachment B - letters of support*).

Fremont County, City of Cañon City, Cañon City Metro Recreation District, Cañon City Bankers Assoc.; Chaffee County, City of Salida, Town of Buena Vista; Lake County, Leadville Coalition, City of Leadville; Eagle County Regional Transportation Authority for Eagle County, Towns of Eagle, Avon, Vail, Minturn, Red Cliff, Gypsum and Beaver Creek Resort; U.S. Bureau of Land Management - Cañon City and Grand Junction Districts; USDA Forest Service - White River and Pike San Isabel National Forests; Colorado Division of Wildlife (*see Attachment C for names and addresses*)

4. **Project Title:** Heart of the Rockies Historic Corridor

5. **Project Location:**

U.S. Congressional District: 3 Colorado House District #: 44,45,56,61

Counties: Fremont, Chaffee, Lake, Eagle Colorado Senate District #: 4,5,8

6. **Two or More GOCO Funding Categories Advanced by this Project:**

Open Space Outdoor Recreation

Local Government Wildlife

7. Brief Description of the Project:

Colorado State Parks, on behalf of a corridor partnership of towns and counties, state and federal agencies, non-profit and community groups, submitted a Legacy Project Concept Paper for this project during the first round of Legacy proposals in December, 1995. Since that time, the project has been more thoroughly explored through GOCO's Legacy Planning Grant for a Trail Feasibility Study. The project arises from the planned abandonment of the 178 mile railway corridor from Cañon City to Sage (near Gypsum), due to consolidation of operations from the merger of the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads.

While the communities and the State are actively seeking replacement rail service, community leaders recognize the difficulties of attracting replacement rail service in today's economic and cultural climates. As a result, the corridor partnership looks to preserve the corridor through the federal railbanking statutes, and to reap the social and economic benefits of interim trail uses of the corridor. Union Pacific's donation/bargain sale of the corridor means acquisition costs can be reduced from \$6.75 million to \$1.5 million, enabling capital resources to be focused on trail development, its access points and habitat protection measures.

The result will be one of the most spectacular rails to trails conversions in the U.S., traversing the Royal Gorge and canyons of the Arkansas River, up past the magnificent Collegiate Peaks Range to the subalpine habitats of Tennessee Pass, and down to the rich bottomlands of the Eagle River valley. The cultural and historical connections between residents and the environment through time are abundantly evident in the landscape, from Indian settlements through the glory days of the mining era to today's flourishing ski areas. This rich cultural heritage, coupled with significant and in many places sensitive habitats for flora and fauna, will be featured in environmental education and interpretive programs.

Project benefits are comprehensive. The trail will be a critical link in the developing statewide trail system that will eventually connect Grand Junction and West Slope trail systems to the Front Range network. Open spaces now preserved in a de facto manner by the access barrier of the railway will enjoy continued protection instead of being subject to the pressures that would arise from the break-up for sale of the abandoned corridor if it were not railbanked. The regional economy, already stung by the decline of the mining industry, will recoup the loss of railroad-related economic activity by way of new business and sales taxes generated by the users of what will doubtless prove to be a very popular, easily accessible 178 mile trail through the Heart of the Rockies.

8. Project Funding:

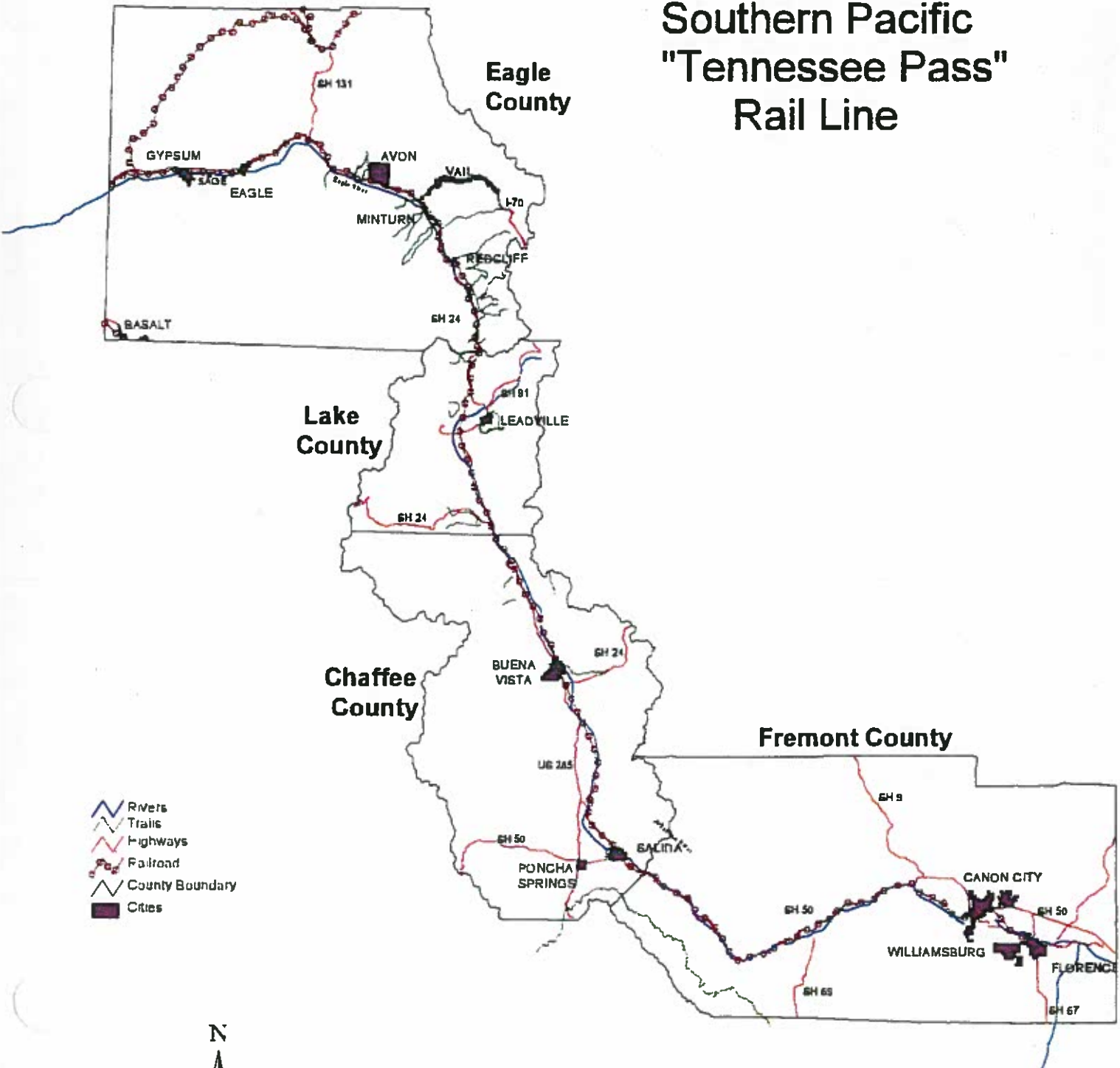
Grant Request:	<u>\$ 5,000,000</u>	
Cash Match (project period):	<u>\$ 1,750,000</u>	
In-Kind Match (project period):	<u>\$ 5,530,000</u>	(Not including substantial commitments as of yet unestimated.)
Total Project Cost: (project period)	<u>\$12,280,000</u>	

COLORADO

Heart of the Rockies

Historic Corridor

Southern Pacific
"Tennessee Pass"
Rail Line



GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO LEGACY PROJECT HEART OF THE ROCKIES HISTORIC CORRIDOR CONCEPT PAPER

January 6, 1997

For 116 years, the rail corridor from Cañon City to Gypsum has played a vital role in linking the communities of the Arkansas and Eagle River valleys together and to regional and national markets. Originally forged in 1880 by the Denver and Rio Grande Railway to serve the first boom of the mining industry, the railway has changed along with the corridor communities. Today, the twin forces of the decline of the mining industry and the nationwide trend toward consolidation of rail carriers have forced these communities to suddenly come to grips with a stunning change -- the abandonment of rail service by the newly merged Union Pacific and Southern Pacific Railways.

One year ago, the corridor communities teamed up with Colorado State Parks, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service to propose to Great Outdoors Colorado an exciting new use of the corridor - a 178 mile trail through the heart of the Rockies. While the communities and the State are actively seeking replacement rail service, community leaders recognize the difficulties of attracting replacement rail service in today's economic and cultural climates. As a result, the corridor partnership looks to preserve the corridor through the federal railbanking statutes. This unusually far-sighted legislation enables the corridor to be kept intact for interim trail uses until the day when rail service becomes feasible again.

Since being awarded the GO Colorado Legacy Planning Grant, the corridor partnership has conducted a detailed Feasibility Study to take a close look at the trail use option. A multi-jurisdictional Steering Committee comprised of local citizen leaders appointed by county commissioners and representatives of state and federal agencies conducted the study. After extensive public input and analysis of resource data, the Steering Committee reached several overall conclusions (*see attached Executive Summary*):

- ▶ By investing between \$6.4 million and \$10.4 million, the corridor can be transformed into one of the nation's most spectacular long distance trails, off-setting the loss of rail service by annually generating up to \$6.6 million for the regional economy.

- ▶ Prior to a rail to trails conversion, a detailed Corridor Management and Development Plan should be adopted. Important issues to be addressed include critical wildlife habitat conservation, clean-up of hazardous materials, scope of trail use and development, and accommodation of adjacent landowner concerns.

The timeline for Union Pacific's abandonment is well-suited to fall within the Legacy Projects timeframe. Railway representatives expect the abandonment process to be completed by the end of 1998. This gives the corridor partners sufficient time to complete the extensive planning needed to be ready to go to construct and substantially complete the first phase of development by the summer of 1999.

By seizing this opportunity now in the short time while it is available, the corridor partners can, with GOCO's Legacy Grant, put in place an accessible 178 mile trail that links the corridor's communities, community parks, open lands, and state and federal recreation sites while protecting wildlife habitat. In addition, putting in place the *Heart of the Rockies Historic Trail* will be one giant step in building an intrastate network of trails. As shown on the accompanying map, the trail will be a crucial link in a statewide trail system that will eventually connect Grand Junction and West Slope trail systems to the Front Range network.

The corridor partners are requesting a \$5 million Legacy Project grant to match current investments of \$7.28 million of cash, donated railway lands and railway bargain sale lands, and in-kind services the corridor partners are bringing to the project. As the project progresses, the corridor partners anticipate additional cash matches and more accurate estimates of in-kind matches by agencies, organizations and volunteers will increase our total match figure. The Legacy Project features two main components:

- 1) Corridor Management and Development Plan
- 2) Corridor acquisition and trail development

These components are described below:




1) **Corridor Management and Development Plan**

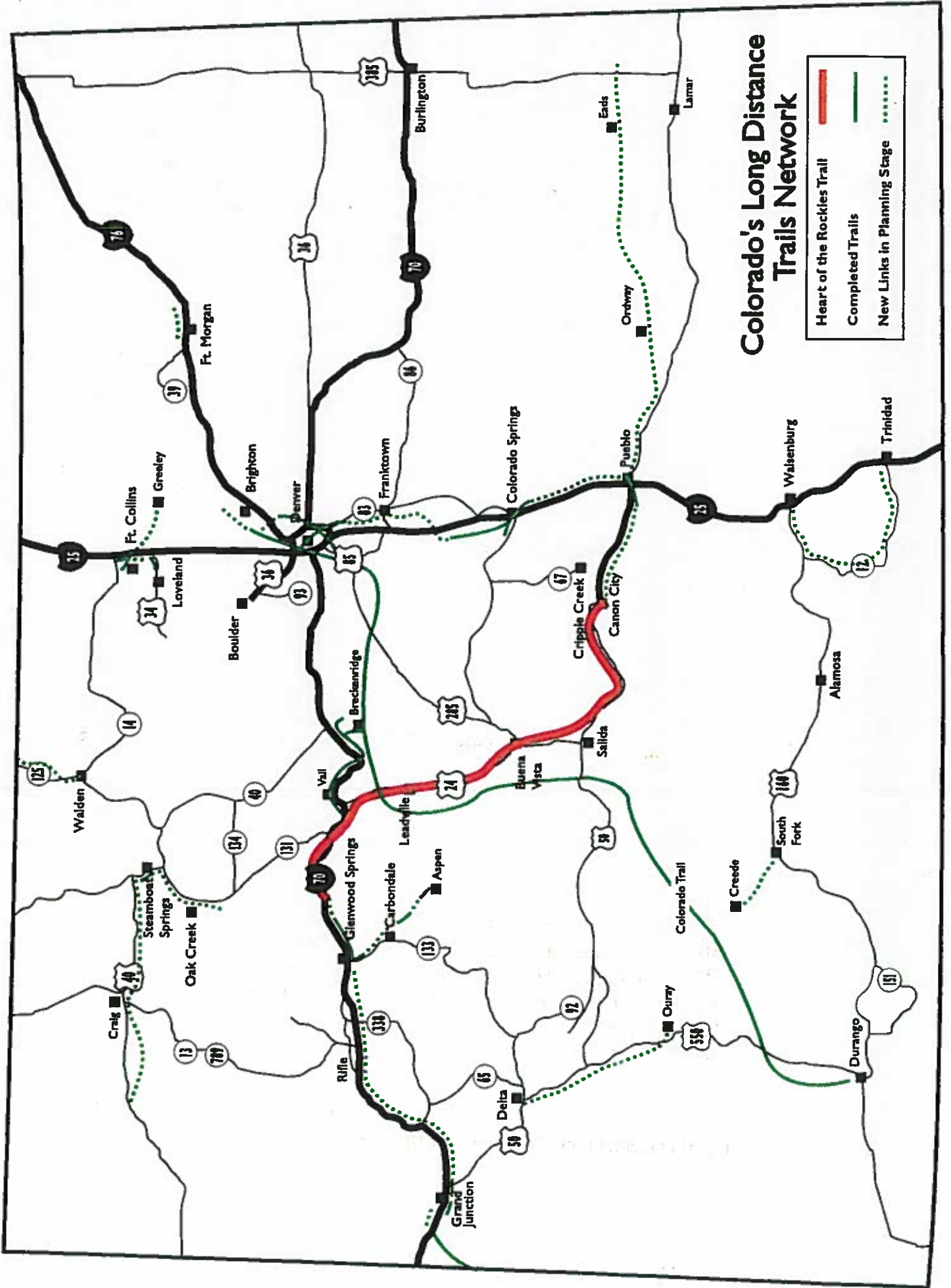
A key part of this Legacy Project is funding for the Corridor Management and Development Plan. The Feasibility Study points out the complexities of planning for a 178 mile corridor through four counties and 20 communities. Local government leaders have made it clear that they want the citizens of the corridor to have a strong voice in key decisions on:

- ▶ The scope of trail development.
- ▶ The protection of open space, wildlife and other environmental values.
- ▶ Strategies to meet the concerns of adjacent property owners.
- ▶ On-going trail corridor management responsibilities.
- ▶ The integration of trail use with local transportation and public services infrastructures.
- ▶ Scope and content of cultural and historical interpretation.

Consistent with the recommendations in the Rail Trail Feasibility Study, the Legacy Project sponsors are committed to creating and implementing a **multi-jurisdictional Corridor Management and Development Plan** prior to trail construction. Counties, cities, state and federal agencies, user groups, business and non-profit organizations

Colorado's Long Distance Trails Network

	Heart of the Rockies Trail
	Completed Trails
	New Links in Planning Stage



will be included both in development of the process and in creation and adoption of the Plan. **Since federal lands are involved, NEPA compliance will be part of the planning process.**

It is expected that one outcome of the Plan will be the formation of **a permanent multi-jurisdictional task force** to guide the trail management agencies in plan implementation. **Several options exist, including but not limited to:**

- ▶ **Expansion of the role of the existing Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area Citizens Task Force to include oversight of the trail corridor in the Arkansas drainage counties.**
- ▶ **In Eagle County, oversight by the Eagle County Trails Committee.**
- ▶ **Formation of a new multi-jurisdictional trails commission to oversee all or parts of the corridor.**

This comprehensive planning process will be the linchpin for the success of the project. Total cost is estimated at \$330,000, and the project partners are proposing that GO Colorado contribute \$100,000 to this crucial project component. In addition to the cash match of \$35,000, the corridor partners will bring substantial in-kind staff commitments preliminarily estimated to be at least \$195,000 in value.

2) Corridor acquisition and trail development

The remainder of the Legacy Grant will be used for acquisition and development of the trail through the corridor.

Corridor acquisition:

Thanks to a generous bargain sale/donation of the corridor engineered by Governor Roy Romer and Union Pacific President Dick Davidson, **acquisition of the corridor is surprisingly within reach.** UP has agreed to donate the 109 mile portion of the corridor from Malta (near Leadville) to Cañon City, including the rails in the 9 mile section through the Royal Gorge. From Malta to Sage, UP is offering a bargain sale price of \$902,000. An estimated additional \$600,000 in cash and \$20,000 in in-kind staff services will be needed to acquire additional property for trail access points and for small parcels isolated between the rail corridor and the adjacent rivers.

The overall result is an acquisition cost reduction from \$6.75 million to an estimated \$1.52 million. Project partners propose to bring \$520,000 in partner matches to a GOCO investment of \$1 million for the acquisition portion of the project.

Trail development:

In the Feasibility Study, trail development costs were estimated by the Steering Committee in a range from \$6.4 million to \$10.4 million. Costs include trail surfacing, retrofits to the 119 railway bridges in the corridor, access facilities

(trailhead parking, water supply and sanitary facilities), habitat protection and restoration, watchable wildlife and historic interpretive sites, and capital equipment to maintain the trail.

The actual overall trail development costs will be determined in the Corridor Management and Development Plan. By matching corridor partner investments of at least \$1.27 million with GOCO's \$3.9 million for trail development, the initial phase of trail development will be possible. The corridor partners plan to implement future phases of the project by way of sources such as State Trails Program grants, Lottery funds, local government revenues, ISTEAs, Colorado Historical Society grants and additional GOCO grants.

CHARACTERISTICS AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT:

This project is not just urgent - it is a once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire and protect a corridor with vast recreation, open space and wildlife values. GOCO's investment in the Heart of the Rockies Historic Trail will mean that the corridor partners will accomplish the equivalent of putting in place 40% of the Colorado Trail all at once. Picture what a spectacular route it could be, easily accessible to visitors and citizens of the 20 communities through which it passes:

- The dramatic canyons of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, including the Royal Gorge and Browns Canyon, now accessible only by boat or rail.
- Connecting links to 7 Wilderness Areas - Sangre de Cristo, Collegiate Peaks, Hunter/Fryingpan, Browns Canyon, Buffalo Peaks, Holy Cross and Eagles Nest.
- The Leadville Historic District, with connections to a new trail system designed to bring people to historic old mine sites. Here the Corridor also intersects with the Colorado Trail.
- Tennessee Pass and its scenic, forested watershed divide between the Arkansas and Eagle River drainages, including historic Camp Hale, training ground for the famed 10th Mountain Division.
- Down the Eagle River drainage to Minturn, where the corridor intersects the new trail being built to Vail, Vail Pass and the Summit County trails system.
- Through the rapidly growing Eagle Valley towns of Avon, Edwards and Eagle, providing a valuable recreational asset for citizens and for tourists attracted by Vail Valley's ski areas. It will also provide a much needed alternative to people now forced to drive between towns along busy I-70 and U.S. 6.

Adding to the significance, the corridor passes through the White River and San Isabel National Forests, as well as BLM lands in the Royal Gorge and Glenwood Springs Resource Areas. These public lands are under pressure from growing numbers of recreationists during all seasons, and the corridor would not only offer alternatives, but also serve to spread out

the impacts through new opportunities to access federal lands at new sites. The Corridor Management and Development Plan will be an important tool in directing and controlling this expanded access.

Fishing and hunting access along the rivers will also be expanded, especially in the Eagle River drainage, and corridors will be kept intact for movement of wildlife. In addition, the maximum 3% grade of the railroad bed makes the corridor instantly accessible for all types of users.

Without funds to make a significant investment in the corridor, the partners face two unsatisfactory outcomes:

- ▶ If not acquired through railbanking, the 173 mile long ribbon of land through two major river basins, upland forests and dramatic canyons would be broken up and sold to the highest bidders. Open space and habitat values would be severely compromised, and any hopes of future rail service would be dashed.
- ▶ If funds to invest in sufficient trail surface and facilities are not available, responsible use of the corridor would not be possible. The trail surface and its access facilities must be attractive enough to trail users to generate user fees to pay for operation and maintenance of the trail. Without a self-sustaining capability, a range of negative impacts could result. Unmanaged access would tend to bear out the worst fears of adjacent landowners already apprehensive of potential trespass, vandalism and liability problems. Important resource protection needs such as noxious weed control and habitat protection would be inadequately funded. Effective maintenance of trail bridges, culverts and drainageways and the trail surface itself would not be possible.

IMPACT OF THE PROJECT:

Since the sudden appearance of the corridor as a potential major recreation, wildlife and open space resource has been largely unanticipated, existing local, state or federal plans tend to not mention the affected lands specifically as a trail corridor. However, the acquisition and development of the corridor as a trail advances the goals of several planning documents.

- State Trails Master Plan - identifies the Arkansas and Eagle River valleys as Priority I corridors with the highest statewide significance. To date, the State Trails system has focused mainly on trail networks around urban areas. The next step is to link these relatively well developed systems into a statewide network, inter-connected by long distance trail corridors.
- Eagle County - implements the county's Master Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Eagle River Watershed Plan and the County Trails Plan.
- Lake County Plan - calls for trail links to Eagle, Summit and Chaffee Counties.

- San Isabel National Forest Plan
- White River National Forest Plan
- BLM Royal Gorge Resource Area Management Plan
- Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area - implements the joint State Parks/BLM Management Plan for trail connections from Granite to Pueblo.
- Chaffee County Trails Plan - well under way through GOCO funding.
- Fremont County Trails Plan - just under way through GOCO funding.

In addition to creating a corridor easily accessible to the diverse resources along its 178 mile length, the *Heart of the Rockies Historic Corridor* also connects to and acts as a catalyst for development of a large variety of local community-based recreation and open space amenities, including:

- Pueblo - potential trail connection from the Pueblo regional trail system to Cañon City along the railway or other proposed routes.
- Cañon City - connects to a city open space park along the river and the Arkansas River Walk trail, and upstream through the city's Royal Gorge park.
- Salida - connects to a city park, local trails and the headquarters of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area.
- Chaffee County - will be a major feature in the Chaffee County Trails Plan, currently in development.
- Buena Vista - preserves major corridor through center of town and connects to a riverside park, fishing access bridge, and a trail up to another historic corridor trail along the old Colorado Midland RR.
- Lake County/Leadville - The Lake County Parks Department is currently developing the Mineral Belt Route, a system of trails on abandoned railroad lines and other historic routes that provide access to and weave together a number of mines and sites in and around the Leadville Historic District. The trails would continue west to Turquoise Lake, where GOCO has funded a trailhead project to access National Forest trails. Another proposed trail would run from Leadville on another historic rail bed to link with the trails of the Summit County system.
- Red Cliff - connects to Shrine Pass trail which in turn connects to the Vail Pass trail, and development of park and recreation facilities.
- Minturn - connects to Eagle River trail under construction (via GOCO grant) and park and recreation facilities.
- Dowd Junction - connects to Vail to Dowd Junction trail, and on to the Vail Pass and Summit County trails.
- Avon - connects town by trail to other I-70 corridor towns and development of park and recreation facilities.
- Eagle - connects to GOCO-funded trail to county fairgrounds and development of park and recreation facilities.
- Eagle County - development of trails and river access locations in unincorporated areas. At the west terminus at Sage, a connecting link of a few miles would access

the Glenwood Canyon trail and the new GOCO-funded Roaring Fork rail trail.

Resource Protection

As the corridor passes through the relatively dry canyons of the Arkansas drainage, the cool and wet environment of the Tennessee Pass forests, and the canyons and meadows of the Eagle River drainage, it offers a wide range of exceptional open space, scenic and biological values. The Corridor Management and Development Plan that will be completed before the corridor is opened to trail use will provide the comprehensive framework to guide resource protection. The key resource protection elements will include:

- ▶ **Open Space protection:** With the abandonment of rail service will come pressures to allow access across the corridor to open lands that have been difficult to access because of the barrier of the railway. In the planning process, serious consideration must be given to tools available to preserve these valuable open lands in accord with local government plans and policies. One tool that will be explored is access limitations across the corridor. As analyses by the Land Use Resource Center reveal, the railbanked status of the corridor will assist in this regard, since it will be in the best interests of the corridor partners to avoid problems that increased access would cause if rail service were restored some time in the future.
- ▶ **Habitat protection:** Analyses by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program reveal important sensitive plant and animal species, plant communities and habitats along the corridor. Trail managers must adopt conservation-based management strategies to protect these invaluable populations.

For example, DOW has expressed concern about potential effects of trail use on the herds of bighorn sheep who inhabit the Arkansas drainage. Nesting eagles and wintering elk and deer are other species of concern that must be protected. State Parks and DOW are currently developing a detailed wildlife management planning process for the corridor, which will identify potential impacts and ways to alleviate them through options such as trail user education efforts, habitat improvements, trail use restrictions, and alternate routes if necessary.

Habitat restoration will also be explored in the wildlife management and Corridor Plan planning processes. Opportunities to create and enhance wetlands, re-establish native flora in the railway right-of-way, improve fish habitat and other restoration measures will be examined and implemented.

- ▶ **Hazardous materials clean-up:** Hazardous materials have been documented at sites along the corridor, consisting of mine wastes, several railway accidental spills of chemicals, and lubricants used in rail operations. In accord with federal law, an agreement with Union Pacific must be reached prior to transfer of title to trail

managers. The wastes will be cleaned up to a level that will restore habitat and protect trail users.

- o **Environmental Education and Interpretation:** As the corridor climbs from the canyons of the Arkansas River to subalpine habitat on Tennessee Pass, then down to the rich bottomlands of the Eagle drainage, it passes through a wide range of ecotypes. The cultural and historical connections between residents and the environment through time are abundantly-evident in the landscape, from Indian settlements through the glory days of the mining era to today's flourishing ski areas. Accordingly, environmental education opportunities are boundless, as evidenced by the attached support letters from corridor school districts, Colorado Mountain College and the Colorado Outward Bound School.

Yet the corridor's resources are not simply environmental education opportunities. Trail managers also have an important responsibility to make sure trail users understand that they can impact the environment, especially the sensitive flora and fauna habitats found throughout the corridor. A comprehensive program must be planned to use school programs, interpretive exhibits, brochures and trail rangers to make visitors fully aware of how to go lightly on the land.

Economic impacts:

Tourism is the mainstay of the region's economy, and trail development would contribute to it. The current trend of mine closures, paired with the on-going rise in visitors to the region's outstanding outdoor resources, means that tourism will continue to increase in importance. The Feasibility Study concludes that the trail would generate annual economic activity of about \$4.9 million to \$6.6 million for the region, and from \$9.1 million to \$12.1 million statewide.

Property taxes that will be lost from abandonment of railway operations would be significantly offset by sales tax revenues generated by trail users. In Chaffee, Fremont and Lake Counties, an estimated additional \$92,500 to \$123,400 in additional sales taxes would be generated, partially offsetting the \$222,200 currently collected rail property taxes. In Eagle County, sales tax increases are estimated at \$139,500 to \$181,000, more than replacing the current \$65,200 in rail property tax.

In addition, research conducted nationwide confirms that residential and commercial property values will most likely increase adjacent to the proposed trail along the entire corridor. These tax revenues will be supplemented by Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) payments if state or federal agencies become title holders to corridor lands.

Opposition to the project has been voiced by some private landowners adjacent to the corridor and others. There are over 700 rail-to-trail conversions in the U.S., including 12 in Colorado, indicating ample evidence of the success of these kinds of projects. In most of these cases, there has also been significant opposition *prior to project completion* from adjacent residents who fear vandalism, loss of privacy, and other effects of public access on foot, bicycle and horse.

However, nationwide experience on rail-trails through rural, agricultural and urban areas shows that the majority of those people initially concerned become trail supporters after trail use begins and their concerns prove to be unfounded. Experience on the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area and other recreation areas along the Corridor also shows that effective management can avoid recreationists' encroachment on adjacent private lands. This is consistent with a 1995 study of property adjacent to three Denver-area trails, where no perceptible negative effects on safety or property values due to adjacent recreation uses were found.

Attitudes of adjacent landowners were explored during the course of the Feasibility Study through surveys and public meetings. Each of the counties surveyed the 533 known landowners along the corridor. Of the 182 responses, 53% registered concerns about potential loss of privacy, litter and other effects. Those in favor of a trail (49%) outweigh those landowners who do not like the idea of a trail (37%).

Two of the ten main recommendations of the Feasibility Study addressed these concerns. First is the **initiative to amend Colorado's Recreational Use statutes** currently being spearheaded by the Colorado Municipal League and Club 20. This legislation aims to substantially clarify landowners' rights to liability protection against recreationists, and to remove disincentives for canal and ditch owners to allow trail uses in ditch corridors.

The second recommendation is to **adopt strategies to control potential effects of trail use on adjacent landowners**. These strategies should focus on management and design methods to control potential impacts, including trespass, trash, protection of privacy, fencing, livestock disturbance, noise and safety. The corridor partners are fully committed to examining these issues and adopting control strategies prior to opening the trail for public use. It will be one of the key issues that will be addressed in the development of the Corridor Management and Development Plan. The Feasibility Study Steering Committee recognized the importance of mitigating these concerns, and based its assessment of the scope of trail development and management presence with these concerns in mind.

LEVERAGING AND PARTNERSHIP:

The multi-jurisdictional Steering Committee guiding the Feasibility Study agreed on ten future action recommendations. In order to carry out these recommendations, the corridor partnership will continue to rely upon multi-jurisdictional efforts that will, by their nature,

integrate local government, open space, outdoor recreation and wildlife goals. The ten recommendations are:

1. Prepare a detailed Corridor Management Plan before opening the Corridor to trail use.
2. Adopt strategies to make trail use compatible with adjacent land uses.
3. Pursue opportunities to link the Corridor trail with other outdoor resources.
4. Develop strategies to protect and conserve the Corridor's biological resources.
5. Pursue preservation and interpretation of the historic and cultural resources of the Corridor.
6. Secure the resources to fund the capital and operations costs of the Corridor.
7. Ensure that hazardous materials are cleaned up to a standard that will accommodate public uses of the Corridor.
8. Pursue legislative actions that will strengthen liability protection for adjacent landowners.
9. Pursue land exchange transactions with the railroads that would yield mutual benefits.
10. Develop a volunteer network for construction and operations of the trail.

A review of the benefits of the *Heart of the Rockies Historic Trail* shows that the project is well integrated across the four GO Colorado funding areas. To summarize, those benefits include:

Local Governments:

- Close to home recreation opportunities for corridor residents of the 20 communities and 4 counties.
- The trail will link together and stimulate additional investments by local communities in local parks, trail systems and open space. By joining together to bring significant investments in the Legacy Project, mutual benefits will far exceed those that any one community acting separately can accomplish.
- Economic benefits that displace the loss of rail service.

Open Space:

- Preserves a linear open space corridor of statewide significance in an area that is experiencing rapid population growth and development.
- Discourages sprawl away from developed community centers by preventing fragmentation of the corridor that would occur if it were broken up and sold to the highest bidders.
- Facilitates protection of open lands along the corridor, by way of access controls across the railway in accord with local government plans and policies.

Parks and Outdoor Recreation:

- Acquires and constructs a trail and river greenways of statewide significance, destined to be one of the nation's premier rail-trails.

- Access by the disabled to a realm of outdoor activities, made possible by the maximum 3% grade and bridges of the railway.
- Opportunities for less strenuous trail recreation by those not currently fully served on public lands, such as families with children and an American population characterized by the rapidly expanding elderly segment.
- Improvements to emergency access for river rescue operations.
- Enhances the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area by providing a new and complementary activity for recreation area visitors.

Wildlife:

- Habitat protection and improvement - remove fences, replant/reseed disturbed areas, improved water quality through hazardous materials clean-up, enhance wetlands created or disturbed by railroad operations, and improve fishery habitat through rock placements and plantings to shade stream banks.
- Keeps intact wildlife migration corridors between open lands, especially important in the rapidly developing Eagle River drainage.
- Exceptional opportunities to employ environmental education and watchable wildlife programs and facilities that will give trail users the information they need to appreciate wildlife in a low impact manner.
- Enhanced access for anglers and hunters along the Arkansas and especially the Eagle River drainages.
- Increases accessibility for hunters to the abundant public lands adjacent to the corridor.

THE CORRIDOR PARTNERSHIP:

While corridor leaders are continuing efforts to attract replacement rail operators, they are cognizant of the difficulties in attaining this common goal. As an alternative, the corridor communities and counties are teaming up with state and federal agencies, non-profit groups and community groups to establish the *Heart of the Rockies Historic Trail* as a new regional resource.

Already, local governments have committed to bring \$500,000 in matching funds to the project for trail acquisition and development in their respective jurisdictions. State Parks is pledging \$1 million, plus in-kind staff time. The BLM is contributing \$84,000 in in-kind staff time for planning and environmental analyses and is exploring cash funding capabilities. The USDA Forest Service is also committing staff time for planning and environmental work. Individual citizens and recreation groups are so enthusiastic that they are donating personal contributions, already totaling \$1,010. As the project progresses, the corridor partners expect private sector fund-raising to total at least \$250,000.

The attached letters of support from 159 local, state and federal agencies, recreation and trail groups, conservation and service organizations, education groups, business interests and

individuals confirms the depth of enthusiasm for keeping the corridor intact for trail uses among residents and local leaders along the entire length of the corridor.

Commitments of cash and in-kind services to date are listed below. As the project progresses, additional cash commitments are expected, and in-kind matches will be more accurately estimated.

Fremont County	\$ 25,000	Chaffee County	\$ 30,000
City of Cañon City	\$ 25,000	City of Salida	\$ 30,000
Cañon City Rec. District	\$ 25,000	Town of Buena Vista	<u>\$ 30,000</u>
Business owner	\$ 10,000	Chaffee County Total	\$ 90,000
County Bankers Assoc.	<u>\$ 16,000</u>		
Fremont County Total	\$101,000		
Lake County	up to \$ 60,000	Eagle County Regional	
Leadville Coalition	\$ 25,000	Transportation Authority	\$250,000
City of Leadville	<u>\$ pending</u>	Members include:	
Lake County Total	\$ 83,333	Eagle County	Town of Vail
Colorado State Parks	\$1,000,000	Town of Eagle	Town of Avon
Colorado Div. of Wildlife	\$ pending	Town of Minturn	Town of Red Cliff
		Town of Gypsum	Beaver Creek Resort
Bureau of Land Management			
Cañon City District		\$ 75,000	in-kind, cash match pending
Glenwood Springs Resource Area		\$ 9,000	in-kind
USDA Forest Service			
Pike San Isabel National Forest		\$	in-kind unestimated
White River National Forest		\$	in-kind unestimated
Arkansas River Outfitters Association	\$ 500		
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club	\$ 100		
Rocky Mtn. Llama & Alpaca Assoc.	\$ 100		
Trout Unlimited, Collegiate Pks. Chap.	\$ unestimated		
Private citizens (8 to date)	\$1,010		

Volunteer Organization In-kind Commitments:

Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado	Eagle Valley Cycling Coalition
Colorado Trail Foundation	Colorado Snowmobile Association
Salida Trails System Committee	Greater Arkansas River Nature Association
Colorado Outward Bound School	Greater Buena Vista Area Chamber of Commerce

PROJECT COSTS AND ALLOCATIONS:

Based on the estimates in the Trail Feasibility Study and additional information gathered since the completion of the study, the total cost to acquire the corridor and construct the trail and access facilities is estimated at \$13.5 - \$17.5 million. Once the Corridor Development and Management Plan is completed, more definitive costs will be established. The Legacy phase of the project will complete the planning, land acquisitions and the first phase of trail development. Project costs are summarized below, and additional detail can be found in the budget and timeline sheets that follow.

a. Project Cost Estimates (millions):

	<u>Overall Project</u>	<u>Legacy Phase</u>
Corridor Management and Development Plan	\$ 0.330	\$ 0.330
Land acquisitions		
UP donation/bargain sale	\$ 5.260	\$ 5.260
Cash acquisitions	\$ 1.520	\$ 1.520
Trail development		
Surfacing/access facilities	\$ 5.140- 8.940	\$ 4.105
Interpretation/Education	\$ 0.600- 0.800	\$ 0.405
Habitat Management	<u>\$ 0.660</u>	<u>\$ 0.660</u>
TOTALS	\$13.510-17.510	\$12.280

b. Legacy Budget Summary (in millions):

GOCO Request	
Outdoor Recreation	\$ 2.500
Open Space	\$ 1.000
Local Government	\$ 1.000
Wildlife	<u>\$ 0.500</u>
Subtotal	\$ 5.000
Corridor Partner Matches*	
State Parks	\$ 1.115
Local governments	\$ 0.565
Federal agencies	\$ 0.100
DOW	\$ *
Union Pacific	\$ 5.250 (donation/bargain sale)
Private Sector/individuals	\$ 0.250
Non-profits/volunteers	<u>\$ *</u>
Subtotal	\$ 7.28

Project Total **\$12.28 million**

* Includes in-kind matches. Additional cash matches and more accurate estimates of in-kind matches are expected as the project progresses.

STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY:

The Feasibility Study Steering Committee recognized it was crucial to determine if the on-going stewardship of the corridor could be secured by sufficient and dependable sources of funds for on-going operation and maintenance costs. Based on projected trail use at full project build-out of an estimated annual 300,000 to 400,000 trail user days, the Feasibility Study identified annual operations and maintenance costs at \$440,000 to \$567,000 for the entire corridor.

The Feasibility Study identified a potential management responsibility scenario, wherein Eagle County would operate and maintain the trail for the 73 miles in its jurisdiction between Sage and Tennessee Pass, and State Parks would operate and maintain most of the remainder of the corridor from Tennessee Pass to Cañon City. The Corridor Management and Development Plan will examine more closely management costs based on the selected scope of trail development and management presence, and will determine which entities will be the actual trail managers.

The Steering Committee concluded that user fees should be the cornerstone of any operations and maintenance funding scenario. Based on the Eagle County/State Parks management scenario, the study estimated trail user fees could generate from \$395,000 to \$517,000, nearly enough to cover the estimated O&M costs. Of course, actual revenues would depend on fee structures, actual number of trail users and managing agency fee enforcement capability.

Other sources that could be used to cover O&M shortfalls from fee collections include community and agency funds, private sector contributions, volunteers and fees for the myriad of easements that the railway has previously granted. The linear nature of the corridor opens the potential for new easements in the corridor for utilities. An exclusive easement already exists for fiber optics lines, but as technologies advance, other telecommunications uses have the potential to generate substantial sums for O&M budgets.

Another potential source of operations and maintenance fees is the potential establishment of a scenic tour operation at the nine miles ending the corridor in the Royal Gorge. Union Pacific has agreed to donate that portion of the corridor with the rails intact, based on the assessment that a scenic tour train could be financially feasible. If the Corridor Management and Development Plan determines that scenic rail service in the Royal Gorge is the preferred option, and if a viable operator surfaces, revenues from the operation may be a viable source of operational funds for the remainder of the corridor.

Future rail service:

In addition to potential rail service in the Royal Gorge, the railbanked status of the corridor could lead to renewal of rail service at some time in the future, meeting regional and

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statewide goals. Perhaps the best current potential lies with the Eagle County section of the corridor, which the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has identified as a potential rail passenger service priority.

Eagle County intends to conduct a feasibility study on rail service during the coming year. Given initial estimates of \$40 million to establish passenger service in this section and the results of feasibility studies on the Roaring Fork corridor, it is not unreasonable to project that it could take up to 20 years before demand justifies such an expenditure. Even if passenger service does prove feasible in the near term, the character of much of the terrain will be conducive to a rail with trail outcome for the corridor.

OVERALL PROJECT TIMELINE:

December 1, 1995

Southern Pacific Railroad formally applies to Surface Transportation Board (STB) for abandonment as part of its proposed merger with the Union Pacific Railroad.

January, 1996 - September, 1996

GOCO Legacy Planning Grant analyses
STB abandonment proceedings

September, 1997

Southern Pacific/Union Pacific merger approved by STB

January, 1997 - July, 1997

Legacy grant application process

August, 1997 - Winter, 1998

Conduct Corridor Management and Development Plan

Fall, 1997 - Spring, 1998

Union Pacific finalizes abandonment proceedings with Surface Transportation Board

Spring, 1998 - Winter, 1999

Closure on acquisition
Phase I trail development

Winter, 1999 - Summer, 2002

Complete additional phases of trail development

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PROPOSED BUDGET
HEART OF THE ROCKIES HISTORIC CORRIDOR LEGACY PROJECT

Description	Date	GOCO Cash 7/97-12/99	Applicant Cash 7/97-12/99	Partners Cash 7/97-12/99	Applicant In-kind 7/97-12/99	Partners In-kind 7/97-12/99	TOTAL
Corridor Management and Development Plan	1/97-2/98	\$100,000	\$35,000	\$0	\$45,000	\$150,000	\$330,000
Land acquisition - Union Pacific donation/bargain Sale	Sep-98	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,255,000	\$5,260,000
Land acquisition - cash purchases of corridor	Sep-98	\$1,000,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$1,520,000
Trail development Surfacing & access facilities	11/98-12/99	\$3,250,000	\$565,000	\$250,000	\$40,000	*	\$4,105,000
Trail development Interpretation & education	11/98-12/99	\$225,000	\$75,000	\$100,000	\$5,000	*	\$405,000
Trail development Habitat management	11/98-12/99	\$425,000	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$10,000	*	\$660,000
TOTALS		\$5,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$750,000	\$115,000	\$5,415,000	\$12,280,000

* Note: Partners in-kind matches have yet to be estimated for these categories.

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PROPOSED TIMELINE
HEART OF THE ROCKIES HISTORIC CORRIDOR LEGACY PROJECT

Category	Task/Activity Description	Begin	Complete	Estimated Cost*	GOCO Amount	Proposed GOCO Allocation
Planning	Conduct Corridor Management and Development Plan process	1/97	2/98	\$330,000	\$100,000	\$50,000 SP \$50,000 LG
Land acquisition	Negotiate Union Pacific donation/bargain sale	3/96	9/98	\$5,260,000	\$0	\$0
Land acquisition	Acquire railway right-of-way	6/98	9/98	\$912,000	\$652,000	\$652,000 OS
Land acquisition	Acquire lands for trail access and to eliminate small isolated parcels	6/98	12/99	\$608,000	\$348,000	\$348,000 OS
Trail development	Grade and construct 178 miles of trail and access facilities	11/98	12/99	\$4,105,000 *	\$3,250,000	\$2,300,000 SP \$950,000 LG
Trail development	Design and implement interpretation and education exhibits and programs	11/98	12/99	\$405,000 *	\$225,000	\$150,000 WL \$75,000 SP
Trail development	Conduct habitat management research, implement enhancement and protection projects	7/97	12/99	\$660,000 *	\$425,000	\$350,000 WL \$75,000 SP
	TOTALS			\$12,280,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000

GOCO ALLOCATION TOTALS:

Open Space (OS) \$1,000,000
 Local Government (LG) \$1,000,000
 Wildlife (WL) \$500,000
 State Parks (SP) \$2,500,000

* Note: Asterisk indicates value of in-kind matches yet to be determined for these categories.

